



Southern Rural Fire Health and Safety Update November 2014



Southern Rural Fire Authority

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SECTION 1 - Introduction

The Southern Rural Fire Authority (SRFA) is responsible for all types of fires in the rural area which occur within the District and is committed to taking all practicable steps to ensure the health and safety of all personnel when training or working for the Authority.

This Health and Safety (HSE) report is to update the SRFA Committee any other stakeholder(s) on progress and activities relating to HSE within the District.

1.1 Overview

So far this year most man-hours performed by SRFA volunteer, contract and agency fire crews have been around training activities as well as assisting with three prescribed burns with a stakeholder forest owner/manager earlier in the year. A number of contract and agency fire fighters have been participating in scheduled training activities run by SRFA which have also included live fire training which has taken place without incident.

There has been one reported minor injury accident which occurred on a VRFF training night where a fire fighter received some superficial bruising due to slipping while climbing down from the top of the tank on a fire appliance. This incident has been investigated and steps taken to ensure the hazard is minimised.

There have been two VRFF locations that have appointed within their force - a Health and Safety Officer being Vicki Marie Coveney from Blackmount VRFF and Allen (AC) Jones from Hedgehope VRFF. Reporting to the Controller of each VRFF, these individuals are the first point of call within the two VRFF regarding health and safety, ensuring hazards are identified and communicated to SRFA. Other VRFF are encouraged to follow suit.

Fire rated smoke and dust masks continue to be distributed amongst all VRFF as well as replacement gloves which meet all NRFA standard requirements for personnel wearing gloves at a fire (standard states gloves do not need to be worn at a fire but if they are they are to meet certain standards).

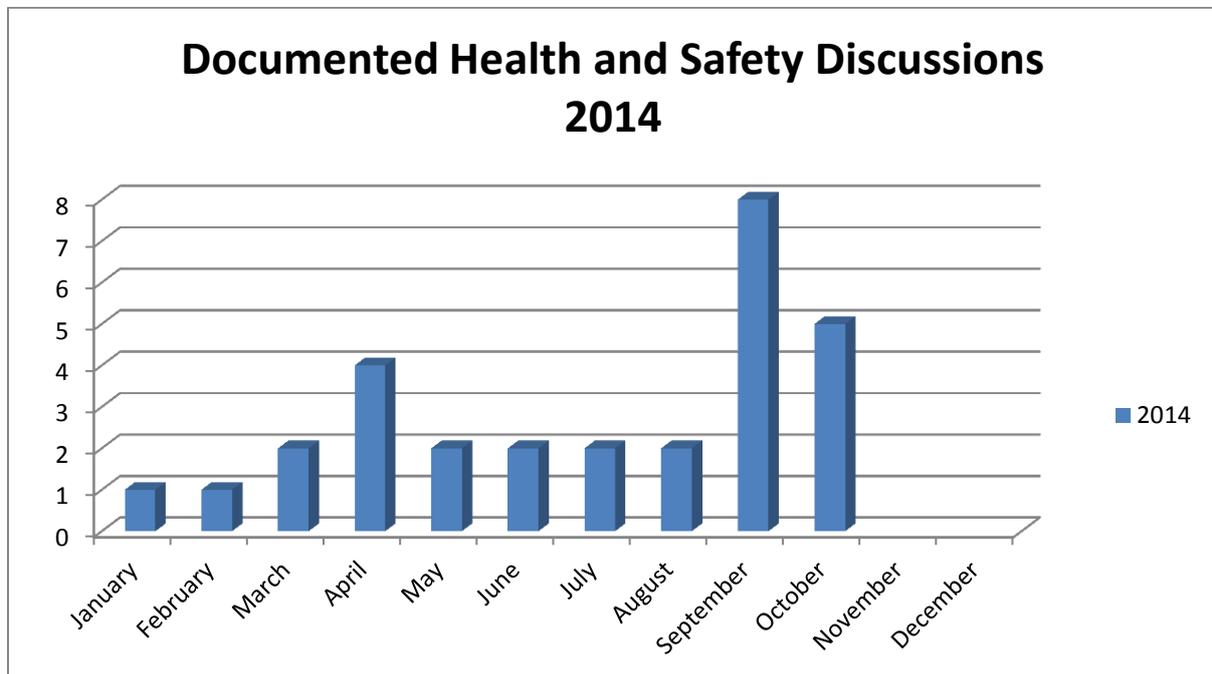
Slight changes made to the SRFA Health and Safety Management System were approved for use in October 2014. Replacement SRFA HSE documents have been distributed to all locations and stakeholders to replace any previous versions held on file. All locations have been advised to spend some time with their personnel going through the revised system and to complete and return to SRFA a record of safety discussion form.

The revised system will be analysed by the Operations Coordinator against legal opinions sourced by the National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) on the proposed health and safety legislation due in 2015 to ensure continued robustness of systems currently in place. The circular distributed by the NRFA is attached in topical reading.



SECTION 2 - Documented Health and Safety Discussions

To date there have been 29 documented HSE discussions. These include SRFA staff meetings where identified hazards have required review, meetings relating to the roll out and introduction of the HSE management system and training events where identified hazard controls contained in the HSE management system have been discussed and utilised.



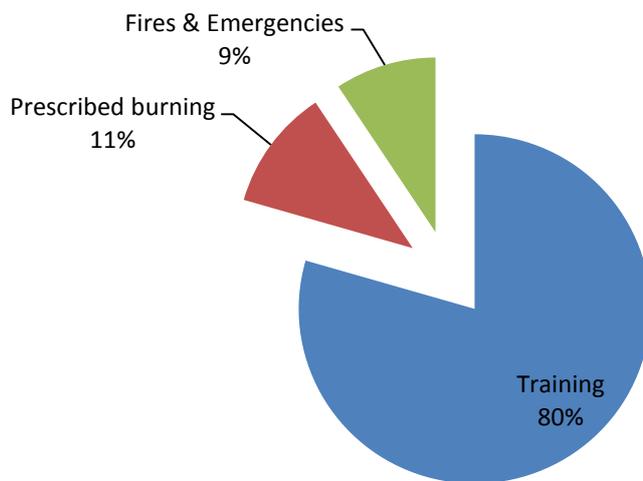
SECTION 3 - Reported Events

As at 1 November SRFA has achieved 45 days since the last recorded injury event. This related to a minor injury received by a VRFF fire fighter on 16 September 2014 while climbing down off the tank of a rural fire appliance during training. Previous to this incident SRFA had achieved 268 days since its previous injury, which related to a NZ Fire Service volunteer on 20 December 2013.

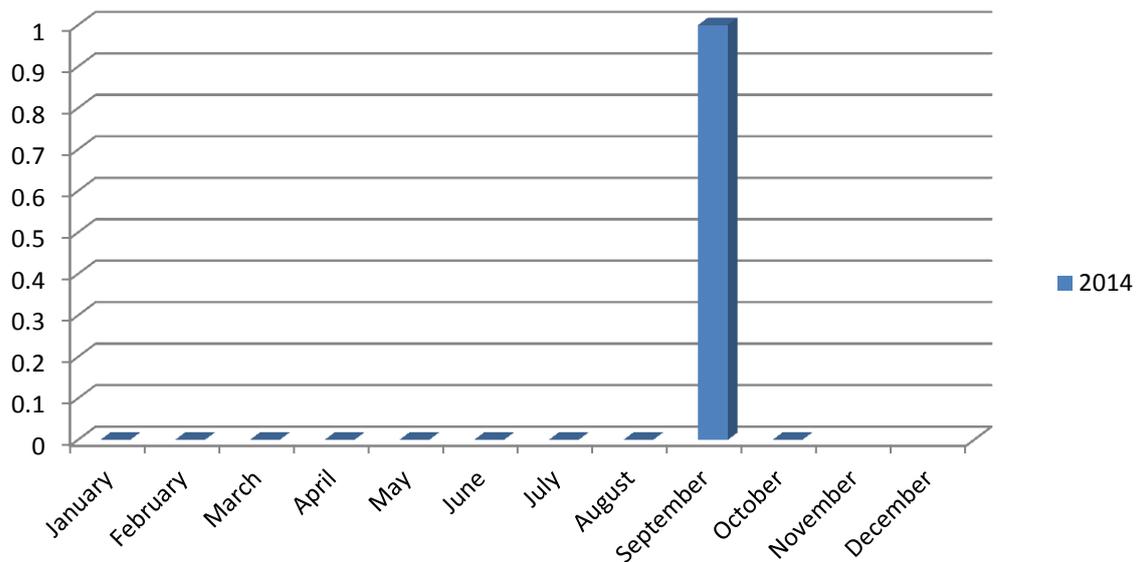
There has been one reported near miss incident which occurred on 11 March 2014, however it was not formally reported until early April.

It is estimated based on the frequency of trainings of agency and contract fire crews undertaken between January - November and the average attendance of each VRFF that approximately 2188 man hours of training have been undertaken during this period. Approximately 309 man hours have been spent undertaking prescribed burning operations and a further 256.5 man hours in attending fires and other emergencies.

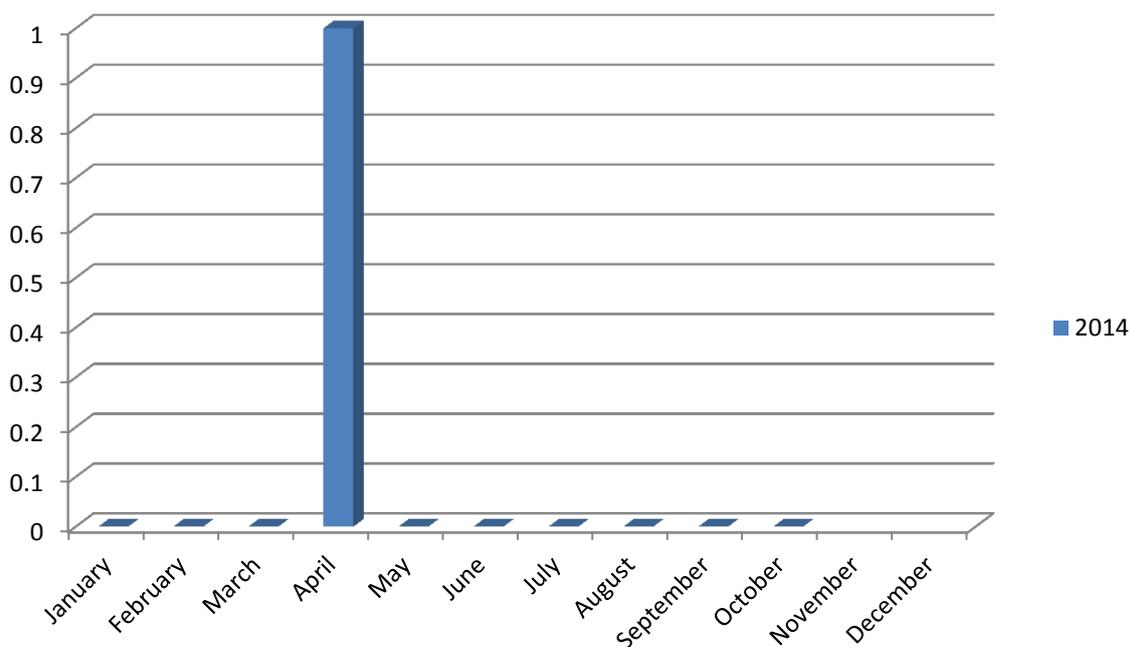
Percentage of man-hours January - 1st November 2014



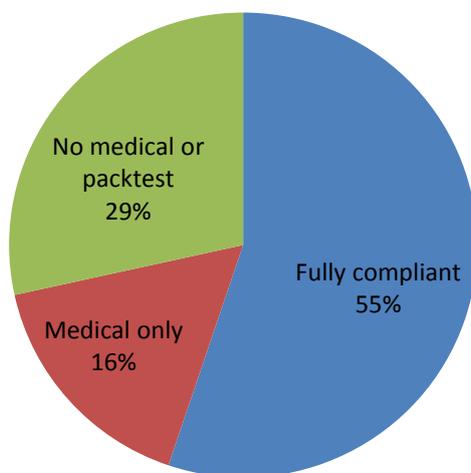
Number of injury accidents reported 2014



Number of near miss incidents reported 2014



Current Pack Test Status



Note: Subject to consistent change

SECTION 4 - Topical Reading



National Rural Fire Authority

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2 October 2014

NATIONAL RURAL FIRE AUTHORITY CIRCULAR 2014/14

Health and Safety Bill 2015 - Implications for Rural Fire Authorities

Purpose

This National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) Circular is to inform Rural Fire Authorities (RFAs) and to provide advice on the implications of changes to the current health and safety legislation with that set out in the proposed Health and Safety Reform Bill 2015.

Background

The Health and Safety Reform Bill 2015 is part of Working Safer, a major package of changes to the New Zealand workplace health and safety environment that has already resulted in the establishment of WorkSafe New Zealand.

It will create the Health and Safety Reform Act, which is based on the Australian Model Law, anticipated being in force by April 2015.

The changes that will arise from the new legislation will have implications for all Rural Fire Authorities (RFAs) who as entities in their own right are responsible for health and safety in their places of work.

Information on Health and Safety Reform Bill 2015 implications for RFAs

The NRFA is providing the information paper Appendix A, to Rural Fire Authorities to give guidance to enable RFAs to plan for changes and modernising of health and safety policy procedures and processes for meeting the changes in the health and safety requirements arising from the proposed Health and Safety Reform Bill 2015.

The Rural Fire Committee of the Commission (RFCC) at their August 2014 meeting have endorsed the information paper for release to by the NRFA to all Rural Fire Authorities with the Committee strongly emphasising how important it is that all RFAs incorporate this information into their RFAs Health and Safety policy and practice.

Key Points for RFAs to note

Rural Fire Authorities are not afforded any exemption or special protection in the new Health and Safety Reform Bill 2015 and like all organisations RFAs must comply with the requirements of it.

The paper provided outlines some detail of the proposed new Bill and the implications of the changes for RFAs, some key points to note are:

- The Bill focuses clearly on setting responsibilities and the duty of care, introducing specific expectations from the governance level of a business or organisation, specifying responsibilities for people controlling a business on a practical day-to-day basis and through to workers.
- Introduction of the term PCBU – Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking – and removal of the term employer, thus broadening the responsibilities to encompass health and safety duties for PCBUs whether or not they are in 'control' or acting as the 'principal'
- Imposes a primary duty on RFAs conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU), to ensure so far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of the RFAs workers and other people associated with the work carried out by the RFA.
- Change from serious harm that requires notification to the regulator (WorkSafe), to notifiable injury, illness, incident and event that are specifically defined in the Bill
- In the context of Rural Fire Authorities the definition of an 'officer' could reasonably encompass: the Board/Committee (RFDs); the Council (Territorial Authorities); Director General/Chief of Defence (DOC and NZDF); Chief Executives; the Principal Rural Fire Officer; and those who might be held to account for the governance and management of any significant health and safety failures within the RFA.
- Officers can be convicted or found guilty of offences under sections 39 and 42 of The Bill, and may face imprisonment of up to 5 years and/or individual fines up to \$600,000.
- Although volunteers are workers in the activities they undertake for RFAs, there are different expectations of volunteers in the Bill than there are of other workers. In particular, volunteers are exempt from offences and penalties relating to reckless conduct, failure to comply leading to death or serious injury, and failure to comply with health and safety duties.

Conclusion

The NRFA advises of the importance all Rural Fire Authorities need to now place on understanding the requirements of the new Health and Safety Reform Bill 2015.

Implications for all Rural Fire Authorities are also that their day to day management of work place health and safety practices will need to align to the requirements of the Bill. RFAs will need to modify their existing policies, procedures and practices, and develop tools and templates to meet the requirements.

The NRFA through the linkage with NZ Fire Service (NZFS) People & Capability group, will provide RFAs with any relevant NZFS developed tools and templates as these come to hand as examples to help guide RFAs in meeting their requirements.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin O'Connor".

Kevin O'Connor
National Rural Fire Officer