



NEW ZEALAND  
**FIRE  
SERVICE**  
Whakarātonga Iwi

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# fire & rescue

The New Zealand Fire Service Magazine

ISSUE

29



**Help floods  
in for  
Northland**

Fire & Rescue is the flagship publication of the New Zealand Fire Service.

It is produced by Media, Promotions and Communications, National Headquarters, Level 9, 80 The Terrace, Wellington.

Editor: Iain Butler

**Front cover:** Paihia firefighter Brent Webb helps Cynthia Kenny escape raging flood waters, Northland, March 2007.

Story on page 6.

Picture: Northern Advocate/Tania Webb

**Back cover:** Fierce flames in the heart of a fire in a Napier wrecker's yard.

Story page 9.

Picture: John Cowpland

We welcome contributions from Fire Service personnel and their families.

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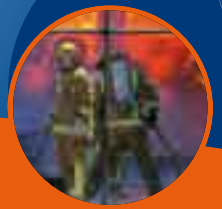
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The world of evacuation schemes is about to change for the better.

# Risking it all

A new approach to evacuation scheme management and the establishment of a national central processing unit (CPU) are just two initiatives in a bid to redefine the way the Fire Service manages risks posed by the commercial sector.

With last year's changes to the evacuation regulations, the role of fire safety staff and firefighters needs to also change, says the man heading the bold new fire risk management project, Western assistant fire region commander Mitchell Brown.

Mitchell says the project's aim is to better identify risks in commercial buildings and, where appropriate, develop specific tactics for dealing with emergencies in them.

"If you have a printing warehouse where one half of the building is paper and the other is the printing machinery, the owner's going to be far more concerned about saving the machinery than the paper that comes off it.

"That's just an example of how we can remove a 'one-size-fits-all'

approach and get down to prioritising appropriately the specific building risks in your patch."

To support this new approach, the CPU will provide initial administrative support and evacuation scheme processing to get the data in to an SMS data repository and tasked to the region co-ordinator to locally manage queries and requests, whether they are dealing with building evacuation management, a dangerous building or an engineering issue.

"In a nutshell, the CPU will gather information and deal with feedback to building owners, as well as assisting with SMS task work flow allocation."

Mitchell says national coordination of evacuation scheme applications still relies on regional management of building risk management.

As with any revised processes, consultation and education are key to making it successful, and a national road show will take place in late May and early June to do just that.



Pictures: Fire & Rescue, Manawatu Standard

“  
In a nutshell, the CPU will gather information and deal with feedback to building owners, as well as assisting with SMS task work flow allocation.  
”





# Executive makeover for UFBA

*The United Fire Brigades Association (UFBA) underwent some of the most radical changes in its history at this year's annual conference.*

For the first time in its 130 year history, the UFBA executive will comprise of a mix of elected and appointed members, with the positions of president and vice-president retained, but no longer voting members of the board.

Four board members will be elected on two-year terms, and can stand for re-election if they choose. Three members will be appointed.

UFBA chief executive John Thorn says the changes came about through a desire to split governance and management



responsibilities up, and to have greater accountability among the executive.

“I think it [the changes] was just a realisation that the model that had served the organisation so well for the past had just reached the end of its useful life.”

John says while debate on the issue was robust, there was a general consensus that the changes were needed.

He says the conference was a success in other ways, too, with large crowds turning out to both the competitions and the Staying Alive Expo.

The two major firefighters' advocacy groups came together in a unique way when NZPFU secretary Derek Best attended and spoke at the conference.







## History sometimes repeats

*Twenty years since its last waterways national title, Carterton is at it again.*

Carterton was crowned national champion with a margin of 22 points over its nearest rival. A team from Carterton last won in 1987

Showing that experience is a key to success, two of the team that took the honours on the 2007 national championships at the UFBA conference were also competing when they won the 1987 title – current coach Gordon Taylor and DCFO Wayne Robinson.

Despite the intervening drought, Carterton had an edge at this year's waterways, having competed previously in Australia. In 2005 Carterton was second in the Australasian championships.

Other waterways wins included Clyde in the 'New Event' category and Matamata in the two-person team event.

Pictures: Manawatu Standard and courtesy of John Thorn



## Age before beauty

*Experience ruled the day in the inaugural firefighters combat challenge.*

The US-inspired event, which pits individuals and teams in a gruelling relay of firefighter work-related tasks, was hosted for the first time in New Zealand at the UFBA conference.

Tony Scott, one of the key people behind bringing the event to these shores, wore the biggest grin as his Auckland Airport brigade won the glamour four-person event, coming in with the only sub-two minute time of the whole competition.

Overall, the combat challenge attracted a greater diversity of brigades to the UFBA event days. The first three teams home in the four person event were an industrial brigade (Auckland Airport) a career team (Auckland) and a team of volunteers (Greenhithe). Elsewhere, Waitakere Rural brigade was second home in the two-person event (behind Christchurch Airport) while one of their team won the over-40 individual category.

However, it was the performances of the chronologically gifted in the field which raised eyebrows. Christchurch Airport and Brooklands Volunteer Fire Brigade both featured heavily in the over-40 and over-50 categories, with one of the airport two-person teams made up of two competitors who also took part in the over-50 category.





# Hell hath no fury

Northland firefighters recount their recent tussles with nature to **Maria Cowin**.

On Friday, March 30, Northlanders awoke to a region that wore the scars of recent battle, but the sun shone brightly to the welcome news that not a single human life had been lost.

The previous day Mother Nature had unleashed her fury with the worst storm in Northland in 150 years, and even some parts of the region that had survived the notorious 1988 Cyclone Bola were wiped out.

Roads became impassable due to flooding or slips, dozens of motorists and travellers became stranded, forced to abandon their vehicles and head to safety.

With skill, courage and tenacity Northland's firefighters and Fire Service personnel had provided a professional response to an event far removed from battling flames.

The most dramatic example of their efforts was the rescue of Cynthia Kenny (14).

The Haruru Falls teenager was trying to cross a swollen creek near



Paihia firefighter Brent Webb comes to the rescue of Cynthia Kenny.

Pictures: Northern Advocate

Lemon's Hill on SH11 between Kawakawa and Opua when she got into trouble.

She clung to a tree for 20 minutes before firefighters arrived, throwing her a rope, which she tied to the tree and used to inch her way above the raging floodwaters.

"The firefighters were really cool, they helped me and kept me alive," Cynthia told *The Northern Advocate*.

"It was awesome what they did, it was scary though."

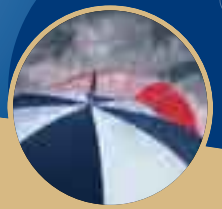
With the cleanup well underway, Northland is reflecting on an event that tested emergency management as local authorities pulled together to coordinate the region-wide response.

Losses to property and repairs to essential infrastructure such as roads and water mains are in the tens of millions of dollars.

The bridge at Kerikeri's stone store becomes a river.







**Wayne Martin,**  
Chief Fire Officer, Kawakawa  
Volunteer Brigade

“We were at a callout. A tree was down on a road at 2.30am on the Thursday. While we were there we began to hear callouts on the radio for Paihia and Kerikeri brigades. The floods had hit.

“During the peak 18 of our brigade members out of a roll of 21 were tied up with callouts. The local police came to the Kawakawa Fire Station and we ran the operational base from there.

“We all made sure our families were safe and comfortable. Some of us brought our kids to the station until someone else from the family could collect them.

“We had to close a number of roads on the state highways. The only way to get through to Moerewa was by truck, but at one point we even had difficulty getting the fire truck through. I finally sent the brigade members home to bed that night at 9.30pm. It had been a long day.”

**Shane Schrafft,**  
Chief Fire Officer, Paihia  
Volunteer Brigade

“I’m really proud of the brigade. We had a number of firefighters whose own homes were under threat during the floods, but they still performed the service for the public.”

“From the time we got our first callout during the floods it was continuous. On Thursday at some point we had one truck at Opuā attending a callout, the other was in Paihia. But the one in Opuā (with a crew of eight) got stuck there – slips and flooding in the area made it impossible for them to get back through. It was lucky they were there, because there were so many callouts over that way and we couldn’t have got back in.

“While the crew stuck in Opuā was clearing fallen trees from the road a call came in from Police that a teenaged girl had got into trouble trying to cross a swollen creek. Four of the firefighters rushed to the scene and took part in a rescue. It was pretty hair-raising.”

The crew in Paihia was also involved in a rescue at Haruru Falls of a female kayaker from rocks on a cliff face.

The Paihia brigade spent the next two days cleaning up the flood-ravaged town, then on Saturday night held their annual fundraiser – a casino night, which had been planned for almost a year. Numbers were slightly down – some punters were unable to get through on the roads.

The floods highlighted the need for inter-agency collaboration in a large-scale emergency response. During the peak of the storm Northland Fire Region commander Trevor Andrews was based at Northland Regional Council Civil Defence and Emergency Management (NCDEM) headquarters as a member of the coordinating executive group (CEG).

Ministry of Civil Defence & Emergency Management director John Hamilton, visiting Whangarei the day after the storm, commented that he was impressed by the operational management of the CEG.

Trevor also acknowledged his regional team and its ability to move into incident management mode in a crisis, which was critical to successful operation management from region HQ in Whangarei.

*“I take my hat off to the communities that were affected; to the people who used commonsense to see what was going on around them and kept out of harm’s way and let us do our job. And I’m extremely proud of the firefighters across the region, not only because of what they achieved but because they also kept themselves safe.”*

– Trevor Andrews,  
Northland Fire Region Commander.

Crew and locals assist in the rescue in swift, knee-deep water.





# Mowing sparks major fire

*An errant spark could be to blame for a fire in the Santoft Forest near Bulls.*

The fire in late February needed the expertise of, at one point, five helicopters, four Fire Service crews, Rural Fire and the army to keep it under control.

A local farmer mowing a verge could only run for help as a spark started a small fire which rapidly grew.

The fire followed weeks of dry weather in both islands which saw the usual run of restricted fire seasons and total bans – including a move in the MacKenzie Basin in Central Otago to ban vehicles in a bid to stop accidental fires.

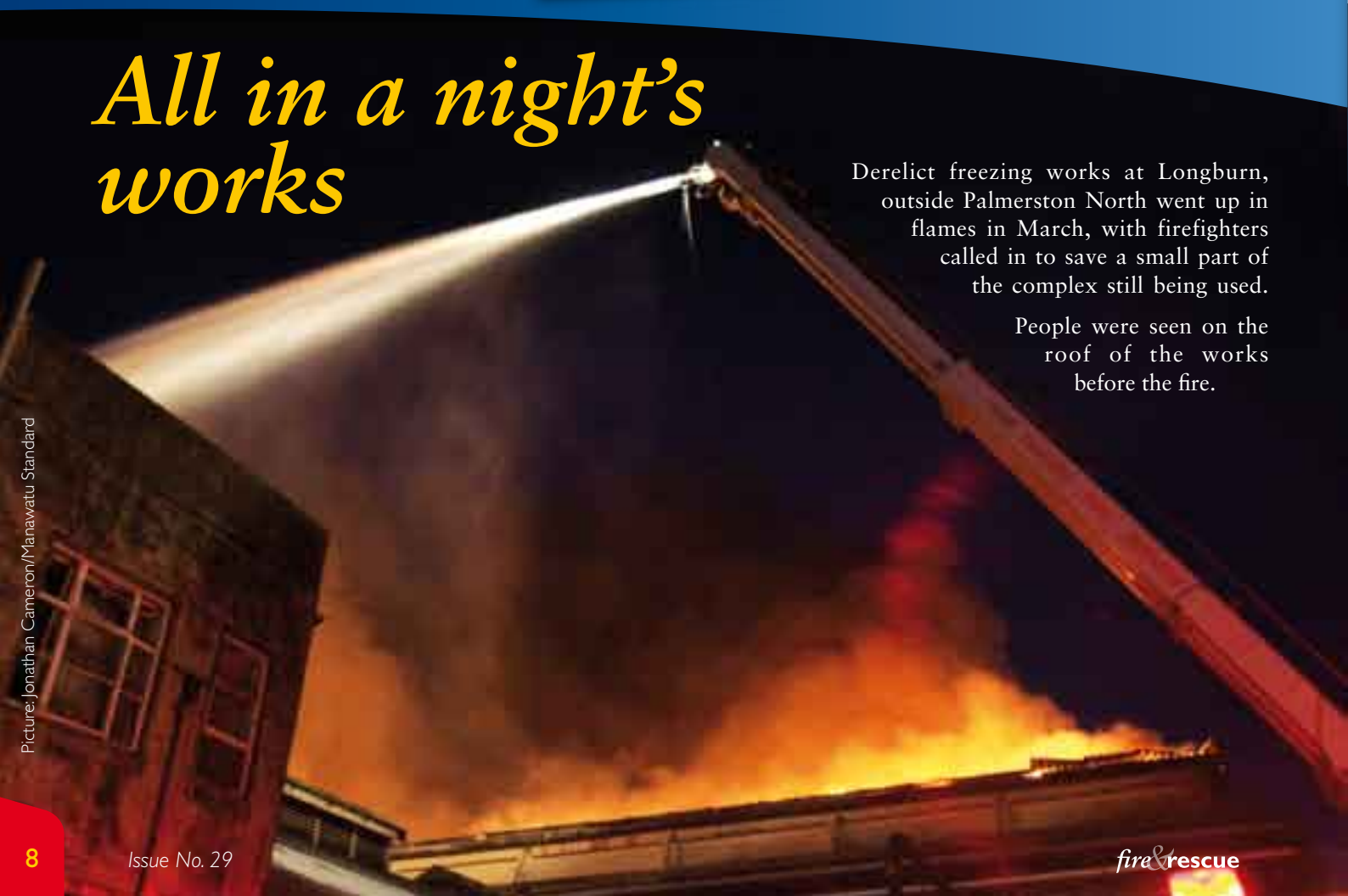


Pictures: Jonathan Cameron/Manawatu Standard

# All in a night's works

Derelict freezing works at Longburn, outside Palmerston North went up in flames in March, with firefighters called in to save a small part of the complex still being used.

People were seen on the roof of the works before the fire.



Picture: Jonathan Cameron/Manawatu Standard





# Black cabs go nowhere in Napier

*Someone should have called a taxi, because there were plenty of black cabs lying around a Napier wrecker's yard after a fire there in March.*

About 100 cars awaiting dismantling were consumed in a fire caused by a stray spark from a cutting torch.

Napier CFO Ray Brown told *Hawke's Bay Today* the fire was extremely hard to tackle.

"It was right at the back of the yard and was surrounded by stacked car bodies. At first we could only get halfway in."

Add to that the volume of accelerants involved, from car seat foam to engine oil and tyre rubber.

Large portions of the Napier/Hastings fire force were called on to tackle the fire, which had started in a single car seat, before attempts to put it out with an extinguisher saw sparks blown into the car's hood lining, from which the blaze rapidly grew.



Pictures: John Cowpland

## Need a lift?

Someone in Invercargill does after this van fire in Waimatuku near the city. Firefighters were called in the early hours of March 6.



Pictures: Barry Harcourt



# What comes down...

*As predicted in the last issue of Fire & Rescue, the Mt Ruapehu lahar was an emergency of minimum fuss.*

A small lahar at about 11.15 am on Sunday, March 11 was followed by a much larger one about 15 minutes later.

There were no reports of injuries or infrastructure damage.

Ohakune CFO Ben Goddard says all the organisations involved in the response to the lahar worked together well and all knew what they had to do.

“We had done so much practise and dummy runs that it just felt like that. It was an excellent example of co-ordinated incident management at its best.”

Ben says the incident management team was relieved to be finally dealing with the lahar after months on edge as the Mt Ruapehu crater lake began to fill well beyond its natural rim, held in only by easily dislodged ash on debris from the 1995 and 1996 eruptions.



Ohakune CFO Ben Goddard (left) and Sgt Mike Craig.

Pictures: Mike Heydon, Getty

“We had a series of false starts in the morning and it seemed like we were going to be chasing false alarms all day but in hindsight it was a sign of things to come.

“When the highway patrol came through on the radio and said they could see the lahar below the clouds, we did let out a bit of a whoop.”

The team at the Incident Control Point worked for about seven hours before they were able to take a first-hand look at the lahar at near-by Tangiwai.

In the end, even the mountain played its part, with a partial breach of the crater before the main event, meaning that the expected wall of water and debris was let out more steadily, sparing infrastructure in its path.

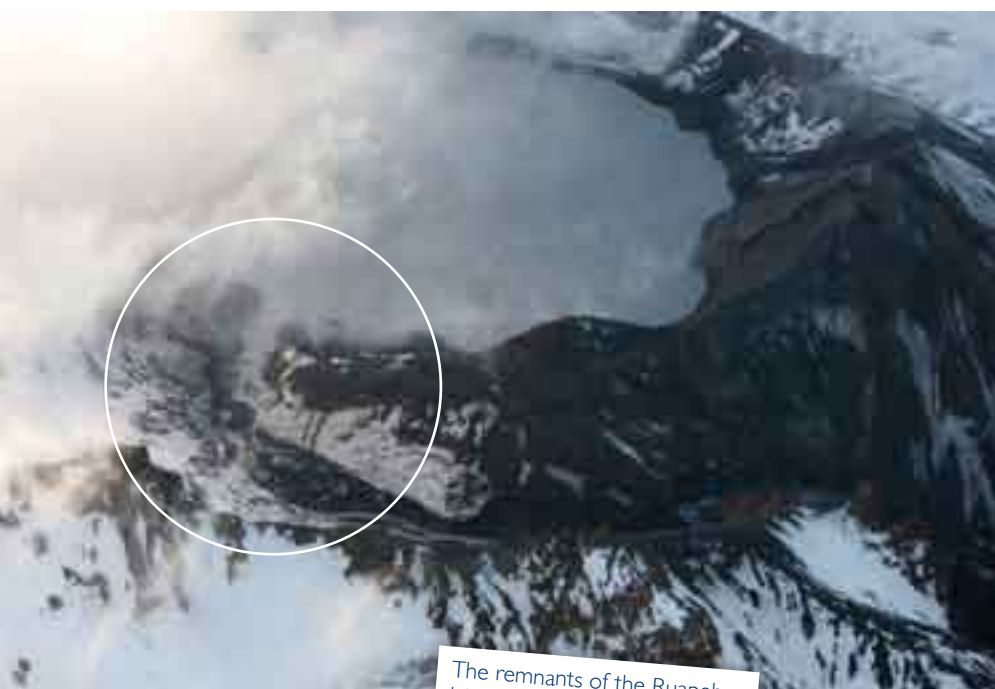
“We had in the contingency that the road [SH49 at Tangiwai] could be closed for a minimum of 24 hours, but in the end Transit people were able to get in there and inspect it and it was open quite quickly.”

The same was true of the rail bridge, which was open at a reduced speed limit just hours after the lahar, allowing a passenger train which had been stopped in Waiouru to get through.

Western Region trainer Paul Brigham was dispatched to the scene to help back up the local crew, and says he was impressed by the well-polished response.

“Everyone seemed to know exactly what they needed to do and they had taken account of all possible scenarios - there was no sense that anyone was making it up as they went along.”

The Government has also praised the emergency response, saying everything worked as planned.



The remnants of the Ruapehu lahar flow down the mountain.





# Skyline protected under new plan

By Debbie Jamieson

Fire brigades in the Southern Lakes area have welcomed a New Zealand-first, multi-agency fire response plan to protect exclusive alpine subdivisions and businesses in the district.

The plan was drafted by the Department of Conservation (DoC) after the 2005 Guy Fawkes Closeburn fire that saw 60 rural subdivision homes near Queenstown evacuated and threatened the large residential area at Fernhill.

“We were lucky it was not a particularly hot fire. If it struck now when we have high fire danger the end result would be significantly different and would pose quite a risk to human life,” DoC Wakatipu manager Greg Lind said.

The plan covers 6000ha around the

resort including about 300 homes in the Closeburn subdivision, the heavily populated Arthur’s Point area and the Skyline gondola building above Queenstown – all of which have only one entrance road.

The Skyline was at particular risk. If a fire started at the base of the gondola it would take only four minutes to reach the restaurant and facilities at the top, Lind said.

“There’s up to 2000 people there at any one time and 800 a night. They could be trapped very easily.”

Included in the new plan were clear response guidelines for the Queenstown Lakes District Council Rural Fire Force, the Fire Service, Police and DoC – who would be the lead agency.

One of the most important aspects was outlining fire evacuation plans

for each of the areas including safe areas and how evacuations should be carried out, which members of the public learned on a well-attended open day this month.

Initial responses would also be speeded up by a new scale of risk ratings, which the incident controller would use to direct the immediate response.

Queenstown CFO Bob Robertson welcomed the plan. It had become increasingly necessary as the number of rural subdivisions grew, he said.

Of particular benefit were provisions that gave the brigade the power to call up to two helicopters to the scene without going through a chain of command, speeding up the response time.

Fire brigades and rural fire forces from throughout the Queenstown Lakes District attended a training day this month focused on working with helicopters and fixed wing aircraft in rural firefighting situations.

Picture: courtesy of Stuart Anderson





Pictures: John McCombe

# The one-eyed wonder women

Meet the Transalpine administration team, where innovation comes with a smile.

By Kim Peterson

With the Crusaders always winning it's not surprising the Transalpine administration team's drive is to be the best and the first. Actually, having one Hurricanes fan and two Highlanders supporters among us, we're not all one-eyed Cantabs. We pride ourselves on being an innovative and creative team of women and we want to get it right for our customers, be they volunteers, career personnel or the general public.

There's far too little space to list all our roles and achievements, but some of our recent good work includes setting up an 0800 number, so that volunteers who are working during the day can call us toll free with their

queries, and starting *The Transalpine Express*, which has become our most well known achievement, even getting a mention by Mike Hall in this magazine!

Responding to the 2005 All Personnel Survey, we have incorporated the strategic mission, vision and values into all our formal communication to improve understanding of them. Another achievement is getting region's intranet site up and running, a site which has fast become the main source of information for our region.

We are also piloting a new national template for the volunteer internet sites with NHQ webmaster Mike Lee. Four volunteer brigades eagerly took up the challenge.



As our training administrator, Jan looks after all things training, supporting a team spread across the region with scheduling, paying bills, even making sure the volunteers on their seven-day recruit course are fed and watered during their stay in Christchurch. Jan also manages the database updates for all career and volunteer personnel. With local chiefs seeking her out to ask questions or simply to say hello, Jan can put a lot of faces to names.





## Joan

Joan is the first point of contact for the Timaru district, providing support to the full range of staff in South Canterbury. While some of us specialise in certain areas of the business, she has become a Joan-of-all trades to support Timaru.



## Rhonda

Our very own USAR chick! Rhonda is the admin support person for USAR TF2 and early last year we lost her to the tornado incident over on the West Coast [not literally I hope! – Ed]. One of her tasks is making sure accounts get paid on time, especially for remote areas of our region. She's also our travel administrator, always striving for the best possible deals, which given the geographic diversity of our region, is an impossible job sometimes.

## Anne

Anne provides support to career and volunteer firefighters on SMS and evacuation procedures. Anne is very process-driven and has had extensive input into the implementation of new IT systems, including SMS. Anne also supports fire safety and FAIP.



## Kim

Kim looks after budgets, capex and monitoring for Transalpine, advising personnel on their budgets and implementing processes as a result to support the budget managers. She is currently working on pulling together the management team for input in the region's business plan. Day-to-day management of the office takes up a lot of time and solving problems on behalf of our region is a constant, but very satisfying, part of her role.



## Amanda

With an internal communications focus – updating the intranet and being editor of *The Transalpine Express* – Amanda is constantly persuading us to give input and articles. Amanda also tackles any IT breakdowns and system support issues we have, to assist our IT systems support person Dave McGillen. She is currently creating and updating a computer user guide for the volunteers on the intranet, Outlook, fire.org.nz and portal.fire.org.nz, as well as working on the internet template trial.



So that's the team. Our diverse but complementary traits and skills enable us to work well together, despite being spread across the South Island. We support and assist each other and have a great time doing it, as evidenced by the fact that no-one has been here less than four years. We have a bit of a reputation for doing things a little differently here but the motivation to do the best for our customers keeps us on our toes.

Why do we do it? We believe that the first point of contact is very important in promoting the Fire Service as a community organisation. If people leave our offices feeling that their needs have been met and we can share a smile or a laugh as well then that makes it all worthwhile.



# Apocalypse, then lunch



Story and pictures by Kerry Marshall

*For two days the suburb of Taradale in Napier resembled a disaster zone.*

Cars caught fire, planes crashed, people were trapped, alarms sounded and fire engines crossed back and forth through the town.

Over 60 firefighters and volunteer ambulance crew including firefighters from Whangarei participated in this year's running of the bi-annual Operation Maxwell, a 24 hour training weekend. It is supported by Fire Service staff, Red Cross, Civil Defence, the Salvation Army and army cadets.

Crews responded to scenarios including a car into the local river with multiple patients, a light aircraft crash into vehicles at Napier Airport, a chemical spill at a factory, a P-Lab and a multitude of exercises including people trapped, fallen off ladders, or stuck up trees.

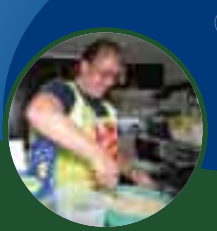
The highlight of Saturday night was a live fire exercise with Training Officers Ali "not an asthmatic" McNabb and Mike O'Shea running a fuel sprinkler at an old shingle works. Spectators and firefighters alike were treated to a massive fireball as crews moved in and out protected by a water curtain.

Late to bed Saturday night there were some tired looking crews come Sunday morning as they were dispatched early in the morning to yet more scenarios.

Lunch from the Salvation Army mobile canteen finished the weekend with everyone taking away a great experience, good training and new friends.







# Operation Maxwell: Behind the scenes



For every firefighter that enjoyed the 2007 Operation Maxwell in Taradale there was another person running around either cooking, overseeing scenarios, operating radios or helping as a patient.

A large crew of over 60 helpers included:

- The Red Cross and Civil Defence who provided patients;
- The Salvation Army and its mobile canteen who spent the weekend cooking fantastic food;
- Career and volunteer firefighters who oversaw training, ran communications and helped wherever needed;
- The Army cadets who erected tents and provided security.

The weekend was based at the clubrooms at the Meeanee Speedway just out of Taradale. Here communications, accommodation and catering was set-up. Scenarios were run on private properties, schools, business premises and council parks and rivers with great support all around.

Spectators were treated to several spectacular events including a car fire just behind the main Taradale shopping centre, a plane crash at the Napier airport, and a car crashing into the local river. This proved to be realistic enough for the photographer from the local paper to be rung and told to “get going and check it out” while he was there taking photos.







# Fire police on patrol

*Parked around the back of Napier Fire Station ready to roll is the fire police van 5126. Turned out for every second alarm, when a person is trapped at a crash, or at the request of fire or police, the dozen members attend 80 to 90 calls a year.*

Story and pictures by Kerry Marshall

Providing traffic management, lighting and scene protection the fire police free up firefighters and police officers for other duties at incidents. Most members are former firefighters with many years' experience and understanding employers as most of the calls are of at least several hours' duration or longer for serious crashes or large incidents. One call lasted 12 hours.



Three to four crew respond in the van which carries signage, first aid, extinguishers, salvage sheets and lighting kit. Several members are based in Hastings and can also respond in the Hastings ute if it is available.

Well supported by Eastern Region, and career and volunteer stations, the fire police are a welcome sight, covering an area most of the way up the Napier/Taupo Road, north from Napier to Putorino and south to Norsewood.





# Two-star performance

*Last month, Wanganui SSO Ken Malcolm became the first career firefighter to rack up 50 years in the job.*

It all started with a young Wanganui chap hanging around the fire station, which was close to his home.

Seeing his interest, in 1957 the brigade chief installed him as an auxiliary – a low-paid, night-time firefighter.

“You started at 7pm and worked until 7am. There was a lady who cooked your meals, and you had to pay for that, but everything else was provided.”

The times being what they were, everything else didn't consist of much.

“They didn't have much in the way of BA. Until 1961, most firefighting was matter of holding your breath and closing your eyes.

“Of course, back then it was mostly just wood smoke you were breathing in.”

The rare occurrence of motor accidents brought a similarly rudimentary approach.

“Again, we didn't have the sophisticated gear, we just used a crow bar. But of course the cars didn't crumple up, so you could just pop the doors back.”

Two years later, a full-time job came up, and Ken grabbed it with both hands.

Despite his length of service – he first began acting as an officer 37 years ago – Ken is not a wistful, nostalgia-buff reliving his glory days. He's as much focussed on the job today as he was when he first joined.

The day of his 50th anniversary was just another day at work for Ken, although he acknowledged the importance of the first firefighter



making it to double gold-star status entirely with paid service.

“You're working with a lot of young guys, so I try to keep fit to keep up with them.”

To do that, Ken runs every day, as well as playing tennis, golf and playing with his energetic grandkids.

“I'm not one for sitting at home.”





Silverdale SFF Nicky Lafferty was recognised for years of community work recently.

# Zonta says it with flowers

The award came from the Hibiscus Coast branch of Zonta, an international organisation recognising women achieving in business and community activities.



Picture: Nigel Marple

Nicky with Andrea Rossouw on Rose Day.

On March 8, Zonta groups around the world celebrate Rose Day, where people nominated by the group are presented with, funnily enough, roses and an award by way of recognition for their work.

Zonta member Andrea Rossouw nominated Nicky this year, and says it

was a reflection of her consistent years of effort in the community, both in emergency response, community safety work, and sporting success.

Nicky was thrilled, if a little surprised, by the award.

“I thought they were just asking me to give a talk, but it turned out they wanted to give me flowers.”



Nicky in the 2001 firefighters calendar.

# Worth the wait

Plimmerton's Bert Bailey finally got what he has waited 65 years for – a chance to wear a chief fire officer's uniform.



CFO Russell Postlewaight presenting former chief Bert Bailey with a 351 (Plimmerton Station) shoulder patch.

Bert, now 95, was Plimmerton's second superintendent of the fire brigade (as the chief was called then) back in 1942. But in those days there were no uniforms and no fire engine, just a handcart with buckets and hand pumps.

With the brigade's 75th birthday due in two years' time, Bert has been helping the brigade with memories of those early days and current chief fire officer Russell Postlewaight obliged by lending Bert his uniform for a try-on.

Russell is keen to hear from anyone who has particular memories of the brigade and its activities, or photos of brigade members or fires, floods or other incidents the brigade might have been involved in. He can be contacted on: [russell.unfire@paradise.net.nz](mailto:russell.unfire@paradise.net.nz)

Photo: Kotuku Media





# When I'm 64

*The 75-year-old Dunedin Fire Station brought some locals of a similar vintage in for a special fire safety opportunity.*

Story and pictures by Barry Gibson

With help from the William Hannah gift, firefighters targeted senior citizens for a fire safety education campaign.

Before Christmas, invitations were sent out to the city's retirement villages, Age Concern groups, Probos organisations, and Lions Clubs inviting seniors to a tour of Central Fire Station. The response was huge and although the Seniors Week programme started with a small audience of 25, by the end of the week, 50-60 people were attending each afternoon session.

Following a formal welcome, guests got a fire safety talk covering the most likely causes of fire among the elderly – heaters, multi plugs and electric blankets.

A station tour followed, with participants split into small groups and provided with a brief history of the station on a guided walk, ending with the station museum and visual displays of events in the station's rich past.

Following afternoon tea, the seniors were treated to a demonstration of a cooking fire, which also showed sprinklers at work.



# Now you're cooking



Pat Gavin hands over a cheque to a representative from the Child Cancer Foundation after auctioning one of his kitchens.

*A Northland factory fire ends up being good for the community...in a round-about way.*

When Pat Gavin's factory was saved from disaster by the quick work of Whangarei firefighters in November, he had an idea.

As a way of saying thanks, he would auction off a kitchen and donate the money to a charity of the brigade's choosing.

The Child Cancer Foundation was the lucky recipient of an \$8000 cheque following the auction, but Pat was also smiling – he is able to his business back to its original building this month, thanks to the Fire Service.

Picture: Whangarei Leader



## The Opinion Pole gets flamed in its first week



# Battle in Seattle

*East Coast Bays SO Steve Callagher takes you into the mind of a competitor in the biggest stair-climb event of them all.*

The event was the 16th annual Scott Firefighter Stair-climb in Seattle, Washington on March 4, where 1200 competitors donned level 2s including BA and raced up 69 floors to the top of the Bank of America Tower.

Tony Scott (Auckland), Jason Bennett (Cooks Beach), Wyn Warner (Kamo), Carmen Daniela (Tokomaru) and I were the New Zealand team. We were lucky to have Tony Scott with us as he had just recently recovered from necrotising fasciitis – a nasty flesh eating disease.



## SPORTS COUNCIL

*Event Calendar*

# 2007

### Firefighters' 42 Traverse Challenge Mountain/Quad Bike Race – Tongariro Forest

April 28, 2007

Email: [owhango@fire.org.nz](mailto:owhango@fire.org.nz)

Website: [www.42traverse.com](http://www.42traverse.com)

*Entry forms and contacts for some events are available online at Firenet or [fire.org.nz](http://fire.org.nz)*





The few days between our arrival and event day were spent relaxing and interacting with our American hosts, who deserve a special mention for their hospitality.

On event day we arrived at the ominous black Bank of America Tower, which stretches skywards. No time to stand around feeling intimidated, we had to organise BA sets, loan boots and other equipment.

Our customised 'New Zealand flag' helmets were donated by Pacific Helmets, and after the event two of them were auctioned off and the US\$700 raised was donated to the Leukaemia and Lymphoma Society. This event annually raises in the vicinity of US\$300,000 for the society.

We were all in awe at the sheer size of this event, the largest firefighter stair-climb event in the world, with almost 1200 competitors, their supporters, 200 event marshals and support personnel, TV camera crews and reporters, all gathered at the base of the 73-level tower. Surprisingly, despite the sheer numbers of people and equipment, there was a sense of order and control.

At 10 am the first platoon of 50 firefighters was led to the stairwell by the Seattle Fire Brigade Pipe Band. Each firefighter had an electronic timing chip attached to record ascent times. Then, all of a sudden, the torturous climb began. One firefighter every 15 seconds for 5 hours.

At level 10, I remember thinking "I'm very tired already". I focused my attention on just getting to level 20. On arrival at level 20, I was exhausted. From levels 25 to 60, although exhausted and suffering from the intense heat build-up inside my level twos, I was just focusing on technique and trying to ignore the thoughts that keep springing to mind, like:

"I don't care if someone passes me"; "Just slow down a little bit"; "Take single steps instead of doubles for a while"; "Why am I doing this? Just stop, no one will care."

Suddenly I reached level 60. I could hear people on the landings cheering on the firefighters following below. I found myself thinking "No one is going to pass me now", and began my final burst to the finish.



Pictures: courtesy of Tony Scott

The boots on my feet felt like lead weights, quads burning, legs like jelly, gasping for air, heart pounding violently, throat raw and dry, eyes stinging.

None of it mattered though, because the end was in sight. On the final flight of stairs my warning whistle stopped and I sucked the BA mask into my face. It didn't matter, a few more steps and I was there.

I dropped to my knees at the top of the stairwell and tried to rip my mask and helmet off. Race officials were quick to assist me. I was helped to my feet, BA set, helmet, gloves and jacket were removed. They kept me moving to make way for the firefighters following behind. I was shown to a recovery area on the top floor which boasts a spectacular view of the city with a snow capped Mt Rainier on the horizon. I sat there taking it all in for 10 minutes, then it was time to move on. The recovery room was filling up rapidly. I returned to the ground floor to wait for the rest of the Kiwi team to finish.

Steven Callagher was first in the over 40 years category and third over-all. The Kiwi team came sixth out of 143 teams. Knock Steve off his perch at this years' Sky Tower Vertical Challenge in Auckland, on May 12. Register at [www.timingnewzealand.co.nz](http://www.timingnewzealand.co.nz)

## Taranaki Provincial Snooker Tournament

Hawera  
July 1, 2007  
Contact Warwick Stewart  
[Stewart.warwick@fire.org.nz](mailto:Stewart.warwick@fire.org.nz)

## Wellington Provincial Golf Tournament

Feilding, July 8, 2007  
Email:  
[warren.dunn@fire.org.nz](mailto:warren.dunn@fire.org.nz)

## National Snooker Tournament

Hawera  
July 14 & 15, 2007  
Contact Colin Dudley 06 278 3190  
Email: [Dudley.colin@fire.org.nz](mailto:Dudley.colin@fire.org.nz)

## National Ski & Board Championships

Ohakune  
August 2 & 3, 2007  
Email: [Ohakune@fire.org.nz](mailto:Ohakune@fire.org.nz)

*To list your sporting event on this space please send details to: [warren.dunn@fire.org.nz](mailto:warren.dunn@fire.org.nz)*



# Something fishy

Story and pictures courtesy of Craig Bain

*Not even a 150-year storm could stop the annual National Game Fishing Tournament, held at Russell in the Bay of Islands.*



Despite the heavy rain and significant flooding the few days before, teams came from all around New Zealand and overseas to take up their rods in search of the ones that wouldn't get away.

The tag and release of a striped marlin saw the chief fire officer and crew from Ngunguru Brigade win the competition.

Hard luck story has to go to Gary Lorigan, fishing on behalf of the host brigade. His striped marlin weighed in at just 900 grams too light for IGFA rules and the fish was disqualified. If it had been tagged and released, he would have won the competition.

The event and prize list just keeps on getting bigger and better each year. Russell looks forward to your team attending next years' event.

## Help!



SFF Alan Smith from Porirua blue watch proves that firefighters' popularity with children isn't on the wane.

Picture: courtesy of Ian McFadden-Rew



### SPORTS COUNCIL

Event Calendar

# 2007

#### National Trout Fishing Competition

Turangi,  
August 20 – 23, 2007  
Email: francarmstrong@hotmail.com

#### South Island Basketball Tournament

Christchurch  
September 1, 2007  
Email: chris.lind@fire.org.nz

#### National Rugby Tournament

Wellington  
September 7 & 8, 2007  
Email: john.rowe@fire.org.nz

Entry forms and contacts for some events are available online at [Firenet](http://Firenet) or [fire.org.nz](http://fire.org.nz)





## Ohaione Volunteer Fire Brigade 100th anniversary

Ohaione Volunteer Fire Brigade has had an eventful 2007, and 2008 will be no different with the brigade marking 100 years of existence in February 2008.

For more information contact The Jubilee Committee, Ohaione Fire Station, PO Box 112, Ohaione.

A 'Centennial Parade' of historic appliances will also feature as part of the festivities. Vintage vehicles from out of town are welcome, and anyone interested in taking part should contact the committee.

Picture: Mike Heydon



## Balclutha Volunteer Fire Brigade is celebrating 100 years

Balclutha will celebrate 100 years of serving the South Otago community at Labour weekend, October 19 - 21, 2007.

For further information phone Gavin Scott on (03) 418 0199 or Peter Soper on (03) 418 2642.

## Desperately seeking souvenirs

Fire & Rescue is international these days, beamed out to the world over the world-wide web, so it's not surprising that we get the odd, well odd request.

Two people from Europe are seeking fire souvenirs and while their ambition knows no bounds (a spare vehicle, anyone?) their hearts are in the right place.

So, if you have a spare patch to give away, send to:

Dr Eugeniusz Bacht,  
Collector of Fire Souvenirs,  
Bajdy 55, 38-471 Wojaszowka,  
pow. Krosno,  
POLAND

And/or:

Bangoura David  
140 Rue De Mairieux  
59600 Maubeuge  
NORD FRANCE

Email: babounes59@aol.com



Polish firefighters want your patches



