

Simulating fire learning

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The simulation table was a popular demonstration for the group of CFA volunteers.



Pictures: CFA A group of taskforce members gather around the simulation table.

Simulating fire learning

Around 60 of CFA's Planned Burn Taskforce recently gathered at the Victorian Emergency Management Institute (VEMI) in Mount Macedon to gain expertise from key industry leaders.

The taskforce, made up of more than 700 volunteers, including dual brigade member for both Chirside Park and Yarra Glen Angela Fleay, were offered an expression of interest to partake in the weekend (15-16 June) to enhance their capabilities in fuel management.

CFA Planned Burn Taskforce Support Officer Kerryn Tait said it was a positive and informative weekend that saw a number of guest speakers interact with the attentive group.

"The main aim of these workshops is to educate our taskforce members more about why we do fuel reduction activities, how they happen and how they are contributing," Kerryn said.

"We had the likes of CFA Senior Research Officer Rachel Bessell and Senior Research

Scientist Thomas Duff discuss grass and cropland research which provided a deep dive into control lines, ignition patterns and fuel loads.

"Something we're also trying to get on the front foot of is safety on the fireground, so we had Health and Safety Manager Noble Yamak discuss the importance of reporting.

"The simulation table drew the most attention, as vegetation management team leader Dan Idczak presented a fire scenario on the simulator. A map was used on a table and members built the landscape, set wind and temperatures and ran through the behaviour of a moving fire."

For five-year Planned Burn Taskforce member, Angela, the weekend was a fantastic learning opportunity that covered many aspects, while she thoroughly enjoyed hearing of Deputy Chief Officer Alen Slijepcevic's stories from his trek to Everest Base Camp.

"My favourite presentation was the one on human factors that cause good leaders to

make poor decisions, led by CFA Commander Safer Together and Planned Burn Taskforce Manager Tim McKern. It was all about command and control and decision-making processes," Angela said.

"Understanding that sometimes what others perceive as a bad decision is actually a decision made for the right reasons, and then learning to adapt if something doesn't go to plan was incredibly invaluable."

Angela turns out for Chirside Park as a daytime responder, but also dual responds with Yarra Glen Fire Brigade, managing commitments around her work as a pastry cook.

"We're really lucky to have such passionate leaders around us. We're all very supportive of each other and we love running into each other when out on strike teams," Angela said.

"Learning more about the importance of planned burns and what they do for the environment and the protection of properties is really important to us.

"It's all the work that goes in before the fire season that can make such a huge difference and we really enjoy contributing to the prevention process so we're ready for when a fire hits."

Kerryn describes the Planned Burn Taskforce as one big family with infectious positivity, a mentality that is highly regarded throughout the organisation.

"They are a fun bunch who enjoy being together. They're very social and are all very like-minded. The culture amongst the group is very strong and admired broadly," Kerryn said.

"They get so much out of interacting and working with each other right across the state and workshops like these are a great way to thank them for their efforts over the burn season.

"The environment is quite different to their work with their brigades, it's burning in a safer and more controlled situation, and they genuinely want to be involved."