

An aerial photograph showing a large fire burning in a forest. Thick white smoke billows from the ground, partially obscuring the trees. Two firefighters in yellow gear are visible in the center, directing a high-pressure stream of water onto the burning area. The surrounding forest has some trees with autumn-colored foliage, while others are charred and blackened.

IGNITE

TE HIRINGA O TE TANGATA

ISSUE 23 / AUTUMN 2022 / NGAHURU 2022

4

Whanaungatana on
display at Waihārara

12

Celebrating
our wāhine

19

Help us improve our
decontamination system



Ignite is the official magazine for Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

Te Hiringa o te Tangata –
To have drive, zest, determination.
To have heart and soul.

Ignite represents the voices of the people across the country who dedicate themselves to protecting life, the environment and property in their communities. It is produced by the Fire and Emergency Communications Team, National Headquarters, Level 12, 80 The Terrace, Wellington, 6140.

Contributions to Ignite

Contributions to be considered for publication are welcome and may be submitted to: communications@fireandemergency.nz. Photos need to be at least 1MB.

Read Ignite online

fireandemergency.nz/news-and-media

This document is printed on "FSC Mix Certified environmentally responsible paper, manufactured from ECF Pulp. It is produced under strict ISO14001 Environment Management."

All material in Ignite is copyrighted and may not be reproduced without permission.



KIA ORA KOUTOU

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Kerry Gregory on his appointment to the role of Chief Executive for Fire and Emergency New Zealand. Kerry will bring immense knowledge, experience and vision to this role.

I anticipate I will hand over to Kerry by mid-2022 at the latest, which means this is likely my final Ignite editorial.

As I reflect on my five years as Chief Executive, I am proud of what we have all achieved. Creating a unified operational structure to better meet the future needs of our communities, enhancing our business processes to be a strategic organisation, and tackling the negative aspects of our behaviour have been the three main themes of my tenure as CEO. Although there is still much to be achieved in each of those aspects, we have established a strong foundation and gone a long way in their implementation.

Many highlights come to mind but a common theme across many of them is our dedicated people and their mahi to protect our communities and Aotearoa

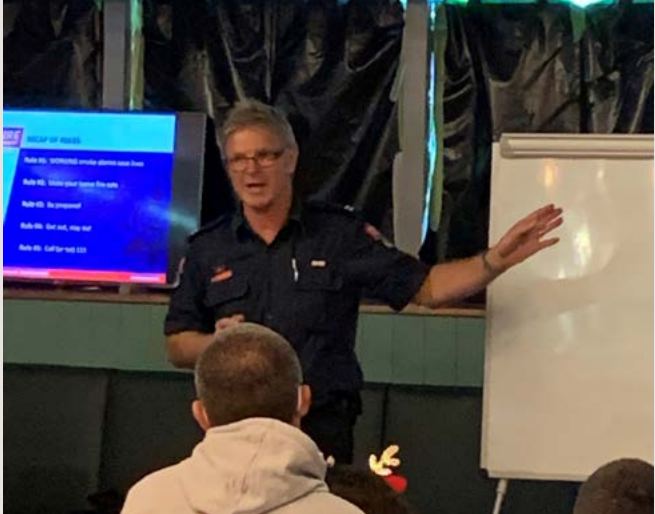
New Zealand. Once again, this issue of Ignite is full of great examples.

See how Auckland City firefighters are helping some of New Zealand's newest residents, evacuees from Afghanistan, understand fire safety in their new home (page 3). Read stories from some of the many people across the country who gave their time and skills to help keep surrounding communities safe from the Waihārara Fire in Northland (page 4). Learn about how our Community Readiness and Recovery teams are connecting with rural communities through the very popular FMG Junior Young Farmers and Agrikids competitions (page 10). And read about a dramatic rescue from rising flood waters involving members of our USAR team on the West Coast (page 16).

Fire and Emergency is privileged to have such public-spirited people give their time and skills to serve their communities – thank you all.

Ngā mihi nui mō ngā rā kei te heke mai

Rhys Jones, Chief Executive



BUILDING TRUST AND UNDERSTANDING WITH EVACUEES

In spring last year, Auckland City Station attended what appeared to be a routine call-out to an accommodation building in the city. Senior Firefighter Greg Jefferson noticed there were a lot of security guards but few occupants in the evacuation area and questioned why that was. The answers he received led to a new fire safety initiative that will undoubtedly save lives.

The building was a secure place for Afghanistan evacuees, who had assisted the New Zealand Defence Force in Afghanistan. For them, alarms and uniforms were something to be feared, which is why so many, including children, had not evacuated the building. Greg saw an opportunity to help this brave and at-risk group.



"I talked to the security company who ran the facility and various government departments, to see if we could share fire safety knowledge with the group and help build trust with emergency services. They responded positively and we gave our first presentation at the end of October," said Greg.

Three presentations were held under the orange traffic light setting and the response was excellent. Auckland City Station Officer Ali Rodger said over 200 people attended.

"Each presentation saw more and more people coming along. They learned about fire safety and Greg also took the time to assure them our uniformed emergency services were here to help, not harm them," said Ali.

While presentations have been temporarily halted, it's hoped they'll begin again soon, with smaller numbers and other safety measures in place. Work is also underway to translate the materials into the Afghan language, Dari.

"Another 700 Afghanistan evacuees are due to arrive here in the coming months. We owe these people a great deal and the least we can do is help make them safer for their new lives in Aotearoa," said Ali.



WHANAUNGATANA ON DISPLAY AT WAIHĀRARA

On 18 December 2021, Fire and Emergency was called to a vegetation fire in Waihārara, Northland.

The next 52 days were an incredible display of whanaungatanga, as everyone pulled together. We worked alongside the Department of Conservation, our forestry partners, NZDF, Ngāi Takoto iwi, Far North District Council, Northland Regional Council – Civil Defence and Emergency Management, New Zealand Police, Dairy NZ, Northland Rural Support Trust and the Kaimaumau, Houhora and Waihārara communities to contain the fire and prevent any loss of life or damage to property.

This was a complex incident with the combination of wetlands, peat, sand and highly variable wind conditions creating a difficult and unpredictable environment for firefighting. Even locals who knew the area and its history well were surprised at what they encountered.

As time passed and the blaze continued, our people came from right across the country to support their Fire and Emergency whānau in Te Tai Tokerau and provide some

much-needed relief from the challenging mahi – both physical and mental. From our firefighters on the front line to those supporting, advising and looking after them in the incident management team, it was truly a united effort from large numbers of dedicated people.

Throughout the incident the people of Kaimaumau, Waihārara, Houhora and surrounding areas also showed great support and care for the crews and incident management team. At a time of great personal stress to them, they were kind, thoughtful and generous, showing their appreciation for the hard mahi of everyone involved and welcoming us into their community.

We departed on 7 February, yet while this marked the end of our response, our work continues to this day as we support the community to recover from such a devastating event.

Thank you to everyone who played a role in our response to the Waihārara fire. Your commitment and perseverance in the face of such challenging conditions were admirable. Here you can read reflections from some of our people, and our partners, who were part of the response team.

"Part of my role was to keep an eye on energy levels, especially with younger crew members. We started each day with a prayer and karakia. It was our 'pick-me-up' moment. I was really impressed with our partner relationships and the camaraderie built up amongst the crews. We were all working together to reduce risks and protect people and property."

Abraham Witane, Te Hiku Treaty Settlement Implementation Senior Strategy Advisor



"We had to keep people in bubbles across sectors when we went back to the orange light setting. On top of that we also had to deal with firestorms, a tsunami, a tropical storm and COVID scares. The result was a real testament to everyone involved, who were away from family and friends for so long."

Kevin Ihaka, contracted to Fire and Emergency. Managing Director of Forest Protection Services and Operations Manager at the fire



"Waihārara was hot, hard, dusty and dirty work. I was working with a group of people comprising forestry workers, Defence Force and paid firefighters. Everyone was focused on the job of keeping the flare-ups under control, and were friendly, welcoming and encouraging of each other."

Angela Derbyshire, Volunteer Firefighter, Waitemata Fire District



"I was lucky to go up to Kaimaumau initially as part of the Structure Protection Team (SPT) when the area was first evacuated; the residents were awesome and supportive of us doing our mahi around their whares. We then got to go back about three weeks later again as SPT and it was amazing to see how organised and controlled the Command Centre had become. Again, I thoroughly enjoyed working with other support networks and the tangata whenua of Waihārara district."

Ady McKenzie, Senior Firefighter, Whangārei Fire Brigade



"There was so much to do and new people to meet and learn from. It's all-encompassing and before you know it eight days are gone and you have no idea where they went. Time just disappeared."

Kaye AhSam, National Advisor for Women's Development, Resources Manager at the fire

"I really appreciated the opportunity to be deployed as part of the Incident Management Team to enable people to have a break who had been working so hard for weeks. It's always so rewarding to be able to do my part to help the local communities and the crews on the ground."

Kirsty Percasky, Strategic Agreements Manager,
Resource Unit Leader at the fire for 11 days



"It takes special and passionate people with courage to do what is needed at times of a crisis. From this crisis came giving of oneself and time away from their own families and communities – on both a local and national level bringing us all together as one collective for a positive outcome, showing what humanity can achieve. Solidarity, creating new relationships and better appreciation of each other and our environments."

Craig Hobson, Ngāi Takoto Iwi – Logistics and
Support for fire crews



"It's been a while since we've dealt with large-scale peat fires so there was a lot of learning around deep-seated burning. It was great seeing improvements throughout the incident in how we worked together."

Rory Renwick, National Wildfire Specialist



PROUD MOMENT FOR FIREFIGHTER AT WAIHĀRARA FIRE

January 2022 was full of new experiences for Whangārei firefighter, Helen Waterworth, but 8 January trumped the rest. At 0500 that day, while working at the Waihārara Fire, Helen moved up a rank from Qualified to Senior Firefighter and swapped out one bar for two on her epaulettes.

"It was such a proud moment to put on my new epaulettes that morning," says Helen.

"That was my second day at the Waihārara Fire, where I was providing cover in the Incident Command Unit that had come up from Whangārei. It was my first time in the command unit or at an event like this. Coming from metro, it was really neat to experience first-hand. I learnt a lot."

Helen began her firefighting career as a volunteer in Hastings before being accepted for the Career course. After graduating, she spent two years at Johnsonville and Porirua stations in Wellington before moving to Whangārei.



CAMARADERIE AND FRIENDSHIP AMONG FIREFIGHTERS 'INCREDIBLE'

Fresh out of high school, Graeme Neilson knew he wanted to give something back to his local community, which is why he became a volunteer firefighter. Thirty-two years, 1,500+ callouts, and three different stations later, Graeme is now a Station Officer at the Invercargill Fire Station.

What makes being a volunteer firefighter so special? Graeme says that the camaraderie and friendship with fellow firefighters is incredible.

"There's something special about going out and helping people in need with the friends you've made along the way."

Graeme's sense of community also extends to his day job. As the owner/operator of the Ascot Four Square for the past 23 years, he says one of the best things about his job is getting involved in community projects and his role as a volunteer firefighter works in well with that.

Being self-employed gives Graeme the flexibility he needs while he is 'on call'.

"When I am at work, before I respond to a call-out, I need to size up the staffing levels at that time, but also allow for the fact I may be away from work for a couple of hours or more, depending on the type of emergency. There are times when I can't leave work straight away."

Hanging on the wall of the Four Square is a reminder of the vital contribution his business makes by allowing for emergency responses during work hours — the 'Proud Employer' mark. The mark represents the collaboration between volunteers and their employers and recognises the contribution employers make to keeping New Zealand safe.

We continue to support and promote our self-employed volunteers and employers of our volunteers. Graeme was profiled recently as part of our Proud Employer campaign.

If you're a self-employed volunteer or would like to nominate your employer for the Employer Recognition Programme, you can register at www.fireandemergency.nz/join-our-support-crew

GROWING SPOTLIGHT ON LARGE ANIMAL RESCUE

A small group of dedicated people has been working hard to create practical and effective ways to improve how we respond to large animal rescue.

We respond to around 60 large animal rescue calls per year, most of which are horses and cattle generally trapped in mud, creeks, ditches, swamps, etc, but these also include traffic-related incidents, where animals are trapped in vehicles and horse floats.

Colin Russell, Group Manager Canterbury District, studied large animal rescue at Massey University, following that up with a scholarship trip to the UK.

"As primary responders, we bring the leadership capability to coordinate a team response with animal owners, vets and other partners. We have some knowledge in our brigades, but our big need is to coordinate and formalise our policies, procedures and training so we conduct safe, effective rescues," said Colin.

Ali Turner, Station Officer Waitemata District, also underwent training at Massey. Afterwards he engineered and developed specialist rescue equipment for purpose-built Large Animal Rescue kits. These kits are located at Silverdale, Kumeū and Papakura, and a replicated kit at New Plymouth.

"Animals have immense power and size, so we developed a kit to effect a rescue safely, minimise risk to our personnel and prevent harm to the animal," said Ali.

All this hard work will be given a further boost by the Australasian National Council for Emergency Services' (AFAC) ongoing development of a guideline for Large Animal Rescue

Operations (LARO), adding weight to the development of our own policies and training.

Late last year, the AFAC Urban Operations Group established a working group to develop a guideline for LARO. Rob McDowall, Senior Technical Rescue Specialist in our Specialist Response Team, was nominated to represent Fire and Emergency on the group, as it was agreed that LARO would sit within that team.

Rob says the intention of the guideline is to provide an overview of rescue operations involving large animals, including scope, procedures, techniques, training and equipment, for AFAC partner agencies.

"A draft document was introduced to the working group, based on work done by the British Animal Rescue and Trauma Association (BARTA) for the National Fire Chiefs Council's National Operating Guidelines. Subject matter experts from within and external to Fire and Emergency have been involved in consultation and provided feedback from a New Zealand perspective, with almost all of this feedback being accepted by the working group.

"Once the working group has completed the draft guideline, it will go to the AFAC Rescue Technical Group for review, prior to going before the AFAC Urban Operations Group for approval. If approved, the guideline will then be tabled at the April meeting of the AFAC Council for sign-off and endorsement. The guideline will sit within AFAC doctrine, and as such is an advisable course of action for AFAC member agencies. As a member, it gives us a framework from which we can review what we already do, and further develop our capability."

Those undertaking the rescue are career personnel from New Plymouth Fire Station and staff from SPCA North Taranaki. The Large Animal Rescue Trainers were Fire and Emergency subject matter experts from Te Hiku (Auckland) and Te Ūpoko (Palmerston North and New Plymouth) and members of the Massey University Veterinary Emergency Response Team.



CONNECTING CREATIVELY WITH RURAL KIDS

Fire and Emergency has always been a big part of rural communities, and now we're getting even closer, providing competitive modules for the hotly contested FMG Junior Young Farmers and Agrikids Regional Finals.

Late last year NZ Young Farmers approached us to create fire safety modules for these two hugely popular competitions. We were delighted to accept, and the National Community Readiness and Recovery team, with help from Communications and Engagement, set about developing fun, creative and educational modules for the competitors to be scored against.

Tom Ronaldson, Senior Community Engagement and Education Specialist in our Community Readiness and Recovery team, said they wanted something highly engaging to connect with these younger age groups, 'so we developed two interactive games based around key fire safety messages'.

"We developed a board game focusing on wildfire safety messaging for the Junior Young Farmers, featuring a house on a rural property. Contestants have 17 fire risk and safety messages they must place in correct positions around the house to protect it from fire.

"The Agrikids module is a colourful jigsaw puzzle. Competitors are asked 20 fire safety questions and receive a piece of the puzzle for each correct answer, with just six minutes to complete it.

Delia Riley, Community Risk Manager, Southland, said the Young Farmer of the Year is a fantastic way for our district teams to get out into our rural communities.

"I was on the Agrikids module and it was great to see the kids who had done Firewise rattling off the answers."

Tom said the games were an exciting new way to connect with and educate the next generation of young farmers and, with seven regional finals from February to April, we are engaging with lots of kids and teens around the country.

"The farming community is great and really get stuck in when they see value in something, especially when it's to do with looking after people, property and the environment."

District Community Readiness and Recovery teams, with the help of local brigades, are running the modules at each final and will provide feedback at the end of the nationwide competitions. The hope is to then include the interactive games as another creative tool for our teams to use when engaging with their communities.

Te Kei CRM teams from Otago and Southland supported these competitions, which were the first of the regional finals of the Young Farmers of the Year competition.



FIREFIGHTING ON ICE

Gordon Munn's firefighting has taken him to the end of the earth.

The Blenheim Volunteer Fire Brigade Officer was deployed to Antarctica in December as part of his role as a Sergeant, Senior Station Officer and Shift Leader for the Royal New Zealand Air Force in its Woodbourne Air Base Defence Brigade.

The deployment was at short notice. There was an immediate need for aircraft rescue firefighters because of a staffing shortage at the United States-led Williams airfield meant only aircraft on life-safety missions could land.

Gordan found out on a Monday that he was being deployed and by Wednesday he had entered a 14-day isolation in Christchurch.

Once down in Antarctica, it was all hands on deck.

"Primarily we were down there in support of the aircraft flying, in an aviation firefighter role," Gordon said.

"We were also doing the normal firefighting, the domestic, industrial stuff, as well as ambulance work, so responding to medicals – pretty much everything really."

In between the work, there was a bit of time to get out to see the wildlife, including minke whales, seals, skuas and penguins, with the summer season temperatures holding between -5 and -20 degrees Celsius.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It's an amazing environment down there," Gordon said.

Due to it being summer, acclimatisation to the all-day sunlight was needed. There was also a short period of familiarisation with the US equipment and way of doing things.

"The main one was obviously all the metric conversions you have to do. The protocols and procedures were all different. Radio communications were all Americanised, but for the most part within about two days of training we'd picked it up and were running with it."

It's not the first time Gordon has been deployed overseas. He has previously deployed to Australia with RNZAF and has joined two Fire and Emergency deployments, also in Australia, to fight wildfires.

"[The wildfire deployment] was a good experience – definitely challenging and a lot of hard work, but it was rewarding at the same time."

Firefighting in is Gordon's blood. He has been a volunteer firefighter for 12 years in Ohakune, West Harbour (Auckland) and Blenheim. He joined in Ohakune in 2010 as his dad and three older sisters were already part of the brigade.

"It's a family thing. It's nice to be able to help people. It's a good environment, a good team, especially in Blenheim. You make some good mates."



CELEBRATING OUR WĀHINE

This International Women's Day we celebrated by sharing the stories of some of the amazing women in Fire and Emergency.

Deputy Chief Executive Raewyn Bleakley said International Women's Day — held every year on 8 March — is a chance to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of all women within our organisation, and everyone who supports them.

"Over recent months we collaborated with photographer and Director, Kristi Scott, to create profiles of some of our wāhine, shining a light on their journey and passion

for serving communities across Aotearoa. The result is a powerful collection of stories, each as unique and insightful as the women behind them.

"Only 6 percent of our career firefighters and 20 percent of our volunteers are females. The communities we work in are diverse and we will be more effective when our workforce reflects the communities we serve."

Here we share two of the profiles that are part of the collection. Further stories can be found on our website and will be shared over the coming months.

“ HELPING PEOPLE FEELS PRETTY GOOD

Nestled among the mountains in Glenorchy resides Sonya Porteous, a volunteer firefighter for the Glenorchy Volunteer Fire Brigade. The first recognised female leader within the brigade, Sonya leads her team as they look after their community.

With all its unique aspects, rural firefighting holds a special place of pride for Sonya. She says she feels that the same support she provides to her brigade and community she receives equally in return; she is keen to point out the capabilities and high level of support in her brigade.

They attend not only call-outs in the Glenorchy area, but have also been deployed to Canada, Australia, and other parts of New Zealand to assist. Through deployments to wildfires abroad, Sonya and her brigade feel they are making a valuable contribution as well as developing their own expertise and skills.

Sonya continues to grow in her role with the Glenorchy Volunteer Fire Brigade as she has recently taken up the additional role of Air Support, where she liaises with aircraft and firefighters on the ground. This is not new territory for Sonya as her day job is at a helicopter company.

Outside of Fire and Emergency, Sonya stays busy not only with her full-time job, but also participates in an array of community organisations and helps out on other farms in the area. She balances all of this with her home life, including her partner, who is also a volunteer with the fire brigade.

Sonya's message to women considering being a firefighter:

"I would say go for it. It's so rewarding. Being a volunteer, I don't expect anything back, but when you know that you can help someone, and help them through a difficult time, you come away feeling pretty good."



“ BEST JOB IN THE WORLD

Ady McKenzie is a Senior Firefighter with the Whangārei Fire Brigade, a role to which she brings an array of skills she's built over the years.

While she enjoyed her career as a tertiary educator for Sport and Recreation New Zealand (now Sport NZ), she wanted a change after her daughter was born. Always ready for a challenge (preferably with some adrenaline involved), and with a propensity for serving the community, firefighting had long been on Ady's mind.

She was the first wāhine on the brigade in ten years and, while this was intimidating, her own expectations of what she wanted to achieve for herself and other wāhine to follow motivated her to progress to her current role of Senior Firefighter. With the support of her brigade, she continues to succeed and aspires to find new ways of contributing to her community.

Ady has a regular habit of running up mountains. This helps her to train for the multisport races she regularly participates in, as well as for firefighter competitions both in New Zealand and abroad. She has won the Sky Tower Stair Challenge (a race up 51 flights of stairs) three times in a row and currently holds a record for the competition.

Ady encourages her friends to pursue firefighting, and she created a social group, Emergency Wāhine in Whangārei, which brings together women who work across all emergency sectors in the area to provide support to each other.

Ady's message to women considering a journey with Fire and Emergency:

"Go for it. Give me a call, happy to help out. 'Best job in the world,' we say, but it actually is."



SSO Tony Sealey instructs a trialist during the trials.



POST-FIRE MANAGEMENT TRIALS UNDERWAY

Post-fire management (PFM) system trials run by the Carcinogen Control Project are under way in Palmerston North and Auckland.

Trials will run for three months and will also be held in Christchurch and at the National Training Centres in Rotorua and Woolston. If these trials are successful, there will be a national roll-out.

The system is based on overseas models including the DEBRIS model which came from the former Australian Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) – now Fire and Rescue Service Victoria.

Firefighters follow steps 1-5 to minimise carcinogen inhalation and absorption at the incident ground and be ready to be redeployed during the incident or released from the incident. Key elements of the PFM are defined by establishing cones marked as:

1. Particulate suppression
2. ECO
3. BA recommissioning
4. Rehab
5. Staging area.

Some of these may already sound familiar to you, as they already exist; however we are clarifying the steps that we need to take to move from 'dirty to clean'. We have also added a couple of new steps for when firefighters come out of a structure fire.

Along with the cone identification covers, the rest of the PFM kit includes a hose, spray bottle, and firefighter wipes which are specially formulated for removing toxic by-products of combustion.

As with any product or system trials, the emphasis is on feedback from the trialists. Senior Station Officer Palmerston North, Tony Sealey, who is involved in the trials, said the system was a great step forward in the management of carcinogens on the fire ground.

"We hope more areas of need are identified during the trials so the end product that is rolled out will be of great benefit considering the multitude of incidents we attend."



[portal.fireandemergency.nz/
projects-and-programmes/
carcinogen-control-project/](https://portal.fireandemergency.nz/projects-and-programmes/carcinogen-control-project/)





GOOD PLANNING AND COMMUNICATION BEHIND AIRLIFT RESCUE

A well-executed helicopter rescue typified what was a successful deployment to the West Coast floods for Fire and Emergency's Southern Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) team earlier this month.

Eleven USAR personnel were deployed to the coast to assist with the Emergency Management Assistance Team (EMAT), drone operations, Rapid Disaster Assessments, as well as evacuations and other logistics.

Five of those personnel, Josh Vermeulen, Chris Calveley, Rob Schiphorst, Charles Arrowsmith and Blair Robertson, were involved in a rescue on 4 February which made headlines as they extracted a stricken family of four from their farm.

The road out of their property had been cut off by a nearby river and an attempt to get through in a tractor had been unsuccessful, leaving them stranded on high ground.

Chris said they had a Working Safely Around Water kit, but did not have to use it as they could reach the family without having to enter the water by cutting through bush and going over a few fences.

"While the father and his two dogs were able to walk out with the team, given the proximity of the Murchison Heli Tours helicopter the call was made for the mother and two children to be airlifted to safety.

"The chopper was right there, so it just made sense to get it in and get them to safety straight away, rather than trying to get them through the bush. There was climbing over fences and things like that – it would've been a nightmare."

Chris said the key to the successful rescue was two-fold: good planning and good communication.

"We were able to keep miles away from the water, which is the best thing to do. If you don't have to go near the water, then don't go near it. That's the message really. Do your risk assessment and if you can do the job without going near the water, then that's the best way of avoiding risk.

"The other reason it went so well was because we had really good communication, from Josh down on the road to the team further up by where the road had been washed out and the third team that went down through the bush to locate the people, as well as communication with the chopper."

Outside of the rescue, Chris said the rest of the deployment had gone well.

"It was a pretty straightforward deployment. Everyone was doing everything they could to make things better and you get the best out of people in those situations. It was really nice to see.

"Hats off to all the USAR guys, they left a good reputation when they departed, as they always tend to do."



PROTECT YOUR CREW BY REPORTING ALL NEAR MISSES

Our people face many risks in their day-to-day jobs and reporting an event which may have resulted in harm is an important part of keeping yourselves and your crew safe.

Gavin Lack, Advisor Risk Reduction in Te Ihu, often works alone as a fire investigator. After spending most of the day investigating a structure fire in Canterbury, he said he received a call which made him jump on Safe@Work and report a near miss.

"On the way home, I received a call from the Police letting me know that the the property I was at had a history of family and domestic violence. While the day went smoothly, I knew things could have been very different and wanted to report the near miss to protect my colleagues."

Gavin's quick thinking to report the near miss was supported by his manager and he is urging other managers to encourage the reporting of near misses too.

"Being a lone worker isn't often thought about as a risk in our line of work and is often forgotten about, but everybody should be reporting near misses, no matter what they are."

Gavin and his colleagues have learned from his experience and passed that knowledge on to others.

Near miss reports help us identify improvements, and enhance the protection we provide to ourselves and the public. A near miss reported today has the potential to protect the next shift.

If you experience a near miss, report it by logging on to the Safe@Work system, and if you have a story to share, email safetyhealthandwellbeing@fireandemergency.nz



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Our annual People Survey is a vital way you can make sure your voice is heard and help our organisation be the best it can be.

The survey is running from 7 March to 1 April and we want to hear from all employees and volunteers on how Fire and Emergency New Zealand is doing and how we can ensure our organisation is a great place to work and volunteer.

A link to the survey will be sent from AskYourTeam to all employees at their Fire and Emergency email. If you are a volunteer you will be sent a link to either your Fire and Emergency email, or your personal email if you have told us this is your preferred email. The link in the email is unique for individuals and is the only way to answer the survey.

The survey should take about 15 minutes to complete and is confidential, which means we will not be able to identify people unless they put identifying information in the free text fields.

Those who took part last year will notice the survey looks slightly different this year. Based on your feedback, we have changed some of the questions to make them more suitable for the organisation we are today. We have also included free text fields for you to add any additional comments you may have.

If you have any questions or haven't received an email from AskYourTeam, please contact PeopleSurveys@fireandemergency.nz

Please take part – your feedback is incredibly valuable and it's your chance to have your say.

FIRE FIT CHALLENGE BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER AND IMPROVES HEALTH

Bringing staff together and creating some positive banter were the motives for Christchurch City Brigade's recent "Fire Fit Challenge".

Qualified firefighter from the Brigade's Brown Watch LaWanda Cowan said the eight-week health and fitness challenge – which took place before the red traffic light setting – boosted morale for stations, South Comms and the Black Watch team as 'COVID-19 has been hard on everyone one way or another'.

"It started and concluded with a 360-degree scan to track our fat loss and muscle gain and each week a PT gym workout video was released along with a Zoom yoga/ meditation session. There were weekly challenges and prizes all staying in the health and fitness theme. In the end, we had an astonishing 105 staff sign up and get involved which was awesome to see and so many positive responses.

"A few people mentioned they felt more comfortable in the gym using the equipment and felt they were getting more out of their sessions. Others said they lost significant visceral fat (fat located around your organs) and a couple of people said they now no longer need medication for reflux and headaches. They were also finding they were having a better night's sleep and more energy which were some unexpected results!"

LaWanda said there were also staff who didn't expect to see changes due to their current fitness regime but managed to improve their health score as well.

"Our aim was for everyone to feel included and, although the gym workouts were scalable, we will include body weight workouts this year if we manage to gain funding again.

"We were lucky enough to gain funding from multiple avenues and send out a massive thanks to:

Christchurch Emergency Services Charitable Trust (CESCT), who supplied the majority of the funding, along with Fire and Emergency Sports Council, Christchurch Firefighters Social Club and Black Watch Social Club.

"We also thank the New Zealand Firefighters Welfare Society and the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union for providing gifts for prizes.

"Our winners were judged on muscle gain and weight loss:

Under 40 years	40 years and older
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First: Eric Pepperell• Second: Kieran Eastwick• Third: Carl Whiten	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• First: Blair Robertson• Second: Shane Cole• Third: John Herriott

"Overall Champ who received the Ryburn Trophy (donated by ex-firefighter Graeme Monk from Classique Sculptures) was Blair Robertson.

"The trophy was named after our Welfare Officer Jim Ryburn for many reasons – all the amazing work he's done looking after all our staff especially after the Christchurch Earthquakes, the support and direction to help get this challenge off the ground, and lastly as an overall top bloke!"



L to R: LaWanda Cowan, Qualified Firefighter; Blair Robertson, Senior Firefighter, Region Safety, Health & Wellbeing Advisor; Jim Ryburn, Station Officer, Welfare Officer (now retired)

HELP US IMPROVE OUR DECONTAMINATION SYSTEM

We need your feedback for a review of our decontamination system.

Many of you will have been at incidents with a risk of contamination by a substance – if not chemicals, then maybe sewage-contaminated flood waters, products of combustion, or body fluids.

You will know that decontamination – getting clean afterwards – is an important aspect of keeping you safe. This is because decontamination minimises the level of hazardous substances (chemical, biological or radiological) that you are exposed to which can cause injuries and/or longer-term illnesses.

While the Carcinogen Control Project has been updating our post-fire decontamination, the hazmat team is preparing a new project to review and update the way we do deliberate decontamination.

The main equipment we have for deliberate decontamination is our decontamination tents. However, the tents are getting old and are also not always the right tool for the job, especially when we think of our decontamination needs beyond just hazmat.

This project aims to bring you a decontamination system that is:

- effective at getting the job done
- able to provide respect and dignity to our people and members of the public we need to decontaminate
- quick and easy to deploy and refurbish at the end of a job.

We completed scoping and preparation work for this project between 2019 and 2021. To progress further with this work, the project team now needs more data and statistics to illustrate the challenges that our crews are experiencing when using and maintaining the decon tent and the equipment that goes with it (hot boxes and pods).

How you can help

You can help by scanning the QR code and contributing to the short survey. There is also a Portal news story through which you can access the link to the survey.

If you or someone from your crew would like to discuss the project further, contact National Advisor, Decontamination, Brendon Irwin at brendon.irwin@fireandemergency.nz.



Scan this QR code to access the Decontamination Survey





BECOMING A FIREFIGHTER FULFILLS CHILDHOOD DREAM

For Canadian Air Combat Systems Operator Major Bob Mitchell, giving back to his community means serving as a volunteer firefighter with Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

Bob has been in New Zealand since 2018, initially to complete his Advanced Command and Staff Course (ACSC), before he was posted on an exchange to Headquarters New Zealand Defence Force in Wellington.

Bob first volunteered as a firefighter in Nova Scotia, Canada in 2005 and, when he knew he would be staying in New Zealand, he sought out Fire and Emergency New Zealand to see what opportunities were available here.

He completed a recruit course and, through Recognition of Prior Learning from his time as an officer in Canada's volunteer fire brigades, was made Senior Firefighter at the composite Porirua Station, before eventually becoming a Station Officer.

Bob always dreamed of being a firefighter as a child and says the profession runs in the family, with his grandfather and uncle both being volunteer firefighters.

"I like to think that I have always had a desire to help those in need and being a volunteer firefighter does give one the chance to help the community. Fire and Emergency is also based on teamwork and you need to work together to accomplish the task at hand and get the job done."

An unusual incident that required his help was the stranding of orca whale Toa in Plimmerton, Wellington last year. He assisted the Plimmerton Volunteer Fire Brigade, Department of Conservation, and the New Zealand Police in getting the stranded whale off the rocks. The whale required 24/7 support, and the local community came out in swarms to volunteer to join the orca in the water to help keep it from hitting the sides of its temporary enclosure and to comfort it.

"My wife and I conducted a three-hour shift on the evening of 13 July and then I went back again by myself for another three-hour shift the following day. Hypothermia was a huge concern and we discovered that the volunteers in the water didn't want to come out and at times had to be instructed to exit the sea."

Despite everyone's best efforts, the young whale died.

"It was a sad ending, but it was a great demonstration of the power and spirit of community and I am glad to have played a role in it."

While his New Zealand volunteering will end with his return to Canada in the middle of the year, the friendships he has formed through it will remain.

"I'd say my closest friends in New Zealand are now firefighters, whether they're career staff or volunteers, and I suspect when I go back to Canada in a couple of months, I will maintain contact with these people for the rest of my life."

Some parts of the story come from an article written by Emily Lindahl with the RCAF. Reprinted with permission.



TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

As custodians of land and kaitiaki of the environment, Māori are impacted by our organisation's operational decisions at incidents and the way we manage emergencies across "the 4 R's" in general.

Most recently at Waihārara in the far North, we've seen some good practice based on an established Fire and emergency relationship with iwi that allowed the organisation and local iwi leaders to pool their resources and connections to improve outcomes for their communities, as well as inform our emergency response. To continue to improve how we serve and connect with Māori, Fire and Emergency is becoming more culturally capable, which includes understanding Aotearoa's history. To support this understanding and to commemorate Waitangi Day, our Kaupapa Māori Directorate hosted sessions to learn about Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Two "Kawhe me te Kōrero: Coffee and Conversation" sessions were attended by 280 of our people from across the organisation. Hosted by Network Waitangi Ōtautahi organiser Katherine Peet, she took attendees through some key events that aren't widely known about the signing of the Te Tiriti, as well as the role of the Waitangi Tribunal and how we can honour Te Tiriti today. Wildfire Specialist Darrin Woods signed up to the sessions as he 'recognises the importance of Te Tiriti in modern Aotearoa'.

"I wanted to be more appreciative of what it involves and means to all our people. I am also on a personal journey to reconnect with my whakapapa and become more culturally aware."

As a Trainer, Matthew Whyte wanted to see how the sessions would be taught as he said he recognises that these topics can be hard for people to share dialogue around.

"I found that the content of Katherine's kōrero gave respect and credibility to a potentially controversial conversation. I am passionate about utilising training to encourage our organisation's cultural evolution."

Both Kawhe me te Kōrero sessions were recorded and are hosted on a dedicated "Te Tiriti o Waitangi – The Treaty of Waitangi" Portal page with other useful resources. This page can be found by searching "The Treaty of Waitangi" or by using this QR code.



portal.fireandemergency.nz/national-teams/kaupapa-maori/te-tiriti-o-waitangi-the-treaty-of-waitangi/





FOLD-OUT FIRE TRUCK FOR CHILDREN AT STARSHIP A 'REAL HIT'

In December 2020, Michelle and Warrick Wood received the devastating news that their three-year old son Frankie had been diagnosed with a rare and aggressive brain cancer. Sadly, Frankie passed away in April 2021.

Michelle said Frankie loved Fireman Sam, Paw Patrol and anything relating to fire trucks. "After Frankie lost his ability to walk, he was given a ride-on fire truck that he'd cruise around Riverhead on and that brought him, and us, so much joy."

To help other families going through really tough times, Michelle and Warrick founded 'Frankie to the Rescue', which provides activity packs to children at Auckland's Starship Hospital and also supports families who have children receiving palliative care.

"Soon after setting up Frankie to the Rescue, we had the idea to reach out to Fire and Emergency as we felt it was a great fit. With their support, we've been able to put some really cool products in the children's activity packs so far – cardboard fold-out fire trucks, postcards to colour in and stickers. We are working with them now on some more fire safety products that can go in the packs and are excited to continue collaborating."

The fold-out fire truck was designed by Tūrangi rural firefighter Tommi Joyce. It was pure chance that Tommi had designed the fold-out and sent it to the marketing team at NHQ to get approval to use it for local children. The team asked if they could include it in the activity packs and, after a few tweaks including adding "Frankie to the rescue", that's what happened.

Tommi said he was humbled that the trucks were used for the project.

"I never in a million years would have thought that me playing around on photoshop would ever help kids at Starship hospital!"

Michelle said the feedback from Starship after the first delivery had been 'fantastic'.

"The fold-out fire trucks and colouring in postcards have been a real hit. We're planning another delivery in the next little while to Starship and one to Christchurch Hospital."

A Give a Little page has been set up and people can search @frankiesrescuecrew on Facebook and Instagram for more information on Frankie to the Rescue.



A SNAPSHOT FROM OUR DISTRICT FACEBOOK PAGES

Our District Facebook pages are proving a really effective way of engaging with our audiences.



Fire and Emergency New Zealand
26 January 2022 at 15:31

KiwiRail had a special passenger on Tuesday at their Westfield depot in Auckland - a seal pup.

Shout out to the career firefighters from Ōtāhuhu fire station, along with Department of Conservation and KiwiRail, for helping rescue this wee pup from a sticky situation.

Firefighters cooled the seal with water and managed to persuade the seal out from under the train. They then herded it into a holding area until DOC arrived.



West Coast - Fire and Emergency
4 February 2022 at 13:23

Our crews are out knocking on doors in the area covered by the compulsory evacuation order in Westport, making sure everyone understands the need to leave today.

We have brought additional crews from brigades in Canterbury to work alongside the Westport team and other West Coast brigades. There is also an Urban Search and Rescue team in Westport, who are helping set up additional accommodation at the Holcim evacuation facility.

Some of our own firefighters in Westport have homes and family in the evacuation zones, and we are supporting them too.



Silverstream Volunteer Fire Brigade
30 January 2022 at 18:10

Today's callout was also notable because for the first time in over a decade, we had 2 female firefighters riding the appliance.



Upper Hutt Volunteer Fire Brigade
14 February 2022 at 20:54

A Valentine's Day special for these two ❤️

Congratulations to SFF and QFF Cadle who received their course completion certificates tonight.

This ❤️ couple chose to spend there romantic evening with us doing some training.

#happyvday #vday2022 #training #fenz #upperhuttfire #hotdate



**FIRE
EMERGENCY**

NEW ZEALAND

SHARE A STORY SAVE A LIFE

Report all near misses

- Any event which may have reasonably resulted in harm
- Any event resulting in equipment damage
- Near misses are blame-free and non-punitive.



portal.fireandemergency.nz/national-teams/people-hr/safety-and-wellbeing/near-miss-reporting/

Some examples reported by our staff include:



Working in and around moving vehicles
Emergency braking to avoid a collision.
Unauthorised access to a rail corridor.
Near hit "vehicle v dismantled firefighter".



Working in and around fire and explosive materials. Damaged PPE, K11-2 where firefighters were in danger.



Working at heights. A fall without injury e.g. fall arrest worked, working higher than 3m without appropriate safety equipment.



Working in and around water.
An accidental fall into water.



Working in and around overhead objects and structures. A fall through a floor, with no harm.



Fatigue resulting to micro naps whilst driving.



Electricity – an incident response where electricity was a hazard and it had not been isolated.