



2016 VICTORIA BUSHFIRE DEPLOYMENT NEWSLETTER NO. 1

Sunday, 2 January 2016

New Zealand Taskforce Alpha Update

A contingent of Kiwi firefighters have joined their counterparts across the Tasman to combat wildfires blazing in Victoria.

New Zealand's Taskforce Alpha arrived in Melbourne on Saturday, 2 January and is made up of a Taskforce Leader (Michael 'Sully' Sullivan), National Rural Fire Authority Liaison (Rory Renwick), Field Liaison Officer (Graeme Still), and crew members from Whangarei, Auckland Rural Fire Authority, Waimea Rural Fire Authority, Otago Rural Fire Authority and Department of Conservation.



Photo: Crews arriving at Melbourne Airport.

Briefing session

On Sunday morning Taskforce Alpha received briefings at the Altona Fire Depot from the local Bushfire training specialists and National Rural Fire Authority.

The briefings discussed:

- who has responsibility for fire in what areas
- the resources that are available
- what the current situation across Victoria is
- some warnings about local laws
- outlined some of the different procedures and jargon that may be used.

After the briefing Taskforce Alpha were fuelled up with a generous lunch, and were buddied up with members from the Hume Taskforce (made up from people from various agencies throughout the Hume district).

Taskforce Alpha have been allocated seven utes/SUVs, chainsaws, radios, and hand tools and were dispatched to the Wye River fire about two and a half hours drive southwest of Melbourne along with the Taskforce from Hume.

The same, but different

The fire training our crews already have remains very much applicable across the Tasman as while environment is different, fire behaviour is the same.

What is different in the 'lucky country' is the number of things that bite, especially ants, Taskforce Alpha were assured that the more serious incidents with things like snakes are actually very rare.



Photo: The briefing at Altona Fire Depot.



Photo: Sorting Equipment at Altona Fire Depot.



Photo: Taskforce Alpha before they hit the road – best looking fire team Aussie has seen.

Altona Fire Depot

Altona fire depot is a cache used to supply fire equipment to Department of Land Water and planning (DELWP) fire crews across the state.

The facility includes approximately 5000m² for equipment storage and development, and holds huge amounts of equipment.

Out in the yard they have shipping containers ready to go, with things like container kitchens, mobile mechanical workshop facilities, and portable mini caches to support base camps.



Photos: Altona Fire Depot and equipment storage.

Crew Introduction - Forest Protection Services (FPS) Whangarei

In each of the Deployment Newsletters we will introduce one of the four crews that make up Taskforce Alpha. Starting with Forest Protection Services (FPS) from Whangarei.

FPS carry out a range of forestry work, including contract fire suppression and management, as well as silviculture, planting, fire equipment maintenance, and other supporting land management contract work.



Patrick Roithmayr
(Crew Leader)



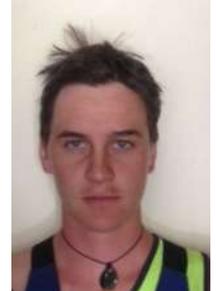
Phillip Herewini
(Crew)



Nicki Robinson
(Crew)



Doven Hau
(Crew)



Kieren Sullivan
(Crew)

State Wide Situation

The main fire of significance remains the Wye River – Jamieson Track fire (previously called the Lorne – Jamieson Track fire).

Fire activity has been quiet throughout the day due to the weather conditions. More than half the fire edge remains untracked and is primarily in steep and inaccessible country. This is where Taskforce Alpha has been deployed, and it is likely NZ Taskforce Bravo will also end up.

Lightning strikes in the late afternoon Saturday, 2 January caused several new fires in Gippsland out to the east.

Fires do not pose any current threats to communities and in current mild conditions are not spreading quickly.

Outlook

There is a strong possibility of further lightning strikes Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday, however fire danger conditions are expected to remain mild, so these like the fire starts on Saturday, 2 January are not likely to result in large fires in the coming days.

Out Planning

A second NZ Taskforce (Bravo) has been requested to arrive on 11 January to be available to work on 13 January.

Date	Action
9/01/2016	NZ Taskforce Alpha have planned R&R
11/01/2016	NZ Taskforce Bravo arrives in Melbourne

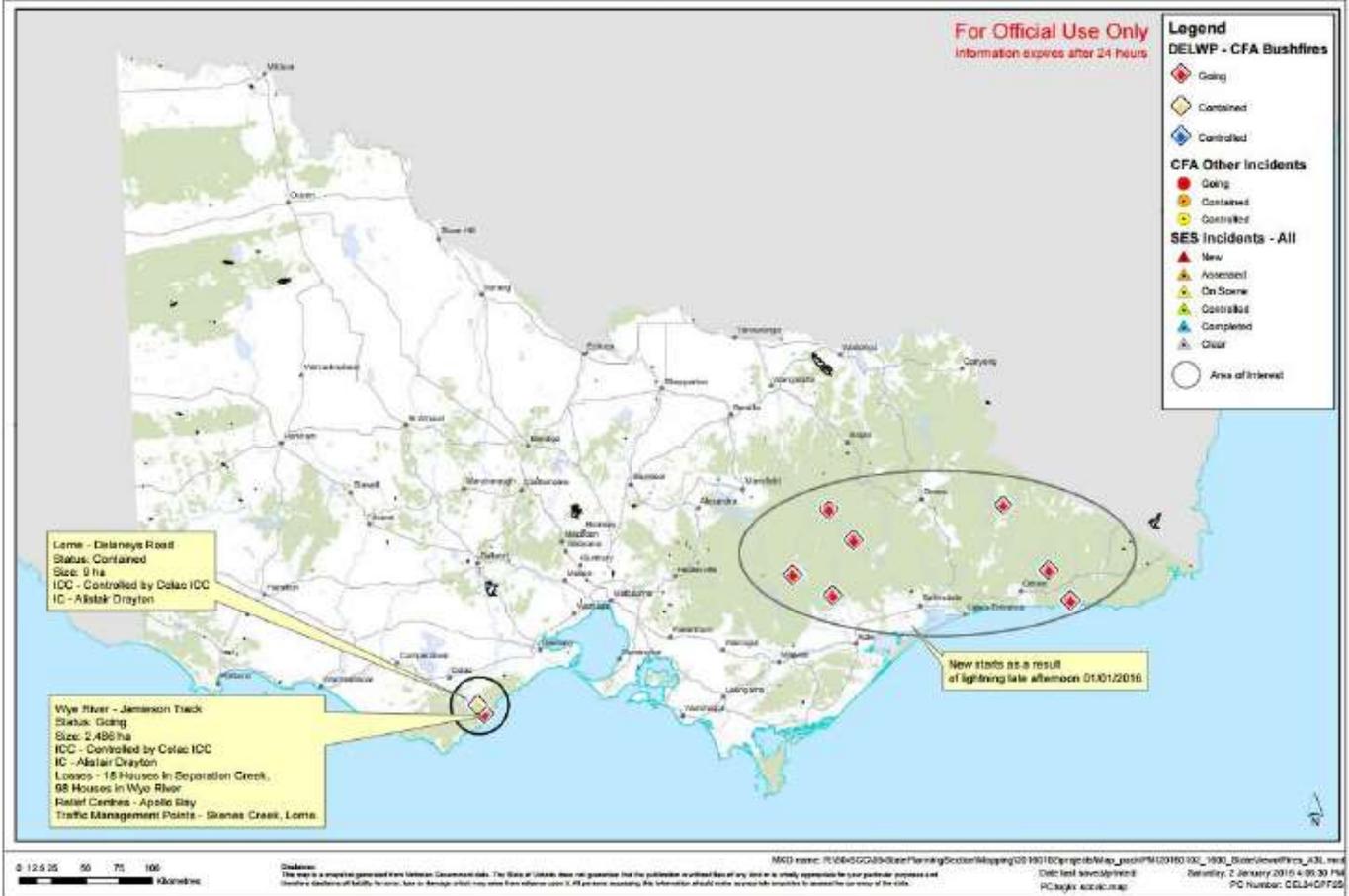


Image: Fire Map Locations provided by SCC Melbourne.

Regards

Rory Renwick
National Rural Fire Authority Liaison