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MEDIA STATEMENT

Melbourne's suburbs hold a key to a safer summer - volunteers

The body that represents CFA volunteers says Melbourne's suburbs are the key to a safer summer, as a source of thousands of people who either fight fires or prevent them.

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria's (VFBV's) Bob MacDonald says many people don't realise that CFA volunteers provide fire fighting, car accident response and rescue services to sixty percent of metropolitan Melbourne.

"Those suburban CFA brigades provide emergency services in their local areas all year round and also contribute to the 30,000-strong volunteer force that fights major bushfires," Mr MacDonald said.

VFBV says several thousand of the volunteers who fought last summer's bushfires were from the CFA's 200 outer suburban brigades.

"Suburban Melbourne is a good source of volunteers – along with CFA training and nationally recognised qualifications, they get plenty of experience outside the summer season," Mr MacDonald said.

"Thousands of volunteers who fought the Black Saturday fires had been busy in the suburbs all year, dealing with house fires, car accidents and industrial incidents, as well as keeping up their training," he said.

"That's why the suburbs are so valuable to the CFA and the state of Victoria."

VFBV says the suburbs can have a major effect on the bushfire season in other ways too, through residents who've never even seen a fire truck up close.

"The summer holiday season takes a lot of people from the metropolitan area into the bush, and with a little extra knowledge they can contribute to a safer Victoria."

VFBV has three tips to get you started on a safer holiday:

Campfires are a common source of bushfires – do without a campfire, or see the CFA website (www.cfa.vic.gov.au) for when and how you can build one safely

Fire Danger Warnings are in local media – check them every day and you will know when to be on the alert for fire

Have a plan, just in case – plan ahead in case a bushfire affects the area where you are on holidays; what events would be sufficient for you to decide to leave, and where would you go?

“The suburbs are already the source of thousands of fully trained and experienced CFA volunteer fire fighters, and tens of thousands of holidaymakers can do their bit too, by helping to prevent fires and learning to make the right decisions for their own safety,” Mr MacDonald said.

VFBV represents Victoria’s 60,000 CFA volunteers and provides their experienced advice to the CFA and State Government.

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