



# SITREP 08/14

## Victorian Taskforce update

FRNSW's deployment of our members to assist during the Morwell fire has now been underway for over a fortnight. Initially, our role was to standby in CFA stations to release Victorian firefighters to fight the fire at Yallourn open cut mine. This week has seen the expansion of our role, with part of the taskforce utilising the FRNSW CAFS appliance being deployed directly into the Yallourn hot zone. This significantly increases the risk of exposure of our members. Members joining the taskforce are advised:

- No member should serve for more than 2 shifts in any 8 day period in the hot zone.
- Members should wear full BA in the hot zone at all times, and spend no more than two hours in the hot zone without a break outside the control lines of at least one hour.
- Members should comply with the CO monitoring regime in place at the perimeter of the hot zone, and be rotated to surrounding stations if elevated CO levels are discovered.
- Members should work with the FRNSW HazMat S/O who will be in place on the perimeter in regards to any further procedures put in place to increase firefighter safety.

Members may contact the Union office if they have any questions about the safety protocols in place at Yallourn, or about the deployment in general.

## HSR nominations open

Some Area Commands have begun the election process for Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs) under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act). As reported in SITREPs 18/2012 and 42/2013, the Department's position on representation has been that the bare minimum required by WorkCover will do, that it should be as cheap as possible and that it should avoid any role for the FBEU.

Safety issues and concerns essentially arise at two levels in our industry - organisation-wide, such as uniforms, trucks and gear; and station-specific, like a loose stair tread or engine bay configuration. It was for this reason we advocated for station-based HSRs for the local issues and Union representation at the organisational level. The Department's Area-based representation model is problematic for this reason, but the Union sees no cause for alarm in the election of HSRs.

The WHS Act was written for industries and workplaces with low or no union presence. Thankfully, that is not the case in our job. In this sense, nothing changes now HSRs are being elected. If you have a safety concern then by all means let your HSR know, but let your Union know as well. The reality is that every FBEU member is a health and safety rep and, Departmental policy or not, the Union can and will continue to act on workplace health and safety in ways that HSRs cannot - by fronting management and then, if necessary, taking disputes to the IRC and/or by taking direct action, including industrial action.

Members should be aware of the election process and if they feel they have something to contribute, they should, however no one should be under any illusions about the FBEU's continued commitment to enforcing safe working conditions on the job.

Jim Casey  
State Secretary

Friday 7 March 2014