

ANNUAL REPORT 1976



**NORTHERN TERRITORY
FIRE BRIGADE**

NORTHERN TERRITORY

FIRE BRIGADE

ANNUAL REPORT 1976



CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
 2. EMERGENCY CALLS
 3. GENERAL SERVICES
 4. FIRE PREVENTION SERVICES
 5. TRAINING
 6. APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT
 7. PERSONNEL
-
- APPENDIX A CALLS BY STATION AND MONTH OF THE YEAR
- APPENDIX B FIRE CALLS BY CAUSE
- APPENDIX C FIRE CALLS BY PROPERTY INVOLVED
- APPENDIX D CALLS OTHER THAN FIRE
- APPENDIX E PERSONS KILLED AND INJURED AT INCIDENTS ATTENDED BY THE BRIGADE
- APPENDIX F FINANCIAL SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

(a) Buildings and Equipment

- (i) At the time of writing this report, no building work has been carried out on the three fire stations of the City of Darwin, other than temporary repairs, much of which was carried out by members of the Brigade.
- (ii) As a long term result of the cyclone, the Brigade is still short of such basic items of equipment as 1½ inch hose and couplings. This situation is having a depressing effect upon general morale.

(b) Firefighting Clothing

The Brigade is one of the first in Australia to complete field trials with firefighting clothing made from NOMEX, the lightweight fire resisting cloth recently developed in the U.S.A., and have been a great success in the Territory. It is hoped similar clothing manufactured in Australia will soon be available.

(c) Fire Prevention

Thorough investigation of cause of fire and liaison with the Dept of Construction, produced a broad investigation of electrical services and connections, with the discovery of much incorrect and hasty work as a legacy of the cyclone emergency. Much of this has now been corrected.

2. EMERGENCY CALLS

A total of 2434 calls were received by the brigade an increase of 6% on 1975 which included calls attributable to the cyclone emergency. Total false alarms received were 747 this represents a percentage of 32.5 against the percentage of 49 received in 1973, this improvement is considered largely attributable to improved equipment in the central control room. Total estimated financial loss from fire for the year was \$1,003,000.

(a) Notable Fires

(i) Car Fire - Fatalities - Hooker Creek Settlement

At 1150 hours on Friday 23rd April 1976 a request was received from the Police for a Brigade Officer to attend the above settlement to ascertain the cause of a fire which resulted in the death of two small aboriginal children. On arrival it was found that the fire had occurred in an abandoned motor vehicle in which the children had been playing. It is thought that the fire was caused by the children playing with matches.

(b) House and Caravan Fire - Darwin

(ii) A call was received at 0235 hours Friday May 7th 1976 at the Daly Street Control Room to a house fire, No 3 Railway Street Parap. Two appliances responded and on arrival it was found that a 3 bedroom Govt. house on piers and two caravans situated under the house were well involved in fire. At the time of stop 0252 hours two 1½" jets were in use. Damage to all three was severe. Cause is thought to be from a lighted cigarette. Financial loss assessed at \$56,000.

(c) House Fire - Mica Beach

(iii) On 20th May 1976 a late call was received by Daly Street Control Room to a house fire Mica Beach area. The house is on Cox Peninsula, an isolated area of Darwin Harbour. On arrival it was found that a 4 bedroom timber building on piers had been involved in fire. Damage was complete. A grass fire had swept through the area on Wednesday 19th/Thursday 20th May, involving the house plus generator shed in fire. Financial loss assessed at \$41,000.

(d) House Fire - Anthony's Lagoon

(iv) On 9th June 1976 a late call was received to a fire at Anthony's Lagoon Homestead. On arrival it found that a house 80' x 60' had been virtually destroyed by fire. Cause of the fire is thought to be a combustion heater. Estimated financial loss \$45,000.

(e) House Fire - Limbunya Station

(v) At 1740 hours on Wednesday 19th May 1976 a late call was received to a house fire at Limbunya Station. This station is located approx. 150 miles west of Wave Hill, near the W.A. border. An investigating officer from the Brigade attended and on arrival found that the station homestead had been destroyed by fire. The building, 75 ft x 53 ft in area, was constructed of steel frame, aluminium exterior cladding, galvanised iron roofing with timber and masonite interior walls and ceilings. Cause of fire is thought to be an electrical wiring fault. Financial loss assessed at \$54,000.

(f) Shepherdson College Fire - Elcho Island

(vi) At 1143 hours on Sunday 20th June 1976 a call was received at Daly Street Control Room notifying the Brigade that a serious fire had occurred at the above College. An Officer of the Fire Prevention Department subsequently flew to Elcho Island to investigate the fire.

Brief details are:- At approximately 1330 hours 20/6/76 a grass fire started in the vicinity of the college. Two employees from the college successfully extinguished the fire using a 25.4mm garden hose. At approximately 1400 hours a further outbreak of fire occurred, this fire well involving the Manual Arts Workshop, school-rooms and timber shed.

Two lengths of 1½" hose were connected to the nearest hydrant but this was found to be insufficient to reach the fire. By the time an alternative static source of water was located and utilized the fire, aided by a strong breeze and exploding L.P.G. Oxygen and Acetylene cylinders, had gained control and completely involved the building. Damage was complete.

The timber shed, involved in fire was severely damaged. A third building suffered minor damage. Cause of the major fire is thought to be attributable to the grass fire, allegedly started by two small boys. It is thought that a "hot spot" may have developed in the timber shed, with a subsequent spread of fire to the school buildings. The financial loss is assessed at \$253,000.

(g) Stock Feed Store - Darwin

(vii) At 1420 hours Wednesday 23rd June 1976, a call was received at the Daly Street Control Room to a shed fire at the 18 mile, Stuart Highway. No 1 and No 7 Stations responded. On arrival it was found that a steel frame G.I. clad shed 100' x 50' used for the storage of hay and other stock feed, was well involved in fire. The fire was brought under control using lines of 1½" hose and hose reels. Damage was severe. No apparent cause of fire was found. Financial loss - approx. \$120,000.

(h) Shop Fire - Darwin

(viii) At 1703 hours Wednesday 23rd June 1976 a call was received at the Daly Street Control Room that a building known as Gee's Food Centre was involved in fire. No 1 and No 7 Stations were ordered on. Two lines 1½" hose were got to work and the situation was under control at 1749 hours. The building was of two floors 45' x 50' and in a damaged condition. Extensive damage was caused to an adjoining bakery. Investigations failed to find any apparent cause. Financial loss assessed at \$25,000.

(i) Fatality - Alice Springs

(ix) At 2149 hours on Wednesday 23rd June 1976 a late call was received at Alice Springs Fire Station that there was a fire at the rear of a store in Todd Street. One appliance attended and on arrival it was found that the fire which had occurred in a flat, had been extinguished and one male person removed to hospital suffering from severe burns. The injuries subsequently proved to be fatal. The most probable cause of the fire is thought to be that the occupant of the flat had rolled off the bed dragging the bedding onto an electric radiator.

(j) Shop Fire - Darwin

(x) At 0109 hours on Saturday 24th July 1976 a call was received at the Daly Street Control Room that a fire was in progress at the "Picnic Take Away Food Shop" Stuart Highway, Stuart Park. Two appliances were ordered on. On arrival it was found that a wood and fibro building 30' by 50' was partially involved in fire. The building was used as a take away food shop with an adjoining shop used as a hair dressing salon. One jet plus 2 B.A. sets were got to work and the situation was under control at 0129 hours. The cause is thought to be an accumulation of fat and grease in the flue and chimney over the electric range, overheating and igniting roof timbers. Financial loss - approx \$17,000.

(k) Catamaran Fire - Darwin

(xi) At 2008 hours on Sunday 8th August 1976 a call was received at Daly Street Control Room to a boat fire at 8 Radford Court Nightcliff. The module from Casuarina responded and on arrival it was found that a 21 metre Catamaran was well alight. 1 line 1½" hose was got to work but due to the bondwood construction of the craft severe damage occurred. Cause is thought to be an electrical fault or spark from an electric fan used for ventilating purposes, igniting paint fumes. Financial loss - approx \$20,000.

(l) Fatality - Red Bank Mine via Wologorang

(xii) At 2035 hours on Tuesday 19th October 1976 a request was received from the Police requesting the attendance of a Brigade Officer to investigate a fire involving one person. Wologorang is situated in the Queensland border/Gulf of Carpentaria area. On arrival it was found that an explosion and fire had occurred in the Red Bank Mine power house. The person involved in the fire, a mechanic, was seen to stagger from the burning building with severe burns. He was transferred to Mt. Isa Hospital where he died shortly after admission.

The power house a building of steel frame and galvanized iron sheeting, area 12' x 24' with associated plant and equipment, was completely destroyed. Cause of the fire is thought to be an electrical spark igniting vapours from flammable liquid being used to clean machinery. Financial loss assessed at \$90,000.

(m) Hostel Fire - Katherine

(xiii) At 0702 hours Monday 1st November 1976 a call was received at Katherine Fire Station to a fire at the single mens quarters, Northmeat Abattoirs. Two appliances responded and on arrival it was found that the first floor of a building of 2 floors was heavily involved in fire. The building 72' x 36' was constructed of timber frame with fibro asbestos outer cladding, hardboard inner walls with galvanized iron roofing. Three lines of 1 1/2" hose were got to work with the stop message being sent at 0745 hours. Damage to the upper floor was complete with severe damage to the Ground floor. Probable cause of fire - electrical wiring fault. Financial loss assessed at \$270,000.

(n) Shop Fire - Alice Springs

(xiv) At 2136 hours on 15th November 1976 a call was received at Alice Springs Fire Station to fire in a shop at Reg Harris Lane, Alice Springs. On arrival it was found that the building was smoke logged and the external extractor flue glowing. One jet was got to work and two B.A. sets in use. The situation was under control at 2236 hours. Cause of the fire was attributed to gas being left turned on under vats of cooking fat. Financial loss assessed at \$12,000.

3. GENERAL SERVICES

(a) Twelve pumping and special service tasks were carried out. Very few visits to Aboriginal townships were carried out. (Refer to Fire Prevention Section).

(b) Special Services

Fatal Accident - Parap

At 0801 hours 21st December 1976 a call was received at Daly Street Control Room that a person had fallen from the water tower on Stuart Highway at Parap and that the turntable ladder was required for rescue purposes. The turntable ladder plus two support appliances were ordered on. On arrival it was found that a male person had fallen from the top of the 40 metre tower onto a landing some 14 metres below. The injuries sustained were fatal. Removal of the deceased person from the tower was effected by Brigade personnel who were commended for their actions.

(c) External and Committee Service

- (i) The Chief Fire Officer continued to serve on the Bush Fire Council.
- (ii) The Chief Fire Officer continued to serve as Chairman on the Northern Territory Fire Prevention Committee.
- (iii) The Chief Fire Officer continued to serve on the Committee of the Royal Life Saving Society of Australia.
- (iv) Station Officer Mohr continued to serve as Secretary of the Northern Territory Fire Prevention Committee.
- (v) Station Officer Mullins continued to represent the Brigade on the emergency planning committee.

4. FIRE PREVENTION SERVICES

The Fire Prevention Sections strength stands at two. The statistics indicate a sharp increase in some areas and a decrease in others namely:

The areas where a decrease occurred are:

- (a) Building plans: Due to a slight tapering off in major building projects throughout the Territory.
- (b) Visits to Aboriginal Townships: The townships visited by Brigade Officers are those places where a serious fire or fatality occurred and Bathurst Island. Fire Prevention Officers have been unable to carry out visits due to financial restrictions and staff shortages in this Section.
A reading of investigating officers reports would seem to indicate a need for vast improvement in the maintenance of firefighting appliances and equipment and the necessity for adequate training with regular follow up visits. This can only be achieved by the Fire Prevention Section carrying out their full responsibilities in this area.
- (c) The following general fire prevention services were carried out during the year:

Comparisons 1975 - 1976

(i) Caravan, Caravan Park inspections	17	-	60
(ii) Entertainment licence inspections	42	-	100
(iii) Visits to Aboriginal Townships	12	-	See notes on Fire Prevention
(iv) Visits to Schools	78	-	175
(v) Fire Investigations	11	-	80
(vi) Fire Permits	54	-	500
(vii) Lectures - Demonstrations	49	-	50
(viii) Goodwill Inspections	72	-	150
(ix) Building Plans	213	-	180

5. TRAINING

- (a) Breathing Apparatus Five courses of breathing apparatus/emergency tender training were carried out - all trainees successfully completed the course.
- (b) Driver/Pump Operator One course of driver/pump operator was held. Six trainees were successful.
- (c) Driver Training An advanced driver training course was held in the Darwin Area. Due to manning problems this course had to be cancelled.

6. APPLIANCES AND EQUIPMENT

(a) Major Appliances

(i) Headquarters

- 1 Staff car Ford
- 1 Station Wagon Holden
- 1 Utility Ford
- 2 SP Pump Dennis

(ii) No 1 Station Daly Street

- 1 Turntable Ladder Pump Major E.R.F./METZ
- 1 Pump Dennis
- 1 Rescue Tender Toyota 4 x 4
- 1 F.W.D. Toyota
- 1 Station/Sedan Ford
- 1 Utility Ford

(iii) No 2 Station Nightcliff
Used for maintenance work only.

- 1 Service Van Ford
- 1 F.W.D. Toyota

(iv) No 3 Station Winnellie

- 1 Light Pump International
- 1 F.W.D. Toyota

(v) No 4 Station Katherine

- 1 SP Pump International
- 1 F.W.D. Toyota
- 1 Utility Holden
- 1 Godiva Pump

(vi) No 5 Station Tennant Creek

- 1 SP Pump Landrover
- 1 F.W.D. Toyota
- 1 Utility Holden
- 1 Pump Godiva
- 1 V.W. Trailer Pump

- (vii) No 6 Station Alice Springs
 - 1 Major Pump Dual Purpose Dennis
 - 1 Light Pump International
 - 1 Utility Ford
 - 1 Trailer Pump Godiva
- (viii) No 7 Station Casuarina
 - 1 Light Pump International
 - 1 F.W.D. Toyota
- (ix) No 1 Volunteer Brigade Pine Creek
 - 1 Trailer Pump VW
- (x) No 2 Volunteer Brigade Adelaide River
 - 1 SP Dennis Pump
- (xi) No 3 Volunteer Brigade Larrimah
 - 1 V.W. Trailer Pump
- (xii) No 4 Volunteer Brigade Mataranka
 - 1 V.W. Trailer Pump
- (xiii) No 5 Volunteer Brigade Batchelor
 - 1 SP Pump Dennis

Total hose held by M.T. Fire Brigade

1½" hose	-	9,700 feet
2½" hose	-	12,000 feet
3" hose	-	600 feet

1½" hose. 6,000 feet of 1½" hose is held by Stations outside of the greater Darwin area. A large percentage of 1½" hose held in the Darwin area is ready for Board of Survey and disposal. This can be attributed to heavy usage during the post cyclone period. Very little replacement hose has been received during the two years post cyclone.

7. PERSONNEL

(a) Actual strength as at 31st December 1976

<u>Chief Fire Officer</u>	P.D. Holtham, F. Fire E. M.R.S.H.
<u>Station Officers</u>	M.L. Allen
	C.J.W. Dash
	W.F.W. Mohr
	D.J. Mullins
	D.G. Lamshed
	E.E.A. Chong Wee
	G.N. Beale
	J. Bird
	A. Stubbs
	E.L. Turley
	A. Ravenscott Grad. I Fire E

Senior Firefighters 21

Firefighters	Reg.	77
Firefighters	Aux.	3
Firefighters	Vol.	<u>12</u>
		130

Established Strength

1	Chief Fire Officer
1	Executive Officer
12	Station Officers
20	Senior Firefighters
80	Firefighters
18	Auxilliary Firefighters
30	Volunteer Firefighters
<u>162</u>	

APPENDIX A

Calls by Stations and Month of Year

Regular Stations

Stn	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
1	48	31	41	69	93	70	60	65	68	84	62	53	744
3	6	11	16	50	72	33	34	20	17	23	19	20	321
4	6	4	7	15	29	20	14	26	12	27	10	7	177
5	6	9	5	12	16	15	12	7	6	6	12	7	113
6	16	34	35	33	30	49	80	98	112	60	50	69	656
7	22	9	16	39	73	59	48	35	30	31	34	23	419
<hr/>													
	104	93	120	218	313	246	249	241	245	231	187	179	2430

Volunteer Stations

Adelaide River 4

APPENDIX A

Fire Calls by Cause

Light thrown down	930
Burning rubbish	127
Electrical circuits	47
Electrical stoves	4
Over boiling fat	2
Camp fires	31
Children with matches	79
Sparks from bushfires	50
Mechanical defects	50
Incendiarism or suspicious fires	47
False alarms - defective apparatus	672
False alarms - good intent	33
False alarms - malicious	42
Welding - cutting gear	16
Naked light in contact	1
Burning off	51
Calls other than fires	198
TOTAL	<u>2430</u>

APPENDIX C

Fire Calls by Property Involved

Enclosed land	939
Open land	184
Offices- shops	19
Rubbish	187
Private dwelling	37
Caravan	20
Wharf - dock - marine craft	2
Hotels - Hostels	5
Road Transport	73
False alarms	747
Other outdoor	19
	<hr/>
	2232
Calls other than fires	198
	<hr/>
TOTAL	2430

APPENDIX D

Calls other than fires

Spillage of dangerous and flammable liquids	79
Leakage of flammable and toxic gases	26
Assistance - motor vehicle accidents	60
Aircraft - emergency standby	5
Search and Rescue	11
Pumping and special service	12
Chemicals spilt on road	1
Bomb hoax	4
	<hr/>
TOTAL	198

APPENDIX F

Persons killed and injured at incidents
attended by the Brigade.

Killed at accidents	5
Injured at accident	32
Killed by fire	4
Injured by fire	<u>4</u>
	<u>45</u>

APPENDIX F

Financial Summary for Financial Year Ending 30th June 1976

	Expenditure
1. Salaries & Allowances (Average 110 men)	\$1,352,683
2. Extra Duty	
(1) Recall 12%	
Darwin 70%	35,206
Katherine 8%	4,024
Tennant Creek 7%	3,521
Alice Springs 15%	7,544
	<hr/>
Sub Total	50,295
(2) Compulsory Overtime 4%	10,538
(3) Absenteeism 77%	
Darwin 60%	122,296
Katherine 9%	13,344
Tennant Creek 8%	16,306
Alice Springs 23%	46,880
	<hr/>
Sub Total	203,826
TOTAL (1) (2) & (3)	264,709

Notes on Extra Duty

- (1) Recall - Off duty firemen are paid minimum of 2 hours double time if they report for duty to provide a support crew during an actual fire call.
- (2) Compulsory Overtime - Day shift officers involved in fire prevention and protection departments for inspections and investigation work.
- (3) Absenteeism - To maintain minimum operational strength on each shift to cover rostered duty personnel absent because of recreation, sick and other leave.

	Appropriation	Commitment (including exp)	Actual Expenditure
	\$	\$	\$
3. Duty Travel	23,000	10,765	10,602
4. Operational Items			
(1) Service Charges	34,800	27,633	24,538
(2) Miscellaneous	21,500	22,957	15,907
(3) Uniforms	22,500	22,633	6,261
(4) Vehicle Hire	90,700	118,700	117,093
(5) Wages Katherine	3,750	3,923	3,923
(6) Wages Tennant Creek	3,750	5,987	5,987
TOTAL	177,000	201,833	173,709
5. Plant & Equipment		70,346	19,274
6. Stores Stock			
(1) 100210034 Stationery		1,027	606
(2) 100220325 Miscellaneous		7,633	3,744
(3) 100220337 Uniforms and clothing		13,060	5,806