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**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **COASTAL VOLUNTEERS JOIN FORCES FOR SAFETY TRAINING**

Volunteers from four coastal Gippsland fire brigades have joined forces and pooled their vehicles for a novel training exercise.

Nearly 40 volunteer firefighters from Golden Beach, Longford, Loch Sport and Seaspray came together on Saturday to gain experience using different vehicles and in identifying potential hazardous tree hazards.

Golden Beach captain Paula Grosveld said the exercise for the four coastal brigades was designed to improve the firefighting skills of volunteers and to make it safer for them.

“We completed burn over and hazardous tree drills and volunteers chose a name from a hat to determine which vehicle they used during the drills,” she said.

The brigades shared a pool of 10 vehicles; five 3000lt 4x4 tankers, two ultra-lights, one 1,400lt 4x4 light tanker, 1 slip on unit, and a forward command vehicle.

“If volunteers get on a vehicle they haven’t seen before, it could take five minutes to get used to it. To prepare for scenarios where firefighters may need to use a truck they haven’t seen before, especially during an emergency or in cases of last resort – firefighters need to be ready and familiar with the different types of trucks before we get to the fire ground.”

“It was absolutely fantastic to have so many to train on.”

The volunteers also practiced their hazardous tree assessment, completing full training modules.

Ms Grosveld said falling trees posed serious risks for firefighters. “When you go onto a fire ground with trees all around you, you need to be aware of your safety because they can fall without warning,” she said.

“There is a saying; look up, look down, look around and we have dedicated safety officers to look for tree risks, but it’s something all volunteers should be aware of.

“Our number one priority is our own safety. We want to serve our communities and save lives and properties but we can’t do that if we haven’t ensured the safety of our own crews first.”

Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria (VFBV) CEO Adam Barnett said the training initiative was an example of the professional service and dedication of volunteers.

“These brigades are typical of many brigades that develop additional capabilities off their own initiative,” Mr Barnett said. “CFA volunteers train hard to be highly skilled to respond to a range of

incidents, from accident and rescue to bushfire and structural fires and continue the long tradition of protecting their local communities and beyond.”

Learn more about CFA’s world-respected surge capacity on the VFBV website: <https://vfbv.com.au/index.php/component/k2/item/568-cfa-s-volunteer-surge-capacity-essential-for-victoria>

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