

Media Release

The Hon Lisa Neville MP
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for Water



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HIGH TECH DRONES TO LIFT VICTORIA'S FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITIES

Victoria's firefighting capabilities have been boosted with the launch of a new aviation unit and four new drones that will gather aerial images of fires and other emergencies to strengthen emergency response efforts on the ground.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services Lisa Neville joined Fire Rescue Commissioner Ken Block today to announce a new Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) aviation unit based at Burnley. The new unit will use cutting edge drone technology, led by a highly specialised team of firefighters.

Featuring both high-definition thermal imaging and live streaming cameras, the unit's four new drones are able to capture better quality footage from the air to support firefighting and other emergency service purposes.

The drones represent a significant uplift in capabilities for FRV's existing drone service - known as its remote piloted aircraft systems (RPAS) service - because of their ability to stay in the air for up to 30 minutes and to withstand difficult wind conditions.

Importantly, the new drones can carry both thermal and optical cameras at the same time, an advancement on existing aircraft within the RPAS fleet which can carry only one type of camera at a time.

The technology means firefighters can better monitor fires and other incidents from the air, and get a fuller picture of complex fires, ultimately increasing community safety and contributing to saving lives.

FRV's new aviation unit will be staffed by four dedicated specialist firefighters, including Civil Aviation Safety Authority-qualified drone pilots and specialist aviation accredited personnel.

The unit, which became operational last month, has already been instrumental in supporting the response to a recent industrial fire in Laverton North.

FRV drones were used last year to support rapid impact assessment of fire-affected areas throughout Victoria following the bushfires that ravaged large parts of the state in late 2019 and early 2020.

Quotes attributable to Police and Emergency Services Minister Lisa Neville

"As we saw during last year's devastating bushfire season, our firefighters tackle some incredibly complex and challenging fires – these four new drones within Fire Rescue Victoria's new aviation unit will significantly add to their fire-fighting arsenal."

"Thanks to this highly specialist aviation unit and these new highly specialised drones, our emergency services will have greater access to critical information and intelligence to efficiently contain fires, respond to emergencies and save lives."

Quote attributable to Fire Rescue Victoria Commissioner Ken Block

"This technology provides us with much greater situational awareness during a range of emergency incidents and dramatically improves timely decision making and community and firefighter safety."

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