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# MIDWEST Times

## Water bombing drills put crews to the test



**Bomb's away:** The pilot of a water bomber drops his 3000 litre load as part of an intensive drill to prepare for the fire season. In a sign of the dangers ahead, 50 hectares of pastureland near the Burma Rd Nature Reserve was destroyed in a blaze last week. **Water bombing drills put crews to the test: P2.**

Picture: MAC HOLT

### MAC HOLT

EVERY year before the main bushfire season all emergency service groups hone their training skills.

The Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment and Conservation Department in Kalbarri are the hazard managers for fires in the national park and surrounding areas.

They are the guys at the sharp end in the hot, dangerous conditions that always exist in fire season.

To support the front line troops are the SES who, when required, provide mainly communications and logistics support.

Just one of these support activities is water bomber refill.

Each year, before the main bushfire season, a training and refresher water bomber refill course is held at Kalbarri airport.

The water bombers are called in to help control the hot spots which threaten to take control of the fire.

The water bombers need to cycle through in short time, being refilled on the ground to replenish their loads of water and fire retardant foam.

So the SES volunteers and DEC employees train to support the VFRS in their fire-fighting activities.

This co-operation has been shown many times in the past where SES support the VFRS during fires and the VFRS support the SES during floods



(as an example communications and sand bagging support during last year's floods). Also, where required all emergency services, including the VMR, ambulance officers and police all work together to protect the people in the community.

Now every DEC employee and most of the Kalbarri SES can confidently provide this support service to the "fireys" during the upcoming fire season when needed.

Involved in this latest refresher training were SES volunteers Brandon Bickford, John Brandenberg, Mark Broome and Mac Holt, and DEC employees Mike Paxman, Russel Asphard, Colin Baker, Bill Tolson and Darcy Stilling.



ABOVE:  
Water gushes out as a member of the ground crew completes the refill.

LEFT:  
Ready to go — the pilot gives the thumbs up.

Picture:  
MAC HOLT