

>>> Tough Times

In December of 1993 through to January of 1994, the NSW RFS was involved in the largest firefighting effort ever seen in Australia. More than 800 fires burnt simultaneously during a period of less than a month and almost 1,000,000 hectares were burnt. Help was brought in from as far away as New Zealand to fight the fires and 20,000 firefighters contained fires that claimed 206 houses and 4 lives.

CommtechWireless



BASEPage and the NSW Rural Fire Service

Consisting of 69,000 volunteer members in roughly 2,100 brigades throughout 143 rural districts, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is the world's largest fire service in a country known for bush fire outbreaks. CommtechWireless, through the installation of BASEPage software, has been helping the Rural Fire Service remain as efficient as possible for more than seven years.

Frequent Fires

With the frequency and intensity of fires in NSW, and across Australia, fire services like the NSW RFS need to deploy volunteers throughout a wide area as quickly and efficiently as possible to have any chance of containing an outbreak. To achieve this rollout, the NSW RFS employs a BASEPage system installed at a central point in each of 143 regions.

Nuts and Bolts

The system used by the RFS consists of 1 or more high-powered transmitter towers located at elevated points across each rural location. The central fire station has a PC with its own IP address running BASEPage. Connection to this PC can occur from anywhere throughout the town using the telephone network – as shown in the diagrams overleaf. Messages are sent from the BASEPage machine via the transmitters to volunteers. With a delivery time of less than two seconds, pagers are the preferred and most cost-efficient device for receiving these messages.

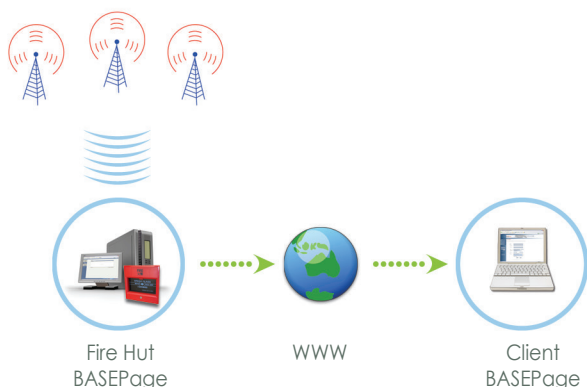
From 000 to Go

When a call is made to Australia's national emergency service (000), it is answered at the call centre located at the closest geographical point to the originating location.

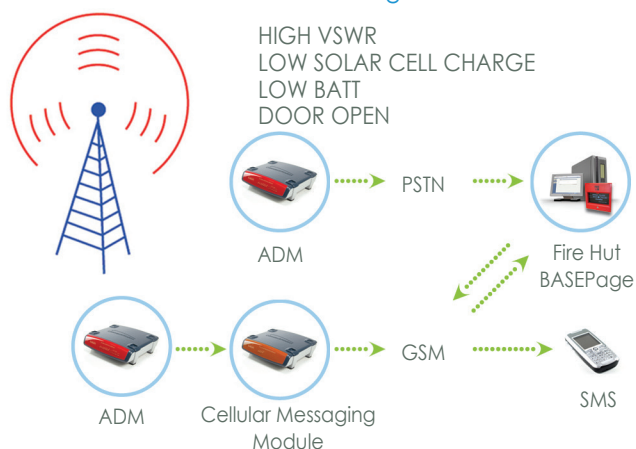
The call centre staff member will then make the call via telephone or commercial paging network to the volunteer on duty for the location of the fire. In rural areas of NSW and other parts of Australia, the distance between the 000 call centre and the volunteer can be thousands of kilometers.

Upon receiving the call and noting the details, the volunteer uses a laptop with BASEPage installed to connect over the phone network to the BASEPage PC at the central fire hut. From this connection, the duty volunteer can send alerts to all officers on the system, simultaneously, using the transmitter towers set up across the location.

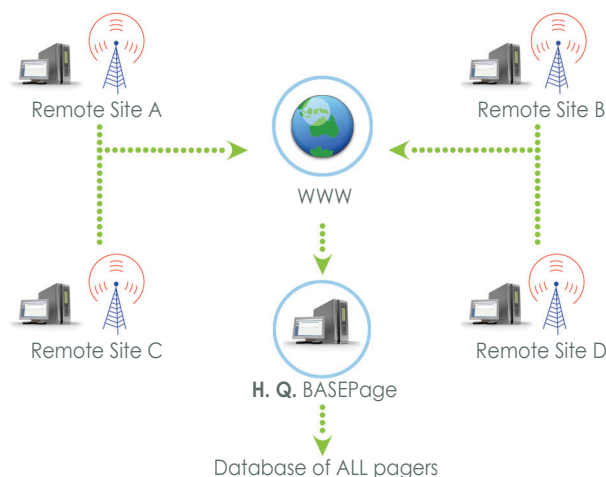
>>> Figure 1. Remote Initiation of Personnel Recall



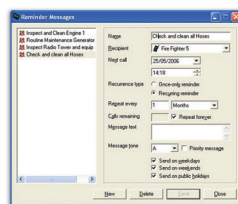
>>> Figure 3. Asset Loss Prevention / System Status Self Monitoring



>>> Figure 2. Centralised Topology

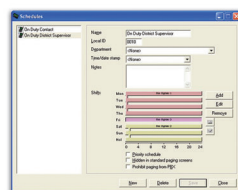


>>> Figure 4. Reminder & Schedule Message Screen



Reminder Message Screen

Remind staff to perform routine maintenance tasks



Schedule Message Screen

Select staff from duty roster automatically

Internet Connection

The NSW RFS can also connect to their central BASEPage via GSM modem using the Internet. This allows for a single BASEPage server, central to the entire state of NSW, with the details for all 69,000 volunteers stored and accessible. The ability to rollout the entire RFS in an instant is a distinct advantage of employing such a system.

Saving Time

With the addition of RELAYPage units from CommtechWireless, any fire service using the described system can power up machinery, turn on lights, even boil the kettle ahead of any rollout – saving time that could easily mean the difference between life and death.

Alarm Notification

By integrating this system with modules in the Fusion Series, officers can be notified of various alarm events. High VSWR alarms, theft and damage of equipment, open door alerts and maintenance reminders can all be sent automatically to the pagers and mobile phones of volunteer staff.

All-Important Reliability

The importance of the work carried out by the Rural Fire Service, requires the most reliable and efficient methods of communication available. Using BASEPage, the NSW RFS can get officers to the scene of any outbreak as quickly as possible. The flexibility of Commtech solutions means the system can be expanded when necessary to meet the growing requirements of the hard-working outfit.

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