

# Firefighters up to the challenge

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**Keeping watch:** DOC fire officer Tony Teeling and Conservation Minister Kate Wilkinson.

South Canterbury rural firefighters are working up a sweat in preparation for the dry summer ahead.

Firefighters from Canterbury and the West Coast have spent the past two days honing their skills at this year's regional rural fire exercise - the ninth year it has been held.

A Conservation Department Rural Fire team from Twizel is among the teams taking part in the three-day challenge, which comes to an end today.

Teams of firefighters have been taking on multi-faceted tasks, designed to test participants mentally and physically.

Principal rural fire officer for South Canterbury Rob Hands said participation in the event had grown, with crews from around New Zealand taking part.

This year's event had particular significance, as many firefighters had applied their rural fire experience during the earthquake response. "After the past year's events, no one underestimates the importance of this exercise."



**Onwards and upwards:** Firefighter Marcia Fairhall, of the Conservation Department's Te Manahuna Office in Twizel, completes the abseiling task at the regional rural firefighters challenge.

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