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Alex Forth: Volunteer RFS firefighter admits to lighting fires

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A PROBATIONARY Rural Fire Service member deliberately lit fires at Lochinvar, Keinbah, Bishops Bridge and Sawyers Gully and made numerous hoax calls to emergency services because he was bored and wanted to be called out to battle the blazes.

Alex Forth, 21, of Aberglasslyn, pleaded guilty on Wednesday to four counts of intentionally cause fire and be reckless as to its spread and making false call to emergency service number.

Charges relating to a number of other fires will serve as back-ups when Forth is sentenced in Newcastle District Court next year.

Forth joined the NSW Rural Fire Service in September, 2015, and was attached to the Lochinvar Brigade as a probationary member, court documents state.

But not long after he joined, there was a “significant spike in suspicious, deliberate or undetermined” bushfires in the area patrolled by the Lochinvar brigade. Forth used “molotov cocktails” to start two separate fires in the Werakata National Park at Keinbah on April 15, court documents state.

A week later he used the same method to start a scrub fire on Old North Road at Lochinvar.

Typically, after lighting a fire, Forth would call 000 to report it and then drive to the station to prepare to head out with the crew.

But Forth began raising suspicion with his superiors.

On one occasion he called another volunteer and told him about a fire before it was broadcast to members and another time he was at the station within two minutes of RFS members being notified of a blaze.

Arson Investigators began physical and electronic surveillance of Forth and watched as he lit a fire in roadside scrub at Lochinvar on April 28. He was arrested when he arrived at the Lochinvar RFS station a short time later.