



STATE BUSHFIRE PLAN 2014



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Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Metropolitan Fire Brigade and Emergency
Management Victoria.

Version Control

Title	Version date	Nature of amendment
State Bushfire Plan 2012	June 2012	First version was based on provisions of the <i>Emergency Management Act 1986</i> and the <i>Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010</i>
State Bushfire Plan (Version 2 – 2014)	October 2014	An update of the first version to align the document with the <i>Emergency Management Act 2013</i> (which repealed the <i>Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010</i>) and the updated State Emergency Response Plan (July 2014 version)

Foreword from the Emergency Management Commissioner

Bushfire safety is a shared responsibility between the fire services agencies, emergency management agencies, State and local government, communities, households and individuals. The preparation of individuals and teams is essential to the success and safety of bushfire management. It is critical that everyone involved in managing bushfires in Victoria understands their responsibilities and takes the necessary action to prepare for the fire season.

This is the second version of the State Bushfire Plan, amended to reflect recent changes in the legislation relating to the management of emergencies, including bushfire, in Victoria.

Emergency Management Commissioner

Craig Lapsley is Victoria's first Emergency Management Commissioner with his appointment effective from 1 July 2014. Prior to this appointment, Craig was Victoria's first and only Fire Services Commissioner, the senior operational fire fighter in Victoria and responsible for leading the three fire services agencies. This was provided under the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010*, which has since been repealed and replaced by the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.

Under the *Emergency Management Act 2013*, the Emergency Management Commissioner has legislated responsibilities across the management of all major emergencies in Victoria and is accountable for ensuring the response to emergencies is systematic and coordinated.

State strategic control priorities

The Emergency Management Commissioner has identified priorities to underpin all planning and operational decisions made during the management of emergencies, including bushfire, in Victoria. The State strategic control priorities provide clear direction on the factors that must be considered and actioned during any emergency.

The priorities focus on the primacy of life and the issuing of community warnings and information, to assist people to make informed decisions about their safety. The priorities include the protection of property, economies and the environment.

During a difficult or fast moving bushfire, the priorities provide bushfire management personnel with a decision-making framework that can translate into immediate action to protect the community and help mitigate the potential consequences of the bushfire.

The priorities are:

- Protection and preservation of life is paramount. This includes:
 - Safety of emergency services personnel and
 - Safety of community members including vulnerable community members and visitors/tourists located within the incident area
- Issuing of community information and community warnings detailing incident information that is timely, relevant and tailored to assist community members make informed decisions about their safety
- Protection of critical infrastructure and community assets that support community resilience
- Protection of residential property as a place of primary residence
- Protection of assets supporting individual livelihoods and economic production that supports individual and community financial sustainability
- Protection of environmental and conservation assets that considers the cultural, biodiversity, and social values of the environment.

First response to fires and other emergencies must be fast, determined and thorough and take precedence over normal agency activities. However, in the context of protecting human life as the paramount concern, early advice to communities is equally as important.

The Incident Controller may need to vary the strategic control priorities in some circumstances, but may only do this after consultation with the Regional Controller and the State Response Controller and with the decision based on sound incident predictions and risk assessment.

To assist achieve the strategic control priorities, the Incident Controller should consider:

- continuous situational awareness
- community warnings and advice
- incident intelligence
- incident prediction
- dynamic risk assessment
- weather forecasts
- mapping
- resources management
- incident management structure – including field command and incident, regional and state control
- identification of community impact and consequences
- two-way communications with the Incident Management Team, Emergency Management Team and regional and state control.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CW Lapsley'. The signature is stylized and written in a cursive-like font.

Craig Lapsley PSM
Emergency Management Commissioner

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose and scope

The State Bushfire Plan (**the Plan**) provides an overview of the current arrangements for the management of bushfire in Victoria and contains information on bushfire prevention, response and recovery. The Plan reflects an integrated approach and shared responsibility for bushfire management between government, agencies, business and the community.

This is the second version of the State Bushfire Plan and the intent is to describe the arrangements at a point in time. There may be further changes to the arrangements for the management of bushfire resulting from on-going reform in the Victorian emergency management sector. The next version of the Plan will incorporate these changes.

The Emergency Management Commissioner has developed this Plan in conjunction with the fire services agencies: Country Fire Authority (CFA), Department of Environment and Primary Industries (DEPI) and Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB), with input from a range of other emergency management agencies.

The Plan refers to a range of existing plans and documents relating to bushfire-related programs but does not duplicate the information contained in these, instead providing directions to websites or other sources where the reader can obtain further information if required.

The Plan joins a suite of other hazard-specific plans as a sub-plan of the State Emergency Response Plan. The State Emergency Response Plan can be found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

The Plan does not include arrangements for the management of structure fire except where this is a consequence of bushfire.

1.2 The bushfire threat in Victoria

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world, with a history of catastrophic bushfires. The last decade has seen a dramatic increase in the number, size and severity of bushfires. Major fire events such as the 2003 Alpine Fire, 2006 Grampians Fire, the 2006/07 Great Divide fire and the devastating 2009 Black Saturday fires provide evidence of the increasing fire risk.

A variety of causes can ignite a bushfire. Some bushfires result from events that are natural, such as lightning, while others result from human activity.

Victoria's high bushfire risk is the consequence of a combination of factors including:

- large areas of highly flammable dry eucalypt forest
- expanses of highly flammable grassland
- a climatic pattern of mild, moist winters followed by hot dry summers
- protracted droughts
- agricultural practices where fire is used routinely
- an increasing population density in bushfire-prone areas, such as in the rural-urban fringe.

A major bushfire can result in significant consequences, both locally and far reaching on:

- people, e.g. loss of life
- infrastructure, e.g. community infrastructure failure
- economy, e.g. financial loss
- environment, e.g. permanent loss of ecosystems
- social setting, e.g. reduced services to the community.
- public administration, e.g. an inquiry leading to changes in policy and legislation.

Bushfire is a significant risk facing the State. However, it is also a natural part of the Victoria environment. The State uses planned fire to reduce the impact of unplanned bushfire and to regenerate and maintain the health of indigenous ecosystems.

1.3 Definitions

The Plan uses the following definitions:

- **Bushfire** is an unplanned fire primarily in vegetation such as grass, forest and scrub
- **Bushfire consequences** are the impact of the bushfire on:
 - people and the social, community and health environment
 - the economic environment
 - the built environment
 - the natural environment.
- **Prevention** is the elimination or reduction of the incidence or severity of emergencies and the mitigation of their effects
- **Response** is the combating of emergencies and the provision of rescue and immediate relief services
- **Recovery** is the assisting of people and communities affected by emergencies to achieve a proper and effective level of functioning

The EMMV recognises the phases of prevention, response and recovery as clusters of activity that often overlap.

Although not recognised as a separate phase of emergency management, **preparedness** is critical to effective bushfire management and has been included as a separate section in this Plan. Preparedness is the establishment of structures, development of systems and testing and evaluation by organisations and communities of their capacity to perform their allotted roles in an emergency.

The Plan uses the term **household** to refer to all sub-sections of the community, such as families, businesses and farms.

1.4 Emergency Management Manual Victoria

The Emergency Management Manual Victoria (EMMV) is the state's principal document for guiding the arrangements of all agencies with a role in emergency management. The EMMV can be accessed at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

The EMMV comprises the following parts:

- Part 1 – Emergency Management in Victoria
- Part 2 – Emergency Risk Management and Mitigation in Victoria
- Part 3 – State Emergency Response Plan
- Part 4 – State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan
- Part 5 – State and Regional Emergency Management Planning
- Part 6 – Municipal Emergency Management Planning Arrangements – Guidelines for Committees
- Part 6A – Guidelines for Municipal Fire Management Planning
- Part 7 – Emergency Management Agency Roles
- Part 8 – Appendices and Glossary

Part 5 identifies agencies holding responsibility for the development of action plans for the management of specific types of hazards, such as fire. This Plan has been developed within this context and joins a suite of other hazard-specific action plans that are listed in the EMMV Part 8 Appendix 10 – Multi-agency Plans, Policies and Practice Notes.

1.5 Arrangements within this Plan

The Plan refers to the following sets of arrangements:

- community resilience, which relates to the arrangements made by all sectors of Victorian society to ensure their interests can withstand and recover from emergencies such as bushfire
- Victorian emergency management arrangements, as outlined in the EMMV
- State, regional and municipal fire management plans, which build on the arrangements in the EMMV to establish specific arrangements for the management of bushfire

- the operational arrangements of individual agencies, including:
 - the internal operational arrangements of the fire services agencies
 - the plans of other agencies with a role in bushfire management, which should align with the arrangements in the EMMV, fire management plans and the principles outlined in this document
- the plans and arrangements of communities and individual households.

The following diagram represents the relationships between these plans and arrangements and illustrates their interdependence.

The table on the following page identifies the principal documents mentioned in this Plan.

The table does not include legislation, all the documents of the fire services agencies, the internal plans of other agencies with a role in bushfire management or the plans the fire services agencies develop to manage specific risks during a bushfire response.

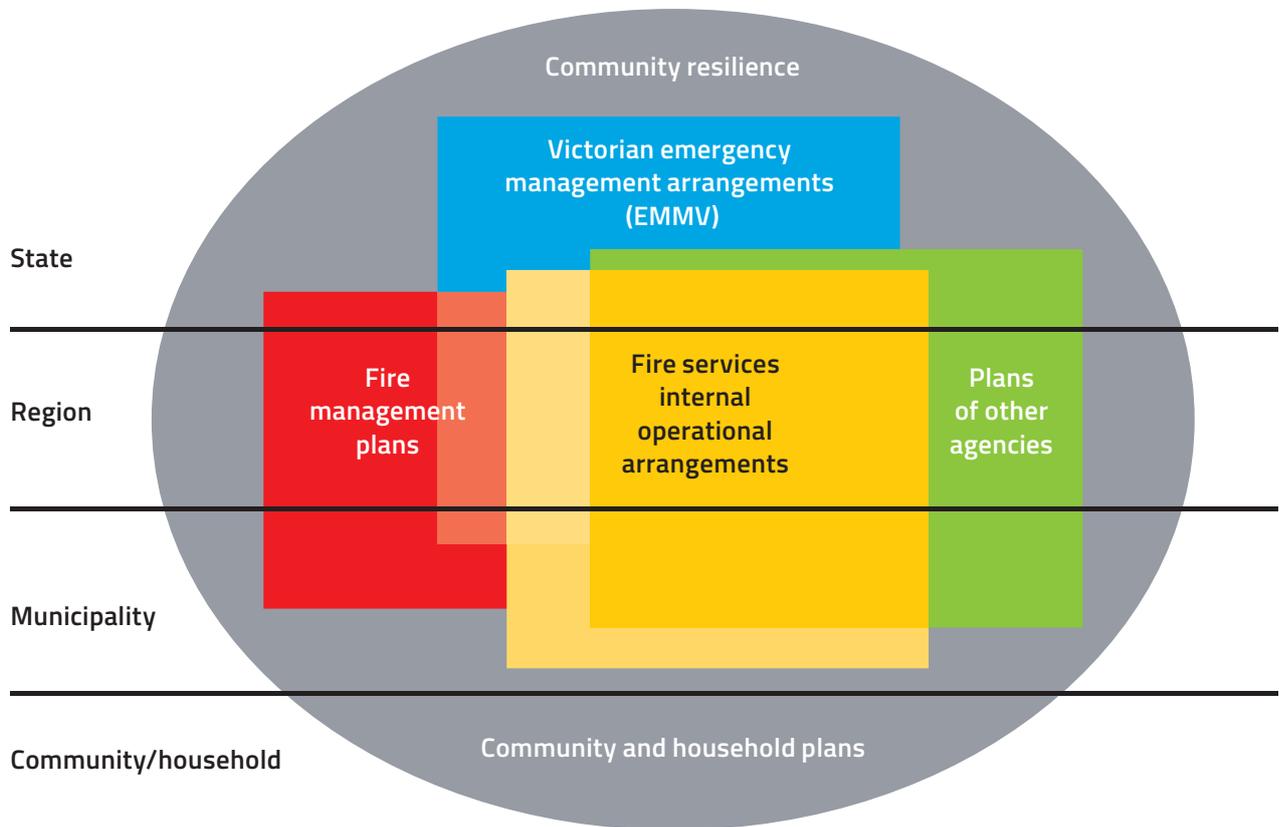


Figure 1: The relationship between the key sets of arrangements mentioned in the State Bushfire Plan

Table 1: Key plans and documents mentioned in the State Bushfire Plan

	Community resilience	Victorian emergency management arrangements (EMMV)	Fire management plans	Agencies internal operational arrangements
National	National Strategy for Disaster Resilience			Agreements for resource sharing
State	Bushfire Safety Policy Framework	EMMV Part 3 – State Emergency Response Plan EMMV Part 4 – State Relief and Recovery Plan EMMV Part 5 – State and Regional Emergency Management Planning EMMV Part 6A – Guidelines for Municipal Fire Management Planning EMMV Part 7 – Emergency Management agency Roles	State Fire Management Strategy	Joint agency SOPs Individual agency SOPs
Regional		Regional Emergency Response Plans Regional Emergency Relief and Recovery Plans	Regional Strategic Fire Management Plans	CFA/DEPI Local Mutual Aid Plans CFA Regional Operational Management Plans DEPI Regional Readiness and Response Plans DEPI Fire Management Plans
Municipal		Municipal Emergency Management Plans	Municipal Fire Management Plans	DEPI Fire Operations Plans (for DEPI Fire Districts)
Local	Community emergency management plans Community Information Guides			Pre-incident Response Plans
Household	Household Plans			

2 Responsibility for bushfire management

2.1 Legislative framework

The following legislation, while not exhaustive, is the principal legislation for bushfire management in Victoria:

- *Emergency Management Act 2013*
- *Emergency Management Act 1986*
- *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*
- *Metropolitan Fire Brigades Act 1958*
- *Forests Act 1958*
- *Electricity Safety Act 1998*

The *Emergency Management Act 2013* supersedes the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010* and part of the *Emergency Management Act 1986*. Where applicable, incident management procedures previously issued by the Fire Services Commissioner under Section 21 of the *Fire Services Commissioner Act 2010* continue to apply under the new legislation.

The Code of Practice for Bushfire Management on Public Land establishes the principles, standards and guidelines applying to the management of fire on public land in Victoria.

The EMMV guides the responsibilities and arrangements for all agencies with a role in emergency management.

A number of Victorian Government Ministers are responsible for administering the legislative framework for bushfire management in Victoria.

2.2 Emergency Management Commissioner

The *Emergency Management Act 2013* establishes the Emergency Management Commissioner with accountability for ensuring the response to emergencies in Victoria is systematic and coordinated.

Section 32 of the Act lists the primary functions of the Emergency Management Commissioner, which include leading the response to Class 1 emergencies in Victoria, including emergencies with the potential to become Class 1 emergencies. A Class 1 emergency is:

- A major fire
- A major emergency where either CFA, MFB or VICSES is the control agency.

Information about the role of the Emergency Management Commissioner can be found at: <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au>

2.3 Fire services agencies

The fire services agencies hold the primary responsibility for bushfire management in their respective jurisdictions:

- MFB is responsible for the prevention and suppression of fire in the metropolitan fire district. Information on the MFB can be found at <http://www.mfb.vic.gov.au>
- CFA is responsible for the prevention and suppression of fire in the country area of Victoria (private property outside the metropolitan fire district). Information on CFA can be found at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au>
- DEPI is responsible for the prevention and suppression of fire on public land in Victoria outside the metropolitan fire district. Information on DEPI can be found at <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au>

The Chief Officer/Chief Fire Officer of each fire service agency is a statutory officer accountable for delivering the bushfire-related responsibilities of their respective agency.

The fire services agencies have protocols for providing the community with a seamless and effective fire service across jurisdictional boundaries.

2.4 Other agencies

Many other agencies have a role in bushfire prevention, response and recovery. These are identified in the EMMV Part 7 – Emergency Management Agency Roles, found at www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv



3 Community resilience

The National Strategy for Disaster Resilience, developed by the Council of Australian Governments, provides high-level guidance on disaster management to federal, state, territory and local governments, business and community leaders and the not-for-profit sector. The Strategy can be found at www.coag.gov.au/node/81

Foremost in the Strategy is the principle of all of society taking responsibility for preparing for disasters. Examples within the bushfire context include:

- individuals taking responsibility for their own safety and actively planning and preparing for bushfire
- local government and communities conducting local fire prevention and preparedness programs
- industry, including critical infrastructure providers, tourism and agriculture, recognising the potential risk of bushfire on their businesses and planning for continued service provision
- non-government and community organisations, to which the community may turn for support or advice, preparing for major bushfires
- government agencies through:
 - applying risk-based land management and planning
 - creating organisational partnerships to build community capacity and capability
 - providing bushfire education
 - supporting individuals and communities to prepare to respond to and recover from bushfires
 - ensuring an effective, well-coordinated response to bushfires
 - providing information to the community during bushfires
 - helping communities to recover and learn following bushfires.

The community, businesses and individuals can better withstand and recover from a bushfire through early financial recovery. Insurance is a key factor in early financial recovery.

4 Objective and principles for bushfire management

4.1 Objective

The objective of all bushfire management activities in Victoria is to reduce the impact and consequences of bushfire on human life, communities, essential and community infrastructure, the economy and the environment.

4.2 Principles

The following principles guide bushfire management activities in Victoria.

Leadership

The Emergency Management Commissioner and the fire services agencies are accountable, on behalf of the Victorian Government, for leading other agencies, the community and individuals to make appropriate arrangements to reduce the impact of bushfire.

Protection of human life

Human life, which includes the lives of both community members and emergency services personnel, takes priority above all other considerations in bushfire management.

Responsibility for building resilience

Bushfires are inevitable and not all bushfires are preventable. All levels and sectors of society share responsibility, within their sphere of influence, for building a more resilient community and environment that can prevent, respond to and recover from bushfire.

Community involvement

Community involvement is essential to ensure bushfire management approaches are inclusive, integrated and comprehensive across diverse communities and landscapes.

A seamless approach

The fire services agencies work together, using resources efficiently and effectively, to provide the community with a seamless approach to all aspects of bushfire management.

Risk-driven

Plans and priorities for bushfire management should aim to achieve a measurable reduction in the impact and consequences of bushfire.

Learning and knowledge

Local knowledge, experience, and operational and scientific evidence are all integral to the ongoing improvement of bushfire management policy and practice.



5 Planning

5.1 Fire management planning

There are fire management planning committees at the State, regional and municipal levels to plan for bushfire prevention, response and recovery. Originally established under the *Emergency Management Act 1986* and referenced in Parts 5 and 6A of the EMMV, this committee structure reports to the State Crisis and Resilience Council, through the Risk and Resilience Subcommittee, under the authority of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.

There are a number of Victorian Government Ministers responsible for various aspects of bushfire prevention, response and recovery and they all support the fire management planning process.

As the Victorian emergency management reforms progress, the planning approach taken by fire management planning will transition into a planning framework for all types of emergencies.

The committees are:

- a State Fire Management Planning Committee
- eight Regional Strategic Fire Management Planning Committees
- a Municipal Fire Management Planning Committee for each Victorian municipal district and alpine resort.

These committees operate within the existing legislative and planning context. Membership comprises representatives of the key stakeholder agencies. An Emergency Management Planning Unit within Emergency Management Victoria and the committee chairs support these committees.

More information about fire management planning can be found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/our-work/fire-management-planning-2> and <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

5.1.1 State planning

The State Fire Management Planning Committee oversees Victorian fire management planning to ensure it is consistent, sustainable and integrated. The Committee is responsible for providing leadership and the development of tools and processes for consistent and continuous improvement in fire management planning.

The Committee is chaired by the Emergency Management Commissioner and includes a wide range of agencies and organisations.

5.1.2 Regional planning

Regional Strategic Fire Management Planning Committees provide a forum to build and sustain organisational partnerships, generate a common understanding and shared purpose with regard to fire management across a region and ensure municipal and individual agency plans are linked to regional strategic direction and are consistent across regional boundaries.

The committees work collaboratively to develop Regional Strategic Fire Management Plans that are risk-based and guide the arrangements for fire prevention, response and recovery across each region. The plans guide the development of each municipal-level plan within the region.

5.1.3 Municipal planning

Municipal Fire Management Planning Committees provide a municipal level forum to build and sustain organisational partnerships, generate a common understanding and shared purpose with regard to fire management in the municipality and ensure that the plans of individual agencies are linked and complement each other.

The committees are responsible for developing and publishing Municipal Fire Management Plans, ensuring implementation of the actions detailed in the plans, and monitoring the effectiveness of those actions.

5.2 Landscape bushfire strategy

The Emergency Management Commissioner is developing a new approach to bushfire planning that applies a holistic approach to fire management planning across several municipalities that share a common risk landscape, such as a mountain range. The approach incorporates a range of information including public and private land management characteristics, demographics, community bushfire preparedness and fire behaviour characteristics.

The landscape bushfire strategy aims to improve community and agency preparedness and enable informed decisions to be made before, during and after a fire.

A pilot program is underway in the Dandenong Ranges. Information can be found at: <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/our-work/current-projects/landscape-planning-pilot/>

5.3 Community emergency management planning

The Emergency Management Commissioner is developing an approach and framework for emergency management planning at the local level. Through a facilitated process, the approach encourages communities, agencies, councils, business and other stakeholders to develop local plans for emergency events through developing shared solutions to local problems, strengthening relationships and sharing local knowledge and experience. A pilot project is underway in Harrietville.

5.4 Community information guides

CFA, local agencies, local government and communities have collectively produced community information guides as a source of information to assist people in high-risk bushfire areas plan their individual or household fire plans.

Information about community information guides can be found at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/community-information-guides/>

5.5 Household plans

The Emergency Management Commissioner advises that every household (including businesses and farms) should have the written bushfire survival plan. Information on the development of these plans can be found at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/your-bushfire-plan/>



6 Prevention

6.1 Responsibility

Bushfire prevention is the responsibility of all Victorians – achieved by all sectors of society taking action within their sphere of influence to reduce the impact and consequences of unplanned bushfire.

The State has a duty to plan and prepare for, prevent, respond to and support recovery from bushfires. Government, across a wide range of Ministerial portfolios, develops legislation, and plans and implements programs to reduce the risk of bushfire. However, during a bushfire, the State cannot absolutely guarantee the safety of all community members.

The fire management planning committees at the state, regional and municipal levels are responsible for identifying bushfire risks and planning associated treatments.

Public authorities are responsible for treating bushfire risks within their respective jurisdictions in an integrated manner.

Owners and occupiers of land have a responsibility to manage their properties to reduce the risk of bushfire.

Information on the responsibilities of public authorities and owners and occupiers of land can be found at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about/who-does-what/>

Individual community members are responsible for learning the risks of their environment and for making their own decisions about how to respond to these risks in order to ensure their safety.

6.2 Regulation

CFA and DEPI use fire restrictions to reduce the likelihood of bushfire ignition through regulating activities known to start fires on days of high fire danger. The fire services agencies also work with the Victoria Police to enforce any breaches.

Fire regulations are often called 'fire restrictions'.

6.2.1 Restrictions on private property

CFA declares the 'fire danger period' in the country area of Victoria, with the exception of areas in the 'fire protected area' (refer to paragraph below) when the risk of bushfires requires restrictions on the lighting of fire.

Information on the 'fire danger period' can be found on the CFA website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions

DEPI restricts the use of fire in the 'fire protected area', which is private property located within 1.5 kilometres of a park, forest or other public land in areas of Gippsland and the north east of Victoria, by declaring a seasonal 'prohibited period', generally at the same time CFA declares the 'fire danger period'.

Information on the 'prohibited period' in the 'fire protected area' can be found on the DEPI website at <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fire-and-emergencies/public-land-fire-restrictions/restriction-dates-prohibited-period>

Most municipal councils also have local laws restricting activity involving fire. Information on these can be obtained from the relevant local council or by visiting their website.

6.2.2 Restrictions on public land

DEPI declares the 'prohibited period' all year round in State forests, national parks and protected public land to restrict the use of fire.

DEPI also uses legislation to limit the use of fire in activities known to cause bushfires, such as recreation (for example through campfire restrictions), timber harvesting, saw milling, honey extraction, welding, grinding and the use of explosives.

DEPI and Parks Victoria restrict public access to parks and forests on days when the Emergency Management Commissioner declares a Code Red fire danger rating.

Information on public land fire restrictions can be found on DEPI's website at <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fire-and-emergencies/public-land-fire-restrictions>

6.2.3 Total Fire Ban days

Section 40 of the *CFA Act 1958* provides for the CFA Chief Officer to declare a Total Fire Ban on days when the danger of fires occurring is extremely high and any fire would be extremely difficult to control. The declaration of a Total Fire Ban imposes strict rules and regulations regarding the circumstances in which fires may be lit.

CFA, MFB and DEPI may issue permits for their respective jurisdictions under section 40 of the *CFA Act 1958* on days of Total Fire Ban to allow for essential catering, welding, grinding, saw milling and road construction work.

Information on Total Fire Ban days and CFA permits can be found at www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions

Information on permits issued by DEPI can be found at <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fire-and-emergencies/public-land-fire-restrictions/commercial-and-other-activities>

Information on permits issued by MFB can be found at <http://www.mfb.vic.gov.au/Industry/Total-Fire-Ban-Permit-and-General-Information/TFB-Permits.html>

6.2.4 Enforcement

Enforcement links inextricably to community education, because the main aim is to change the behaviour of people.

The fire services agencies have a Victorian Fire Investigation Policy and Procedures agreement with the Victoria Police, Victoria Forensic Science Centre, Office of Gas Safety, Energy Safe Victoria and Victorian WorkCover Authority regarding an integrated approach to fire investigation. The aim is to identify trends and improve the targeting of fire prevention and community safety strategies.

The fire services agencies work to identify people who breach fire restrictions. Once suspects are identified, the Victoria Police are empowered under the *Summary Offences Act 1966* to take action. The fire services agencies work collaboratively with the Victoria Police to prepare prosecutions where required.

The Victoria Police have an arson-prevention program, which includes patrolling areas of high fire risk on days of high fire danger.

6.3 Electricity

Electricity powerlines contacting vegetation is one cause of bushfire. The *Electricity Safety Act 1998* requires electricity distribution companies to prepare bushfire mitigation plans, which are audited by Energy Safe Victoria. The *Electricity Safety Act 1998* also creates the Electric Line Clearance Consultative Committee, which manages a code to ensure vegetation remains clear of powerlines.

Energy Safe Victoria has directed power companies to install new protection and other devices on a range of powerlines to reduce their risk of starting fires. Energy Safe Victoria is also working with the Department of State Development, Business and Innovation to implement a capital works program to replace a number of powerlines in high bushfire risk areas to further reduce the risk of powerlines starting bushfires.



6.4 Land and fuel management

6.4.1 Public land

Approximately one third of Victoria is public land managed by DEPI, Parks Victoria and other partner agencies. To support fire and emergency management, DEPI maintains an approximately 50,000 kilometre network of fire access roads, air bases and communications infrastructure such as radio and fire towers.

DEPI maintains a rolling three-year Fire Operations Plan for each region to identify the location of intended fire prevention and preparedness works such as:

- planned burning, which reduces the spread and severity of bushfire but does not prevent bushfire
- slashing, mowing or clearing in town blocks and along fire access tracks
- construction of strategic forest firebreaks to protect communities and critical community assets such as water supplies in very high risk areas

Information on DEPI's program for managing fire on public land can be found at <http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/fire-and-emergencies>

6.4.2 Private land

Private land owners or occupiers are responsible for ensuring their activities or the level of fuel on their land does not present a danger to life or property from the threat of fire.

Guidelines on agricultural fire management for farmers and other rural landholders can be found at http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/fm_files/attachments/Publications/on-the-land.pdf

During a major fire, the level of hazard reduction on private land can influence fire behaviour and can either complement or detract from the effectiveness of hazard reduction on public land. Where necessary, Municipal Fire Prevention Officers enforce fuel hazard management on private land.

Where possible, the fire services agencies work with private landholders to manage fuel levels across the continuum of both public and private land. The Landscape Bushfire Strategy planning process (described in section 5.2) is working to formalise a risk-based approach to fuel management across both public and private land.

6.4.3 Roadsides

Road managers, mainly VicRoads and local councils, are responsible for roadside fuel management. Road managers assess the risks of roadside fuels and treat these where appropriate.

6.5 Planning and building in bushfire prone areas

The Department of Transport, Planning and Local Infrastructure, working with councils and the fire services agencies, administers the planning and building system response to bushfires.

Planning and building systems are important for creating more bushfire resilient communities. Local planning schemes set out how settlements, towns and rural areas will grow and change in response to the threat of bushfire, with building regulations ensuring new development is constructed with regard to likely forms of bushfire attack.

More information can be found at: <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/plansandpolicies/bushfire-planning-and-building-resource>



7 Preparedness

7.1 Fire Danger Ratings

The interaction of fuel, weather and topography determines bushfire behaviour. Topography is fixed and fuel can be managed to some extent. However, weather cannot be controlled and the fire services agencies monitor weather conditions in order to understand the fire risk at any point in time.

The Bureau of Meteorology uses a number of weather variables to calculate daily numerical indices both for grassland and forest fuels – the Grassland Fire Danger Index and the Forest Fire Danger Index. The indices are then categorised as Fire Danger Ratings.

Fire Danger Ratings give an indication of how a fire would behave under forecast weather conditions and how difficult it would be for the fire services agencies to control a fire in these conditions. During the warmer months, weather forecasts, radio and television broadcasts, some newspapers and the FireReady smartphone application feature the daily Fire Danger Rating.

Information on Fire Danger Ratings can be found on the CFA website at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings/>

The Fire Danger Rating categories and their associated Fire Danger Indices for grassland and forest are shown in the following table.

Table 2: Fire Danger Rating categories and corresponding GFDI and FFDI range

Fire Danger Rating categories	Grassland Fire Danger Index (GFDI)	Forest Fire Danger Index (FFDI)
Low – Moderate	0 – 11	0 – 11
High	12 – 24	12 – 24
Very High	25 – 49	25 – 49
Severe	50 – 99	50 – 74
Extreme	100 – 149	75 – 99
Code Red	150 +	100 +

Note: Code Red is not automatic – it is declared by the Emergency Management Commissioner following consideration of a range of other factors

Figure 3: Sample Fire Danger Rating display



Figure 3 depicts an example of how these rating classes are displayed in public communications. Code Red days are not automatic. The Emergency Management Commissioner determines and declares Code Red days following consideration of a range of additional factors. Once a Code Red day has been declared, all parts of government prepare to minimise the impact and consequences of major bushfires on their area of interest.

Arrangements on Code Red days include:

- messages and warnings to the public about how they should prepare and act in order to survive
- community, agency and support agency preparedness
- closure of schools in areas of high fire risk
- closure of public land.

7.2 Community preparedness

7.2.1 Bushfire Safety Policy Framework

The Emergency Management Commissioner annually reviews and releases the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework to provide government, agencies and other stakeholders with direction on the development and implementation of bushfire-related public safety policies and programs. It reflects the findings and recommendations of the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission and is informed by the latest bushfire research.

The Bushfire Safety Policy Framework establishes the following context for bushfire-related public safety policies and programs:

- The protection of human life is paramount.
- Risk management is fundamental to bushfire safety.
- Bushfire safety is a shared responsibility between the government and a range of stakeholders. However, individuals are ultimately responsible for making their own decisions about how to respond to the bushfire risk.
- The State has a duty in equal measure to prepare for, prevent, mitigate, respond to and support recovery from bushfire. The State cannot absolutely guarantee the safety of all its citizens from bushfire.

- All bushfires are different. Bushfires are complex and dynamic events. Safe responses will always depend on specific circumstances, so agencies and the community need to plan for a variety of situations.
- Bushfire safety depends on people having access to a range of safety options. All options other than being out of the fire area involve varying degrees of danger.
- All Victorians, no matter where they live, must understand the bushfire risk. They have a responsibility to learn about bushfire and to undertake measures to mitigate their own exposure to it. They must act to ensure their own safety.
- Bushfire safety involves effective planning and preparation prior to a fire, making informed decisions during the event, and having access to a range of safety options, in particular places to shelter from the effects of the fire.
- The State will provide timely advice to the community of forecast dangerous fire conditions and will warn communities wherever possible if a fire is likely to affect their location so that people are able to make informed decisions about how to respond.
- Bushfire safety information, warnings and other safety interventions must recognise the diversity in the community and be accessible, address different needs and be relevant to local situations. The State will endeavour where possible to inform visitors to Victoria of the local bushfire risk and how best to ensure their safety.

The Bushfire Safety Policy Framework aims to create safe and resilient communities through setting directions for:

- increasing the level of public understanding and preparedness for bushfire
- enhancing the ability of those at risk from bushfires to make informed decisions about how to respond
- enabling safe response during bushfires by establishing a range of bushfire safety options.

The Bushfire Safety Policy Framework does not address other approaches to fire prevention such as land use planning, infrastructure management and planning, building regulation, managing vegetation, or operational planning and preparedness, which are also vital in managing the bushfire risk.

Although it primarily addresses the bushfire risk, the goals and activities in the Bushfire Safety Policy Framework also relate to other hazards.

The Bushfire Safety Policy Framework is reviewed annually.

7.2.2 Household preparedness

Each household is responsible for preparing their own property for bushfire for example, clearing vegetation around the house, in accordance with State planning controls for the clearing of native vegetation (that is, the 10/30 and 10/50 rules) and local government requirements.

Information on the clearing of native vegetation around houses can be found at <http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/plansandpolicies/bushfire-planning-and-building-resource/vegetationmanagement> and by contacting the relevant local council.

Other measures for preparing a property include retrofitting existing dwellings so they can better withstand bushfires.

The CFA has a range of programs and mediums (including meetings, home visits, phone and online services) to assist householders and landowners to prepare their property for bushfire.

Information on these programs can be found on the CFA website at <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare>

7.3 Agency preparedness

The Emergency Management Commissioner and the fire services agencies prepare a suite of arrangements for responding to bushfire, including:

- Ensuring a sufficient resource capacity for sustained response, including:
 - A sufficient number and distribution of trained and experienced personnel
 - Fire fighting equipment, such as tankers and bulldozers, designed specifically for bushfire
 - An aircraft fleet to support ground fire fighters
 - Modern logistics systems to support fire fighters.
- Maintaining a science and technology capability to:
 - Forecast fire risk and impact
 - Provide fire fighters with information about the fire.
- Arrangements for the readiness of resources, including
 - Readiness plans
 - Pre-positioning of resources.
- Procedures for initiating response to fires, including
 - Bushfire detection systems
 - Call-taking and dispatch arrangements.

7.3.1 Capacity

Human resources

CFA has an integrated workforce of approximately 58,000 volunteers (with approximately one-third fire fighters) supported by career fire fighters and other staff.

DEPI works with their Networked Emergency Organisation (NEO) partners (Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, VicForests and other government departments) to access staff with bushfire and emergency management skills, supported by approximately 1,750 other staff during emergencies. DEPI employs additional fire fighters over the summer.

MFB relies on a workforce of over 1,700 career fire fighters.

Additionally:

- The fire services agencies have agreements with a wide range of agencies and interest groups regarding the delivery of specialist services during bushfires

- The fire services agencies have pre-emptive agreements with comparative interstate and international agencies to provide reciprocal support during major fires and, in some cases, during preparedness arrangements
- Arrangements are in place to source Commonwealth resources (such as Defence) if required.

Capability

The fire services agencies train their personnel in a wide range of bushfire response and support roles. They conduct their training and exercises as joint-agency events wherever possible to ensure an effective integrated bushfire response.

Equipment

Each agency maintains its own vehicle and equipment fleet designed to meet its jurisdictional responsibilities.

Wherever possible, the fire services agencies collaborate during equipment design to improve interoperability for the future.

Where appropriate, the fire services agencies maintain a comprehensive register of contract equipment that can be hired during an emergency.

Aircraft

The fire services agencies annually establish a fleet of contract and on-call aircraft, comprising both helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, to assist ground-based fire fighters. Throughout periods of high fire risk, aircraft resources are strategically located at air bases around the state.





Logistics

Each of the fire services agencies maintains an extensive store of logistical supplies so they can sustain a fire fighting effort over a prolonged period.

The stores are:

- Fire Equipment Development Centre (DEPI) at Altona North
- State Logistics Centre (CFA) at Knoxfield
- Sunshine Warehouse (MFB).

Arrangements are also in place with suppliers to obtain additional logistical supplies at short notice.

7.3.2 Science and technology

Forecasting risk

The fire services agencies use fire behaviour analysts to combine meteorological and fire science inputs to develop fire behaviour predictions. The predictions help fire fighters identify the potential impact and consequences of bushfires and help inform the development of bushfire control and risk mitigation strategies.

Remote sensing and other technology

The fire services agencies collaborate where possible on the development and use of technology to support fire fighting. They primarily use technology to develop an operating picture of a bushfire that can be shared at the incident, region, state and community levels.

Technology such as remote sensing can also provide bushfire managers with a strategic overview of major bushfire.

7.3.3 Resource readiness

The Emergency Management Commissioner and the fire services agencies have an agreed set of arrangements for ensuring resources are ready to respond to bushfire in Victoria.

Local readiness plans

The fire services agencies have a Local Mutual Aid Plan (LMAP) for each region that outlines agreed joint arrangements for bushfire readiness and response. Additionally:

- DEPI has a Regional Readiness and Response Plan for each region defining the readiness and first response procedures for NEO resources
- CFA has a Regional Operational Management Plan for each region outlining CFA readiness and first response procedures.

Daily readiness arrangements

During the fire season, the Emergency Management Commissioner and the fire services agencies jointly ensure response resources (personnel, equipment, facilities etc.) are ready at the state, regional and local levels, commensurate with the fire risk. This includes pre-positioning fire fighting resources and incident management teams on days of high fire risk.

7.3.4 Fire detection and dispatch

Early detection of and response to bushfires is vital to restricting their spread. The fire agencies detect bushfires using a range of methods including reports from the public, 'spotters' in fire towers, detection aircraft and observation by government employees during their daily activities.

The Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) provides the link between the Victorian community and the State's emergency service agencies. It provides Victoria's 24-hour emergency call taking and dispatch services – managing the provision of operational communications for Victoria Police, CFA, MFB, Ambulance Victoria and Victoria State Emergency Service. ESTA receive Triple Zero (000) calls from the public to report fires and dispatch CFA or MFB resources.

Where a fire is detected on public land, ESTA dispatches the assigned CFA or MFB resources and contacts the DEPI duty officer who may dispatch additional DEPI resources.

8 Response

8.1 Introduction to bushfire response

8.1.1 The nature of bushfire response

Following the ignition of a bushfire, the fuel, topography and weather in the area where the bushfire is burning will determine its size, direction and intensity.

In light fuels such as grass, fire fighters generally extinguish bushfires using water. Where water is scarce or where fuels are heavier, such as in a forest, fire fighters generally contain bushfires within earthen firebreaks, created using either hand tools or heavy machinery. Aircraft can assist in halting the intensity and spread of a fire for a temporary period, allowing ground fire fighters to approach and properly extinguish the flames.

Section 7.1 of this Plan identifies that Fire Danger Ratings indicate how a bushfire will behave under forecast weather conditions and how difficult it will be for fire fighters to control the bushfire in these conditions.

At higher Fire Danger Ratings, a bushfire is more likely to become uncontrollable, with the flames burning in the crowns of the trees at an intensity that could endanger the life of anyone in its path, including the lives of fire fighters. These bushfires may even generate their own weather. A bushfire burning under these conditions can take considerable time, effort and expense to extinguish and may impact large areas with far reaching consequences on communities, infrastructure, the economy and the environment. Fire fighters will only be able to contain a bushfire of this scale once weather conditions moderate and the fire intensity reduces to a level that is safe for fire fighters to approach. A common tactic is for fire fighters to light a fire ahead of the main fire (a 'back burn'), with the aim of the two fires drawing together and self-extinguishing. However, back burning can only be undertaken once fire fighters are confident they can control the new fire.

8.1.2 First response

The fire services agencies are responsible for the first response to bushfires according to their respective legislative and jurisdictional responsibilities.

Where fire fighters respond quickly to a bushfire, they can generally contain it before the flames have time to reach their maximum intensity. A quick first response will keep the area of impact of the bushfire as small as possible and will minimise the potential for bushfire to have broader consequences.

Once a bushfire has been contained, fire fighters must ensure they thoroughly extinguish all burning materials and the fire poses no risk of re-ignition before they leave it unattended. This will normally involve careful monitoring of the weather and on-going patrol of the area for several days to ensure there is no re-ignition of fuels previously thought extinguished.

8.1.3 Major bushfire

The *Emergency Management Act 2013* defines a major fire or emergency as a large or complex fire (however caused) or emergency that:

- has the potential to cause, or is causing, loss of life and extensive damage to property, infrastructure or the environment or
- has the potential to have, or is having, significant adverse consequences for the Victorian community or a part of the Victorian community or
- requires the involvement of two or more agencies (fire services agencies if a major fire) to respond to the emergency or
- will, if not suppressed, burn for more than one day (fire only).

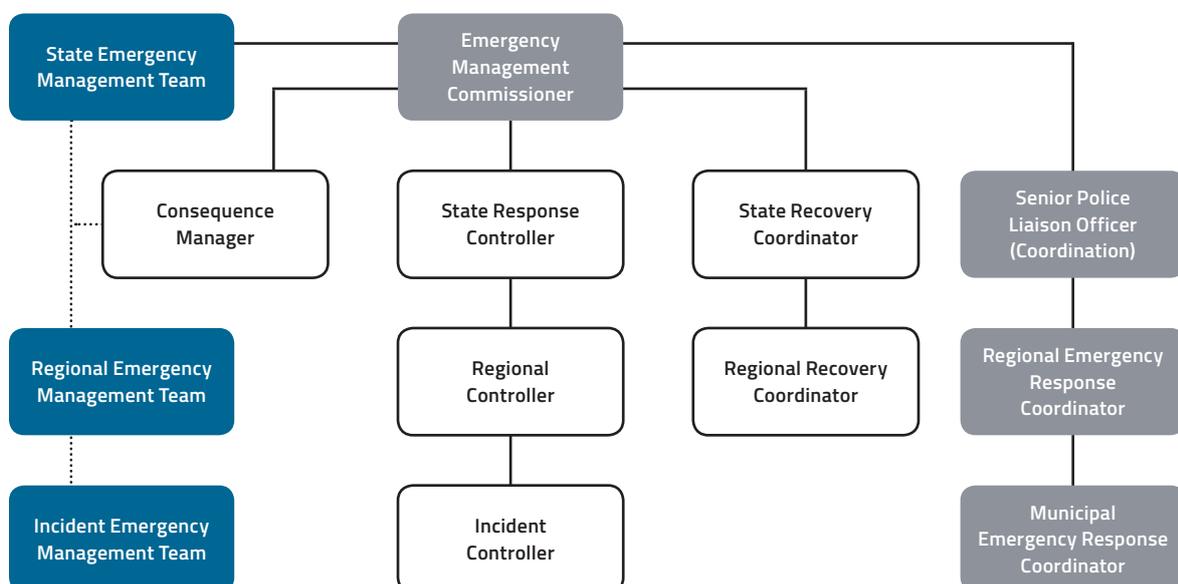
The legislation emphasises the importance of fire fighters and fire agencies recognising the potential of a bushfire to become a major bushfire well in advance, so that the State can escalate the arrangements for controlling the bushfire and plan ahead to reduce its impact and consequences on the community.

8.1.4 The role of the Emergency Management Commissioner

The Emergency Management Commissioner leads the State response to major bushfires, including those with the potential to become major bushfires.

The diagram below shows the structure the Emergency Management Commissioner uses to manage Class 1 emergencies, which includes major bushfires. The structure shows how the Emergency Management Commissioner ensures the control, coordination, consequence management and recovery functions integrate to increase their effectiveness in reducing the impact and consequences of bushfires.

Table 3: Control arrangements for response to class 1 emergencies as of 1 July 2014



8.1.5 Operating doctrine

The fire services agencies have operating procedures relating to their systems of work and the management of specific risks.

For the management of major bushfires, the Emergency Management Commissioner issues operational standards and procedures under sections 50 and 51 of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.

These documents can be found on the Emergency Management Commissioner website at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au>

8.2 Control

8.2.1 Victorian emergency response arrangements

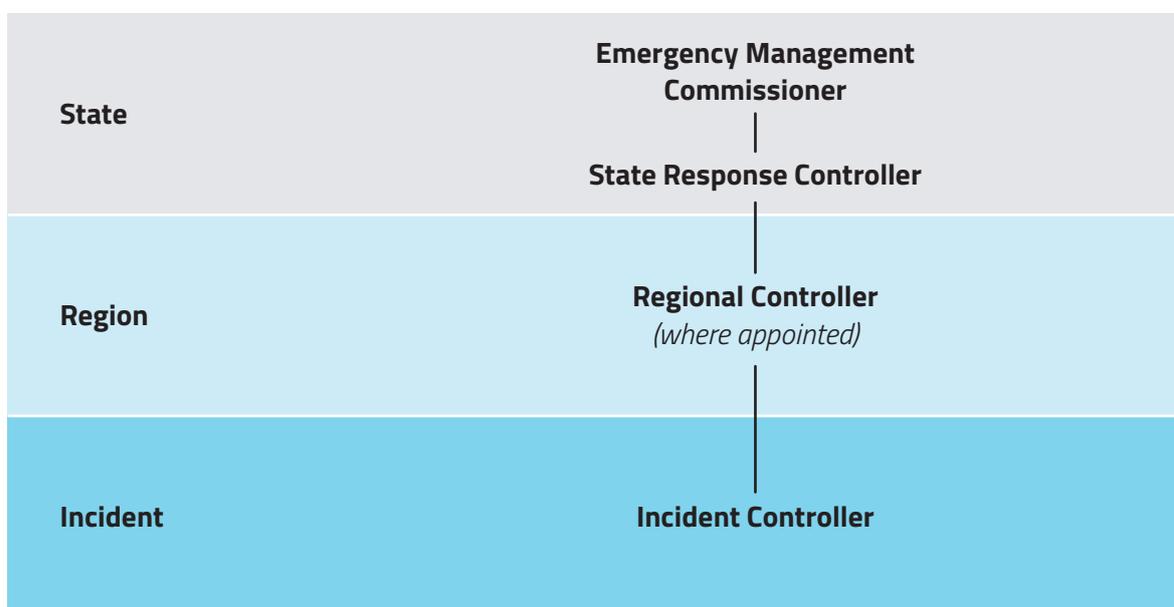
The State Emergency Response Plan (Part 3 of the EMMV) outlines the arrangements for the management of all emergencies in Victoria. The State Emergency Response Plan can be found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

The State Emergency Response Plan uses a three-tiered approach to emergency management, with the key functions of control, command, and coordination performed at the incident, regional and state tiers of emergency response management. The control function is responsible for emergency response activities and the command and coordination functions provide support to those performing the control function.

Additionally, all emergency managers must ensure:

- the safety of response personnel and the community is a priority
- the consequences of the emergency are managed
- there is communication to meet the information needs of communities, Government, agencies and business
- relief and recovery are integrated with emergency response activities.

Figure 4: The line-of-control for bushfire



8.2.2 Line-of-control

A 'line-of-control' is established for bushfire to ensure the Emergency Management Commissioner and controllers at each tier are connected, can readily communicate information and to ensure there is a level of State and regional oversight of the management of all bushfires.

The line-of-control for bushfire is the Emergency Management Commissioner, State Response Controller, Regional Controller and Incident Controller.

The Emergency Management Commissioner appoints State Response Controllers and agency personnel as Regional Controllers. The three roles maintain an overview of bushfires through contact with agency commanders at their respective tiers. Their level of involvement in the management of a bushfire relates to the likelihood of it becoming major.

In first response, the control agency appoints the Incident Controller. For a major bushfire or a bushfire with the potential to become a major bushfire, the Regional Controller will appoint an Incident Controller from a list endorsed by the Emergency Management Commissioner. These are appointed regardless of their agency.

Major bushfires or those with the potential to become major bushfires are managed from Incident Control Centres, Regional Control Centres and the State Control Centre.



8.2.3 Support for controllers

During major bushfires, or where a major bushfire can be reasonably expected:

- the Incident Controller (if appointed) will establish an Incident Management Team (IMT) to provide support for a range of incident management functions including the planning, intelligence, public information, operations, investigation, logistics and finance functions. The fire services agencies use the Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System (AIIMS) for establishing an IMT.
- the Regional Controller will establish a Regional Control Team, comprising regional agency commanders, the Regional Emergency Response Coordinator and Regional Recovery Coordinator.
- the Emergency Management Commissioner and State Response Controller will establish the State Control Team, comprising the Emergency Management Commissioner, State Response Controller, state agency commanders and State Recovery Coordinator.

In particular, the Regional Control Team and State Control Team assist the controllers and the Emergency Management Commissioner to establish a strategic integrated agency approach to the readiness for and response to major bushfires.





8.3 Support resources

The fire services agencies support each other during bushfire response. Parks Victoria is also a key support agency. Agency arrangements include automatic activation to provide support; for example CFA will automatically respond to a bushfire on public land where DEPI is the control agency and where the fire could threaten private property.

Command of agency resources remains within agencies unless the agency has agreed to an alternative supervisory arrangement.

The Incident Controller is responsible for requesting, directing and releasing support resources during a bushfire using the process outlined in the State Emergency Response Plan.

A large number of other agencies also provide specific support services during bushfires.

Costs associated with the provision of services and resources are managed in accordance with the arrangements in the EMMV Part 8 Appendix 1 – Financial Arrangements, which is found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

8.4 Coordination

8.4.1 Emergency response coordination The Emergency Management Commissioner is responsible for the state coordination of agencies with roles and responsibilities for response to bushfire.

Victoria Police members are appointed as Regional Emergency Response Coordinators (RERCs) and Municipal Emergency Response Coordinators (MERCs) and undertake the coordination of resources at the regional and municipal tiers of emergency response respectively.

A Senior Police Liaison Officer deals with requests to or from the RERCs and MERCs and provides advice and information to the Emergency Management Commissioner about things such as:

- the likelihood of situations to escalate into major emergencies
- the effectiveness of control structures
- the provision of community information and warnings
- the management of significant risks and consequences
- the provision of relief services to the affected community
- the cooperation of agencies
- the supply of resources
- the operation of Emergency Management Teams
- the declaration of emergency areas.

8.4.2 Emergency Management Team (EMT)

EMT are formed at each activated tier of emergency response management as follows:

- State Emergency Management Team (SEMT)
- Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT)
- Incident Emergency Management Team (IEMT).

EMT are collaborative forums where agencies with a diverse range of responsibilities during emergencies meet to discuss the risks and likely consequences of bushfires and assist the Emergency Management Commissioner and controllers establish priorities and plan a 'whole of government' approach to the management of these risks and consequences.

An important role of an EMT is to arrange for the provision of urgent relief needs of people affected by bushfire and to plan for and deliver recovery activities, ensuring these integrate with the bushfire response activities.

EMT ensure the response and recovery agencies, other agencies, local government and service providers are coordinated in their approach. The inclusion of a local government representative in an EMT is particularly important, as they are a primary source of information on local communities and the local area.

Not all agencies have the capability to provide a representative for EMT at each tier. For example, a person may represent their agency at both the REMT and IEMT.

More information on EMT can be found in the Emergency Management Team Arrangements 2013, found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/procedures/incident-management>

8.5 Public safety

8.5.1 Community information and warnings

Sections 42 and 43 of the *Emergency Management Act 2013* provide for warnings and information in relation to fires in Victoria.

Warnings for fires are issued in accordance with the Victorian Warning Protocol, developed under the auspices of the national warning principles and which is used for all types of emergencies in Victoria. The Victorian Warning Protocol can be found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/our-work/victorias-warning-system/victorian-warning-protocol/>

The Incident Controller normally authorises all warning and advice messages for the community and may be assisted by the Regional Controller or State Response Controller. A range of mediums is used, including:

- the FireReady smartphone application
- voice and SMS phone messaging through the use of the Emergency Alert tool
- agency websites
- Victorian Bushfire Information Line
- emergency broadcasters in accordance with relevant Memorandums of Understanding
- community alert sirens
- CFA Facebook and Twitter
- door knocks.



Where the timeframe is short and an extreme and imminent threat to life exists, any response agency personnel can issue warnings to a community likely to be affected, providing they notify the Incident Controller as soon as possible.

Public Information Officers may be appointed at the incident, regional and state tiers to manage the provision of public information and warnings on behalf of the Incident Controller and all responding agencies.

The Emergency Management Commissioner may also seek support from the Emergency Management Joint Public Information Committee (EMJPIC) to ensure the state-level messages from all agencies involved in the management of emergency response, recovery and the consequences of the emergency are included in the key messages to the public.

8.5.2 Evacuation

Evacuation is the relocation of people from dangerous areas to safer areas and their return once the situation is safe. An evacuation may apply to a specific locality, an institution (school or hospital), a town or a large area of the state.

Evacuation Guidelines can be found in the EMMV, Part 8 – Appendices and Glossary, Appendix 9. Part 8 of the EMMV can be found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

In Victoria, evacuation is largely voluntary. The controller makes a recommendation to evacuate and it is the choice of individuals as to how they respond to this recommendation.

In some circumstances, legislation provides some emergency service personnel with authority to remove people from areas or prohibit their entry. Information on these circumstances is provided in the EMMV, Part 3 – State Emergency Response Plan, which is found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

8.5.3 Traffic management

Victoria Police are responsible for coordinating the development of a traffic management plan in conjunction with the Incident Controller at a bushfire.

Depending upon the fire status and associated risks, the plan may include establishing traffic management points (TMP) to restrict access to the area. These include five levels of possible access, which vary from allowing access to emergency services personnel only through to allowing open access to all members of the public.

Victoria Police have developed a document titled 'Guidelines for the Operation of Traffic Management Points during Class 1 Emergencies' which can be sourced through the details listed in the EMMV, Part 8 – Appendices and Glossary, Appendix 10. Part 8 of the EMMV can be found at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

8.6 Consequence management

As well as the direct impact of the flames, bushfires can have far reaching consequences on the community, the economy, the built environment and the natural environment. For example, a community may rely on services generated from the bushfire area, such as water or electricity, and these services may no longer be available following the bushfire.

During a major bushfire or where one is reasonably expected, such as during a period of severe weather, the Emergency Management Commissioner appoints a Consequence Manager, responsible for assessing the likely consequences of the bushfire and working with the SEMT and REMT to ensure a whole-of-government approach to the management of these consequences.

8.7 Initial Impact Assessment

The Incident Controller is responsible for initiating an Initial Impact Assessment (IIA). The aim of IIA is to capture, during the initial 48 hours of an emergency, the nature and scale of the bushfire impact on people, community infrastructure, and the economic, natural and built environments, in order that emergency relief and early recovery activities can commence. The information also informs emergency management agencies and all levels of government of the actual and potential consequences of the bushfire.

To ensure the expedient collection of information, the Incident Controller may task personnel from any response agency to collect relevant information.

The Emergency Management Commissioner is responsible for ensuring the coordination, collection, collation and reporting of incident data and impact assessment processes as required. The Victoria Police assist with this process.

8.8 Relief

The Emergency Management Commissioner has delegated responsibility for coordinating relief and recovery across Victoria to the Secretary of the Department of Human Services (DHS) until July 2015.

Municipal councils are responsible for establishing and managing relief centres. DHS provides support as required.

The Incident Controller is responsible for initiating the provision of life support and essential needs to persons affected by an emergency and should commence this process as soon as the need is identified.

State relief arrangements are outlined in the EMMV Part 4 – State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>

8.9 Reports and briefings

The Incident Controller, Regional Controller and State Response Controller are responsible for producing and distributing consolidated situation reports and for briefing stakeholders at their respective tiers about the bushfire situation.

Agency commanders can brief their agency managers, executive and respective Minister on their own activities.

During a major bushfire, the Emergency Management Commissioner requests agencies to report on the impact of the bushfire on their area of responsibility and to identify any emerging issues. This information forms the basis of the SEMT Situation report, which the Emergency Management Commissioner uses to brief the Minister for Police and Emergency Services.

9 Recovery

The Emergency Management Commissioner has delegated the recovery coordination role to the Secretary of the Department of Human Services until 1 July 2015. Municipal councils are responsible for recovery management at the municipal level.

The Incident Controller, Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator and Recovery Manager should ensure recovery management activities integrate with emergency response activities from the earliest possible opportunity and plan ahead, through the IEMT, for the transition to recovery.

State recovery arrangements are outlined in the EMMV Part 4 – State Emergency Relief and Recovery Plan at <http://www.emv.vic.gov.au/policies/emmv/>



10 Continuous improvement

10.1 Debrief

As a part of their continuous improvement process, the Emergency Management Commissioner, the fire services agencies and their emergency management partner agencies identify and share key observations and lessons learnt from emergency management activities.

10.1.1 After Action Review

The After Action Review (AAR) process is the primary tool for the fire services agencies to capture the immediate learning from bushfire response or recovery activities into a cycle of continuous improvement.

Each work team should conduct an AAR prior to the conclusion of their work shift, with important information communicated to incoming resources, or when they have returned to their home location at the end of their tour-of-duty.

10.1.2 Whole-of-sector bushfire season review

At the conclusion of the annual bushfire season, the Emergency Management Commissioner, the fire services agencies and their emergency management partner agencies collaboratively review their activities as a sector in order to capture key learning from the season and to identify systemic issues.

The intent of the debrief process is to learn from the season's activities and, where possible, improve systems and processes at the local, regional and state levels.

The findings of the review inform a range of programs aimed at improving targeted aspects of emergency management and enhancing the preparedness, response and resilience of both the fire services agencies and communities.

10.2 Collaboration with partner agencies

The fire services agencies work collaboratively with a wide range of industry bodies, community groups and other stakeholders regarding bushfire-related issues. This includes collaboration with Victorian, interstate and international fire and emergency management agencies in order to share knowledge, improve bushfire and emergency management policy and practice and to optimise the use of resources.

10.3 Research

The fire services agencies are involved in several ongoing research programs in partnership with a range of other organisations, such as the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre (BNHCRC), universities and industry.

The BNHCRC aims to provide a long-term research base that directly supports emergency services and other government and non-government agencies as they work to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from all types of natural emergencies. The BNHCRC follow on from the work of the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre, which has concluded after 10 years of providing leadership in bushfire research.

The BNHCRC comprises the fire and land management agencies in Australia and New Zealand, universities, state and territory governments, the Bureau of Meteorology, the Attorney General's Department and several other fire and emergency management related organisations.

Information on the BNHCRC can be found at <http://www.bnhcrc.com.au>







