

OPERATIONAL CIRCULAR 97/2021

File: D22736

December 2021

ALERTS AND WARNINGS DURING EMERGENCIES

Key Message

Public information during a bushfire is a critical component to keeping the community safe. This High Threat Period, Incident Controllers (ICs) are advised to note:

- the importance of adequate resourcing for the Public Information Section;
- the most efficient and correct way to issue a Bushfire Advice using a PAFTACS message;
- the new way COVID-19 safety messages are displayed in bushfire warnings on Emergency WA; and
- School closures and Evacuation Centres are now shown on Emergency WA

What happened?

Ensuring adequate resourcing for Public Information Section

Providing impacted communities with the right information early in an incident helps people make life-saving decisions to get themselves out of harm's way.

To support this, it is important the IC continually reviews incident needs and requests sufficient Public Information resources (e.g., Public Information Officer, Media Liaison Officer, Information and Warnings Officer) when required. This will ensure an adequate flow of information via the SOC Public Information Team to the community and the media.

Issuing an initial Bushfire Advice using PAFTACS

As noted in [SAP 3.2.B Public Information and Warnings](#), an IC can issue an urgent community warning at Advice level to inform the community of a developing incident.

The first information message (PAFTACS) to COMCEN must include ALL of the following:

- ✓ The location of the fire
- ✓ The direction of the fire
- ✓ Boundaries for the Advice (e.g., streets or suburb)
- ✓ Request Coordinator Public Information (CPI) issue an Advice level warning for the incident.

Target Audience:				
A	B	C	D	Vol
O.I.C. is to communicate content to all relevant personnel under their command, discuss implications, and sign appropriate box above. Once completed Circulars shall be filed on station and forwarded to Information Resources at the end of each financial year.				
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It's important to note:

- The CPI will issue an initial bushfire Advice based on this request.
- If the request does not include sufficient information, the CPI will call the IC (or DO COMCEN if IC is unavailable) to gather further information prior to issuing the warning.
- The CPI cannot issue a bushfire warning level higher than an Advice
- (e.g., Watch and Act or Emergency Warning) without speaking with the IC or delegated authority.
- Further public information will be required if the incident escalates. In this instance the CPI must speak with the IC or delegate directly, to issue subsequent warnings.

Dedicated COVID-19 section in bushfire warnings

A dedicated COVID-19 section can now be seen in bushfire warnings on Emergency WA.

- COVID-19 messaging will appear under a dedicated "COVID-19" heading for Advice, Watch and Act, and Emergency Warning levels. Previously, the messaging appeared multiple times under various headings and only in selected warning levels.
- With the new accordion-style warning format on Emergency WA, having a specific "COVID-19" heading allows people to navigate quickly to COVID-19 information if it is relevant to them.
- The approved WA Police messaging will appear under the new COVID-19 heading as below:

Collapsed view:

Expanded view:

+ COVID-19

+ BUSHFIRE BEHAVIOUR

+ ROAD CLOSURES AND CONDITIONS

+ WHAT FIREFIGHTERS ARE DOING

+ EXTRA INFORMATION

+ KEEP UP TO DATE

COVID-19

If you are in lockdown or any form of isolation or quarantine for COVID-19, you must do whatever you need to protect your life.

If you have been personally directed to self-isolate or quarantine due to COVID-19 and have been advised to leave the area:

- Find suitable alternative premises and wear a mask. Those in the affected area are permitted to go to suitable alternative premises without putting others at risk.
- Alternative suitable premises may include a friend or relative's house, provided they have their own bedroom, preferably own bathroom, and there are not too many people in the house.
- If you cannot return to your quarantine location within one hour, telephone WA Police on 131 444 to advise them you have had to leave due to an emergency.
- Regardless of your location, continue to follow COVID-19 precautions and maintain appropriate physical distancing.

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School Closures and Evacuation Centres now visible on Emergency WA map

Public school closures will be displayed on the [Emergency WA](#) website during emergencies, giving Western Australian parents a more detailed picture of how an emergency could impact them and their children.

This enhancement to Emergency WA enables the Department of Education to plot school closures directly onto the Emergency WA map, so users can quickly identify where their school is in relation to a bushfire warning area.

Evacuation Centres are also displayed during major incidents to enable those who have evacuated an opportunity to plan a travel route.

What do I need to do?

Read through [SAP 3.2.B Public Information and Warnings](#) to get a refresher on issuing public information during a bushfire emergency, particularly point five regarding issuing an initial Bushfire Advice only.

Further information

If you have any feedback or questions, please contact the Public Information Branch at statepublicinfo@dfes.wa.gov.au

CRAIG WATERS AFSM
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OPERATIONS

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