



## Standard Administrative Procedure 3.2.B

### Public Information and Warnings

#### Introduction

Public Information includes warnings and alerts that are disseminated through a variety of channels so individuals and communities are aware of an incident and can take appropriate action to safeguard life and property.

These warnings and alerts cover all hazards DFES is responsible for including bushfire, cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm, structure fire, hazmat and tsunamis.

State Hazard Plan Fire states that one of the Strategic Control Priorities for fire response is providing community warnings and information to the public. Whilst the protection and preservation of life must be paramount when developing incident action plans, accurate and timely community warnings are vitally important as they allow the public to make informed decisions in response to emergencies.

Providing information to the community and key stakeholders outside an Incident Management Team (IMT) is critical to the success of incident management and it is the Incident Controller (IC) who is ultimately responsible for providing public information to the community via the appropriate channels.

Application and dissemination of this vital information occurs through the DFES Public Information framework which uses a range of communication tools to deliver relevant details about an incident or event. Further information can be found in Doctrine.

[Directive 3.2 – Incident Control](#)

Public information can be issued **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

Public Information	Coordinator Public Information (CPI) on <b>0427 479 499</b> or <b>through ComCen (see Section 6 below)</b>
Telephone Warning System (TWS)	District Officer State Situation (DOSS) on <b>1300 566 588</b>

#### 1. Key Administrative Appointments

Key DFES Operations appointments in the Public Information and Warnings process are as follows:

- **Incident Controller (IC).** Performs functions of Public Information until a Public Information Officer (PIO) is appointed. Must approve all public information and warning content for localised incidents such as bushfire, structure fire and hazmat.
- **Operations Area Manager (OAM).** Performs functions of Public Information for widespread hazards such as cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm and tsunamis, until a PIO is appointed. May approve public information and warning content for these types of hazards.
- **Public Information Officer (PIO).** Appointed by the IC or OAM, the PIO provides information to the CPI for dissemination to media, stakeholders and the community.
- **Media Liaison Officer (MLO).** Can act as PIO if directed by the IC. Duties as MLO include liaising with news media at the incident or via telephone, management of media issues, organising media escorts and press conferences.

- **Coordinator Public Information.** Coordinates publication of state-wide public information during emergencies, including distribution of warnings to the community, media and stakeholders.

## Procedures

### 2. Evaluation

A key priority for incident action planning in the first stages of an incident is to address the protection and notification of community members. Providing information to the community should be considered throughout the incident alongside other operational considerations such as crew deployment and planning.

Various incident situations may require the use of public information and/or warnings, including the following:

- Life or property under threat or imminent threat
- Highly visible flames and or smoke in built-up area which may cause fear and uncertainty in local communities
- Sufficient quantities of smoke or a toxic plume that may have an effect on life or health
- Quantities of smoke or flooding that may cause a traffic hazard or restrict traffic flow
- Severe weather warning or other hazard warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

### 3. Authorisation

The IC is to authorise the release of warning for localised incidents such as bushfire, structure fire and hazmat. CPI will issue storm and flood warnings based on BOM warnings, and depending on estimated impact, in consultation with the relevant IC, OAM, PIO or Chief Superintendent.

### 4. Warning Levels

Warnings are specific to each hazard (e.g. bushfire warnings, cyclone warnings etc.) and are built around alert levels that detail the significance of threat to the community and request a 'call to action' by the community.

### 5. Initial Bushfire Advice Only

When an urgent community warning at Advice level is required:

1. During the first informative message (PAFTACS) to COMCEN the IC details the location of the fire, the direction of travel of the fire, and then must request CPI issue an Advice level warning for the incident. The IC must also indicate the boundaries for the Advice (e.g. streets or suburb).
2. COMCEN notify the CPI via SMS the need to issue an Advice  
e.g. "Bushfire advice required for Incident 345657. Please acknowledge by phone call".
3. CPI acknowledges the SMS and interrogates AHIMS State Incident Browser for relevant information, develops and issues the initial bushfire Advice. The CPI may call the IC (or DO ComCen if IC is unavailable) to gather further information prior to issuing the warning if required.

**Note:** The purpose of an initial bushfire Advice is to inform the community of a developing incident as early as possible. Further public information will be required as an incident escalates, and the CPI must speak with the IC or delegate directly to issue subsequent warnings.

## 6. Bushfire Warning Levels:

- **Advice:** a fire has started but there is no immediate danger. This is general information to keep the community informed and up to date with developments.
- **Watch and Act:** a fire is approaching, and conditions are changing, people need to leave or prepare to actively defend to protect themselves and their family.
- **Emergency Warning:** people are in danger and need to take immediate action to survive as they will be impacted by fire. An emergency warning may be supported with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS). The IC will issue a Telephone Warning System (TWS) message (via the DOSS) as per SAP 3.1D when:
  - \* The first Emergency Warning is issued.
  - \* An Emergency Warning area increases in size.
  - \* The severity of threat changes (from “safe to leave” to “too late to leave”).
- **All Clear:** The danger has passed, and the bushfire is under control, but people need to remain vigilant in case the situation changes.

### [Bushfire Warnings Triggers](#)

## 7. Cyclone Warning Levels:

- **Blue Alert:** The community is advised to take precautions in preparation for cyclonic weather.
- **Yellow Alert:** The community is advised to take action to prepare for the arrival of cyclonic weather and move to shelter. A TWS may be issued to advise the community to prepare.
- **Red Alert:** The community is advised to remain sheltering. A Red Alert may be supported with a SEWS siren. A TWS may be issued to advise the community to shelter or where there is a storm surge.
- **All Clear:** Wind and storm surge dangers have passed but care should be taken to avoid dangers caused by damage.

**It is important the DOSS and the CPI coordinate messaging. Any inconsistency must be reviewed and resolved by the IMT immediately.**

### [Annex A - Cyclone Alerts](#)

Warnings for other hazards including earthquake, flood, storm, structure fire hazmat and tsunami also follow similar stages to those above, i.e. prepare, take action, take immediate action to survive and all clear. Further information on warning levels is available from the DFES website.

## 8. Required Detail

Information required when requesting warnings be issued via the Coordinator Public Information, or a Telephone Warning System (TWS) be issued via the District Officer State Situation (DOSS), includes the following:

1. Level of warning (i.e. Bushfire Watch and Act)
2. Location of warning area (*clear, simple boundaries using road names and/or local landmarks*)
3. What do you want people to do? (*Be aware and alert? Leave? Defend?*)
4. Specific incident information (*fire direction, time of impact road closures, etc.*)

**Remember:** community members access warnings in a variety of formats, including audio – therefore warning areas need to be easily understood without the use of a map e.g. “an area bounded by Smith Road, Brown Road, Jones Road and the Swan River” **NOT** “a radius of 1 kilometre around the location of the fire”.

## 9. Incident Areas<sup>1</sup> on Emergency WA

Warnings may also be accompanied by an 'Incident Area', where one is available and authorised by the IC. In the context of Emergency WA, an incident area indicates the last known area which has been directly impacted by a specific hazard, i.e. burnt areas, flooded areas, storm damaged areas, toxic plume area, etc. The incident Area is geographical data only, it is not a warning area.

- The CPI will ask the IC or PIO if there is an incident area (e.g. fire shape) available on FESMaps.
- The IC can authorise its release to the public.
- All updates to the incident area will occur automatically until the IC or PIO requests manual expiry or when an All Clear is issued for the incident.
- An Incident Area **MUST ALWAYS** be accompanied by a warning area to ensure community members are not making decisions based on the Incident Area alone.
- An Incident Area **MUST NOT** be used as a warning area or the basis for a warning area, or be used to provide specific instructions or directions to the public.

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## 10. Dissemination

The Coordinator Public Information issues warnings via various technologies including the following:

- Emergency WA website
- DFES Information Line (13 3337)
- Social Media (DFES Facebook and Twitter)
- ABC/6PR and other media emergency broadcasts
- Warnings emailed to media and stakeholder lists

Public information can be issued **24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

Public Information	Coordinator Public Information on <b>0427 479 499</b> .
Telephone Warning System (TWS)	DO State Situation (DOSS) on <b>1300 566 588</b> .

## 11. Telephone Warning System

The Telephone Warning System (TWS) is one of the methods used to communicate a warning when the situation is time critical and/or there is an impending or immediate threat to a specific community.

The TWS is a communication tool that delivers emergency community messages to fixed line phones (based on service address) and mobile phones (based on billing address and/or location) in a defined area. Warnings can also be delivered via an SMS to all mobile services within, or travelling through, an area by utilising specific cell towers. The District Officer State Situation (DOSS) issues time critical messages through the TWS. To issue a TWS an IC or PIO must call the DOSS on **1300 566 588**.

**Instructions contained in the TWS message must not conflict with instructions in the Emergency Warning e.g. Safe to leave/Not safe to leave. If needed, contact the CPI to update the Emergency Warning to align with the TWS.**

[SAP 3.1.D – Telephone Warning System](#)

## 12. Further Information

Further information to assist the community during emergencies should include the following:

- community briefings

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<sup>1</sup> DFES Operations define an incident area as 'the area defined by the Incident Controller for which they have responsibility for the overall management and control of an incident'. However, for the purposes of Emergency WA an Incident Area is the area known to have been impacted by a hazard.

- evacuation centres
- what are emergency services doing
- reported damage
- cause of incident

The Coordinator Public Information (0427 479 499) is available to provide specialist advice about Public Information (warnings and alerts). Public Information Field Guides are available from Operations Resources. Public Information Talking Points are available from the IM Toolbox.

[Field Guide 3.2 – Public Info-Media Points](#)

[IM Toolbox – Public Information](#)

## Annexes

### ANNEX A DFES Cyclone Alert Triggers

LEVEL	When issued	Public Messages
<b>LOW FORMING – Tropical Low forming off the coast</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a low has formed.</li> <li>• There is no threat to lives or homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You should prepare your home inside and out.</li> <li>• Keep up to date with the development of the cyclone.</li> </ul>
<b>BLUE ALERT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a cyclone has formed but there is no immediate danger.</li> <li>• There is no threat to lives or homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You need to prepare for dangerous weather.</li> <li>• Secure or remove loose material from around your home.</li> <li>• Ensure your emergency kit is complete.</li> <li>• Read through your family cyclone plan and make sure everyone knows what to do</li> <li>• If you do not have plan, decide what you will do if the situation gets worse.</li> </ul>
<b>YELLOW ALERT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a cyclone is approaching.</li> <li>• There is a possible threat to lives and homes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You need to take action and get ready to shelter from a cyclone.</li> <li>• Pack a relocation kit to be taken with your emergency kit.</li> <li>• Fasten all cyclone screens.</li> <li>• Secure boats, caravans, trailers, garden sheds, outdoor furniture, rainwater tanks and LPG bottles.</li> <li>• Move vehicles under cover</li> <li>• Ensure pets and animals are in a safe area</li> <li>• Be aware that shops may now be closing.</li> </ul>
<b>RED ALERT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When there is immediate danger and the cyclone is about to cross the coast.</li> <li>• There is a threat to lives and homes.</li> <li>• Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) may be used to get your attention on radio and television (Check BoM alert)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You need to get ready to move to/go immediately to the strongest safest part of your house or to your closest welfare centre.</li> <li>• Keep your emergency kit with you.</li> <li>• Stay away from doors and windows that should be closed.</li> <li>• Stay inside until the ALL CLEAR is given by authorities.</li> </ul>

<p><b>ALL CLEAR</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When the danger has passed.</li> <li>• It may still not be safe to return home. Emergency services will advise when you can go home.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be careful when you leave your place of shelter.</li> <li>• Take care to avoid the dangers caused by damage such as fallen power-lines and trees, broken water and sewage lines, loose roof sheeting and other material.</li> <li>• Some services such as power and telephones may not be working. Service providers will be working to restore these as soon as they can.</li> </ul>
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## DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE
1.0	Jan 15	New procedure.
1.1	Jun 16	Clarification of TWS functionality types.
1.2	May 18	Update from Westplan Fire to State Hazard Plan Fire including Strategies Control Priorities, specifically community warnings and information to the public. Clarification of situations where public information may be required. Clarification of authorisation required for release of alerts and warnings. Inclusion of information for issuing a community warning at Advice level only. Clarification of required detail when public information or warning is requested. Update on information technologies and procedures for timely dissemination of information to the public.
1.3	Nov 2020	Inclusion of Incident Area process and minor updates throughout.
1.4	December 2020	Clarification of Emergency WA Incident Area vs Operational incident areas.
1.5	September 2021	AWS and Bushfire Trigger Updates.
1.6	September 2022	Addition of Annex B inline with Australian Fire Danger Rating Implementation
1.7	Nov 2022	Review of SAP in line with SAP 3.1D. Changes aligned to Wooroloo Bushfire Review.

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