



## Directive 3.5 – Bushfire

### SOP 3.5.1 – Bushfire Response

[Download Field Guide](#)

## Introduction

1. This procedure outlines the principles and provides guidelines for personnel to utilise during initial response to bushfire incidents. Further information relating to bushfire is detailed in Directive 3.5 - Bushfire.

[Directive 3.5 - Bushfire](#)

## Principles/Planning Factors

2. **General** The following principles/planning factors apply to all bushfire incidents:

| PRINCIPLE                              | DESCRIPTION   |
|--|---|
| <b>Crew Safety</b>                     | Approach and treat the fire in a manner that ensures the safety of emergency services personnel. Further information relating to crew safety at bushfires and LACES can be located within <a href="#">SOP 3.5.10 – Crew Safety at Bushfires</a> .   |
| <b>PPE</b>                             | Afford response personnel the required protection at all times. PPE requirements are outlined in <a href="#">SOP 3.2.1 – Order of Dress – PPC Matrix</a> .  |
| <b>Public Information</b>              | Issue public warnings and information and advise the community as early as possible.  |
| <b>Water Supply</b>                    | Identify a secure supply of water to support firefighting operations. Local knowledge is a key factor in considering water supplies and whether early mobilisation of water tankers are required.   |
| <b>Observe Local Conditions</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Meteorological Conditions.</b> Note temperature, wind speed and direction, and severe weather events. Request incident weather forecasts early. Know when wind changes are due and disseminate information to all levels.</li> <li>• <b>Fuel Loads.</b> There may be variation providing opportunities to create breaks, back burn or switch from defensive to offensive strategies.</li> <li>• <b>Topography.</b> Slope and aspect will affect fire behaviour and rate of spread.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Observe Fire Behaviour</b>          | Identify the direction, rate of spread and the location of the head fire.   |
| <b>Contain to Control</b>              | If possible, contain immediately. If not, work on the flanks where the fire intensity will be lower to pinch out the head fire. Apply resources to contain the spread of the fire and then extinguish.  |
| <b>Site Control</b>                    | Isolate areas of risk (including locations in the anticipated path of the fire) from public access. Request WAPOL assistance if required.   |
| <b>Public Exposure</b>                 | Apply resources to prevent the spread of the fire and associated hazards (e.g. smoke plumes) in order to minimise further risk to the public.   |
| <b>Confirm Site Safe for Departure</b> | Conduct thorough mop up and patrols to ensure all sources of re-ignition are eliminated.  |

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3. **Bushfire Status** This is the reportable status of a bushfire; these terms reflect the current status of a bushfire from going fire through to safe.

| STATUS                  | DEFINITION/MEANING   |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Going Fire</b>       | Any bushfire which is expanding and suppression actions have not yet contained the fire.   |
| <b>Contained</b>        | The status of a bushfire suppression action signifying that a control line has been completed around the fire, and any associated spot fires, which can reasonably be expected to stop the fires spread. |
| <b>Controlled</b>       | The stage during bushfire suppression activities at which the complete perimeter of a fire is secure and no breakaway is expected.   |
| <b>Safe<sup>1</sup></b> | The stage of bushfire suppression or prescribed burning when it is considered that no further suppression action or patrols are necessary.   |

4. **Bushfire Control Phases** As a bushfire escalates, Incident Controllers need to transition through three phases where the approach to control will alter significantly. The three bushfire control phases are as follows:

| CONTROL PHASE          | CHARACTERISTICS  | STRATEGIES   | KEY CONSIDERATIONS   |
|------------------------|--|--|--|
| <b>Initial Attack</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First hour</li> <li>Mobilisation of assets (ground and air) to immediately restrict fire spread</li> </ul>  | <b>Contain Extinguish</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control of resources</li> <li>Prioritisation of effort</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Extended Attack</b> | <b>Offensive Operations</b><br>Acknowledgement that initial attack is not having an effect.<br>Additional resources required <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource relief-in-place</li> <li>IMT required to control and plan</li> <li>Public Information required</li> <li>Authorised powers considered</li> </ul> | <b>Limit Spread<br/>Protect Life and Property Contain-Extinguish</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resourced L2 IMT</li> <li>Public Information</li> <li>Logistic support (ROC)</li> <li>Inter-agency support (SOC)</li> <li>Activating recovery</li> </ul>  |
|                        | <b>Defensive Operations (option)</b><br>Acknowledgement that offensive operations are not suited to current fire behaviour <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life and asset protection prioritised</li> <li>Relocation required</li> <li>Authorised powers enacted</li> </ul>   | <b>Protect Life and Property</b>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resourced L2 IMT</li> <li>Task Force operations</li> <li>Public information</li> <li>Relocation</li> <li>Logistic support (ROC)</li> <li>Inter-agency support (SOC)</li> <li>Activating recovery</li> </ul> |
| <b>Campaign</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous, extended, shift-based operations</li> <li>SOC operating continuously as link between ROC and SECG/EMWA</li> <li>Emergency Situation declared</li> </ul>   | <b>Protect Control Inform</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resourced L3 IMT</li> <li>Resourcing</li> <li>Fatigue Management</li> <li>Public information</li> <li>Activating recovery</li> </ul>  |

Direction regarding extended attack and Campaign type bushfires are concerned with IMT, ROC and SOC functions and are beyond the scope of this procedure.

<sup>1</sup> Only the Incident Controller may declare a bushfire safe.

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## Initial Mobilising

5. **General** Initial mobilising for a bushfire is normally a single CFRS/VFRS station, BFB or VFES unit. The intent of minimum mobilising to a bushfire is for the assessment of the first arriving OIC to confirm the required resourcing mobilisation.

6. **Enhanced Mobilisation** Enhanced 'High Threat Period' (Summer) Mobilising for the Perth Metropolitan, South West and Lower Southwest (Capes District) regions will be activated from approximately December until April each year or as determined by the Deputy Commissioner Operations. For further information refer to [SOP 2.1.2 - Mobilising](#)

7. **Zoned Responses** DFES together with relevant stakeholders has developed a number of zones across the state that require additional response appliances due to its location and possible life and assets at threat. These zones have an automatic notification and response. For further information these response zones refer to [Zone 2 & 2A Operational Protocols](#), [South West Region Response Zone](#) and [Capes Zone Response](#).

## Initial Arrival

8. **First Arriving Appliance – Role** The role of the first arriving appliance is to assess the situation and attempt to immediately contain and extinguish the fire. The OIC of the first arriving appliance is to assume the role of IC until relieved.

9. **Incident Controller Initial Actions** Upon arrival at a bushfire incident, the IC is to undertake the following initial actions:

- Provide arrival code to the COMCEN based on first visual impressions.
- Assess the scene (initial size-up) and secure the area.
- Provide initial incident classification to the COMCEN.
- PAFTACS informative message to ComCen (15 minutes).
- Assess for any life and property involvement and protect if safe to do so.

10. **Initial Size-Up** The initial size-up of bushfires is to incorporate assessment of the following:

| CONSIDERATION                             | NOTES  |
|---|--|
| <b>Life Involvement/Immediate Threat</b>  | Initial tasking is to reflect the immediate threat posed by the fire to life and property.   |
| <b>Communications</b>                     | Create a robust communications plan (based on VHF channels) capable of being expanded into sectors from the outset   |
| <b>Fuel Load and Configuration</b>        | Will determine safe tactical firefighting methods  |
| <b>Capability of Initial Response</b>     | Do the threats to life and property, current weather and fuel load represent conditions beyond the capability of the initial response?<br>If so, request further mobilisation of specific capability resources both ground and air based.  |
| <b>Observed Hazards</b>                   | Ensure initial objectives are safe to achieve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note the location of overhead power lines and the conditions of poles</li> <li>• Note fence lines and other hazards to vehicle movement</li> </ul> |
| <b>Incident Site Control Requirements</b> | Control entry to the incident site of public and vehicles/traffic<br>Manage the hazard presented by smoke plumes. (road closures).   |
| <b>Additional Resource Requirements</b>   | Request additional mobilisation early.<br>Consider the need for aerial suppression.  |

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11. **Initial Objectives** The initial objective at all bushfires is to minimise spread of the fire in order to protect life and property and enable containment. Initial actions at bushfires are as follows:

- Protection and Preservation of Life.
- Community Warnings and Information.
- Protection of Critical Infrastructure and community Assets
- Protection of Residential Property.
- Protection of Assets supporting individual livelihood and community financial sustainability.
- Protection of the Environment.

**It is important to note that these priorities are not hierarchical.**

12. **Incident Classification** Initial incident classifications may be confirmed or upgraded at any time during an incident. Incident Controllers are to re-assess their initial classification at the conclusion of their size-up and throughout the incidents as it is evolving or as the situation demands.

13. **Request of Additional Resources** Incident Controllers are authorised to request additional resources (by type, not specific identification) to combat the incident. In this manner, unnecessary structural assets are not mobilised in order to gain bushfire assets from urban stations.

However, CBFCO, DCBFCO or FCO and LG or VFES ICs (where approved by LG) may request specific resources or resources from a specific Bush Fire Brigade Unit within their LG. CBFCO and DCBFCO may also request additional specific mobilising of BFB resources to incidents within their LG, to incidents in neighbouring LGs at the request of neighbouring CBFCOs or the ComCen

[SOP 2.1.2 - Mobilising](#)

14. **Control Point and Command Channel** Upon request for additional assets, IC's are required to nominate a Control Point (CP) where all resources will be dispatched to by the COMCEN/RDC, and the VHF command channel on which approaching resources can contact the IC and notify of their impending arrival.

Control points should demonstrate the following characteristics:

| CHARACTERISTIC        | NOTES   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>Size/Space</b>     | A CP must be capable of accepting and staging the requested resources.  |
| <b>Safety</b>         | A CP cannot be in the path of the fire, nor create a hazard to traffic/the general public.  |
| <b>Communications</b> | A CP must be able to maintain communications with the COMCEN/RDC. (Fire ground communications may be performed from a separate location). |

[SOP 3.2.6 – T Cards and Incident Management Boards](#)

15. **Initial Communications Plans** Regardless of incident size, initial communications plans are to be based upon the relevant preformed communications plans in order to enable expansion as required. Due to their limitations of range and penetration, ***UHF communications are not to be used*** as incident command channels.

**Note:** During rural operations UHF channels may form part of a communications plan for pastoralist or farmer response.

[SOP 3.2.4 – Incident Communications](#)

[SOP 3.2.5 – Communications Planning](#)

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## Sustained Incident Management

16. **General** This section provides guidance to Incident Controllers on bushfire incident management protocols.

17. **Incident Control** A key to achieving control is the early notification of a **Control Point** and a relevant **Incident Command Channel** to ensure additional requested resources are properly received and tasked before progressing onto the fire ground.

18. **Incident Naming** Incidents will be named using a common standard. In many instances, the locality place or feature may be adequate. The nearest major roadway and the LG name may be necessary for other situations where there are no specific features.

19. **Incident Weather Forecast** The Bureau of Meteorology has established the following process when requesting Incident Weather Forecasts (IWFs) for uncontrolled fires. Requests should be submitted through the IWFs Online Request System:

<https://incidentweatherforecast.service.bom.gov.au/>

User Name: bureau-request

Password: m6DTjc\$JCh

This will automatically send an email to the forecaster, however an alerting phone call to the duty forecaster on (08) 9263 2260 is advisable. When completing the IWFs request the Incident Name box must be completed as follows:

Inc Name space Inc Number

Cockburn 123456

NOTE: Do NOT use "special characters" like "hashtags (#)" in the Incident Name box.

20. **Control Points.** As an incident expands the location and size of a control point needs to be continually reassessed to address the incident needs and expanding IMT.

When identifying a location for a control point a number of factors need to be considered, including the ability to receive and dispatch resources in a timely manner, access to amenities, and ensure it is able to accommodate the expansion of the IMT for the duration of an incident.

21. **Resource Escalation.** The IC must continuously reassess the incident situation in order to ensure strategies (and IMT to plan and implement those strategies) are effectively resourced. The request for additional resources requires planning of arrival, and subsequent tasking and control.

22. **Creating Divisions and Sectors.** All bushfires have potential to expand beyond the physical management capacity of a single IC undertaking all IMT roles. IC/Ops Officer are to create divisions and sectors in order to ensure the safety of personnel on the fire ground and to ensure that the IC/Ops Officer remains in control of firefighting efforts.

Sectors and Divisions must be readily identified by name and communicated to all concerned. Naming of Sectors should follow the phonetic alphabet or functional name for example: Sector Alpha to the left, Sector November to the right, RUI Sector, Water Sector. Naming of Divisions should follow a numerical format, for example Division One, Division Two, Division Three.

- **Divisions** are created to provide a command structure to a group of sectors. Divisions are to be created when the number of sectors active on the fire ground and operating to the Ops Officer exceeds the accepted span of control (>5).
- **Sectors** may be physical or functional in nature. Sectors *may* be created at bushfires under the following circumstances.

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| PHYSICAL SECTORS  | FUNCTIONAL SECTORS   |
|---|--|
| Where the number of appliances active on the fire ground and operating to the IC/Ops Officer exceeds the accepted span of control 1 to 5. | <b>Back burning.</b> Where dedicated resources are tasked to undertaking a back burn.  |
| Where the area involved has caused crews to operate beyond the physical management of the IC/Ops Officer.                                 | <b>Evacuation.</b> Where considerable and dedicated resources are tasked exclusively with evacuation.                          |
| Where multiple fires are being combated (through deliberate lighting or spotting).  | <b>Water.</b> Where the provision of water supplies requires dedicated management.   |
| Where the fire activity on a particular flank requires the dedicated management of one individual.  | <b>Aerial Suppression.</b> Where the guidance of aerial suppression assets requires the exclusive attention of one individual. |

23. **Mop up/Black out.** Effective mop up is required to ensure the bushfire remains contained and controlled. Extinguishing or removing burning material along or near the fire control line by mopping up to minimum standards will minimise the risk of breakouts.

The minimum standards for mop up are:

- Fire perimeter blacked out, to a minimum depth of 20m from the perimeter or as specified by the Incident Controller (IC).
- All burning trees extinguished or removed within 100m of perimeter or as specified by the IC.
- Mineral earth break constructed around the perimeter to a minimum width of 1m.
- The Incident Controller may vary this standard but needs to document his decision and rotational for the decision.

24. **Patrol** Effective patrolling is one of the most important tasks at any bushfire. Identifying potential locations where escapes may occur and controlling any breakouts or hop-overs during the early stage of their development can save considerable suppression effort and minimise adverse impacts.

Patrolling is an essential task that is undertaken in conjunction with mop up operations and must be maintained until the bushfire is declared safe.

25. **Post Fire Recovery Actions** The Incident Controller should where possible allocate resources where appropriate to close of any tracks, rehabilitate constructed fire lines to reduce erosion and access to the public, and inform the land owner of the property of the fire i.e. Shire verge or reserve.

26. **Demobilising** Following a bushfire, there will be a requirement to demobilise resources in an orderly manner ensuring that sufficient resources remain to meet suppression requirements

The Incident Controller is responsible for planning, managing and communicating the demobilization of the incident resources.

27. **Declaring Safe for Departure** Incident Controllers have a responsibility to maintain the safety of both emergency responders and the general public. IC's shall continue to commit resources until the incident is declared safe and must notify the ComCen to close incident off.

[SOP 3.2.3 - Making Safe/Rules for Departure](#)

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## DOCUMENT HISTORY

| VERSION | DATE    | DESCRIPTION OF CHANGE  |
|---------|---------|--|
| 1.0     | Jan 10  | New SOP created. New sections created: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(All)</li> </ul> <b>Source documents:</b><br><i>All listed SOP/SAP, now retired.</i> |
| 1.1     | Sept 12 | Content Reviewed   |
| 1.2     | Nov 13  | Changed strike team to task force as per AIIMS definitions<br>Changed initial objectives to better reflect Westplan Fire   |
| 2.0     | Nov 18  | Review and update of content to reflect changes within Directive 3.5 – Bushfire.   |
| 2.1     | Mar 19  | Add section 19 Incident Weather Forecast   |

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