



## Directive 3.5 – Bushfire

### SOP 3.5.7 – Employment of Strike Teams/Task Forces at Rural-Urban Interface Environment.

#### 1. Introduction

The employment of Strike Teams (ST) and/or Task Forces greatly enhances property protection during operations at bushfires. This SOP outlines the tasking and control requirements of ST/TF employed to RUI environments and the planning requirements to allow safe and effective deployment for personnel.

#### 2. Definitions.

**Strike Teams** – A set number of resources of the same type that have an established minimum number of personnel supported by a minimum of one (1) management resource (Team Leader). STs are made up of resources of the same type such as: appliances, crew, earth moving machinery, etc.

**Task Forces** – A combination of resources that can be assembled for a specific purpose and have a leader, common communications system and may incorporate a mixture of different resource types.

[SOP 3.2.11 – Strike Team Task Force Resources](#)

**3. Purpose.** The employment of Strike Teams and/or Task Forces during firefighting operations at the RUI provides strategic flexibility to achieve incident control objectives. A ST/TF of personnel and resources with the appropriate firefighting or structural defence capability, for the type of RUI environment they are to be deployed to, should be pre-positioned according to requirements, and/or stationed at the staging area for rapid response to developing situations.

All ST/TF deployed to an incident are the responsibility of the Incident Controller (IC) and must therefore follow the agreed chain of command reporting protocol.

It is imperative that ST/TF personnel are adequately briefed by the IC or Operations Officers (OO) so that the appropriate situational awareness and safety considerations are delivered, prior to these personnel entering the fireground or pre-positioned location.

Strategic or specialised tasking requirements may include, but are not limited to:

- structural triage;
- a range of firefighting strategies
- rapid damage assessment;
- evacuation;
- back-burning; and
- water supply, etc.

#### Principles/Planning Factors

**4. Strike Team/Task Force Planning.** Prior to ST/TF personnel being deployed to operational areas, State Operations Centers (SOC), Metropolitan Operations Centers (MOC) and Regional Operations Centers (ROC) and IMT's should be proactive in conducting risk analysis to obtain a comprehensive assessment and understanding of the community profile. Factors to be considered would include, but not be limited to the built environment, natural environment, social environment, and the interface environment.

This risk analysis needs to be conducted to assist DFES and other agency personnel in developing individuals and team's Situational Awareness (SA). This transfer of information via a range of briefings will aid in mitigating against safety concerns that would include the likelihood of entrapment or burn over.

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SA is defined as ‘the perception of environmental elements within a volume of time and/or space, SA involves being aware of what is happening in the vicinity, in order to understand how information, events, and one’s actions will impact goals and objectives, both immediately and in the near future’. This awareness is critical in all decision making processes throughout the chain of command.

5. **Specific planning** ST/TF are to be tasked in accordance with the following planning principles.

PRINCIPLE	NOTES
<b>Minimum Capability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Command – (1) ST/TF Leader with independent mobility</li> <li>The appliance type must be suitable for the RUI environment they are deploying to</li> <li>Water supply requirements must be adequate</li> </ul>
<b>Objective</b>	A clear objective/aim is to be identified for their task. This will be developed from clear briefings.
<b>Task to Capability</b>	ST/TF are not to be given tasks beyond the capacity of their individual parts or that may compromise safety. ST/TF appliance types must be risk assessed as suitable for that RUI environment.
<b>Available Water Supplies</b>	<p>Depending upon where the RUI environment is, the water supply and availability for that area must be assessed.</p> <p>The deployment of bulk water with suitable couplings should be deployed to assist in firefighting operations.</p> <p>Mobile water supplies (tankers) should be located in support of crews as soon as practical. Tankers should be located in a safe position and all crews be kept informed of the location.</p>
<b>Information</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ST/TF Leaders are to be provided mapping suitable for the complexity of their task.</li> <li>Where available, ST/TF Leaders are to be provided with mapped details of previously undertaken <i>Street Triage</i> (see <a href="#">SOP 3.5.6 – Structural Triage</a>)</li> <li>ST/TF leaders are to be briefed and provided with all known predictions of fire behaviour for each anticipated work location to support SA.</li> </ul>
<b>Boundaries</b>	Each ST/TF Leader is to be provided with an Area of Responsibility (AoR) with clearly defined and mutually understood Division or Sector boundaries
<b>Communications</b>	ST/TF leaders are to be provided with clear communications plans. These must be robust in supporting command and control for crew safety.
<b>Logistics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ST/TF are to remain logistically supported by the tasking IMT</li> <li>Water Supplies - Mobile water tankers must be staged in support of ST/TF operations</li> </ul>
<b>Exit Strategy</b>	ST/TF Leaders are to be given clear parameters by the controlling IMT as to when their task would be deemed untenable and they are expected to withdraw their crews.
<b>Safety</b>	Safety is to take priority over all operational activities. All activities must be consistent with the adopted best practice of LACES. Refer to <a href="#">SOP 3.5.10 crew safety bushfire for safety</a>

6. **Duties of the Task Force/Strike Team Leader and crew leaders** The tactical procedures and safety considerations for ST Leaders, TF Leaders and Crew Leaders are listed within the Annex A of this SOP.

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The size and complexity of an incident will determine the appropriate Operations Structure specific to that incident. The ST/TF Leader is the critical link between the tasked group and the Incident Management Team (IMT) via the established Incident Management Structure, typically a Sector Commander, Divisional Commander, Operations Officer etc. It is incumbent upon ST/TF Leaders to ensure the safety of their crews, the feasibility of their task and to continually update the IMT on the progress of the task. Specific duties of the ST/TF Leader are as follows.

DUTY	NOTES
<b>Command</b>	Command assigned crews during all phases of the task: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The deployment convoy</li> <li>• The task</li> <li>• The re-deployment convoy (or withdrawal)</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	Upon arrival within sector undertake an <i>Immediate Street Assessment</i> (irrespective of whether details of a previously undertaken Street Triage have been provided) <b>Note.</b> Additional guidance is provided at <a href="#">SOP 3.5.8 - Immediate Street Assessments</a>
<b>Tasking</b>	Task crews in accordance with the Immediate Street Assessment. Provide each crew with the following minimum information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest known fire behaviour and predictions</li> <li>• Task (Allocated structure requiring protection)</li> <li>• Aim of defensive task (e.g. protect from destruction, deny as fuel source)</li> <li>• Water point/reticulation details</li> <li>• Communications plan</li> <li>• Criteria for abandoning task</li> <li>• Withdrawal route and rendezvous</li> </ul>
<b>Report</b>	Maintain ongoing exchange of information with supervisor by providing scheduled reports on work progress, resource status, and reporting any significant changes or emerging risks.
<b>Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety is to take priority over all operational activities. All activities must be consistent with the adopted best practice of LACES. Refer to <a href="#">SOP 3.5.10 Crew Safety at Bushfires</a>.</li> <li>• Only task crews on feasible tasks that achieve, or contribute to achieving, the objective</li> <li>• Maintain communications with each element of the ST/TF</li> <li>• Direct withdrawal if deemed necessary</li> <li>• Maintain situational awareness</li> <li>• Continually update crews on fire behaviour/wind changes</li> </ul>

The Crew Leader must be prepared to control operations physically independent of the TF/ST Leader. As such, Crew Leaders must undertake similar duties to the TF/ST Leader, but at a lower level. Duties are described as follows.

DUTY	NOTES
<b>Command</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remain in control of crew members during all phases of the task</li> <li>Assist ST/TF leader to coordinate crews to achieve overall ST/TF objective.</li> </ul>
<b>Planning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upon arrival assess the feasibility of the task (information quickly dates in the face of extreme fire behaviour)</li> <li>Deploy allocated resources in accordance with <a href="#">SOP 3.5.9 – Firefighting within Rural Urban Interface Environment</a>, modified to suit local conditions and requirements.</li> </ul>
<b>Tasking</b>	<p>Upon arrival assess the task. Provide each crew member with the following minimum information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Their task, the purpose of their task and the expected fire behaviour/approach direction</li> <li>Water conservation plan</li> <li>Crew rendezvous point</li> <li>Withdrawal plan and planned signals to withdraw</li> <li>Communications plan</li> </ul>
<b>Report</b>	Maintain communications with the ST/TF Leader and update progress regularly
<b>Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plan and brief all crew members (as a group) on the actions to be taken if required to abandon the task</li> <li>Maintain regular personal contact with each crew member</li> <li>Plan the criteria to abandon the task</li> <li>Direct withdrawal if required – crews should withdraw 200 meters into the urban landscape away from the bushfire.</li> </ul>

## DOCUMENT HISTORY

AUTHOR	POSITION	VERSION	DATE	DESCRIPTION of CHANGE
A.J. Hinton	OIO	1.0	Jul 10	New SOP created. New sections created: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (All)</li> </ul> <b>Source documents:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determining Structural Triage (Arnol)</li> <li>• Triage for Fireground (Arnol)</li> <li>• Rural Urban Interface Firefighting Techniques (Arnol)</li> </ul> <b>All listed SOP/SAP, now retired.</b>
D.Childs	Doctrine	1.1	Sep 12	Content reviewed for currency- no change.
S. Bignell	Doctrine	1.2	Nov 13	Change Strike Team to include Task Force in accordance with AIIMS definitions.
K. Stanford	Doctrine	1.3	Nov 13	Addition of paragraph 3 to clarify purpose.
		2.0	Sept 18	Major review of document

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