	Directive 3.5 – Bushfire
DFES Department of Fire & Emergency Services	**SOP 3.5.12 – Tree Removal at Bushfires**

Introduction

1.   Trees may be deemed a hazard to firefighting operations due to posing a risk to life under the following circumstances.

Danger to life	• Emergency service personnel/community/public/access (property and roads)

Danger to life/property	• Spotting leading to fire spread
	  − Located within 100m of blacked out fireline
	  − Tree remains burning after all avenues of extinguishment have been explored/attempted
	• Risk to assets within tree fall zone

Crew leaders are to identify and report unsafe trees in order to minimise the risk of harm to their crew members.   The following procedure is designed to ensure the safe identification, inspection, and if necessary, removal of unsafe trees at bushfires.   Further information is provided at Directive 3.5 – Bushfires.

Procedures

2.   **Identification and Reporting.**   Where the integrity of a tree at a bushfire is suspect, the following identification and reporting is to occur.

PROCEDURE	NOTES
Mark the Tree as a Hazard	• In accordance with marking methods below
Isolate the Hazard	• Cordon-off any tracks, roads or areas that may be put at risk
Report	• Inform the Sector Commander (SC) who is to inform the Ops Officer • The SC is to request support from qualified tree fellers where trees need to be felled[1] • Record all saves and trees felled for future evidence and contentious issues[2]
Identify Location for Later Reference	• Mark the nearest point on the track to identify its proximity • Map reference and if possible GPS plotting to identify the location of the tree
Alert	• SC are responsible to alert all personnel of all risks within their sector • SC must in-brief relief crews and provide updates both periodically and as they occur

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[1] Intermediate fellers are required to deal with 'round and sound-green trees'.   Advanced fellers are required to deal with 'bent and burning/unstable trees'.
[2] When USAR team members are engaged as tree fellers they will record details through GPS and photographic evidence.

3.   **Marking.**   Trees suspected of being at risk of falling, or dropping limbs are to be colour-coded using demarcation tape (day) or cyalume sticks (night/low visibility) as follows.

COLOUR[3]	DESCRIPTION
RED/PINK	Tree is suspect
BLUE	Tree should be extinguished
YELLOW	Tree should be felled[4]

4.   **Minimum Safe Deployable Crew.**   DFES Chainsaw Operators (USAR Tree Felling Teams) are to be deployed, as a minimum, in teams of two – one operator is to be qualified to Advanced Feller status.   Teams are to be deployed with communications, recording (GPS), assessment (TIC) and felling equipment unless prior arrangement has been made for the IC/IMT to provide such equipment.

5.   **Response.**   IC is to request Tree Felling Teams through the COMCEN. The SCC is to notify the Rescue Manager/USAR Officer who after consultation with the SOA will coordinate the response.

Note: For safety reasons chainsaw operations will only be available during daylight hours.

6.   **Reporting and Tasking of Tree Felling Teams.**   Tree felling teams are to report through the Control Point/ICV to the IC/IMT, be briefed on the situation and known tasks, and be allocated to a Sector Commander (SC) within the operational structure.   Tree felling teams will often require fire fighting crew support in order to cool tree barrels prior to cutting.

7.   **Hazard Assessment.**   Trees identified as hazards by crews/SC are only to be approved for felling and/or removal by qualified Advanced Tree Fellers from P&W, DFES or other recognised agencies. The use of unqualified operators to fell trees at bushfires *is not to occur*.   Tree Fellers will in the first instance attempt to save all trees where possible and are trained to "sound" the tree to assess its viability. They save far more trees than they fell and have an extremely strong environmental ethos and training.   All decisions are to be reported to the IC through the SC.

8.   **Safety Warnings.**   Communications and liaison with all crews in the area are to be maintained throughout felling operations.   Safety whistles and horns are to be sounded prior to and after felling operations.

9.   **Recording and Reporting Tree Removal.**   The following records are to be made of tree removal:
- **USAR Tree Felling Team.** When USAR team members are engaged as tree fellers they are to record details of assessed (saved) and felled trees through GPS and photographic evidence.
- **SC.**   Record and report the occurrence and location of all felled/removed trees to the IC prior to departure from an incident.
- **IC.**   Post incident, records of tree removal is to be submitted with all incident records to Information Management.   IC are to ensure that local environmental officers and local bushland groups are advised of the reasoning for any tree removals undertaken.

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[3] Tape/cyalume stick colours can be mixed (e.g. yellow and blue - cool and cut)

[4] Decisions to fell trees can only be made by qualified advanced tree fellers from P&W, DFES USAR or other environmental officers who are trained to 'sound' trees.

SOP 3.5.12 – Tree Removal At Bushfires V2.2_Jan 14   Review Jan 2016

DOCUMENT HISTORY

VERSION	DATE	DESCRIPTION of CHANGE
1.0	Dec 10	New SOP created. New sections created: • (All) **Source documents:** Operational Circular 08/2008 *All listed SOP/SAP, now retired.*
2.0	Jan 11	Following detail added: • Deployable Equipment Levels • Tasking • Response Procedure • Warnings
2.1	Jan 13	Reviewed Response procedure Reformatted to comply with OD7.2
2.2	Jan 14	Review formatting and terminology