

# Enhanced response & recovery capability

## Strategic direction

Continue to lead the way in fire response while building on our recovery efforts. Including:

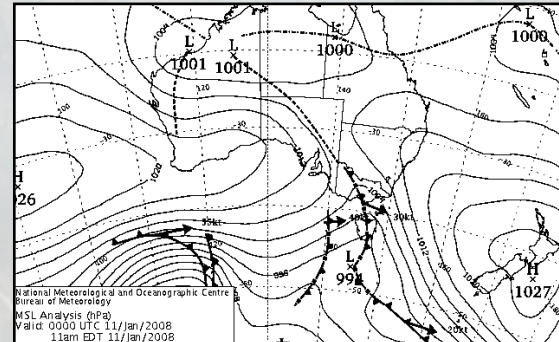
- aircraft and rappel crews for rapid and remote area response;
- greater integration across agencies, including shared vehicles and the integrated Emergency Coordination Centre;
- road and strategic fuelbreak networks for increased protection and safer working environment for firefighters;
- seamless integration and support for recovery from bushfires.

Victoria's bushfire-fighting agencies are recognised as world leaders in putting bushfires out. This reputation has been earned with success on first attack, as well as managing prolonged 'campaign' fires, especially in remote areas. The highly developed dry firefighting skills (limited water) positions Victoria's bushfire agencies to successfully operate in drier conditions under climate change.

## Elements of successful response

The major elements of successful fire suppression, both first attack and extended attack are the same:

- Sufficient numbers and coverage of fit, skilled, accredited and experienced firefighters, including expert remote area firefighters, such as helicopter rappel teams, allowing rapid response to all areas of the state;
- Firefighting equipment designed specifically for bushfires, including 4WD slip-on units, tankers and bulldozers enabling firefighters to operate in a safe, efficient and environmentally aware manner;
- An aircraft fleet that supports on-ground firefighters providing detection, access and bombing, as well as providing rapid transport;
- State of the art equipment and technology, such as the Infrared LineScan, GPS and thermal imaging, to inform firefighters of current fire conditions;



- Seamless and integrated incident control and coordination, ensuring adequate planning, response and information is available to firefighters and threatened communities; and
- Modern logistics systems that can be quickly deployed to support ground crews and help manage health, wellbeing and fatigue issues.





## Challenges to safe, effective firefighting

Increasing bushfire frequency and severity raises the exposure of firefighters to fire, presenting greater safety challenges for fire management agencies.

### Bushfire agencies must manage:

#### Diminishing people capacity

Changing settlement patterns and demographics in bushfire prone areas and competition with other industries have led to a reduction in both volunteer and career firefighter recruitment pools. As well as having fewer people available, valuable local knowledge and skills are also being lost.

#### Radios and communication

Reliable and effective communication systems are vital for the safety of firefighters, threatened communities and for the efficient management of bushfires. An effective and reliable communications network will be maintained to ensure safe fire fighting operations.

#### Equipment

The rapidly changing bushfire landscape requires highly mobile and agile bushfire agencies. These agencies need the ability to make the most of advancements in firefighting technologies, including vehicles and IT.

#### Access and support

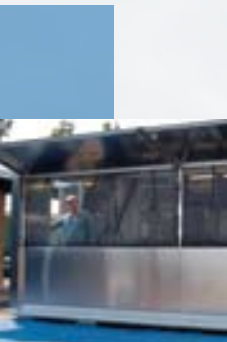
Roads, water points (dams) and strategic fuel breaks play an important role in fire operations, particularly in first attack and firefighter safety. For the past 15–20 years, through changing rural industries and a shift in land management, the maintenance of access roads, water points and fuelbreaks has become increasingly challenging.

## Firefighting in the future

Key response challenges in the future include multiple ignitions in remote areas, rapidly developing fires in interface areas and prolonged campaign fires. To manage these challenges requires a skilled, experienced and resourced response capability. It must have the flexibility and mobility to be deployed around the state providing rapid first attack and sustained campaign operations.

#### Risk based approach

The allocation and positioning of resources is based on projected bushfire risk levels, both seasonal and daily, to ensure appropriate coverage and maximised response capability. To achieve this requires a flexible and mobile workforce.





### Flexible aircraft fleet

An aircraft fleet with flexibility to meet an array of response and detection operations including:

- First attack fleet for rapid response across the state;
- Larger water capacity aircraft fleet for high risk and campaign fires;
- Dedicated aircraft strategically located to protect significant state assets (e.g. Melbourne's water catchments) and high fire risk areas (e.g. Otways);
- Upgraded network of airbases and facilities across the state to support air operations, especially in remote locations; and
- Upgraded dispatch, coordination and operational safety systems to meet specific aviation risk management requirements.

### Integrated equipment

Integrated DSE/CFA vehicle and equipment fleets are needed to ensure that the fleet mix matches local needs. The right equipment in the right location is critical to ensuring firefighting agencies and trained local communities have the capacity to undertake rapid first attack.



### More firefighters

A fit, trained, experienced and accredited mobile firefighting force that can be deployed around the state is needed to meet risk levels. Increased investment in firefighter development is required to bridge the experience gap and ensure skills progression of operational and incident managers.

To support an agile workforce requires the development and maintenance of suitable facilities in remote locations (mobile and/or fixed).

The increase in planned burning and changing nature of response efforts requires a shift in traditional planning, logistics and operations roles. Planning for response operations will require a holistic approach, drawing on all elements of land and fire management, including planned burning objectives and operations, cultural heritage values and asset values.

Operations will need to examine the best use of resources, including aircraft and ground crews with support from logistics with facilities, accommodation, equipment, resources and staff movement.

### Remote firefighting capability

An enhanced rapid response capability in remote areas is crucial for successful first attack. Investment in remote capability, including extra helicopter rappel teams is a key element of future response strategies.

### Transition to campaign fires

When first attack is unsuccessful, the seamless transition to campaign (prolonged) response is critical. Managing campaign fires requires access to a large resource base that allows for rapid surge capacity and

helps manage firefighter fatigue.

Recently, Victoria's firefighting agencies have drawn experienced resources from interstate and overseas to boost the surge capacity. Strengthening these arrangements is a vital component of ensuring access to skilled and experienced surge resources in the future.

### Strategic fuel breaks

The establishment and maintenance of a network of strategic fuel breaks will provide extra support for the protection of significant assets, ecosystems and communities. Importantly they create a safer workplace for firefighters and facilitate the delivery of planned burns.

### Roads and water points.

An effective and well maintained road and bridge network across the public land estate enhances rapid response, providing ready access to water and improving firefighter safety.

### Integrated control and coordination

Seamless integration of agencies delivers efficient and comprehensive coordination and control at local, regional and state levels. A key project will be the establishment of an Integrated Emergency Coordination Centre.

Increased support and development of incident control and coordination centres, including mobile and fixed infrastructure, will enable rapid deployment of Incident Management Teams (IMT's). Employment of the latest technology, especially IT and communications, allows for real-time information flow from fire ground to incident control centres and the community.



# Recovery

Recovery begins the day the fire starts. Effective recovery can not wait until the fire is controlled.

Victorian communities have become increasingly expectant that emergency management organisations will coordinate the entire Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery cycle. This is a theme repeated globally following natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the 2004 South Asia Tsunami. This experience has driven a greater emphasis on recovery, including the social, economic, built, cultural and environmental impacts.

## Challenges of an increased focus on recovery

Historically, bushfire agencies have focussed on environmental aspects of recovery, in particular track rehabilitation and erosion control. The community's expectation of a smooth seamless transition to recovery requires skills, expertise and resources.

The sustained commitment to emergency efforts heavily affects bushfire agencies who, over successive seasons of major bushfires, become caught in a response-recovery cycle, which impacts negatively on normal organisational responsibilities.

An increase in the use of fire to reduce fuel loads in our forests will require an increased capacity to undertake rehabilitation and recovery on public and private land.

Communities need assurances that an increased burning program will also have in place clear and consistent

policy, outlining assistance available to those adversely affected by bushfire or planned fire.

Without additional planning a gap can emerge between the burning activity, emergency response activity and recovery assistance. Whilst fire agencies' processes have reduced this gap, the community expects a seamless transition from the burning or suppression activity to recovery. Presentation of a whole of government approach to communities impacted is a challenge for the multiple agencies involved in providing recovery assistance.

## Recovery in the future

Effective bushfire recovery requires a whole of government approach to ensure that recovery commences with response.

### A consistent approach

Embedding recovery in emergency coordination structures will improve the seamless integration of recovery into bushfire management.

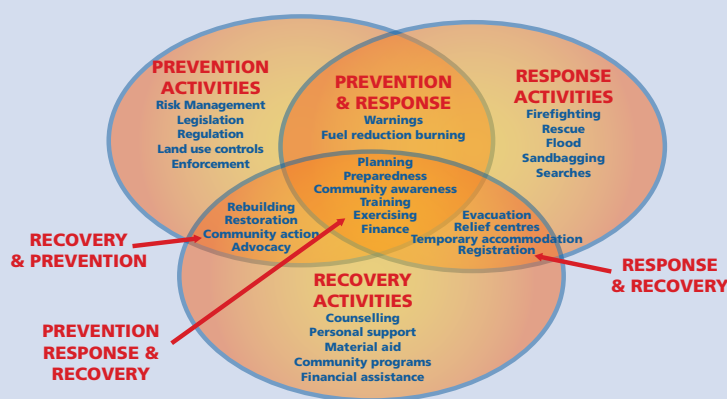
Bushfire agencies will work closely with DHS, the lead recovery for agency in Victoria, and with other recovery support agencies such as DPI (agricultural recovery) to ensure that government support to fire affected communities, individuals and businesses is delivered in a seamless and efficient manner.

Clear and consistent recovery policy (e.g. fencing and water replacement) that outlines government support for fire affected communities, individuals and businesses, and encourages the uptake of appropriate levels of insurance will assist in delivering effective and responsive recovery programs.

### Increased capacity

Increasing the capacity of bushfire recovery agencies to provide assistance and integrated recovery planning will provide more efficient and enhanced recovery programs.

Figure 10: Emergency Management Model



Source: Emergency Management Manual, 2006

**Effective emergency management requires prevention, preparedness, response and recovery**