

# WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT OPERATING PRINCIPLES ON DAYS OF CATASTROPHIC FIRE DANGER RATING

## Purpose

These whole-of-government principles outline the State Emergency Management Committee's (SEMC) agreed policy framework for balancing critical service provision and staff welfare on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating.

The principles are also an important reference for balancing critical service provision and staff welfare, no matter what the Fire Danger Rating may be on any one day.

## Scope

The South Australian Government and all of its employees and contractors have a mutual responsibility to be prepared for any day of bushfire risk and danger.

These principles should be applied in a manner that is consistent with legislative provisions and industrial instruments.

## Definitions

**Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating** is the peak level of warning issued by fire authorities and the Bureau of Meteorology. For further information please go to the Country Fire Service (CFS) website [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au).

On days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, the Bureau of Meteorology will have issued a 'Fire Weather Warning' which will contain information on the status and evolution of weather conditions. For further information please go to the Bureau's website: [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au).

## Principles for Service Provision and Staff Welfare on Days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating

### Whole-of-Government Principles

1. All agencies will ensure that their business continuity plans address the need to ensure that critical services can be provided (and accessible) on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, in addition to other circumstances in which business continuity plans may need to be invoked.
2. All agencies will undertake a risk assessment of business activity on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating that takes into account routine and critical agency requirements and the implications for critical service provision, staff considerations (including their personal bushfire survival plans), stakeholders, agency assets and agency infrastructure. The risk assessment should also consider flow-on implications for stakeholders with a critical dependency on the agency's services.
3. All agencies will have a communication plan that should address communication with people who have different abilities, disabilities or access to technology. The Plan should enable staff and stakeholders to be aware of what to do prior to the fire danger season or prior to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating; what to do when a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating is issued; and what to do when an actual bushfire threat arises.
4. All staff will, (subject to these principles in their entirety), be expected to work on a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating if scheduled or rostered to do so.

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5. All agencies will apply their Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating policies in a manner consistent with the CFS messaging framework, noting the three key elements of that framework:
  - The recommended actions and potential fire behaviour and impact of a Fire Danger Rating of Catastrophic;
  - The appropriate use of Bushfire Safer Places and Last Resort Refuges;
  - The hierarchy of Bushfire Warning messages (Advice, Watch and Act, and Emergency Warning).
6. On a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating all work-related activities that require travel within or through the affected area will be risk assessed.
7. All agencies will consider the implications of their policy decisions in relation to key stakeholders, including how a decision may affect critical service provision, vulnerable members of the community, dependency on the agency by other stakeholders, the public, and the availability to be prepared for and/or respond to an emergency situation.
8. To facilitate cross-agency communication, all agencies are required to designate a senior officer as a point of contact to ensure consistent approaches across government and other stakeholder groups, to coordinate decision making, and to minimise risk to staff, clients and other stakeholders.

## Agency Principles

1. Agencies will be responsible for determining whether service continuation, service suspension or service closure is applied. Agency decisions will consider factors including (but not limited to) risk assessments, the threat environment and CFS messaging.
2. Agencies will be responsible for determining whether individual employees merit not attending at their workplace (including consideration of whether the workplace is in a CFS designated Bushfire Safer Place), based on agency business continuity plans, risk assessments, whether the employee has critical skills or critical service delivery requirements and whether the employee's individual personal circumstances incorporate extenuating considerations.
3. Agencies will encourage staff to develop personal bushfire survival plans. Where an employee's residence requires them to travel through a Catastrophic area to attend their workplace or travel home, line managers will work with the employee to consider the risks associated with such travel, options for alternative work arrangements (e.g. at another workplace (which has the assistive technologies/equipment necessary for staff with disability) or at home), any link between the employee and critical skills or critical service provision requirements; and any special circumstances the employee has to care for family members as part of their bushfire survival plan or associated with school closures.
4. Agencies will manage volunteers and contractors in the same way as they manage employees. This includes balancing service provision and staff welfare, taking into account a risk assessment of the circumstances. Where a contractor or volunteer is responsible to a non-government entity, agencies will engage with responsible officers in each non-government entity in relation to service and welfare requirements on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating.
5. Where employees of government agencies are also emergency service volunteers the employing agency should ensure the volunteer is released for emergency service operations where practicable.

## Review

These principles will be reviewed annually, with input from SEMC member agencies.

## References

A copy of these principles forms an attachment to the Bushfire Hazard Plan. The CFS is the responsible custodian of this Plan.

## Approved By

State Emergency Management Committee

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	Date for Review: September 2017

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