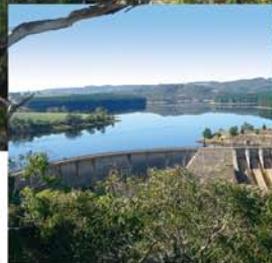


CODE OF PRACTICE

for fire management
on Public Land
in South Australia

2012-2016



Government of South Australia
Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources



SA Water



ForestrySA



Government of South Australia

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.



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FOREWORD

Fire is integral to the South Australian landscape, and has shaped the nature of our native flora and fauna. Fire will continue to shape and influence the character of our public lands.

Every summer we face the risk of bushfires. The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, ForestrySA and SA Water are responsible for managing fire on all of South Australia's public lands. This responsibility is shared across the landscape with the South Australian Country Fire Service, Local Government and private landholders in working to protect life and property, as well as maintaining environmental values through the management of fire.

This Code of Practice draws on the existing *Heads of Agencies Agreement for Fire Management on Public Land*. It contains the overarching fire management principles, performance measures and desired outcomes for fire management programs on public lands. The principles within this Code complement the State Bushfire Management Plan and will facilitate the seamless integration of bushfire management across public and private land in South Australia.

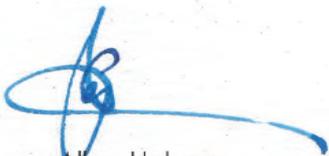
The Government wants to improve its capacity for managing bushfire risk on the State's public land. A shift to provide a consistent, cooperative year-round prevention and suppression effort supports this intent. We are pleased to approve this *Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land in South Australia*.

VISION

To manage public lands responsibly and co-operatively to achieve an affordable and acceptable level of risk mitigation and ecological management. We aim to reduce the size, frequency and impact of bushfires from public land on communities, infrastructure and the environment.

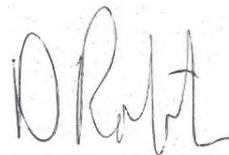
DECLARATION

As the heads of the Agencies responsible for public land management in South Australia, we approve this Code of Practice. We will undertake, on behalf of all South Australians, to deliver fire management programs on public lands that contribute to increased public safety and the long-term resilience of the South Australian environment.



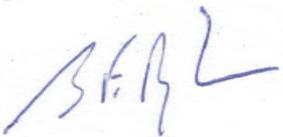
Allan Holmes
Chief Executive
Department of Environment, Water
and Natural Resources

27 April 2012



Islay Robertson
Chief Executive
South Australian Forestry Corporation

27 April 2012



John Ringham
Chief Executive Officer
South Australian Water Corporation

27 April 2012



Greg Nettleton
Chief Officer
South Australian Country Fire Service

27 April 2012

1) INTRODUCTION

As a natural environmental process, fire has both positive and negative outcomes. Fire plays an important role in landscape regeneration, nutrient cycling and habitat maintenance, and much of the Australian landscape has a long history of fire adaptation. The impact of fire varies with the frequency, intensity, scale, time of year, and the fire sensitivity of the ecological community in which it occurs.

Parts of South Australia are highly prone to fire, with hot, dry and windy summers leading to bushfires that are typically difficult to suppress and often lead to significant public safety, economic, social and environmental impacts. Humans, first through Aboriginal peoples and more recently through European settlement, have had a significant impact on fire regimes across South Australia.

Fire Impacts on the Community

Contemporary land managers, as part of a suite of conservation and land management tools, use fire to reduce the risk to life, property and the environment. Using fire in a risk-based framework and as a land management tool acknowledges that both the application of fire and its exclusion will have economic, social and environmental consequences, some of which are predictable, but others which are not.

1.1. Purpose of this Code of Practice

This Code of Practice has been developed to provide a framework for the safe and effective management of fire on public land in South Australia. The State Government recognises the primacy of life in bushfire management; the principles listed in this Code contribute towards the dual purpose of protecting life and property while promoting the environmentally sustainable management of public land.

The Code establishes the minimum standard and performance measures for fire management on public land in South Australia and acknowledges that higher standards may be implemented by individual agencies to accommodate localised risks or other factors.

1.2. Application of the Code

The Code applies to all public lands under the care and control of DEWNR, ForestrySA and SA Water in the State of South Australia (hereafter 'public lands').

Staff, contractors and volunteers of DEWNR, ForestrySA, SA Water and SA Country Fire Service (SA CFS; 'the Agencies') undertaking fire activities on public lands will comply with this Code.

Any policy, plan, instruction, prescription or guideline developed for fire management activities on public lands will be prepared in a manner that is consistent with this Code. Agencies will meet their responsibilities and obligations under this Code through assigned levels of delegation, funding, planning and resource allocation.

Relationship to legislation, departmental policy and approved management plans

This code supports the discharge of the Agencies' legislative responsibilities, which include:

The South Australian *Emergency Management Act 2004*, which establishes strategies and systems for the management of emergencies in South Australia.

The *Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005*, which applies to all land throughout the State, including public lands managed by the Agencies.

The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPWA), *Wilderness Protection Act 1992* (WPA), and *Crown Lands Management Act 2009* (CLMA), relevant reserve management plans, and the Wilderness Code of Management (where applicable).

The *Forestry Act 1950*, which provides for the management of Forest Reserves and Native Forest Reserves, including fire prevention, by ForestrySA.

The Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC), which provides for the protection of matters of national

environmental significance, including threatened species and ecological communities.

The *Native Vegetation Act 1992* (NVA), which guides the management of South Australia's native vegetation.

This Code is based on the COAG National Bushfire Mitigation and Management Principles (2004; **Schedule 1**).

1.3. Endorsement of the Code

The Code of Practice for Fire Management on Public Land in South Australia will be signed by the respective Chief Executives from Heads of Agencies and endorsed by the State Bushfire Coordinating Committee.

In endorsing this Code of Practice, the respective Agencies commit to implementing, as a matter of priority, the actions within for the benefit of present and future generations of South Australians. It is acknowledged that implementation of this Code will be subject to budgetary constraints in individual jurisdictions. However, the principles identified in this document will be reflected in strategic planning undertaken by each agency and the cooperative arrangements developed.

1.4. Monitoring of compliance

Compliance with the Code will be monitored by the Heads of Agencies Committee and reported on annually to the State Bushfire Coordinating Committee.

1.5. Review of the Code

The Code will be reviewed within 5 years of its approval, or at the discretion of the Heads of Agencies Committee.



2) FRAMEWORK FOR FIRE MANAGEMENT ON PUBLIC LAND

The following principles align with the Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery (PPRR) framework as established within the State Emergency Management Plan, and underpin fire management activities undertaken by the signatory agencies. These principles align with the **Research, Risk Modification, Readiness, Response and Recovery (5R)** framework endorsed by COAG in 2004.

The Agencies have agreed to be parties to this Code of Practice and confirm their commitment to conducting cooperative fire management and suppression activities, including the sharing of knowledge, resources, and relevant systems.

The Agencies agree that the protection of life must be given priority over all other fire management and suppression activities.

2.1. Prevention (Risk Modification)

The Agencies are committed to an integrated Bushfire Risk Management planning approach that is consistent with the principles, policies and standards set out in the State Bushfire Management Plan, and will ensure they consult and/or collaborate with each other in areas where a shared interest applies. (*COAG Principles 2, 3 & 5*)

The Agencies will comply with agreed policies, standards or guidelines endorsed by the State Bushfire Coordination Committee (SBCC) when planning for and undertaking fire management activities. (*COAG Principles 2, 5 & 6*)

The Agencies will contribute to and participate in a collaborative and cooperative manner on all Bushfire Management Area Committees wherever public lands of the respective Agencies are located.

The Agencies will establish and maintain planning policies, standards and procedures that reflect Agency-specific needs whilst continuing to support the principles of integrated landscape-scale fire management planning. (*COAG Principles 2 & 5*)

The Agencies will cooperate in the implementation and delivery of prevention strategies including prescribed burning or other fuel management programs where there is a demonstrated operational, logistical and/or environmental benefit. (*COAG Principles 2, 3 & 5*)

Performance measures:

Outputs:

All fire-prone public lands are covered by risk-based fire management plans.

A rolling program of strategic fuel management works is implemented annually across 5% of high risk areas of native vegetation on public lands.

Outcome:

Risk-based fire management is delivered strategically across public lands in a safe and coordinated manner.

2.2. Preparedness (Readiness)

The Agencies will maintain sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and competent personnel necessary for delivering fire management activities.

As a minimum, the Agencies will use the SA CFS Training Pathways and re-accreditation program as the basis for ensuring personnel are adequately trained and competent to fill the roles and functions expected of them. (*COAG Principles 4 & 6*)

The Agencies will comply with occupational health and safety requirements during any inter-Agency training or operational activity. (*COAG Principles 3 & 7*)

The Agencies will, as far as is practicable, ensure that adequate levels of appropriate plant and equipment necessary for bushfire response and delivery of fire management strategies on public land are maintained. (*COAG Principles 3 & 7*)

The Agencies will ensure that all fire fighting plant and equipment is developed and maintained to appropriate standards and, where possible,

configured to allow interoperability. (COAG Principles 3, 7 & 8)

Individual Agencies will develop and maintain integrated response plans in agreed areas of shared fire risk. The plans will define:

- response zones
- communication arrangements
- levels of preparedness
- call out and response procedures
- agreed coordination centres for days of elevated fire danger

The Agencies agree that these response plans will complement Agency-specific response requirements as considered appropriate by that Agency at that time. (COAG Principles 2, 3, 6 & 7)

Performance measures:

Output:

Response plans are current and Agency fire management preparedness audits are completed annually.

Outcome:

Agencies are capable of delivering fire management works and responding to bushfires in a safe, pre-planned, coordinated and collaborative manner.

2.3. Response

The Agencies will conduct all bushfire management activities in accordance with the CFS Chief Officer's Standing Orders (COSOs), associated Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Operational Management Guidelines (OMGs). (COAG Principles 3 & 6)

Notification of incidents occurring within or in close proximity to public lands will be provided to the respective Agency as soon as is practically possible.

Response will be initiated as per pre-planned arrangements.

The Agencies will retain all legal responsibility, including workers compensations and other employee entitlements, for their employees and

members, irrespective of whether they are operating within their area of responsibility.

The Agencies will support the SA CFS during interstate and international deployments as considered appropriate at that time. (COAG Principles 2, 3 & 6)

The Agencies will be responsible for normal operating costs when operating within or outside their own area of responsibility. Any additional costs that are incurred when operating within another Agency's area of responsibility can be claimed from the other Agency. Normal Agency processes and policies will be followed for procurement of administration and logistics.

Performance measures:

Output:

Response to bushfires is rapid, adequate, coordinated, effective, and safe.

Outcome:

The impact of bushfire on communities is minimised through safe, fast, determined and thorough response.

2.4. Recovery

The Agencies will undertake formal after action reviews and post-incident analysis consistent with SA CFS policy. Outcomes from these analyses will be recorded and will contribute to the Centre for Lessons Learnt. (COAG Principles 3, 4, 7 & 8)

Collaborative monitoring of post-fire events for both bushfire and prescribed burning will be undertaken to monitor the impacts of fire in the landscape, with lessons learnt contributing to an adaptive management approach.

The Agencies acknowledge the importance of contributing toward the recovery of the natural environment after bushfire suppression activities have ceased, and will endeavour to conduct recovery activities and monitor the results, as far as is practicable. (COAG Principles 1, 2, 5 & 8)

Performance measures:

Outputs:

Debriefs and After Action Reviews, where deemed necessary, are conducted after each prescribed burn and bushfire operation.

Recommendations from debriefs and After Action Reviews are incorporated into Agency policy and procedures annually.

Data gathered through monitoring programs (intra- or inter-Agency) are integrated annually into fire management programs using an adaptive management approach.

Outcome:

Fire management policy and practices are informed by lessons learnt.

2.5. Research – Information and Analysis

The Agencies will contribute, where relevant, to cooperative and/or collaborative research projects for the improvement of fire management activities in South Australia. (COAG Principles 1, 4 & 7)

Agencies will support projects initiated by the Fire Research Institute and integrate findings into Agency policies, procedures, and practices.

Agencies will engage with research institutions to address identified knowledge gaps relating to fire management.

Performance measures:

Outputs:

The latest research is incorporated into operational practice.

Inter-Agency protocols for fire data management and sharing are developed and maintained.

An inter-Agency fire reporting database is developed and maintained.

Outcome:

The Agencies share expertise and resources in a culture of continuous improvement founded on the principles of risk management, science, and technology.

2.6. Principles for Stakeholder and Community Engagement

The Agencies will undertake and support activities that maintain public awareness of the bushfire threat, including through the ‘Prepare, Act, Survive’ campaign to promote the importance of self-protection.

Stakeholder and community engagement will:

Seek to increase recognition that fire management outcomes are maximised when public and private landholders work cooperatively.

Educate the community on the role fire has to play in the environment by identifying the different objectives of prescribed burning and the conditions under which they should be conducted in order to increase public understanding and acceptance of the contribution of prescribed burning to bushfire prevention and biodiversity conservation.

The Agencies will facilitate the provision of relevant and consistent information to media outlets that informs the public of cooperative fire management operations.

The Agencies will use electronic media outlets including the internet to keep communities informed of fire management activities.

Outcome:

The South Australian public is engaged in and aware of the role of fire in the landscape and the fire management activities being undertaken by the Agencies to reduce the impacts of bushfires on communities and the environment.

3) GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR COMPLIANCE WITH THIS CODE

Monitoring and evaluation of compliance with this Code will:

Be conducted in a manner that is timely, accurate, transparent, and effective; and

Provide for continuous improvement in relation to the effective implementation of this Code of Practice.

Monitoring and evaluation may review evidence from a variety of sources including on-site observations, retrospective assessment, examination of plans and other relevant documentation, and records of discussions with personnel, including operational debriefs.

Compliance with this Code will be assessed on an annual basis through a report to the Heads of Agencies Committee, using the listed principles and associated performance measures. This report will be forwarded to the State Bushfire Coordination Committee for noting.



SCHEDULE 1: NATIONAL BUSHFIRE MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES, COAG (2004)

1. *Bushfires are understood, accepted and respected*

Like other natural hazards, bushfires cannot be prevented. In many instances, bushfires are an important tool to assist in achieving land management objectives. The impact of unplanned fires needs to be minimised through effective action based on learning and understanding. This also requires strong self-reliance.

2. *Shared responsibility*

A philosophy of responsibility shared between communities and fire agencies underlies our approach to bushfire mitigation and management. Well-informed individuals and communities, with suitable levels of preparedness, complement the roles of fire agencies and offer the best way of minimising bushfire risks to lives, property and environmental assets.

3. *Decisions within a risk management framework*

No single action will lead to the elimination of bushfire risk. The best approach to minimising risk is to make decisions about bushfire mitigation and management within an integrated risk management framework.

4. *Integration of learning and knowledge*

Analysis of fire events is based on operational and scientific evidence and research. This should be informed by extensive and consistent national data, including fire regime mapping. The best results will be achieved by integrating all forms of knowledge, and good information about fire history, with analysis at the local and regional levels.

5. *Manage fire according to the landscape objectives*

Australia has a great diversity of climates, environments, land uses and built assets. Fire management objectives and outcomes will vary across landscapes and over time. Clear agreed objectives and an adaptive management approach are required for implementation.

6. *Consistency of purpose and unity of command*

There needs to be consistency of purpose during bushfire mitigation and unity of command for all fire response, irrespective of organisational structures.

7. *Protection of lives as the highest consideration*

Firefighter and community safety must be at the forefront of bushfire mitigation and management deliberations. Although there should always be a balance between safety, effective response and environmental considerations, it is personal safety that must be the greatest concern.

8. *Monitoring performance*

The states, territories and local governments need to regularly review their performance against these principles and other appropriate indicators. Performance review should not be allowed to wait until after a major bushfire event. If the principles are to improve performance and bring about change, they must be monitored on a regular basis.

SCHEDULE 2: HEADS OF AGENCIES COMMITTEE – ESTABLISHMENT AND GOVERNANCE

- 1) The Heads of SA CFS, DEWNR, ForestrySA and SA Water agree to establish the Heads of Agencies Committee.
- 2) This Agreement is not a statutory requirement under legislation, notwithstanding, each Agency will comply with its intent. (*COAG Principles 2, 6 & 7*)
- 3) This Heads of Agencies Agreement supersedes all previous inter-Agency fire agreements except the following (or their successors):
 - Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), Aerial application of chemical fire retardants, inspections of fire hydrants and management of CFS operated storage tanks between the SA CFS and SA Water, 2009.
 - MoU 2011/12 to 2013/14 SAW/DEWNR Seasonal Fire Program signed 6 December 2010.
 - MoU between ForestrySA and SA Water, 2009.
- 4) This Agreement will be implemented through bi-monthly meetings of the members of the Heads of Agencies. At those meetings, business will include reports from the Fire Cooperatives, and other agenda items as requested by members. The Heads of Agencies will meet six times per year, or at the specific request of any member. Decisions will be made by consensus.
- 5) Membership of the Heads of Agencies is the Chief Executive of DEWNR, the Chief Officer of the SA CFS, the Chief Executive Officer of SA Water, and the Chief Executive of ForestrySA, plus their deputies as determined by the respective Agency head. Agency Heads will be required to be present at two meetings per year, that is the meeting prior to the fire season (October) and the meeting after the fire season (April). Deputy members will attend six meetings per year.
- 6) The Chief Executive of DEWNR will chair the meeting, or if absent, will delegate an alternate member to chair the meeting.
- 7) DEWNR will provide an Executive Officer.



For further information please contact:

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Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910, or
see SA White Pages for your local
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources office.
Online information available at: <http://www.environment.sa.gov.au>

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