

media release

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Hot weather high alert

Friday, 6 February 2009

The Country Fire Service (CFS) and the Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS) have placed their resources on high alert in preparation for tomorrow's extreme weather conditions.

The Bureau of Meteorology is forecasting extreme fire danger across most of South Australia with temperatures above 40 degrees and wind gusts of up to 90kph ahead of a mid-evening change.

CFS Chief Officer Euan Ferguson said the most concerning feature of tomorrow's weather will be the strong winds which will create a potentially hazardous and high fire risk.

"The fire danger forecast for Saturday may be as extreme as we've seen in South Australia for a number of years," Mr Ferguson said.

"People who live in high fire risk areas will need to activate their Bushfire Action Plans and be prepared to swing into action by either staying and defending their property or leaving early, depending on what's been decided in the plan."

MFS Chief Officer Grant Lupton said that bushfires are not only confined to country and regional areas.

"Bushfires have the ability to spread very quickly from rural to urban environments, meaning they pose a risk to all South Australians.

"This extended heatwave has also increased the risk of structure fires," Mr Lupton said.

"I urge all home and building owners to check their air conditioners, electrical fans and other appliances for signs of overheating and to ensure those appliances aren't situated near fire hazards."

SA Police (SAPOL) will also be on high alert with special patrols to be activated as part of Operation Nomad.

Chief Superintendent Silvio Amoroso said SAPOL has boosted its number of patrols to detect people involved in deliberately lit fires and will prosecute anyone for not complying with declared fire bans and regulations.

"We have the means and resources to track down anyone who deliberately or negligently lights fires," he said.

"This is a serious crime that is reflected in the fact that South Australia has the toughest penalty in Australia with up to 20 years' imprisonment for a conviction."

Police have also identified several persons of interest and these people are being closely monitored during the fire danger season.

"Offenders should expect zero tolerance from us if they choose to deliberately or negligently start bushfires," Chief Superintendent Amoroso said.

Police are encouraging members of the community to report any suspicious behaviour or activities in bushfire prone areas through BankSA Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or the police call centre on 131 444.

If police or fire attendance is required, people should call 000.

More information on bushfire safety, restrictions on the use of machinery and equipment and Total Fire Bans, is available on the CFS website at www.cfs.sa.gov.au