

Bushfire Emergency Response

Objective

The Bushfire Emergency Response Policy and Procedure aims to ensure the safety of persons present on-site during a bushfire emergency. It provides guidelines and appropriate procedures to follow in a potential bushfire emergency.

Scope

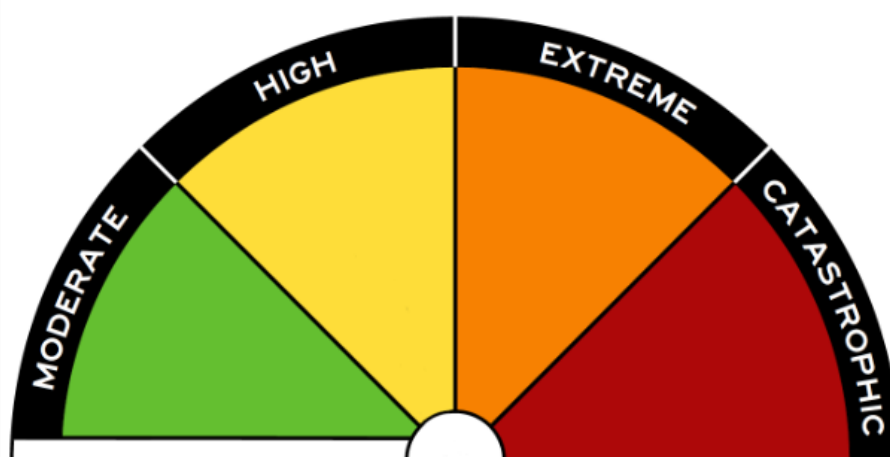
The Bushfire Emergency Response Policy and Procedure applies to anyone who may be present on-site at Cire Services or transiting to a Cire Services site, including board members, the Executive Leadership Team, Managers, Employees, Volunteers and Placement Students. It extends to Clients, Students, Families, Customers, Service Users, Service Providers or Contractors ['Person,' 'People'].

Policy

The new Australian Fire Danger Rating (2022) scale provides the best method of determining bushfire danger during the Country Fire Authority (CFA) declared Fire Danger Period. Cire Services will use these fire ratings to manage the risk of people working at locations or travelling to or through bushfire-prone areas on high bushfire-risk days.

Fire Danger Ratings are issued when there is a fire risk and are forecasted daily up to four days in advance. Fire ratings provide information about how dangerous a fire would be if it started in a specific district on a particular day.

Fire Danger Ratings



There are four levels of fire danger in the new system:

CATASTROPHIC	For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas
EXTREME	Take action now to protect life and property
HIGH	Be ready to act
MODERATE	Plan and prepare
NO RATING	No action is required

While Cire Services sites are located in the **Central Fire District**, it is acknowledged that people may travel from and through other Fire Districts to reach Cire sites.

Cire is committed to ensuring Fire risk information from **neighbouring Districts** is considered in implementing this Policy and Procedure.

Staying Informed

Up to date community advice is available in a variety of mediums:

- Online - <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/warnings-and-incidents/>.
- VicEmergency App.
- VicEmergency Hotline - 1800 226 226.
- VicEmergency Hotline for community members who have hearing, speech or communication difficulties via the National Relay Service, 1800 555 677.
- VicRoads online - <http://alerts.vicroads.vic.gov.au> for unplanned (emergency) road closures and traffic alerts.
- Translating and Interpreting Service for linguistically diverse community members – 131 450.
- Social Media - on twitter @CFA_Updates, @vicemergency, and facebook.com/cfavvic.
- Radio and TV.

Warnings issued by the CFA are based on incident conditions and impact on the community, therefore a first warning issued by the CFA could be the highest level of warning. There are three different levels of warnings:

 ADVICE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ An incident is occurring or has occurred in the area ◦ Access information and monitor conditions.
 WATCH AND ACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ An emergency is developing nearby. ◦ You need to take action now to protect yourself and others.
 EMERGENCY WARNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ You are in imminent danger and need to take action now. ◦ You will be impacted.

Conditions and warnings help guide Cire's response to potential bushfire emergencies.

Driving During a Declared Fire Danger Period

When travelling for work purposes during the bushfire season, the following guidelines should be followed:

- Download the VicEmergency App to your mobile phone.
- Listen to the radio – monitor district forecast danger ratings and daily weather forecasts (ABC 774).
- Carry maps of the area and note exit routes.
- Carry a mobile phone at all times (battery charged).
- Keep a bag in your vehicle's cabin containing long-sleeved clothing made of natural fibre, sturdy shoes, drinking water, and a woollen blanket.
- Stay on main roads unless otherwise directed.
- Avoid driving in to high-risk areas, especially on high-fire-risk days.
- Regularly communicate with your manager about your whereabouts and driving conditions.

Working During a Declared Fire Danger Period

Where the Fire Danger Rating is declared as Extreme or Catastrophic, Cire employees will redeploy to an alternate work location where this is safe and practical. Employees will not be required to use leave entitlements where Cire closes a work location for safety reasons and employees cannot be reasonably and safely redeployed.

Personal Fire Plans

Cire will not unreasonably refuse a request from an employee to take annual leave or leave without pay if required to action their Personal Fire Plan.

Government Regulation

Cire acknowledges that where Government departments impose specific requirements, which are in addition to or inconsistent with this Policy and Procedures, those Departmental regulations prevail to the extent of the inconsistency or limitation.

Responsibilities

Safety Manager

Monitors Fire Danger Ratings and communicates ratings of Extreme or Catastrophic to Management.

Managers

Monitors communications and activates the Bushfire Emergency Response following the Policy and Procedure.

Employees and other persons

Monitor communications and acts following this policy and Procedure.

Procedures

Advanced Notice of Fire Danger

During declared Fire Danger Periods, the Safety Manager will monitor Fire Danger Ratings for Central and neighbouring Fire Districts (West and South Gippsland, North Central) daily and communicate ratings of Extreme or Catastrophic to Executive Management as soon as declared.

In addition, a safety notification message will be sent to all staff from the Safety Manager to notify them of the declared fire danger rating (extreme or catastrophic only) and to keep alert and look out for updated communications from their manager throughout the day.

Managers will receive advice and guidance from the Safety Manager via email regarding what they need to do and be aware of.

Once notified of an Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Rating, Management will activate the Bushfire Emergency Response by:

1. Notifying (by email, text and phone as appropriate) direct reports and related persons of site closures;
2. Ensuring notifications are acknowledged by direct reports and other persons;
3. Keeping the Executive Leadership Team informed of notifications and site closures;
4. Facilitating redeployment of employees and services to an alternate safe location or cancelling/postponing services as required;
5. Facilitating leave approvals for affected employees to enact their Personal Fire Plans;
6. Facilitating (by email, text and phone as appropriate) the reopening of sites once safe to do so; and
7. Facilitating access to the Employee Assistance Program and other supports as required.

Employees and other persons are to follow instructions issued by management.

In summary:

Fire Danger Rating	What does it mean?	Directive	Driving during Fire Danger period
Catastrophic	<p>The worst conditions for a bush or grass fire</p> <p>Buildings are generally not designed or constructed to withstand fire in these conditions</p> <p>The safest place to be is away from high risk bushfire areas and to activate personal fire plans</p>	<p>At-risk sites closed - employees to be redeployed if safe and practical to do so and services relocated or cancelled</p> <p>Volunteers, placement students and clients, customers, service users, students etc. to be notified of closures</p> <p>Employees entitled to request annual leave or leave without pay if required to activate Personal Fire Plans</p>	None
Extreme	<p>Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions</p> <p>If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving</p> <p>Buildings that are situated and</p>	<p>At-risk sites closed - employees to be redeployed if safe and practical to do so and services relocated or cancelled</p> <p>Volunteers, placement students and clients, customers, service users, students etc. to be notified of closures</p>	Restrict transport based on risk assessment



constructed or modified
to withstand bushfire,
that are well-prepared
and actively defended
may provide safety

Employees entitled to
request annual leave or
leave without pay if
required to activate
Personal Fire Plan

Where there is imminent threat of bushfire,
Emergency Management Plans should be immediately enacted

Related Documents

- Emergency Management Plans
- Cire Children's Services Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- VRQA Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness Guidelines ([bushfire preparedness \(vrqa.vic.gov.au\)](http://bushfirepreparedness.vrqa.vic.gov.au))
- Work Health and Safety Policy Statement
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Working from Home Policy and Procedure

Related Legislation

- Incident, Hazard or Near Miss Report Form
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)

Approved by

The Board

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AS'.

Date: January 2023

Operative Date

January 2023

Review Date

January 2025