

Safer Together – being prepared and reducing risk

The summer period brings increased risks across Victoria due to storms, fires and hot weather. The Victorian Government has committed to a range of initiatives and approaches to improve the safety of all Victorians.



SEASONAL OUTLOOK

Victoria is preparing for an above average fire season, with conditions in some parts of the state similar to those seen in the lead up to 2009.

The state is extremely dry with rainfall trends tracking at one of the lowest on record (similar to severe fire seasons such as 1983, 2003, 2007 and 2009).

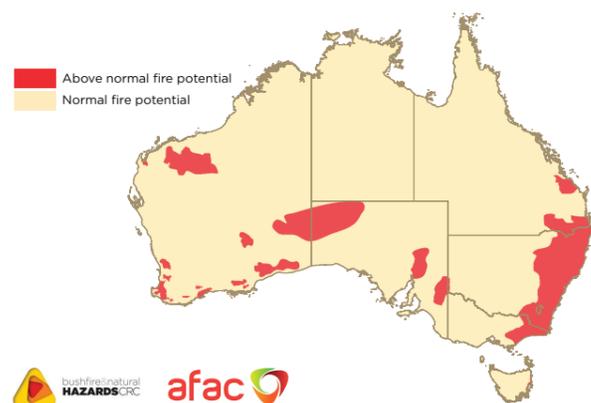
Much of East Gippsland has experienced two consecutive years of record low rainfall during autumn and winter. As a result, forests are significantly more flammable than normal, due to an increase in dead material in the near surface and elevated fuels. This may lead to increase levels of fire activity and intensity.

Unusually early bushfire activity occurred in East Gippsland during July and August, highlighting the severe level of dryness in forests.

Since 1 July 2018, Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) has already responded to over 93 fires impacting more than 1080ha.

The majority of these fires were caused by private property burn offs that escaped, highlighting the significant underlying dryness.

Unattended campfires continue to be an issue, with firefighters already responding to many fires started by campfires, particularly in North West Victoria.



Areas based on interim biogeographic regionalisation for Australia and other geographical features.



FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/51

FOREST & FIRE MANAGEMENT



1191 frontline firefighters in total. Including a record 112 female Project Firefighters.



Bushfire risk target held at 66%, which is 4% lower than the state target.



In total there are **49 contracted aircraft**, plus another 100 "call when needed" aircraft available for peak times.

Investment

- \$273.3 million over four years has been funded towards Safer Together which commits Victoria to maintaining bushfire risk at or below 70 per cent of maximum levels, through fuel management.
- This means the risk of a major fire would be reduced by approximately one third.
- DELWP is working with all of fire and land management agencies to implement this initiative across public land and roadsides.

Staff

- 610 season project firefighters have been recruited.
- Finalising recruitment for 28 Forest and Fire Operations Officers across the state, bringing numbers up to 340 in total.

Fleet and equipment

- \$32 million upgrade of Victorian firefighting vehicles.
- Delivering 60 state-of-the-art, heavy tanker firefighting trucks (Unimogs).
- Delivering 300 ultra-light G-Wagens, replacing the Landcruiser fleet.
- Deploying 3180 heavy vehicles, including dozers, excavators, tractors and loaders.

Aerial fleet

- Victoria's largest aerial fleet will take to the skies this summer, thanks to a \$29.9 million investment.
- Two Large Air Tankers will carry up to 15,000 litres of water, foam or retardant and two Air-Cranes, which will carry up to 7,500 litres of water.
- Night vision capability upgrade.

Infrastructure

- Upgrades and replacements for four of Victoria's 66 fire towers.
- 3000 kilometres of access roads being improved and 3100 being treated for hazardous trees.
- Upgrade or replacement of 53 bridges and crossings.

A SAFER ENERGY SYSTEM



POWERLINE BUSHFIRE SAFETY PROGRAM



The Victorian Government's **\$750 million Powerline Bushfire Safety Program** is working to reduce the likelihood of fires starting from powerlines.

The Powerline Bushfire Safety Program provides expert advice on new or improved powerline technologies designed to reduce bushfire risk, implemented as per recommendation 27 and 32 of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Powerline Bushfire Safety Committee

The program has been implementing recommendations 27 and 32 of the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission to reduce bushfire risk through improved powerline technology and enhanced network controls.

Local Infrastructure Assistance Fund (LIAF)



As part of the Powerline Bushfire Safety Program **\$40 million** has been allocated to fund **back-up diesel generators** in residential care facilities across Victoria.

Research and development



A Government contribution of up to **\$10 million over 5 years to continue research and development** to identify cost-effective risk reduction technologies and procedures.



Approximately **2000 km of the network has been audited** over the past four years.

Rapid Earth Fault Current Limiters

- REFCLs are a technology that detects a wire-to-earth powerline fault within milliseconds, reducing the risk of a fire ignition and minimising supply interruption.
- ESV has specifically increased its resources by 50% to more effectively regulate bushfire mitigation (including REFCL) activities.

Replacing bare wire powerlines in high risk bushfire areas

From 1 May 2016, 544 km of bare overhead line has been replaced with underground cables or covered conductor in high bushfire risk areas.

Automatic Circuit Reclosers

To date an additional 646 new generation Automatic Circuit Reclosers (ACRs) have been deployed on single wire earth return (SWER) lines in the western region of the state.

ADDITIONAL MEASURES TO INCREASE BUSHFIRE SAFETY

Vegetation management



Vegetation must be **kept clear of electric lines to reduce the risks** of electrocution and fire; including bushfires.

The recruitment of Field Officers throughout 2017/18 has allowed ESV to increase its field inspection sample size from a maximum of 4000 spans per annum to approximately 20,000 spans per annum.

Post Australia Day review implementation

Following the Australia Day power outage in early 2018, the Post Event Review Report made 15 recommendations to address outage prevention, improved communications and consumer protection. All Distribution Network Service Providers committed to these recommendations.

Reformed controls on Total Fire Ban days

Since 2012, the networks protection system (ACRs and circuit breakers) have been set to sensitive settings to automatically limit the reconnection of power where faults occur on days of extreme weather.

Pre summer network audits

ESV conducts pre-summer (preparedness) bushfire mitigation audits of all Distribution Network Service Provider networks each year using qualified asset and vegetation inspectors to reduce the risk of assets starting fires.





In total, the 2017-18 and 2018-19 State budgets committed **\$182.4 million over five years to deliver landmark environmental protection reforms.**



Over \$5 million has been invested to allow the EPA to boost incident air monitoring. This allows portable equipment to be deployed to a community where air quality is being impacted by fire or other significant discharges to the air.

EPA's emergency role

EPA provides technical and scientific advice about environmental and human health impacts of pollution and waste during an emergency.

\$3.8 million has been invested over four years to increase air monitoring in the Latrobe valley.

The EPA manages a network of **19 air monitoring stations** across Melbourne, Geelong, Wangaratta and the Latrobe Valley, monitoring pollution for the benefit of Victorian communities.



EPA AirWatch is a map showing air quality information, available on the EPA website. AirWatch includes data from EPA's air monitoring stations and is updated every hour.

EPA's emergency capabilities have been boosted:

Equipment

- Now geared to support 3 simultaneous incidents (1 significant) across the state within 24 hours of being requested to do so.
- A range of deployable air monitoring devices.

Planned burn support

- Modelling will indicate if DELWP's planned burning activities are likely to see air quality impacts on the community.

Smoke incidents

- Forecasting, collection and interpretation of air monitoring data, to inform and assess potential health risks for emergencies.
- Advising emergency services on environmental and health risk protective actions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
ffm.vic.gov.au
delwp.vic.gov.au
energysafevictoria.vic.gov.au
epa.vic.gov.au

What to do to keep safe

Managing bushfire risk is an ongoing and shared responsibility and everyone has a role. Under our new approach, we will involve local communities in decision making about bushfire management all year round – this means understanding what you care about most and working with you to determine local solutions to reduce bushfire risk.

COMMUNITY FIRST PROJECTS

To improve our communities preparation and response to bushfires, this stream of the Safer Together program:

- works with local communities to increase their understanding of bushfire risk, and get them involved in the planning for our fuel reduction program
- boost the skills and capabilities of firefighters to work with communities.

BUILD CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY FOR PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY

This project aims to build the awareness, skills and capabilities of firefighters, volunteers and fire managers for different levels of community engagement through a capacity and capability plan and common training packages.

This summer fire season

WE WILL

- Monitor and predict fire weather to help us suppress and patrol fires
- Use aircraft and fire towers to watch for fires
- Issue fire danger warnings and advice
- Maintain critical infrastructure
- Reduce fuel through planned burns, mulching, slashing
- Roadside vegetation management
- Work with agencies to plan for bushfire management
- Commission bushfire science research
- Build and maintain fire trails in parks and forests
- Recruit and train firefighters.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Develop and practice your bushfire plan and share with others
- Fully extinguish camp fires
- Keep up to date with weather and fire danger warnings
- Work with your community to recover from bushfire events
- Review how your bushfire plan worked in Summer
- Share your bushfire knowledge and experience with new residents
- Get to know your local emergency services personnel
- Join a Community Fireguard Group
- Prepare your property by mulching, slashing, clearing gutters, checking pumps.

