



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE



2021/22 BUSH FIRE SEASON

OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS – COVID19

Document Control

Release History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of changes
1.0	02/07/20	Ben Millington	
1.1	20/07/20	Ben Millington	
2.0	01/07/21	Josh Atkins	
2.1	19/08/21	Chris Ryder	

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Related Documents

Document name	Version
OMP 2.01 State Operations Co-ordination & Alert Status	August 2019
COVID19 Critical Incident Action Plan	March 2020
COVID19 Business Continuity Plan	March 2020
COVID19 Response Action Plan	30/03/20
COVID19 Fact Sheet – First Responder or Attendance at incident where person has suspected or confirmed COVID19	20/03/20
COVID19 Fact Sheet – NSW RFS members in identified higher risk categories	02/04/20
COVID19 Fact Sheet – NSW RFS Essential and Non Essential activities	02/04/20
COVID19 Fact Sheet – Site and Appliance Cleaning	V1.0

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1 Background

The rapid spread rate of COVID-19 is indicative of the highly contagious nature of the disease. Exposure of uninfected individuals to infected individuals has the potential to trigger near exponential spread and proliferation of the disease.

Fire management & suppression activities create an ideal environment for the transmission of infectious diseases: potential high-density living and working conditions, lack of access to and use of soap and sanitizers, and a transient workforce.

These and other environmental and occupational factors (eg. smoke, heat, plants, insects, fungus, fatigue, and physically demanding work) can increase the likelihood of disease transmission. Base camp facilities may cause rapid increases in the number of symptomatic fire personnel and suspected cases, resulting in an infectious disease outbreak during an incident.

Fire fighting response operations are initiated at the local level initially using resources from within the District. Additional resources may be sourced from neighbouring Districts and ultimately, additional resources can be mobilised from anywhere in the State, Interstate or Internationally.

In the event of substantial personnel absences, even for a scenario of a small to moderate percentage of individuals becoming unavailable due to exposure to COVID-19, additional resources from other Areas and Districts will be necessary. In the event of a high disease spread scenario with a high rate of infection, the associated loss of individuals from service will, in a moderate fire season, severely affect the ability to maintain an adequate response.

This document has been prepared to provide guidance and allow for appropriate operational response throughout the 2021/11 bush fire season whilst ensuring all personnel remain COVIDSafe.

Under the provisions of co-ordinated fire fighting, these arrangements have been reviewed by and will apply to all fire fighting authorities (eg. Fire Rescue NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation NSW) unless otherwise advised.

2 COVIDSafe Measures

As COVID-19 restrictions continue to change, the NSW RFS has updated advice to members regarding internal activities and events. Consistent with NSW Government advice and current restrictions, activities and events may be undertaken provided COVIDSafe practices continue to be in place.

COVIDSafe practices mean, where there is a NSW RFS activity or event conducted:

- If members are feeling unwell, they are not to attend a NSW RFS activity or location. They should be strongly encouraged to stay home and get tested.
- Consideration to be given whether an event can be held remotely to limit face-to-face interaction, especially if there's likely to be large groups or people who may be at higher risk of serious infection from COVID-19.
- If activities or events are being held face-to-face, current community restrictions regarding physical distancing should be followed; including face masks, limits on the number of people allowed to gather in a space and the number of people per square metre in an indoor area.
- the NSW RFS requires the establishment and use of the Service NSW QR code for all NSW RFS facilities.
- the NSW RFS also encourages all members to download the COVIDSafe app.

Further information regarding COVIDSafe Guidelines can be found using this [link](#).

Rapid Antigen Testing

Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) has been introduced across industry to provide additional support to ensure the safety of workers and the community during the pandemic. RAT provides a quick and efficient screening measure for COVID-19.

Although these tests have some limitations when compared to the nose and throat swabs undertaken with a laboratory Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test, rapid antigen screening can be performed easily and onsite with results available within minutes.

In addition to existing assessment and screening measures (eg. temperature testing), NSW RFS will introduce rapid antigen testing as another tool to support the ongoing health and wellbeing of members across the organisation.

The testing will be used to assist the NSW RFS to ensure workplaces, base camps, incident management teams and other higher risk settings are as safe as possible.

RAT does not replace the usual COVID-19 precautionary measures including facial masks, hand hygiene and distancing rules that must remain in place, as well as the need for vaccination.

RAT will only be used as a screening measure within NSW RFS, not as a diagnostic tool. RAT will be conducted every two days, inclusive of initial or single shifts/workdays, for individuals in identified priority settings.

NSW RFS has identified the following locations as high priority settings for the introduction of RAT:

- NSW RFS State Operations Centre (when activated)
- Operational Communication Centre (Headquarters and Regentville)
- ICT Personnel attending Headquarters
- NSW RFS Training Academy, Dubbo
- NSW RFS Airbase facilities (including RAAF Richmond and Bankstown)
- Incident Management Teams
- Base Camps
- Pre-planned out of area deployments

Further information regarding Rapid Antigen Testing can be found using this [link](#).

3 Personal Safety for First Responders

NSW RFS and other first responders can minimise risk of exposure to and the spread of COVID-19, via methods of personal protection, cleaning and waste disposal when undertaking all activities such as the following:

- Community First Responders (CFR);
- Assist Ambulance;
- First Aid and Resuscitation (eg. motor vehicle accident, search and rescue, and fire fighting).

These requirements also apply to other supporting roles deployed into the field such as Building Impact Assessments team and Authorised Fire Investigators.

Further information regarding Personal Safety for First Responders can be found using this [link](#).

4 Bush Fire Danger Period

The *Rural Fires Act 1997* provides for a statutory Bush Fire Danger Period (BFDP) commencing 01 October and ending 31 March in the following year.

During the BFDP, land owners and managers are required to obtain permits before lighting fires for land clearances or fire breaks.

This declaration can be varied on either a temporary (seasonal) or permanent (reoccurring) basis and remains in force for the period specific, unless it is revoked.

The NSW RFS Commissioner may declare a variation based on the recommendation of a local Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC). When making this recommendation, the BFMC takes into consideration a number of factors including local fuel and climatic conditions.

The 2021/22 BFDP will commence on 01 August 2021 for several Local Government Areas.

Further information regarding the Bush Fire Danger Period can be found using this [link](#).

5 Hazard Reduction Activity

Hazard Reduction is deemed an essential activity to reduce risk and ensure the safety of the community. District Offices planning and undertaking hazard reduction activities are responsible for the management of locations and must ensure COVIDsafe practices are adhered to.

These measures include (but not limited to) suitable sanitisation and cleaning to protect the health and safety of all fire fighting personnel partaking in hazard reduction activities.

For activities such as crews attending planned events, including hazard reductions, a limit of four people per dual cab and two people per single cab vehicle continues to apply.

Details of personnel participating in hazard reduction activities are to be recorded and retained by the District Office for tracing purposes if required.

As part of the co-ordinated fire fighting arrangements, NSW RFS will continue to work closely with Fire Rescue NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation NSW to plan and undertake hazard reduction activities.

Agencies have agreed to schedule and initiate hazard reduction planning as early as possible, including (where known) the possibility and/or extent of external agency resource requirements.

Formal requests for assistance are to be submitted to State Operations for resources within Greater Sydney and other declared areas (in accordance with Public Health Orders).

For all other areas, requests for assistance will be managed at a local level in the first instance. Where local resources are insufficient or not available, resources may be used from other locations outside of the declared areas.

Where resourcing is required from within declared areas, this is to be discussed between agencies prior to any action. Such requests are to be considered on a case by case basis to determine if the fireground is suitable to utilise/task resources from a declared area.

In addition to the above arrangements:

- consideration is to be given to drafting alternative burn plans or specific activity taskings (eg. sectorising or separating resources).
- sustaining separation of resources from declared areas to specific sectors that are safely accessible.

- providing briefings (where possible) via radio communication or other means noting all Incident Action Plans are to include COVIDsafe principles and related information;
- utilising QR codes for each sector or control point

A dedicated Safety Officer is also to be appointed for hazard reduction activity to ensure COVIDsafe practices are being maintained and adhered to.

6 State Operations & Major Incident Co-ordination teams

General

The NSW RFS State Operations Centre provides readiness, command and control, coordination, liaison and support services across the State during periods of major bush fire activity. When the bush fire risk or activity is especially high, its core staff need to be supplemented with resources from other parts of the Service and other agencies.

Reference to the NSW RFS State Operations Centre includes the Operational Communications Centre (OCC) and Bush Fire Information Line (BFIL).

Operational Readiness

Daily Operational Readiness Levels are determined for the State and Districts as a guide to ensure the service is at the highest level of preparedness necessary to deal with any emergency. [Operational Readiness Levels](#) are determined in accordance with current and predicted forecast weather conditions, current fire activity and other known or forecast influences.

There are four (4) Operational Readiness Levels being:

- Operations Normal (Green)
- Level 1 (Yellow)
- Level 2 (Orange); and
- Level 3 (Red).

Staffing

Given COVID-19 situation, personal circumstances and availability may vary (eg. home schooling) which will need to be reviewed throughout the season.

A State Operations Centre roster (incorporating Major Incident Co-ordination teams) has been developed consisting of four (4) teams which participate in a five-day cycling roster. Staff members within State Headquarters are invited by expression of interest and engaged to assist with other supporting roles/activities.

A primary and redundancy team have been identified for business continuity purposes and will operate at the NSW RFS State Operations Centre in the first instance. However the redundancy team may operate from the Cumberland Fire Control should this facility become unavailable (eg. for deep cleaning purposes).

The issuing of Emergency Alerts & Warnings will continue to be processed through the Operational Communications Centre using the existing emergency conference call facility.

In regards to the establishment of additional Major Incident Co-ordination teams, consideration may be given to doing so at remote locations (outside of Greater Sydney) noting they will continue to report to the State Operations Controller/State Duty Operations Officer.

Fire fighting and supporting agencies also position personnel within the State Operations Centre for liaison and co-ordination purposes. External agency personnel should be engaged remotely (through virtual means) unless there is a critical requirement to have a physical presence.

Monitoring, Testing & Isolation

All personnel should have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) regularly and prior to entering the State Operations Centre.

In the event of an individual is either displaying symptoms, advises close contact or is confirmed as a COVID19 infection, the [NSW RFS Response Action Process](#) is to be followed and implemented.

NSW Health are operating COVID-19 testing clinics across the State which can be found using this [link](#).

COVIDSafe Measures & Redundancy

Operations Normal	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All personnel must 'check-in' using the Service NSW COVID Safe QR Code prior to entering the State Operations Centre.• All personnel must have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) prior to entering the State Operations Centre.• An additional Safety Officer to be appointed to monitor, identify and provide advice regarding COVID19 implications/issues.• Signage to be displayed regarding current COVID-19 measures (such as face masks) and physical distancing measures to be adhered to.• Access to the State Operations Centre will be restricted to rostered and essential personnel only.• State Operations Centre teams encouraged to maintain physical distancing where possible.• COVIDSafe measures to be incorporated into daily briefings and incident action plans.• General and Preventative cleaning to be undertaken of the State Operations Centre as outlined in the Fact Sheet NSW RFS Site & Appliance Cleaning• An analysis of work stations to be regularly undertaken to ensure adequate physical distancing.• Provision of appropriate hand sanitisers at individual work stations.• Promotion and supply of wipes for wiping down of workstations at the commencement and cessation of each shift.• Regular contact with the Health Services Functional Area and State Emergency Operations Centre regarding actual or forecast changes to the COVID19 pandemic (including localities of concern).
Level 1 - 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing Business Continuity Plan to be referenced and actioned as appropriate.• Engagement of health professional to undertake daily health assessments, temperature checks and rapid antigen testing for all personnel prior to entering the State Operations Centre.• General, Preventative and Targeted cleaning to be undertaken of the State Operations Centre as outlined in the Fact Sheet NSW RFS Site & Appliance Cleaning• Consideration to adjusting the State Operations Centre roster to isolate identified teams and ensure appropriate redundancy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration to isolating and providing accommodation for State Operations Centre personnel to minimise broader contact and potential infection spread. • Provision of a Health Functional Area Liaison Officer within the State Operations Centre.
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7 Incident Management Teams

General

An Incident Management Team (IMT) is the group of incident management personnel comprising of the Incident Controller and other personnel appointed to be responsible for the functions of operations, planning, logistics, public information and other identified functions.

An IMT operates from the relevant Fire Control Centre and may be established using local personnel, fire fighting agency personnel or for more significant events out of area resources.

Operational Readiness

Daily Operational Readiness Levels are determined for the State and Districts as a guide to ensure the service is at the highest level of preparedness necessary to deal with any emergency. [Operational Readiness Levels](#) are determined in accordance with current and predicted forecast weather conditions, current fire activity and other known or forecast influences.

There are four (4) Operational Readiness Levels described in the previous section.

Staffing

Given COVID-19 situation, personal circumstances and availability may vary (eg. home schooling) which will need to be reviewed throughout the season.

Area Commands have identified District pairings/groupings for the purposes of a combined and/or replacement IMT. This arrangement will ensure COVIDsafe practices and allow an adjoining District to support during day/night operations and/or assume responsibility in the event of an infection outbreak.

In addition, an IMT has been pre-identified by Area Operations for deployment into a location where no other option exists.

Consideration may also be given to allocating responsibilities to an IMT already operating in an appropriate geographic radius (as opposed to establishing another) noting additional resources will be required.

IMT personnel are generally derived from the relevant District, out of area and external agency personnel.

The deployment of Out of Area Incident Management Team personnel from any identified high risk locations to other lower risk locations needs to be considered carefully.

As part of the co-ordinated fire fighting arrangements, NSW RFS will to continue to work closely with Fire Rescue NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation NSW such requests.

NSW RFS will inform other agencies at the earliest opportunity, including the possibility and/or extent of external agency resource requirements.

Formal requests for assistance for resources within Greater Sydney and other declared areas (in accordance with Public Health Orders) are to be submitted to State Operations.

For all other areas, requests for assistance will be managed at a local level in the first instance. Where local resources are insufficient or not available, resources may be used from other locations outside of the declared areas.

Where resourcing is required from within declared areas, this is to be discussed between agencies prior to any action. Such requests are to be considered on a case by case basis to determine the criticality to resources from a declared area.

Monitoring, Testing & Isolation

All personnel should have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) regularly and prior to entering the Fire Control Centre/facility.

In the event of an individual is either displaying symptoms, advises close contact or is confirmed as a COVID19 infection, the [NSW RFS Response Action Process](#) is to be followed and implemented.

NSW Health are operating COVID-19 testing clinics across the State which can be found using this [link](#).

COVIDSafe Measures & Redundancy

<p>Operations Normal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All personnel must 'Check-in' using the Service NSW COVID Safe QR Code prior to entering the Fire Control Centre/facility. • All personnel must have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) prior to entering the Fire Control Centre/facility. • An additional Safety Officer to be appointed to monitor, identify and provide advice regarding COVID19 implications/issues. • Access to the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre will be restricted to rostered and essential personnel only. • Signage to be displayed at all NSW RFS facilities (including base camps) regarding COVID-19 and physical distancing measures to be adhered to. • IMT personnel encouraged to maintain physical distancing where possible. • COVIDSafe measures to be incorporated into daily briefings and incident action plans. • General and Preventative cleaning to be undertaken of the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre as outlined in the Fact Sheet NSW RFS Site & Appliance Cleaning • An analysis of work stations to be regularly undertaken to ensure adequate physical distancing • Provision of appropriate hand sanitisers at individual work stations. • Promotion and supply of wipes for wiping down of workstations at the commencement and cessation of each shift. • Regular contact with the Local Health District and Region Emergency Management Officer regarding actual or forecast changes to the COVID19 pandemic (including localities of concern).
<p>Level 1 - 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Business Continuity Plan to be referenced and actioned as appropriate. • Engagement of health professional to undertake daily health assessments, temperature checks and rapid antigen testing for all personnel prior to entering the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre. • General, Preventative and Targeted cleaning to be undertaken of the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre as outlined in the Fact Sheet NSW RFS Site & Appliance Cleaning

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration to adjusting the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre roster to isolate identified personnel and ensure appropriate redundancy. • Temporary/supplementary buildings to be considered to provide appropriate distancing. • Consideration to isolating and providing accommodation for Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre personnel to minimise broader contact and potential infection spread. • Area Commands requested to identify Districts that may 'pair or group' for the purposes of a replacement and/or combined IMT. • Request for IMT personnel (IMP 8.03.05 SAP 5) may be submitted to the State Operations Centre or Major Incident Co-ordination team if operating. • An Incident Management Team to be pre-identified by State Operations for deployment where no other option exists. • Provision of a Health Functional Area Liaison Officer within the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre.
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8 Fire Fighting Operations & Resources

General

The State Assistance Procedures are the mechanism whereby Districts and IMTs can access resources beyond those normally assigned to them. These procedures are to be used for the requesting and allocation of resources.

Personnel can minimise risk of exposure to and the spread of COVID-19, via methods of personal protection, cleaning and waste disposal when involved in fire fighting operations.

It is imperative that the deployment of personnel is recorded using Brigade Incident Recording System (BIRS), SAP form and/or by the District Office in a timely manner for tracing purpose if required.

Information regarding COVID-19 and physical distancing measures should be incorporated into all briefings and incident action plans.

As part of the co-ordinated fire fighting arrangements, personnel from Fire Rescue NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation NSW work closely with the NSW RFS during fire fighting operations.

Notwithstanding individual agency COVID-19 plans, the arrangements contained within this document should be applied to external agency personnel unless otherwise advised.

Out of Area Strike Teams

Assistance Request for Strike Team ([IMP 8.03.01 SAP 1](#)) is to be used for requesting strike teams or part thereof. It is imperative that these request templates are accurate and fully completed to ensure personnel can be easily identified for tracing purposes if required. Please note a new electronic Strike Team request process will be trialled/introduced during the 2021/22 bush fire season.

The deployment of Out of Area Strike teams from any identified high risk locations to other lower risk locations needs to be considered carefully and should only occur where there is immediate threat to life and property.

Districts directly bordering an affected area may provide resources upon a local request, in these instances the State Duty Operations Officer (SDOO) or Major Incident Co-ordination Team (if operating) must be informed.

As part of the co-ordinated fire fighting arrangements, NSW RFS will continue to work closely with Fire Rescue NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service and Forestry Corporation NSW to plan and undertake hazard reduction activities.

Formal requests for assistance are to be submitted to State Operations for resources within Greater Sydney and other declared areas (in accordance with Public Health Orders).

For all other areas, requests for assistance will be managed at a local level in the first instance. Where local resources are insufficient or not available, resources may be used from other locations outside of the declared areas.

Where resourcing is required from within declared areas, this is to be discussed between agencies prior to any action. Such requests are to be considered on a case by case basis to determine if the fireground is suitable to utilise/task resources from a declared area.

In addition to the above arrangements:

- consideration is to be given to drafting specific activity taskings (eg. sectorising or separating resources).
- sustaining separation of resources from declared areas to specific sectors that are safely accessible.
- providing briefings (where possible) via radio communication or other means noting all Incident Action Plans are to include COVIDsafe principles and related information;
- utilising QR codes for each sector or control point.

A dedicated Safety Officer is also to be appointed for hazard reduction activity to ensure COVIDsafe practices are being maintained and adhered to.

Staging Areas

Details of personnel attending a staging area must be recorded by the Staging Area Manager or officer delegated by the Incident Controller.

Coordinated entry and exit points at Staging Areas should be established to allow single direction or co-ordination of movement through the location which will allow all personnel to pass through a hand-sanitisation and sign in/out area. This should be overseen by the Staging Area Manager using appropriate signage.

Consideration may also be given to adopting a 'clean and dirty area' principle at Staging Areas and other facilities. For example, a dirty area is designated where personnel clean off contaminants, shed personal protective equipment etc and clean area is restricted for those who have registered, sanitised, meals etc. Briefings and debriefs should be held in line with physical distancing requirements including the completion of an attendance sheet for tracing purposes if required. Consideration should be given to increasing rapid risk assessments and safety briefings for all activities.

COVID-19 cleaning kits should be made available at staging areas for use at the commencement and completion of each shift. Details regarding COVID-19 cleaning kits is listed in *Section 13 – Cleaning & Personnel Protective Equipment/Clothing*.

Higher Risk Personnel

The NSW RFS has undertaken precautions during the COVID-19 pandemic to preserve the health and wellbeing of members, whilst maintaining essential service delivery to the community.

The COVID-19 situation is dynamic and there are regular advice updates communicated by state and federal authorities. These updates include information on categories of people who are recognised as being at greater risk of more serious illness if they are infected with COVID-19, including:

- People aged 70 years and over
- People aged 65 years and over with chronic medical conditions
- People with compromised immune systems
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 50

Where a member is in an identified higher risk category, they should take steps to protect themselves from COVID-19, and take steps to limit their potential exposure. This may include temporarily withdrawing from volunteer activities or considering alternative work arrangements.

Further information regarding Higher Risk Members can be found using this [link](#).

Monitoring, Testing & Isolation

All personnel are to have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) regularly and prior to entering the State Operations Centre.

In the event an individual is either displaying symptoms, advises close contact or is confirmed as a COVID19 infection, the [NSW RFS Response Action Process](#) is to be followed and implemented.

NSW Health are operating COVID-19 testing clinics across the State which can be found using this [link](#).

Heavy Plant

The engagement of Heavy Plant will be in accordance with normal operational requirements, giving relevant consideration for COVID arrangements at the time of engagement.

Briefings and debriefs should be held in line with physical distancing requirements including the completion of an attendance sheet for tracing purposes if required.

Details of heavy plant personnel must be recorded by the Heavy Plant/Staging Area Manager (or officer delegated by the Incident Controller), using a Service NSW QR code.

Where available, all personnel must have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) prior to entering the Fire Control Centre/facility.

COVID-19 cleaning kits should be made available at staging areas for use at the commencement and completion of each shift. Details regarding COVID-19 cleaning kits is listed in *Section 13 – Cleaning & Personnel Protective Equipment/Clothing*.

Community Meetings

Events such as community meetings during fire activity may be held.

Brigades and Districts are encouraged where possible to use technology such as video broadcasting to help keep attendances to a manageable level.

Where events are held face to face, practices such as sanitisation, physical distancing and space limits should be followed. A record of attendance should be maintained using the Service NSW QR code prior to entering the venue.

9 Aviation Resources

General

The COVID19 pandemic and associated events affected the orderly demobilisation of aerial firefighting assets from the 2020/21 bushfire season and is likely to affect the provision of aerial firefighting services this coming season.

The National Aerial Fire Fighting Centre (NAFC) Strategic Committee has also consulted with aviation industry associations where it was agreed this collaboration would continue to ensure a cohesive and coordinated approach.

Agencies (including NSW RFS), NSW Health, NAFC and Emergency Management Australia (EMA) have and will continue to work closely to facilitate entry requirements for incoming pilots, aircrew and aircraft ahead of the 2021/22 bush fire season.

Domestic cross border assistance

Aircraft from within New South Wales (including contracted and other owned/operated by the NSW RFS) are regularly released to assist interstate authorities. In addition to aviation procedures, the arrangements outlined in *Section 14 – Interstate & International Support* should be followed including quarantine requirements

International aircraft and personnel

Uninterrupted delivery of contract and call when needed services in Australia is highly dependent on the availability of pilots and maintenance crew from overseas which may be affected by the travel restrictions and quarantine/isolation requirements. NAFC continues to work with contractors to identify any additional impacts.

In addition to aviation procedures, the arrangements outlined in *Section 14 – Interstate & International Support* should be followed including quarantine requirements

Air Base Operations

Details of personnel attending an air base must be recorded by the Air Base Manager (or officer delegated by the Incident Controller), using a Service NSW QR code.

Where available, all personnel must have their temperature checked and rapid antigen testing (if available) prior to entering the Fire Control Centre/facility.

Coordinated entry and exit points at Air Bases should be established to allow single direction or co-ordination of movement through the location which will allow all personnel to pass through a hand-sanitisation and sign in/out area. This should be overseen by the Air Base Manager using appropriate signage.

Consideration may also be given to adopting a 'clean and dirty area' principle at Air Bases and other facilities. For example, a dirty area is designated where personnel clean off contaminants, shed personnel protective equipment etc and clean area is restricted for those who have registered, sanitised, meals etc.

General, Preventative and Targeted cleaning to be undertaken at all Air Base facilities as outlined in the following [link](#)

COVID-19 cleaning kits should be made available at staging areas for use at the commencement and completion of each shift. Details regarding COVID-19 cleaning kits is listed in *Section 13 – Cleaning & Personnel Protective Equipment/Clothing*.

Commercial cleaners should be engaged to assist with cleaning of Air Bases and other facilities determined by the District Manager/Incident Controller.

The capacity of Air Base facilities should be assessed considering the physical distancing requirements identify the maximum personnel that can be within any standby areas.

Air Base briefing and debriefs should be held in line with physical distancing requirements including the completion of an attendance sheet for tracing purposes if required. Briefings and debriefings are to be conducted in accordance with the Air Base Briefing Checklist and include COVID-19 and physical distancing measures.

Aircraft

The NSW RFS will work with Aircraft Operators ensure aircraft are cleaned appropriately following use. Aircraft Operators may also be requested to produce a COVID-19 plan to ensure compliance with COVIDSafe restrictions.

Where possible, high touch points within aircraft should be wiped down on a regularly basis and a thorough clean undertaken at the completion of each day.

10 Accommodation of personnel

Commercial accommodation

Out of Area personnel are traditionally accommodated in commercial facilities (eg. motels, hotels) or in NSW RFS established Base Camps where commercial facilities are not available nor viable.

Where possible, personnel should be provided with individual rooms or limited sharing arrangements with physical distancing enforced.

Commercial accommodation providers are required under existing Health regulations to ensure appropriate measures are in place to avoid potential transmission.

Base Camps

Set up and management of Base Camps

The NSW RFS Base Camp Manual details the roles and management for such facilities, however there will need to be consideration to the following:

- Additional routine cleaning regimes in accommodation, ablution facilities and dining areas;
- Measures to ensure physical distancing during peak times such as shift change, meal timings and check-in/check-out procedures;
- Procedures for isolation and quarantine of individuals/crews that become symptomatic during deployment; and
- Procedures for decontamination of facilities if an individual/crew are isolated/quarantined.
- Contingency plans for alternative accommodation if camp is unable to continue operating if a large outbreak occurs.

Details of personnel attending a base camp must be recorded by the Base Camp Manager (or officer delegated by the Incident Controller), using the Service NSW QR code. All personnel must follow the current COVID-19 restrictions, where possible, as determined by NSW Health.

General, Preventative and Targeted cleaning to be undertaken of the Fire Control Centre/Emergency Operations Centre as outlined in the [Fact Sheet NSW RFS Site & Appliance Cleaning](#)

NSW Health has issued [Guidance for managers and staff at hotels and other accommodation facilities hosting people in COVID-19 quarantine isolation](#) and have confirmed these arrangements are appropriate to be used in the event a Base Camp is established and operated.

Capacity Reduction

In order to ensure appropriate physical distancing in tent accommodation the capacity of the two styles of NSW RFS tent will need to be reduced by 33%. Therefore:

- 1935 tents (previously 12 pax, COVID conditions = 8 pax)
- HO20 tents (previously 6 pax, COVID conditions = 4 pax)
- Total NSW RFS capacity under COVID = 320 pax

Current Capacity

There are base camp resources currently reserved for a multi-agency response to provide 'Tier 3' field hospital facilities to NSW Health. This arrangement leaves only six tents unassigned, giving the NSW RFS a total capacity to house 48 persons only.

Any actions to release reserved NSW RFS infrastructure will need the authority of the State Operations Controller.

Monitoring, Testing & Isolation

Engagement of health professional to undertake health assessments, temperature checks and rapid antigen testing (where available) for all personnel staying at commercial accommodation and/or base camps is to be arranged and undertaken on a regular basis.

In the event an individual is either displaying symptoms, advises close contact or is confirmed as a COVID19 infection, the [NSW RFS Response Action Process](#) is to be followed and implemented.

NSW Health are operating COVID-19 testing clinics across the State which can be found using this [link](#).

11 Transportation of personnel

Any transport related requirements will be in accordance with operational activity, giving relevant consideration to COVID-19 implications at the time of deployment.

12 Catering for personnel

Catering during fire fighting operations is traditionally provided by Catering Brigades or through commercial providers/contractors.

In addition to existing food handling guidelines, the NSW Food Authority has issued advice regarding [Food Businesses and COVID19](#) to avoid potential transmission. This advice has been provided to all Districts, Catering Brigades and known vendors.

13 Cleaning & Personnel Protective Equipment/Clothing

There are three types of cleaning, general cleaning occurs on a regular basis to minimise COVID-19 exposure or spread, when there is no specific known threat of COVID-19 at the site.

Preventative cleaning occurs when a person at the site has displayed flu-like symptoms and is going home to see a medical professional.

Targeted cleaning occurs when a person at the site has a confirmed positive test for COVID-19, or is diagnosed as having COVID-19 by a medical professional. Cleaning of offices, stations, vehicles and boats requires a general clean of all surfaces with an appropriate cleaning product be followed by disinfectant cleaning of high touch point areas such as, but not limited to lifts, hand rails, door handles, light switches, phones, kitchens, toilets, arms of chairs.

Appliances, vehicles and vessels should be cleaned after use, with an additional precautionary general clean occurring before use. Clean steering wheels, dash, control panels, hand rails, access doors, lockers, equipment handles, pump controls, flat surfaces in the cab and glass.

General cleans should be undertaken with the use of disposable impermeable gloves (eg. Nitrile), long sleeve shirt and long pants, delivering coverage from ankle to wrist, closed shoes and tie back long hair.

Post cleaning, remove disposable gloves (without touching outside of gloves with bare hands) and place into general waste. Wash hands with soap and water (20 seconds) or if not available, apply alcohol based hand sanitiser.

COVID-19 cleaning kits should assemble by District Offices/Sections to include (but not limited to):

- Buckets
- Mops
- Paper towels
- Disposable cloths (eg. Chux)
- Cleaning product suitable for general cleaning of surfaces (eg. Spray & Wipe or soapy water)
- Disinfectant specific for germ sanitisation (eg. Pine O Clean or Dettol)
- Non-leak plastic bags (eg. garbage bags).

Commercial cleaners should be engaged to assist with cleaning of Fire Control Centres, Brigade Stations and other facilities determined by the District Manager/Incident Controller.

State Logistics can assist with any urgent or supplementary orders for cleaning products and personnel protective equipment/clothing.

Information regarding the cleaning of NSW RFS sites and appliances can be found in the [Fact Sheet NSW RFS Site and Appliance Cleaning](#).

14 Interstate & International assistance

In the event of protracted and/or widespread fire activity, interstate (including localised cross border support) and international assistance may be sought.

Formal requests for interstate and international assistance are processed through the National Resource Sharing Centre (NRSC).

Prior to any interstate or international support being sought or provided by the NSW RFS, contact should be made with NSW Health regarding current COVID19 restrictions.

Localised Cross Border assistance

Localised support provided through cross border arrangements should be recorded in Incident Control Online (ICON) and made a notifiable incident using existing procedures.

NSW RFS personnel deployed under these arrangements are to maintain physical distancing requirements and undertake cleaning of equipment/appliances as described below. Details of personnel deployed are to be recorded in Brigade Incident Recording System (BIRS) and/or by the District Office for tracing purpose if required.

Where possible, details of interstate personnel operating in New South Wales should also be obtained for tracing purposes.

Interstate & International assistance

In the event interstate assistance is likely, the requesting jurisdiction must provide sending jurisdiction with their COVID-19 operational protocols at the time of request. It is also noted there are entry requirements and declarations required to be completed for most jurisdictions prior to entry.

It is a matter for the sending jurisdiction to consider the requesting jurisdictions protocols and assess if they adequately meet the sending jurisdiction's requirements.

Assuming that there is agreement and the protocol are accepted, application of those protocols will become a condition of the deployment.

The requesting jurisdiction is responsible for meeting all costs of quarantine associated with the deployment, whether foreseen at the time of deployment or not.

The sending jurisdiction must use its best efforts to gain exemption from any quarantine requirement for returning personnel but this cannot be guaranteed.

Historically, international fire fighting support has been provided by New Zealand, United States of America and Canada.

Australia's borders currently remain closed. Only Australian citizens, residents and immediate family members can travel to Australia.

Travellers arriving from any country may undergo enhanced health screening on arrival in Australia. All arrivals will be quarantined for 14 days and State and Territory travel restrictions may also apply.

These requirements are managed and enforced by State and Territory Governments with Australian Government support.

Exemptions for travel to Australia and mandatory quarantine may be granted by the Australian Border Force and State public health agencies.

Further information regarding travel to Australia can be found using the following [link](#).