



Steph Cooke

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience
Minister for Flood Recovery

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMMUNITIES URGED TO BE PREPARED AS SUMMER BEGINS

As the summer season begins, emergency services organisations have joined forces to urge communities to be safe and prepared following a horror year of natural disasters.

Minister for Emergency Services and Resilience and Minister for Flood Recovery Steph Cooke said the summer months are notorious for a heightened risk of severe storms.

“As we have seen repeatedly this year natural disasters can affect anyone at any time, so the key safety tips of preparing a bush fire survival plan, not driving through floodwaters, swimming between the flags and making sure your home is fire-safe are just as important as ever,” Ms Cooke said.

“We want everyone to have a great summer season and the way to achieve this is to be prepared, know your risk and look out for each other.”

Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner Paul Baxter said families need to remain vigilant over summer.

“Whether it’s planning for any potential bushfire danger in your area or something as simple as putting up lights on your Christmas tree, please keep safety in mind,” Commissioner Baxter said.

NSW Rural Fire Service Commissioner Rob Rogers said the persistent rain has led to good grass and crop growth across NSW, especially in western parts of the State.

“As the warmer weather sets in, the landscape will dry out, increasing the risk of dangerous and fast-moving grass fires so I am urging people to know your risk and familiarise yourself with the new Fire Danger Rating System which has been simplified into four levels – Moderate, High, Extreme and Catastrophic – with clear actions for each level,” Commissioner Rogers said.

NSW State Emergency Service Commissioner Carlene York said that with many roads flooded and properties isolated, it is important for people to take extra care while driving in flood-affected areas.

“Many of the rescues completed by our SES volunteers have unfortunately been for people caught in their vehicles by floodwater, so if you need to be on the road in these areas please plan ahead and in the event you do come across a flooded road then stop, turn around and find another way,” Commissioner York said.

Marine Rescue NSW Commissioner Stacey Tannos and Surf Life Saving NSW CEO Steve Pearce reiterated the importance of water safety and waterway awareness.

“Boaters should always log on with Marine Rescue when heading out, and log off when they return via VHF Channel 16 or the free Marine Rescue App. It’s quick and simple and gives you the reassurance that our volunteers can keep an eye out for you,” Commissioner Tannos said.

“My message this summer is to swim at patrolled beaches, stay between the red and yellow flags, make sure you supervise your children and wear a life jacket where it’s necessary,” Mr Pearce said.

NSW Volunteer Rescue Association Commissioner Mark Gibson warned motorists of the dangers of driving while fatigued.

“Driver fatigue is one of the biggest killers on NSW roads and can be just as dangerous as drink driving, which is why I am urging drivers to take regular breaks when travelling long distances,” Commissioner Gibson said.

Everyone is being urged to follow these steps:

1. **Know your risk:** think about the area you’re in and the types of disasters that could affect you;
2. **Plan now for what you will do:** talk with your family and plan for what you will do if a disaster affects your area or where you plan to holiday this summer;
3. **Get your home ready:** prepare your home by doing general home maintenance and checking your insurance coverage;
4. **Be aware:** find out how to prepare, what to do if there is a disaster in your area or where you intend to holiday this summer and connect with emergency services or keep on top of local news reports to stay informed; and
5. **Look out for each other:** share information with your family, friends and neighbours.

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