

Chris Minns
Premier of New South Wales



Jihad Dib
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government
Minister for Youth Justice

Media Release

New electronic fire danger rating signs to help keep communities safer across NSW

Sunday, 27 August 2023

Iconic fire danger rating signs on roadsides across NSW are getting a digital facelift, with the Rural Fire Service (RFS) set to provide real-time fire risk information to communities via remotely operated signs.

More than 200 digital fire warning signs are being rolled out, as the state approaches bushfire season.

The signs, which are powered by solar panels, are automatically updated each day in line with fire danger ratings on the RFS website. The ratings are informed by data from the Bureau of Meteorology.

The digital upgrade means RFS volunteers will no longer need to manually change the signs daily.

The signs use the revised Australian Fire Danger Rating System, which includes four categories for fire danger: Moderate (green), High (yellow), Extreme (orange) and Catastrophic (red), with simple actions for the community to take at each level. On days when there is minimal risk, 'no rating' is used.

The state's north, where six local government areas (LGAs) are already in Bush Fire Danger Period, has been prioritised for the sign rollout.

From 1 September, a further 32 local government areas in the north and south of the state will enter the Bush Fire Danger Period, as warm, dry conditions increase the fire risk.

Eleven of the 32 areas are entering the danger period a month earlier than usual, with the prolific growth of vegetation after three years of wet weather adding to the heightened fire risk.

This comes as fire activity increases across NSW and Section 44 bush fire emergency declarations are in place for Kempsey, Nambucca and Clarence Valley LGAs.

Section 44 arrangements ensure coordinated efforts are in place to battle the almost 30 fires burning across the region.

Hundreds of volunteer firefighters, with the help of aircrews and our new Chinook helicopter, are currently working to contain fires across NSW.

From 1 September, the following local government areas are beginning their Bush Fire Danger Period one month earlier than usual: Tamworth; Bogan; Coonamble; Walgett; Warren; Moree; Gwydir; Narrabri; Gilgandra; Warrumbungle; and Midwestern.

From 1 September, the following LGAs also begin their Bush Fire Danger Period: Muswellbrook; Singleton; Kempsey; Nambucca; Mid-Coast; Port Macquarie-Hastings; Clarence Valley; Ballina;

Byron; Tweed; Bellingen; Coffs Harbour; Kyogle; Lismore; Richmond Valley; Gunnedah; Liverpool Plains; Upper Hunter; Bega Valley; Eurobodalla; and Shoalhaven.

This is in addition to the six LGAs that commenced the danger period on 1 August: Armidale Regional; Walcha; Uralla; Glen Innes Severn; Inverell; and Tenterfield.

Once a Bushfire Danger Period commences landholders in these LGAs need to apply for a permit to burn off and notify their neighbours and local fire authorities 24 hours before lighting up. Free permits are available by contacting your local Fire Control Centre.

Information about hazard reduction burning, obtaining permits and required notification is also available on the RFS website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/BFDP.

For more information on the Australian Fire Danger Rating System, visit: www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/newfdr

The Premier of New South Wales, Chris Minns, said:

“We are bracing for a potentially dangerous bushfire season.

“We are expecting a return to hot and dry conditions.

“There is also significant vegetation growth after three years of wet weather.

“The RFS have been working to ensure we are prepared.

“These new digital signs are another tool to help warn communities about the risk.

“This helps volunteers get on with other important work to protect their communities.

“This also ensures locals get up-to-the-minute info about the fire risk.”

The Minister for Emergency Services, Jihad Dib, said:

“Everybody needs to start preparing for bush fire season as we start to see fire activity on the rise across NSW.

“Hazard reduction efforts have been hampered by weather conditions following three years of significant and record rainfall.

“The latest Bush Fire Danger Period declarations put landholders on notice that they need to take action and consider how to reduce the risk for themselves and their communities.

“Our Rural Fire Service volunteers are at the ready to respond to emergencies 365 days of the year, and it’s every landowner’s responsibility to be equally prepared for the threat of fire.

“As the weather starts to heat up, it’s time to take simple steps like reducing vegetation around properties and cleaning gutters to reduce the amount of fuel.

“We’re also upgrading our roadside fire danger rating signs, using technology to boost our readiness efforts and freeing up time for our dedicated RFS volunteers.”

The Commissioner of the RFS, Rob Rogers, said:

“Wet weather over the last three years has caused prolific growth, and as we move out of this incredibly wet period the bush fire risk is returning to NSW.

“The new fire danger rating system introduced last season is the biggest change to fire danger rating science in more than 60 years.

“The way fire danger ratings are communicated has been improved and simplified, to make it easier for our communities to make decisions to stay safe on days of fire danger risk.”

MEDIA:

Dan Conifer | Premier | 0456 723 037

Zoe Allebone | Minister Dib | 0414 231 735