



# POLICY NO. 1

## Bush Fire Management Committees

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Owner	Bush Fire Coordinating Committee
Contact	Executive Officer
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### 1 Rationale

- 1.1 The Bush Fire Coordinating Committee (BFCC) is required to constitute Bush Fire Management Committees (BFMCs) for areas in the State subject to the risk of bush fires (Section 50 *Rural Fires Act 1997*). The functions required of BFMCs are set out in the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the *Rural Fires Regulations 2013* and BFCC policy and directions.
- 1.2 BFMCs provide a forum for cooperative interaction between organisations, agencies and the community that leads to effective coordinated bush fire management throughout their area and land adjoining. They ensure that bush fire management is adequately assessed and designed for holistic protection of the community, based on a tenure blind, cooperative and coordinated approach that is built on community and interagency involvement. BFMCs also assist the BFCC by drawing to its attention any matter they consider relevant to the protection of life, property, infrastructure, environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets from bush fires.
- 1.3 The BFCC's general requirements for the BFMCs (including membership, function and conduct) are predominantly detailed in the BFMC Charter and Handbook as well as policy and communique's.
- 1.4 The BFCC will provide direction to BFMCs and encourages BFMCs to bring to its attention any issues that may be of State significance.

### 2 Committee Functions and Responsibilities

- 2.1 Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* requires each BFMC to prepare a Draft Operations Coordination Plan, a Draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plan and a Draft Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan.
- 2.2 These plans must be prepared in accordance with BFCC Policy and submitted to the BFCC for approval. The BFCC Chair can approve plans where the Committee has delegated this

function and where the plans are compliant with BFCC Policy. Once approved by the BFCC, the BFMC must maintain, monitor and review these plans.

- 2.3 BFMC decisions on bush fire management become binding when included in Operations Coordination Plans, Bush Fire Risk Management Plans or Fire Access and Fire Trail Plans, prepared and approved under Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*.
- 2.4 BFMCs must prepare and submit a Draft Operations Coordination Plan within every 2 year period from the establishment date of the Committee.
- 2.5 The BFMC shall ensure that operational preparedness and pre-incident planning is undertaken in accordance with the Operations Coordination Plan.
- 2.6 As per the Operations Coordination Plan, the following must be completed prior to the commencement of the Bush Fire Danger Period for each BFMC.
  - At least one scenario based exercise. This exercise should involve Fire Fighting Authorities who have responsibilities in the BFMC area, SES, NSW Police and NSW Ambulance as a minimum.
  - A Pre-Season Checklist is to be completed and submitted.
- 2.7 BFMCs must prepare and submit a Draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plan within every 5 year period from the establishment date of the Committee.
- 2.8 BFMCs must prepare an Annual Ignition Prevention Plan for their area.
- 2.9 BFMCs must prepare and submit a Draft Fire Access and Fire Trail Plan along with a Treatment Register on or before 30 June 2020 and then within every 5 year period thereafter.
- 2.10 An Annual Works Plan is to be prepared for the forthcoming year, identifying priority and secondary works for the BFMC based on the bush fire risks.
- 2.11 BFMCs must submit an Annual Report to the BFCC by the 1<sup>st</sup> August, which includes information on:
  - Meeting/s held;
  - Attendance of member agencies at meetings;
  - The status and implementation progress of Operations Coordination Plans, Bush Fire Risk Management Plans, Fire Access and Fire Trail Plans and Annual Works Plans;
  - Operational exercises undertaken; and
  - Any other matters that may be requested by the BFCC.
- 2.12 The BFMC's Annual Report will be made accessible to the public.
- 2.13 BFMC members will participate in prioritisation and assessment of applications for funding for bush fire mitigation works to ensure they align with BFCC Policy and NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) guidelines.

### **3 Bush Fire Danger Periods**

- 3.1 A BFMC may make recommendations to the NSW RFS Commissioner regarding alterations to the statutory commencement and revocation of the Bush Fire Danger Periods within its area.

## 4 Fire Classification

- 4.1 BFMCs have the following roles which are to be carried out by the BFMC's Fire Classification Group;
- Identifying potential Incident Controllers and Incident Management Team members as specified in the Operations Coordination Plan; and
  - Consult regarding any recommendation for a declaration in accordance with Section 44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* with consideration given to a potential Incident Controller and Deputy Incident Controllers.

## 5 Committee Membership

- 5.1 Committee membership is outlined in Section 14 of the *Rural Fires Regulations 2013* and Part A of the BFMC Handbook.
- 5.2 Membership nominations must be made in writing to the BFMC's Executive Officer.
- 5.3 If a BFMC member organisation changes its representation on the BFMC, the approval of the BFCC for the change is not required. However, the name of the new representative must be notified to the Executive Officer of the BFMC in writing.
- 5.4 If the BFMC wishes to seek membership of an organisation not outlined in the *Rural Fires Regulations 2013*, it must seek permission from the BFCC in writing, setting out the reasons for its inclusion. Alternatively, if they are not required as a member, they can attend as guests or observers and provide input as requested by the BFMC.
- 5.5 Executive Officers must keep an official record of membership including but not limited to email addresses, postal addresses and phone numbers. This should be maintained regularly and updated at least annually.

## 6 Chairperson Functions

- 6.1 The Chairperson is responsible for presiding over meetings of the BFMC and ensuring that business is conducted in an orderly fashion.
- 6.2 The Chairperson should keep track of due dates for key functions the BFMC must meet and ensure that these are carried out.
- 6.3 The Chairperson should sign all BFMC correspondence.
- 6.4 The Chairperson can delegate their functions to the deputy chair; or if absent from the meeting, the BFMC can elect an acting chairperson in accordance with the *Rural Fires Regulations 2013*.

## 7 Executive Officer Functions

- 7.1 The Executive Officer is responsible for arranging clerical and logistical support to ensure that the BFMC functions efficiently including supporting the Committee to undertake its functions.
- 7.2 The Executive Officer will ensure preparation of effective agendas, taking of minutes and distribution of minutes and correspondence.
- 7.3 For Rural Fire Districts, an Executive Officer may delegate their functions to the Deputy Fire Control Officer in the event of their absence, illness or other inability to act or during a vacancy in the position. This should be an exception rather than regular practice.

- 7.4 For Fire Districts, an Executive Officer may delegate their functions to the person acting in the position of Zone Commander as directed by the Fire and Rescue NSW Commissioner in the event of their absence, illness or other inability to act or during a vacancy in the position. This should be an exception rather than regular practice.

## 8 Committee Conduct

- 8.1 BFMCs will aim to reach consensus on issues on a tenure blind basis. If unable to be resolved, issues can be referred to the BFCC for resolution. The BFCC requires all eligible organisations to participate at the BFMC, and for local issues to be resolved, as far as possible, through a consensus process, as outlined in the BFMC Handbook.
- 8.2 It is expected that all members of the BFMC will attend meetings and actively participate in decision making having authority to commit their organisation to agreed actions. They should also liaise with staff and stakeholders of their organisation and report back to the BFMC.
- 8.3 BFMCs will engage with their communities on all matters relating to the protection of life, property, infrastructure, environmental, economic, cultural, agricultural and community assets from bush fires.
- 8.4 A BFMC should draw upon the expertise of both members and external organisations in performing its duties.
- 8.5 BFMCs must meet regularly to satisfy their statutory requirements and other obligations. As a minimum, the Committee should convene at least twice per year.
- 8.6 Meetings must be conducted in the spirit of consensus and in accordance with the good meeting practice principles provided in the BFMC Handbook. Where there are issues identified, BFMCs are encouraged to resolve the matter using [BFCC Policy 1/2000 - Guidelines for Dispute Avoidance / Dispute Resolution](#) as a guide.
- 8.7 BFMCs should consider any matter related to bush fire management in their area and convey a collective view to the local community when required.
- 8.8 BFMCs may form subcommittees to assist with matters such as preparing draft Annual Works Plans, Section 52 Plans or to address specific bush fire management issues within the local community.

## 9 Amalgamation and Disbandment's of BFMCs

- 9.1 In accordance with Section 50 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the BFCC can amalgamate or disband BFMCs, which may not align with districts or zones of the relevant fire service.
- 9.2 Where BFMCs propose to amalgamate or disband for any reason, these BFMCs must seek formal approval from the BFCC to the proposed change.
- 9.3 Proposals for amalgamation or disbandment must be submitted to the BFCC via its Executive Officer. Proposals must clearly show the agreement of all affected BFMCs and also advise the name of the proposed new BFMC(s).
- 9.4 The BFCC encourages the amalgamation of BFMCs in rural fire districts and fire districts where a single Fire Control Officer / District Manager (Rural Fire Districts) or Zone Commander (Fire Districts) has been appointed for all those districts.
- 9.5 Where amalgamations are required, the BFCC will make every effort to discuss proposed changes with the Executive Officers of the BFMCs affected.
- 9.6 Where an amalgamation has been approved, all existing members of previous BFMCs may retain their positions on the newly constituted BFMC for up to two years. At the conclusion of the transition period, the provisions of Section 14 of *Rural Fires Regulation 2013* must be

met with a variation to 14 (e) to allow for at least one volunteer brigade member for each Council area.

- 9.7 The BFMC should seek continued assistance from former members where that expertise may assist in the Committee's deliberations.
- 9.8 Where there is more than one BFMC representative for an organisation identified in Section 14 after the amalgamation, unless otherwise stated, only one person is to be nominated by the organisation at the conclusion of the transition period. This does not preclude another person from the organisation attending meetings as an observer.
- 9.9 The BFCC reiterates that BFMCs should operate on a consensus basis with all Committee members having a voice in decision making.
- 9.10 As provided for by Section 52 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the new BFMC (formed by the amalgamation) must submit a draft Operations Coordination Plan and a draft Bush Fire Risk Management Plan within 12 months of its official establishment date. In regard to Fire Access and Fire Trail Plans, it is also encouraged that a plan is prepared for the area as soon as practically possible.
- 9.11 Until such time as new plans are approved by the BFCC, the existing plans prepared for the previous BFMCs remain in force.

## 10 Training for BFMC Members

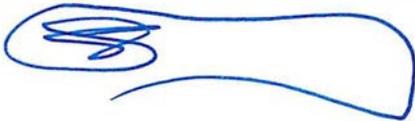
- 10.1 In their endorsement of this policy, the BFCC expects that agencies with an involvement on BFMCs will use the BFMC Handbook and Charter to make arrangements for the ongoing training of their representatives in:
  - the roles and functions of the BFMC, and
  - their representative duties on these Committees.
- 10.2 The NSW RFS in consultation with the BFCC will host an online training program that will provide members with knowledge on the functions of a BFMC along with their role and responsibilities. When members complete modules, a copy of the certificate should be provided to the Executive Officer to record that the training has been undertaken.
- 10.3 Upon request, the NSW RFS will make arrangements to provide face to face training for BFMC members and agencies.

## 11 Related Documents

- Bush Fire Management Committee Charter
- Bush Fire Management Committee Handbook (Including Appendices A – K)
- [Policy 1/2000 - Guidelines for Dispute Avoidance/Dispute Resolution](#)
- [Policy 1/2008 - Bush Fire Risk Management](#)
- [Policy 2/2006 - Management of Bush Fire Operations \(Amended\)](#)
- [Policy 1/2017 - Fire Trails](#)
- [Policy 1/2011 - Allocation Principles for Funding of Bush Fire Mitigation Works](#)

## 12 Amendments

Amendment date	Version No.	Description
19 March 2020	V2	Review of BFMC Policy 1/2006 to reflect updates to the BFMC Handbook, Charter and associated legislation.



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