



RFS

District Information Pack

Riverina Highlands

Riverina Highlands is located on the western slopes of the Great Dividing Range in southern New South Wales bordered by the ACT to the East and Victoria in the South, covering approximately 8,960 square Kilometres with a population of 14,950 people. The main towns within the Snowy Valleys are Tumut, Tumbarumba, Adelong and Batlow with smaller villages located throughout the Snowy Valleys Council Area. Large sections of the Local Government Area are contained within National Parks.

The Snowy Valleys area has mainly an agricultural background and as such fire is part of the community lifestyle, the community (rural) is more adept to dealing with fire and fire related issues. Fire is a recognised agricultural tool used by most rural residents within the Snowy Valleys area.

Between December and February tourism is at its peak with high numbers of tourists camping along the foreshores of the many dams, lakes and streams within State Forest and National Parks land resulting in heightened fire activity during the bushfire danger period, and this issue has been identified as potentially impacting on the ability of certain sections of the community to prepare themselves for bush fire. Additionally, due to the vastness of the area, some challenges are presented when locating people during a bush fire emergency

The Snowy Valleys area has on average 66 bush fires per year, of which 4 on average can be considered to be significant. The main sources of ignition in the area are:

- Lightning
- Illegal burning off
- Escapes from camp fires
- Incendiarism
- Escapes from legal burning off

1.1. Contact Information

District Office Address:	76 Capper Street Tumut NSW 2720
District Office Phone:	02 6981 4222
After Hours Contact:	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
A PSN Radio Channel:	137 RVHLD A
B PSN Radio Channel:	237 RVHLD B
PMR Channel:	2235 RVHLD P– Primary Dispatch Channel
ESO Conversion Chart:	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
Fire Weather Forecast Area:	Southern Slopes
Local Government Area:	Snowy Valleys

1.2. Topography

The terrain varies from the Great Dividing Range and various other mountain ranges and gorges in the east (Snowy Mountains), to the pastoral plains to the west.

1.3. Vegetation

The vegetation is primarily pasture, eucalyptus forest, pine plantations and apple orchards with an increasing area being planted down to grapes.

Other small enterprises include goat, ostrich, deer farming and honey production.

Kosciuszko National Park is to the east and the Australian Capital Territory to the north east.

1.4. Climate

The typical / average climate in the Snowy Valleys area is cool temperate with predominantly Winter rainfall and the bush fire season generally runs from November to March.

Prevailing weather conditions associated with the bush fire season in the Snowy Valleys area are generally North-westerly winds accompanied by high daytime temperatures and low relative humidity. Frequent dry lightning storms occurring during the bush fire season are common on an annual basis.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Tumbarumba Post Office recorded by the BoM (last updated 02 August 2023)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Ma y	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	19.7	22.9	26.2	29.0	28.4	25.2	20.1	15.3	11.9	10.8	12.3	15.6
Min Temp (°C)	5.3	7.8	9.9	12.4	12.0	9.0	5.1	2.3	0.3	-0.1	0.9	3.1
Rainfall (mm)	95.2	77.1	71.4	64.8	54.6	66.0	66.1	82.1	101.8	103.6	106.2	90.0
3pm Temp (°C)	17.7	20.8	23.9	26.8	26.6	23.6	18.7	14.0	10.6	9.5	10.9	13.9
3pm wind (km/h)	10.2	10.3	9.8	9.6	9.0	8.4	7.1	6.4	7.0	7.9	9.2	10.4
3pm RH (%)	49	48	43	38	40	42	50	61	68	67	62	57

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

- Kosciuszko National Park mostly wilderness areas in steep terrain and along the Alpine Way in the southern part of the District while transiting through roadside cuttings.
- Sue City camping area at the southern end of Talbingo Dam and areas along the Elliott Way from Maragle to Cabramurra
- The western area of the District south of Ellersli through to Yaven Creek
- Within the Pine Plantations throughout the District when shielded by tall timber.
- The Riverina Highlands District has a very good system working along ridge tops, once travel commences down into the valleys reception can become quite patchy and hand held radio communications are generally not available

1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Tourism

Between December and February tourism is at its peak with high numbers of tourists camping along the foreshores of the many dams, lakes and streams within State Forest and National Parks land resulting in heightened fire activity during the bushfire danger period. Due to the vastness of the area, this presents some challenges locating people during a bush fire emergency.

During the winter months Tumut is the Western gateway for the Snowy Mountains. This leads to a high amount of traffic flow with multiple coaches and private vehicles utilising the Snowy Mountains Highway taking people to the various ski fields. The risk of snow and ice can effect response times to other incidents that the RFS would normally be attending.

1.7.2. Terrain

There are several areas affected by steep inaccessible country with mountainous ranges and deep gorges.

1.7.3. Energy and Utilities

- Snowy Hydro infrastructure and Power stations at Cabramurra, Talbingo, Khancoban, and Tumut with State Critical High Voltage power lines traversing the upper Tumut River and south towards the Murray River and Victorian Border.
- Snowy 2.0 construction site in the Lobs Hole area of Kosciuszko National Park.

1.7.4. Transportation

Tumut has one major highway passing through it (Snowy Mountains Highway). This corridor connects the western side of the Snowy Mountains to the Snowy Monaro District. It transverses the Great Dividing Range and in winter months may become unpassable due to heavy snow fall in the mountainous areas. The nearest railway is at Cootamundra and a bus service runs daily for connecting travellers.

1.7.5. Aviation

Tumut does have an airport which is predominately used for private and other commercial interests. The District has an established airbase at Tumut Airport with facilities to support aerial suppression.

1.8. Land Management Authorities

Land Manager	% of Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	45.73
Forestry Corp of NSW	17.18
DPI-Lands (Crown Lands)	1.97
Private/Local Government	35.12

For more specific data on the Snowy Valleys District, please follow the link to the Snowy Valleys Bush Fire Risk Management Plan [here](#).

Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.

For further information regarding the Riverina Highlands District Information pack, please contact the Operational Improvement team via **email at** operational.improvement@rfs.nsw.gov.au

