



Service Standard 4.3.1

Community Engagement

Version	3.0
SOPs	Nil
Policy Owner	Deputy Commissioner Operational Coordination
Policy Contact	Director Community Resilience
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Next Review	25 June 2029

1. Purpose

- 1.1. Community engagement is a long-term, strategic effort to reduce the risks and impacts of fire on communities across NSW. Our approach prioritises reducing community risk by building trusted relationships, collaborating with communities, providing tailored information, and supporting clear, informed decision-making.
- 1.2. We focus on supporting people to act early and decisively to protect their lives, homes, and futures. Over time, community engagement encourages meaningful and sustained changes in behaviours, systems and organisations that support preparedness. Together these changes create safer, more resilient communities prepared for fire and other emergencies.
- 1.3. This Service Standard establishes a clear and adaptable framework to guide RFS personnel in delivering evidence-based, locally relevant community engagement activities that contribute to safer and more resilient communities across New South Wales.
- 1.4. The Service Standard should be read in conjunction with the:
 - Community Preparedness and Engagement Framework 2026–2031
 - Community Engagement Member Toolkit
 - Community Engagement Staff Guidelines

2. Policy

- 2.1. Community engagement is a core risk treatment activity integrated into the Bush Fire Risk Management planning process and all levels of Service operations.
- 2.2. The RFS will deliver engagement activities that are inclusive, evidence-based, culturally safe, and focused on empowering individuals and communities to take timely, informed action.
- 2.3. RFS community engagement activities should be designed and evaluated for continuous improvement.

- 2.4. Supporting documentation as listed in this Service Standard provides practical guidance for planning, delivering, and reporting activities at district, area command and state level.
- 2.5. Engagement activities and supporting resources should be consistent with current RFS guidelines, organisational policies, and the requirements of this Service Standard.

Governance

- 2.6. Community engagement governance is structured at three organisational levels. Each group has a charter outlining membership and roles and responsibilities:
 - State Community Engagement Group: supports consistency strategic intent, ensures alignment, monitors and supports statewide performance aligned with the RFS Strategic Direction 2026-2031.
 - Area Command Community Engagement Groups: support planning, delivery and reporting across each area command. Identify capability gaps and act as conduits for information and reporting between District CE Groups and State CE Group. Support delivery of the RFS Strategic Direction 2026-2031.
 - District Community Engagement Groups: support planning, delivery and reporting of CE activities across the district. Support CE capability building, oversee local activity delivery and support brigades. Support delivery of the RFS Strategic Direction 2026-2031.

Prioritisation of activities

- 2.7. To meet our legislative obligations and manage resources effectively, we use a tiered framework to prioritise the delivery of CE activities. This tiered approach aims to ensure transparency in decision-making and resource allocation, while respecting and encouraging diverse local initiatives that contribute to overall community resilience.
 - Tier 1 activities: the CE treatments identified in Bush Fire Risk Management Plan focus areas. These are the highest priority activities for delivery.
 - Tier 2 activities: the activities identified by the district to engage with communities that sit outside the current BFRMP focus areas. These are identified and delivered as district resources allow.
 - Tier 3 activities: The activities identified by brigades, tailored and delivered to engage with their local communities. These are delivered as brigade and district resources allow.
- 2.8. Where resources are limited, Tier 1 activities are prioritised over Tier 2 and Tier 3.
- 2.9. The RFS supports community-led or partner organisation initiatives that align with preparedness objectives. Districts should coordinate local support, and area commands oversee region-wide initiatives. The State CE team will support area commands and districts and oversee strategic partnerships for the whole of the organisation. Provision of support will depend on RFS capacity and alignment.

Roles and responsibilities

- 2.10. RFS members are responsible for facilitating or supporting community engagement according to their role.
- 2.11. Detailed responsibilities and supporting competency pathways are published in the CE Member toolkit and the CE Staff Guide (both available on OneRFS) and include:
 - Community Engagement Officer: plan and deliver engagement activities for their brigade. Support the delivery of CE activities across the district as required. Participate in the District Community Engagement Group. Comply with guidelines, policies and procedures and contribute to reporting and evaluation and innovation.
 - District staff: coordinate and support the delivery of CE across the district. In conjunction with area command, develop and implement District CE and District Annual Works Plans. Provide resources, guidance, and support to members and education to the community.

Organise local resources to undertake CE activities within the district. Maintain accurate records of engagement activities. Coordinate delivery of CE training. Liaise with area command and state teams to support consistency in messaging, delivery of activities, and reporting.

- Area Command Community Risk staff: support districts to develop and execute Annual Works and District Community Engagement plans. Support districts to implement programs and deliver community engagement activities. Liaise between state and district levels to support consistency in messaging, delivery of activities, and reporting. Coordinate and facilitate training as appropriate to build capability across the area command.
- State Community Engagement team staff: lead strategic development of CE, including the distribution of resources and administration of statewide programs. Collaborate with internal and external stakeholders, conduct research, consultation, co-design of programs and identify and drive continuous improvement. Liaise with area commands, districts and members.

Delivery of CE activities

- 2.12. CE activities should contribute to the reduction of risk in communities and be consistent with the Community Engagement Preparedness Framework and the RFS Strategic Direction. They should be delivered in accordance with approved processes and policies.
- 2.13. Activities should be supported by current and accurate RFS resources, advice and best practice.

Community engagement training

- 2.14. The State Community Engagement team is responsible for maintaining, consulting on and updating CE training pathways and content.
- 2.15. District and area command staff and the State CE team are each responsible for promoting and delivering CE training programs.
- 2.16. Area commands and districts should ensure CE skills gaps are identified and included in their existing Training Needs Analysis (TNA) and that CE training is coordinated and delivered using the most current training content. The State Community Engagement team should assist area commands and districts as appropriate.

Reporting and evaluation

- 2.17. The purpose of reporting and evaluation is to track community preparedness over time by assessing what has been delivered and achieved. This process identifies what is working effectively and highlights opportunities to enhance the impact and efficiency of our community engagement activities.
- 2.18. Community engagement activities should be reported using approved systems and templates as detailed in the CE Staff Guideline and CE Member Toolkit.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. For the purpose of this policy document the following definitions apply:
- a. **Community Engagement (CE):** is the activities and interactions that build trust with our communities and support the long-term effort to reduce community risk through behavioural change. The purpose of this type of engagement is to support our communities to identify and understand their local fire risk, to tailor their preparation for their own circumstances, and to take practical action to protect life and property.
 - b. **Bush Fire Risk Management Plan (BFRMP):** the strategic five-year plan developed by a Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) that identifies local bush fire risks and proposes treatments to reduce their impact on communities, assets, and the environment. In

accordance with s 52(1) (b) of the Rural Fires Act 1997, BFRMPs set out the risk treatments which are required to be implemented by fire authorities, land managers and other agencies. These may range from CE programs to operational activities such as hazard reduction and fire suppression.

There is a legislative obligation on BFMCs to report annually on the implementation of their BFRMPs, and the Commissioner of the RFS has a legislative power to audit BFRMPs. There is also a legislative obligation on public authorities, owners and occupiers of land to take steps included in BFRMPs applying to their land. Identified focus area treatment strategies for community engagement are divided into one of five (5) categories. These categories, collectively known as the Community Engagement Program Matrix, are:

- Risk Awareness
 - Planning
 - Preparation
 - Community Resilience, and
 - Community Response.
- c. **BFMC Annual Works Plan:** A document that supports the planning and completion of all BFRMP risk treatments that have been identified for delivery within a 12-month period.
- d. **District Annual Works Plan:** A document that supports the district's annual planning and completion of all RFS-assigned risk treatments from the BFRMP.
- e. **District Community Engagement Plan:** A document that supports the long-term planning and delivery of all CE activities and building capability within the district.
- f. **Tiered activities:** the framework used to support the prioritisation of community engagement activity planning and delivery:
- Tier 1 activities: these are the community engagement treatments identified in Bush Fire Risk Management Plan focus areas. These are the highest priority activities for delivery.
 - Tier 2 activities: the activities identified by the district to engage with communities that sit outside the current BFRMP focus areas. These are delivered as district resources allow.
 - Tier 3 activities: the activities identified by brigades, tailored and delivered to engage with their local communities. These are delivered as brigade and district resources allow.

4. Document control

Release history

Version	Date	Summary of changes
1.0	1 Sept 1999	Initial release
2.0	24 July 2007	Complete review of Service Standards and Procedures
2.0	20 Sept 2002	Repealed while development of the new Community Engagement framework takes place
3.0	25 June 2026	Reinstatement of Service Standard

Version	Date	Summary of changes
		Comprehensive review to reflect current community engagement governance and practice, and publication of the Community Engagement Preparedness Framework.

Approved by

Name	Position	Date
Kelly Quandt AFSM	A/Commissioner	25 June 2026

Related documents

Document name
RFS Community Engagement and Preparedness Framework 2026-2031
Community Engagement member toolkit
Community Engagement staff guideline
Community Engagement Activity Guidelines
Community Engagement Officer role description
Community Engagement Brigade Activity Proposal
Brigade post Community Engagement Activity Report
Community Engagement Risk Assessment