



District Information Pack

New England

The New England Zone is located on the northern inland of New South Wales.

The land covered under the New England Bush Fire Risk Management Plan is 18,458.25 km² and contains three Local Government Areas of Armidale Regional, Walcha and Uralla, with a combined population of 35,061 from the latest 2021 Census.

In the previous year, the New England Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) area had 281 bush fires last year, with 1 Section 44 being declared for the whole Armidale LGA in the last year. The main sources of ignition in the New England BFMC area are:

- Escaped private burns
- Lightning strikes
- Arson/fire setting

The nominated Incident Management Facility is the New England Fire Control Centre located at 41 Shand Dr, Armidale 2350.

1.1. Contact Information

District Office Address:	41 Shand Dr Armidale NSW 2350
District Office Phone:	02 6771 7700
After Hours Contact:	Via State Operations on 02 8741 5400
A PSN Radio Channel:	135 NWENG A
B PSN Radio Channel:	235 NWENG B
PMR Channel:	2233 NWENG P - Primary Dispatch Channel
ESO Conversion Chart:	Please see file in folder for relevant conversion information
Fire Weather Forecast Area:	New England
Local Government Area:	Armidale, Walcha, Uralla

1.2. Topography

The Zone extends along the gorge country from Walcha and Oxley Wild Rivers in the south to Armidale and Uralla in the north across to the western edges of Guyra and the Dorrigo Plateau. It includes some of the most remote and rugged country within the North Eastern Area and is regularly covered in snow in the higher reaches of the Zone during winter.

1.3. Vegetation

The New England is home to a large number of National Parks including Guy Fawkes, Cathedral Rocks, Cunnawarra, Oxley Wild Rivers, Mummel Gulf, Nowendoc, Carrai, Werrikimbe and Cottan-Bimbang National Parks. The area has a diverse range of landscapes including difficult to access gorge and mountainous country mainly to the east.

1.4. Climate

The typical/average climate in the New England area is a temperate to cool climate, characterised by warm summers with uniform rainfall generally occurring in the summer. Patches of montane climate occur at higher elevations and these are characterised by mild summers and no dry season.

The bushfire season generally runs from August to March. Prevailing weather conditions associated with the bushfire season in the New England BFMC area are west to north-westerly winds, moderate to high daytime temperatures and low relative humidity. Frosts in winter support low fuel moisture content in grass fuels and dry lightning storms occur leading to fire impact in remote areas.

1.5. Average Weather Data

Summary of major climate statistics recorded at Armidale Airport recorded by the BoM (last updated 19 April 2024)

Element (Mean)	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Max Temp (°C)	20.6	22.8	25.0	26.3	25.1	23.2	19.7	15.8	12.7	12.3	14.1	17.8
Min Temp (°C)	7.4	10.0	12.1	13.6	13.2	11.6	7.8	4.3	2.4	1.4	1.8	4.7
Rainfall (mm)	73.7	96.1	102.1	90.9	94.4	69.7	35.0	39.3	47.7	43.1	44.8	50.4
3pm Temp (°C)	18.4	20.0	22.5	24.1	22.5	21.3	18.3	14.4	11.3	10.6	12.7	16.1
3pm wind (km/h)	19.8	19.0	19.4	18.9	18.6	18.0	17.6	17.9	18.9		19.5	21.2
3pm RH (%)	46	54	51	52	58	53	49	55	60	56	48	46

1.6. Known Radio Comms Blackspots

- The end of Kangaroo Flat Road
- Anywhere down the Oxley Highway past Kangaroo Flat Road
- The Mummel Gulf/Enfield Range
- Near Yarrowitch RFB Station
- Between Balala and Kyabra Station
- Creek and Rocky Gully (Uralla and Bendemeer) on the New England Highway
- Nowendoc, the far reaches west, south and some small patches to the east of Nowendoc, mainly due to the steep and deep valleys around the Nowendoc area.(some reasonable coverage from the mid coast PMR network in these areas)
- The Gorge country around the Lower Creek Brigade area, and south, especially Kunderang Brook. (Deep valleys and some distance away from a PMR Tower)
- East and southeast of Yarrowitch once you cross the Hastings / Maclean range or apple tree hill on the Oxley Highway heading towards Port Macquarie. There is virtually no coverage from this point, and we sometimes change to a Hastings channel to get some coverage (Over the range and some distance away from a PMR Tower)
- Lower creek and southeast of Yarrowitch are by far the largest black spot areas for the New England PMR network. These areas are made worse by the fact that there also no mobile coverage as well, and very limited coverage from the neighboring districts as well. The only fire agency that has some reasonable coverage in these areas is NPWS, in which they have sites in/ near these areas these towers are VHF which covers a lot better in this terrain than UHF

1.7. Hazards

1.7.1. Transportation and Freight

The New England Highway (A15) is the main arterial highway dissecting the New England Zone, running North – South and providing a vital road link with the Northern Tablelands and Queensland Border region.

Serving as an artery to the coast, the Waterfall Way links with the Coffs Coast to the east, the Thunderbolts Way to the North West and the Hastings Valley to the South East and are critical passenger and freight transport routes throughout the Zone.

The Armidale Regional Airport also serves as the Zone's Airbase and passenger movements through the area are increasing as services expand. The Airport also houses the Zone's RAFT, Logistics and Aviation assets and Brigades.

1.7.2. Agriculture

Mostly, traditional primary industries abound throughout the zone, the area is also home to considerable food production and livestock businesses and larger stock holdings are prevalent throughout the zone.

1.7.3. Energy and Water

- Essential Energy is the primary provider of electrical substations and high-voltage infrastructure throughout the New England Zone
- The New England is also known for our contribution to the renewable energy sector with 2 significant solar installations
- Solar Farms
 - 2 major installations:
 - Big Ridge Rd at Urlla – Southwest of Armidale
 - Barley Park Rd at Metz – East of Armidale
- Water supply for Armidale is located at the Malpas Dam south east of Guyra and to the north of Armidale. The Puddledock and Dumaresq dams are also able to be used as an emergency supply only. Copeton Dam to the northwest of Bundarra is a significant body of water that could be utilised for aviation scooping assets.

1.7.4. Other Identified hazards

- Disused Mine Shafts: Not clearly visible and scattered throughout the area. Solar Farms: Hillgrove & Urlla
- Future Wind Farm project proposed for the Kentucky and Ben Lomond areas.

1.8. Land Management Authorities

Land Manager	% of BFMC Area
National Parks & Wildlife Service	17.1
Forestry Corporation NSW	4.03
Department of Lands	8.3
Local Government	.017
Private	67.6
All Other	2.8

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

Note: This link will only work with internet coverage.

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

