



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

MEDIA RELEASE

Strengthened partnership to benefit farming communities ahead of fire season

25 September 2020

Further action is being taken to strengthen the partnership between the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and farmers across the State from the devastating impacts of bush fires.

Ahead of the official start of the fire season, which is expected to see an increase of threat from grass fires due to wetter and warmer than average conditions, the NSW RFS and NSW Farmers are working together to better protect farming communities. Grass fires can spread quickly across large distances – three times faster than a bush fire, wiping out entire farms in an instance.

Latest data shows above average levels of soil moisture at the end of winter, particularly in central and northern cropping regions in New South Wales. This together with favourable spring rainfall will likely result in significantly above average winter crop yields. 2020-21 alone is expected to more than double that of the 2019-20 harvest.

Minister for Police and Emergency Services David Elliott said the partnership is already delivering results with a new working group focused on integrating Farm Fire Units into fire fighting operations.

“Improving communications between farmers and firefighters on firegrounds is an immediate focus of the group ahead of this fire season,” he said. “This is critical to ensuring that firefighters and farmers are working effectively and safely to protect life and property.”

“NSW is more prepared than ever for this coming fire season after a more than \$45 million investment to fast-track hazard reduction but it continues to be crucial that our communities engage with their local RFS Brigades.”

Under the strengthened partnership, other key initiatives include:

- Local decision making: farmers and local communities are key members of local Bush Fire Management Committees
- Farm Fire Plans: tailored support for farming enterprises to prepare for fire and protect their assets
- Getting Ready: ahead of the fire season, getting to know your local Brigade and using tools like the [Grain Harvesting Guide](#)

For more information contact the State Duty Media Officer on 9898 1855
For current incidents or major fire updates visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

- Rural Liaison Officers: during major fires these officers will work with incident controllers and local farmers to understand what's important for locals
- Locally-led engagement programs for recovery: together programs like Hotspots and Get Ready Weekend supporting communities to get involved, take the lead and become better prepared together

NSW RFS Commissioner Rob Rogers AFSM said: "As part of every rural community across the State, the NSW Rural Fire Service already works closely with farmers to help make our communities safer.

"This year given the increased threat of grass fires, we're redoubling our efforts with this strengthened partnership with farmers and the NSW Farmers to make sure we work better together before, during and after fires. With the potential for millions of dollars' worth of loss and damage, farmers can't afford not to have a farm fire plan and we're here to work with them to protect their livelihoods."

NSW Farmers President James Jackson said: "Being able to best utilise all available resources to manage fire outbreaks is critical and the new fact sheet that aims to better engage NSW RFS volunteers and individual Farm Fire Units is a positive and welcome step.

"Farmers are often the first responders to grass fires and know well the risks of operating machinery in hot dry conditions. The Grain Harvesting Guide continues to be a valuable resource and reference for producers once the harvest commences. NSW Farmers looks forward to further strengthening local partnerships, knowledge sharing, and communication with the NSW RFS over the coming months to ensure our grain crops, orchards and livestock are safe from the ravages of uncontrolled fires."

A range of guides and tools are available to farmers on the NSW RFS website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/farm-fire-safety.

