



Michael Gallacher MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Minister for Police and Emergency Services
Minister for the Hunter

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 30 September 2013

PREPARATION VITAL FOR BUSHFIRE DANGER PERIOD

Police and Emergency Services Minister Michael Gallacher and Rural Fire Service Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons have urged residents in bush fire prone areas across the state to prepare now, with the official start to the bush fire season.

1 October marks the start of the statutory bush fire danger period in NSW. Some areas have already commenced their danger period due to continuing dry conditions.

“In the last few weeks we have already seen significant fire activity which has put homes and lives at risk,” Minister Gallacher said.

“With the warm and dry conditions forecast to continue, it’s important everyone understands the increased risk this season, and prepares for it.

“Last bush fire season was a challenging one in NSW, with more than 50 homes destroyed in January alone.

“In bush fires, complacency can kill. You may think a fire may not happen to you, but if you live in or near the bush, you are at risk and need to prepare now,” Minister Gallacher said.

Research conducted by the NSW Rural Fire Service and the Bushfire Cooperative Research Centre following the January 2013 bush fires found a large number of people did not heed the warnings about the dangerous conditions.

“More than 40 per cent of people surveyed across some of the worst affected areas last summer including Coonabarabran, Yass and the Shoalhaven, stated they wished they had done more preparation,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“35 per cent stated they wish they had a better plan.

“The majority of people know that a Bush Fire Survival Plan could save their life but too many people leave their planning to the last minute. That’s when lives are lost.

“We have just experienced the warmest winter on record and the latest forecasts are pointing to continuing dry and warm conditions,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“In the last few weeks we have seen fires which have started and spread quickly.

“If you’ve been waiting for a wakeup call about preparing for bush fires, this is it.”

Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) Commissioner Greg Mullins said it's important those who do not live close to the bush also prepare.

"Embers from fires can travel great distances, landing several streets back from the bush and starting new fires. It's often these residents that don't consider themselves at risk.

"Therefore it's essential that you have a plan and prepare your home even if you don't live right next to bushland," FRNSW Commissioner Greg Mullins said.

This year alone over 140,000 properties across the State, worth more than \$64 billion, have been provided with protection from bush fires by hazard reduction work.

"Hazard reduction is a vital tool in helping to protect lives and properties. Our volunteers have been working with other agencies to conduct these important burns," Commissioner Fitzsimmons concluded.

ENDS

Minister Gallacher's Office 9228 5257

NSW RFS State Duty Media Officer 02 9898 1855