OP 1.2.18
Operational Protocol for Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RART)
OP 1.2.18

OPERATIONAL PROTOCOL
FOR
Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RART)

Prepared by
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRM</td>
<td>Crew Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAA</td>
<td>First Aid Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMOMSS</td>
<td>Group Manager Operational and Mitigation Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMRC</td>
<td>Group Manager Response and Coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HWS</td>
<td>Helicopter Winch Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IC</td>
<td>Incident Controller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIC</td>
<td>Major Incident Coordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSO</td>
<td>Manager State Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPWS RART</td>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Services Rapid Aerial Response Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MRAFSO</td>
<td>Manager Remote Area Firefighting &amp; Specialised Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPRAFSO</td>
<td>Operations Officer Remote Area Firefighting &amp; Specialised Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPC</td>
<td>Personal Protective Clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPE</td>
<td>Personal Protective Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAF</td>
<td>Remote Area Firefighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAFSO</td>
<td>Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RART</td>
<td>Rapid Aerial Response Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDOO</td>
<td>Regional Duty Operations Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAD</td>
<td>State Air Desk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDOO</td>
<td>State Duty Operations Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITREP</td>
<td>Situation Report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMSS</td>
<td>State Mitigation and Support Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>State Operations Controller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Links

- SS 5.1.5 Protective Clothing and Accessories
- Operational Protocol 1.2.19 Medical Evacuation of Fireground Personnel
- NSW RFS/NPWS Joint Operational Protocol 1.2.12 Remote Area Firefighting
- NSW RFS IMP 8.04.09 Flight Following Log
- NSW RFS IMP 8.04.04 Air Operations Log
- NSW RFS/NPWS Operational Agreement – 2011 Rapid Aerial Response Teams
- NSW and ACT Fire Agencies Bush Fire Aviation Standard Operating Procedures 2011
- NSW RFS Training Guidelines for Remote Area Firefighting

2 Superseded Procedure

Nil

3 Purpose

3.1 This Operational Protocol is for use by the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) and applies to any class of remote fire.

3.2 The NSW RFS has a duty of care to ensure that members and contractors tasked to remote area firefighting operations are trained, qualified, competent and capable of undertaking the tasks allocated to them, and that those tasks are undertaken as safely as possible.

3.3 NSW RFS Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RART) is a function whereby teams of four Remote Area Firefighters (RAF), with Helicopter Winch Skills (HWS) are placed on standby with a designated helicopter at predetermined locations. They are transported by helicopter to the scene of an incident and transferred to the ground by winching or similar insertion techniques, if required.

3.4 RART is typically used to control an incipient bushfire in a remote area before it has a chance to develop and spread. However, that does not preclude RARTs being assigned to other types of operations for which their expertise is also suitable.

3.5 This Operational Protocol has been developed by the NSW RFS for NSW RFS RART personnel. Other agencies working with the NSW RFS may operate under their organisation’s existing operating procedures or guidelines.

3.6 Members of the NSW RFS shall operate under this Operational Protocol when deployed to another agency’s jurisdiction.
4 Coordination of Personnel

4.1 This section refers to Appendix C – RART Standby Process.

4.2 A RART will consist of four RAF members including one qualified RAF Crew Leader, and must have at least one member qualified in First Aid Application (FAA) or equivalent.

4.3 Coordinating RAF personnel for RART is the responsibility of the Operations Officer Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations (OPRAFSD).

4.4 The names of the RAF firefighters are to be forwarded to the RART Coordinator at the State Air Desk or the Manager Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations (MRAFSD) through the Regional Duty Officer (RDO), prior to standby.

4.5 The first four RAF firefighters are the primary RART and are to be at the base of operations at the required time. An additional four RAF firefighters will be on call should the need for deployment arise. They are not required to be at the base of operations for standby.

4.6 If the NSW RFS Region where activation is to occur is unable to provide the required RAF firefighters, requests are to be firstly made through the other Regions. If no Region can provide the required RAF personnel, then a request can be made by the State Duty Operations Officer for suitably qualified State Mitigation Support Services (SMSS) staff to fill the shortfall for the required RART standby team.

5 Qualifications for RART Firefighters

RART Firefighters

5.1 RART firefighters must be currently competent in Remote Area Firefighting as set by NSW RFS Training Guidelines for Remote Area Firefighting (RAF) and also hold current qualification in Helicopter Winch Skills (HWS).

RART Leaders

5.2 RART leaders are to be qualified in Crew Leader (CL), currently competent in Remote Area Firefighting as set by NSW RFS Training Guidelines for Remote Area Firefighting (RAF), and hold current qualification in Helicopter Winch Skills (HWS).

6 Operational Procedures

Standby of RART

6.1 This section refers to Appendix G – NSW RART Standby Triggers for a Local Government Area Based on Four Day Weather Outlook Matrix
6.2 The decision and timing for RART/s to standby may be recommended by the MRAFSO, OPRAFSO, the RDOO, the SDOO or the SOC.

6.3 The decision to standby is approved by the NSW RFS SOC or SDOO in consultation with the:

(a) NSW RFS Aviation Duty Officer;
(b) NSW RFS Remote Area Firefighting and Specialised Operations Manager;
(c) NPWS RART Coordinator; and
(d) any affected MIC or RDOO.

The coordination of firefighters for RART will follow Appendix C – RART Standby Process.

RART Standby Locations

6.4 This section refers to Appendix F - RART Dispatch Bases at 100 knots.

6.5 Standby locations shall to be reviewed annually by the MRAFSO, prior to the fire season to ensure adequate service delivery and facilities are maintained.

Notification of RART to Districts

6.6 The RART Coordinator, located at the State Air Desk, will notify the District Duty Officers covered by the RART of:

(a) standby timings;
(b) airbase location;
(c) areas covered;
(d) contact details of Dispatch Officer; and,
(e) a briefing on how to request a RART response.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) have committed to notifying any NSW RFS District in which a NPWS RART is available to provide a response, with details about how to request such response.

Dispatch of RART

6.7 A RART Dispatch Officer may be located with the helicopter and RART at the nominated airbase. The RART Dispatch Officer does not form part of the RART and remains at the airbase on deployment of the RART.

6.8 The District requesting the RART will call the RART Dispatch Officer at the closest standby location directly and request a response.

Initial Response

6.9 This section refers to Appendix A - RART Deployment Authorisation Process.
6.10 On calling the RART Dispatch Officer the District Duty Officer will provide:
(a) time of original fire call;
(b) location;
(c) description;
(d) current local weather;
(e) any threat to property; and,
(f) any other District resource being responded.

6.11 The Dispatch Officer will respond the RART upon completing a briefing with the RART and Aircrew, utilising Appendix D – RART Dispatch Officer Checklist and Appendix E – RART Team Leader Deployment Checklist.

6.12 Once the RART has been responded the Dispatch Officer will contact the RART Coordinator to advise:
(a) the response and the time of original fire call;
(b) time of dispatch;
(c) location;
(d) local weather conditions; and,
(e) any District resource being responded.

6.13 The RART Coordinator will inform the SAD, the SDO/SOC, Regional Duty Officer and the NPWS RART Coordinator that the response is underway.

Response to Reconnaissance Flights

6.14 For days on which reconnaissance flights take place in areas where RART is operating, the Coordinator or Dispatcher may receive a request to respond either from the State Air Desk or the Air Observer of the reconnaissance flight. In such instances:
(a) The RART Coordinator will pass details onto the RART Dispatcher;
(b) The RART Dispatcher will contact the relevant District and advise of request and details;
(c) The RART will be responded on approval of the District or State Air Desk;
(d) Multiple requests from reconnaissance flights will be managed as per section 6.15.

Multiple Requests for RART deployment

6.15 This section refers to Appendix B – RART Deployment Multiple District Requests Process.
6.16 If multiple requests for a response are received by the RART Dispatch Officer, they are not to delay the response. The RART will be deployed to the first call for a response.

6.17 The RART Dispatch Officer shall contact the RART Coordinator who, in consultation with the affected RDOO or Region MIC, the SAD and SDOO/SOC shall determine the priorities of response.

6.18 The RART Coordinator shall inform the RART Dispatch Officer and Districts of the order of priorities.

Management of RART on Dispatch

6.19 The control of the operational management of a RART, once deployed into the field, transfers to the requesting District or IC of the incident.

6.20 The RART leader should establish communications with the Fireground once overhead of the scene.

6.21 The RART Coordinator may redeploy the RART in consultation with the District, IC and the authority of the RDOO/MIC or SOC/SDOO.

Flight Details and Passenger Manifest

6.22 The RART Dispatch Officer is to ensure the Flight Details and Passenger Manifest is completed and a copy kept with the RART Dispatcher.

Flight Following

6.23 The RART Dispatch Officer is to ensure that flight following is conducted either by the RART Dispatcher, State Operations or the District the RART is operating within. IMP 8.04.09 Flight Following Log is to be utilised for flight following.

Air Operations Log

6.24 The RART Dispatch Officer is to ensure the Air Operations Log is completed for RART Operations. IMP Air 8.04.04 Air Operations Log is to be utilised for this purpose.

Deployment of RART

6.25 The RART leader, in consultation with the RART crew, will make the final determination on the RART deployment taking place, utilising Crew Resource Management (CRM) and the RART Deployment Checklists located at Appendix D of this Operational Protocol.

6.26 A Situational Report (SITREP) via the radio network is to be given to the District and RART Dispatch Officer upon arrival at scene and prior to insertion. ICON entries are to be made at the time or as soon as practicable by the RART Dispatcher or Coordinator.
6.27 The RART leader will make the determination, in consultation with the requesting District on the type and duration of deployment dependant on access, other resources on scene, additional resources required and the capacity for the RART to contain or extinguish the fire.

6.28 Types of deployments may include;
(a) SITREP only to District;
(b) Insertion of crew only;
(c) Insertion of crew with helicopter bucketing; and
(d) Other operations as approved by the SOC.
Note, water bucketing with helicopter only may be conducted until additional resources arrive.

6.29 If the fireground is able to be accessed by ground or vehicle based crews, the RART will stay on scene until such time as ground crews arrive and commence firefighting operations.

Insertion of RART

6.30 There are various options for aerial insertion, e.g. landing, hover entry/exit and winching. Winching should only be undertaken when other options are not possible. All insertion procedures must be in accordance with the NSW and ACT Fire Agencies Bush Fire Aviation Standard Operating Procedures 2011:
(a) Bush Fire Aviation Standard Operating Procedure 2.3.1 Landing, Hover Entry/Exit;
(b) Bush Fire Aviation Standard Operating Procedure 2.3.2 Winching; and,
(c) SOP 2.3.2.2 Agency Procedures.

Aviation

6.31 All aviation related procedures must be in accordance with the NSW and ACT Fire Agencies Bush Fire Aviation Standard Operating Procedures 2011:
(a) Standard Operating Procedure 2.3.1 Landing, Hover Entry/Exit;
(b) Standard Operating Procedure 2.3.2 Winching; and,
(c) 2.3.2.2 Agency Procedures.

6.32 If the RART is assisting at incidents that have ground crews in attendance or are able to access the fireground, and the helicopter is bucketing only, then its normal deployment duration shall be no more than two fuel cycles or until replacement aircraft is on scene.

Release and extraction of RART

6.33 Irrespective of the nature of the deployment, the RART will be released in consultation with the District in which the operation is taking place.
6.34 If at any stage during the deployment the IC, District of operation, RART Dispatch Officer or RART leader becomes concerned with the safety and welfare of the RART, they can authorise the immediate extraction or relocation of RART firefighters to a safe area or safety refuge.

7 Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment (PPC/PPE)

7.1 PPC/PPE shall be worn and/or carried for RART operations and is to be in accordance with SS 5.1.5 Protective Clothing and Accessories.

7.2 The minimum requirement for PPC/PPE is to consist of:
   (a) Firefighting boots;
   (b) Bush firefighting trousers and jacket (the two piece assists in “down” dressing to an appropriate non-synthetic undershirt or other non-synthetic shirt when firefighters are away from the “active” fire ground, an example of which is the approved NSW RFS yellow utility shirt);
   (c) Long-sleeve NSW RFS utility shirt;
   (d) Bush firefighting helmet;
   (e) Bush firefighting gloves;
   (f) Goggles;
   (g) Flash hood.

7.3 RART firefighters are to be properly equipped for the assigned task in accordance with the Personal Equipment, Team Equipment and Communications Equipment List listed in O.P 1.1.2 Joint Operational Protocol for Remote Area Firefighting. The RART is to ensure they take the appropriate equipment for the deployment.
Appendix A - RART Deployment Authorisation Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District Office</td>
<td>Determines need for RART deployment based on reported fire/smoke/lightning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Office</td>
<td>Contacts RART Dispatch Officer at Airbase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RART Dispatch Officer at Airbase</td>
<td>Deploys RART to location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RART Dispatch Officer</td>
<td>Contacts RART Coordinator at State Operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RART Coordinator</td>
<td>Contacts RART Dispatch Officer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RART Dispatch Officer</td>
<td>Updates RART ICON report. Advises requesting District of deployment and hand over to District</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B - RART Deployment Multiple District Request Process

Responsibility

- Multiple District Offices
- Each District Office
- RART Coordinator
- RART Dispatch Officer at Airbase
- RART Dispatch Officer at Airbase
- State Duty Officer / SOC
- RART Coordinator
- RART Coordinator
- RART Dispatch Officer

Process

- Determines need for RART deployment based on reported fire/smoke/lightening
- Contacts RART Dispatch Officer at Airbase
- Contacts RART Coordinator at State Operations
- Contacts MIC/Region/State Duty Officer and NPWS RART Coordinator
- Determines RART priorities and advises RART Coordinator
- Contacts RART Dispatch Officer
- Advises requesting Districts of deployment and hands over control to District/s

Notes

- Advises of all requests
- Confirms all requests for deployment and priorities are given to each location. The decision on priorities is made by the SOC
- Advises of deployment to locations and priorities
- Aircraft continues to first call unless otherwise instructed

RART deploys to location of first call

10 Minutes
### Appendix C – RART Standby Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manager RAFSO/Operations Officer RART Deployment</td>
<td>Monitoring confirms that four day forecast/trigger met for Standby</td>
<td>Consists with NPWS RART Coordinator on potential NPWS RART locations and timings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Manager Response and Coordination (State Duty Officer in GMRC absence)</td>
<td>Determine locations and timings for Standby</td>
<td>In consultation with SDO, GMOMSS, MRAFSO and NPWS RART Coordinator. The decision is made by GMRC/SDO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Operations</td>
<td>Contacts affected MIC/Region</td>
<td>Advises locations and timings of Standby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affected MIC/Region</td>
<td>Requests RAFT firefighters from District</td>
<td>If no local RAFT personnel available, request from other District/Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIC/Region</td>
<td>Inform Manager RAFSO of number of RAFT operators</td>
<td>If no volunteer RAF operators available, Regional Operations Manager may request State Mitigation personnel to fill shortfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager RAFSO</td>
<td>Create RART ICON report</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GMRC:** Group Manager Response & Coordination  
**GMOMSS:** Group Manager Operational & Mitigation Support Services  
**MRAFSO:** Manager Remote Area Firefighting & Specialised Operations  
**RAFT:** Remote Area Firefighting Team  
**SDO:** State Duty Officer
## Appendix D – RART Dispatch Officer Checklist

### Rapid Aerial Response Dispatch Officer Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RART Operator Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leader</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ph No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Section 1 (to be completed prior to departure)

- **Date:**
- **Time of call:**
- **Location:**
- **Map:**
- **Grid ref:**
- **Time of initial fire call:**
- **By whom:** Aircraft/District/Tower/Public
- **Fire description:**
- **Other resources allocated:** Crane/Water bombing/Plane/Helicopter/Ground crews
- **Property threats:** Yes/No
- **Details:**
- **Comms Plan:** Flight Following
- **District GRN/PMR:**
- **Crew to Helicopter:**

#### Section 2 (to be competed and radioed to Dispatch Officer prior to deployment)

- **Time of departure:**
- **Time overhead scene:**
- **Time on ground:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temp:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veg type: grass/crop/scrub/forest/ mallee/plantation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire aspect: N/N/E/S/SE/S/SW/W/WNW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flame height (mtrs):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deployed: Yes/No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method of deployment: Land/hover/winch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason not deployed:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other resources required:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### Section 3 (to be completed on RART completing the incident and returned to RART Dispatch Officer)

- **Time of completion/withdrawal:**
- **ICON number:**
- **Fire size:** <10ha / >10ha
- **Estimated size (ha):**
- **Resources used:** Rake/hoe/blower/pump/chain saw/bucketing/aircraft

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**RART Dispatch Officer Checklist**

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OP 1.2.18
Rapid Aerial Response Teams (RART)
Version 1.0
Printed documents are uncontrolled

4 August 2014
## Appendix E – RART Team Leader Deployment Checklist

### Rapid Aerial Response Team Leader Deployment Checklist

#### Section 1 (to be completed prior to departure)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District requesting:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time of call:........./.......</td>
<td>Location:..................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map:....................</td>
<td>Grid ref:............................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of initial fire call:......./.......</td>
<td>By whom: 000/Aircraft/District/Tower/Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire description:..................................................................................</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Other resources allocated: Crane/Waterbombing/Plane/Helicopter/Ground crews

- Property threats: Yes/No Details:.................................................................
- Comms Plan: Flight Following........... District GRN/PMR ................................ Crew to Helicopter:............................

#### Section 2 (to be completed prior to deployment and while conducting an aerial appreciation of the incident)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of departure:........../........</th>
<th>Time overhead scene:......./..</th>
<th>Time on ground:........../...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weather</td>
<td>Veg type: grass/crop/scrub/forest/mall/forest/plantation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temp:-------------------------------</td>
<td>Fire aspect: N/NE/SE/S/SW/W/NW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hum:--------------------------------</td>
<td>Flame height (mtrs):...........</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direction: N/NE/SE/S/SW/W/NW</td>
<td>Surface/near</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speed (kph):......................</td>
<td>surface/elevated/bark/crown</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rain/fog/overcast/cloudy/clear</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated fire size (ha):........</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deployed: Yes/No</td>
<td>Method of deployment: Land/hover/winch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason not deployed:................</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other resources required:...........</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Section 3 (on completion or withdrawal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time of completion/withdrawal:................</th>
<th>ICON number:..........................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fire size: &lt;10ha / &gt; 10ha</td>
<td>Estimated size (ha):................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources used: Rakehoe/blower/pump/chainsaw/bucking/aircraft</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Information:..........................</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entered into ICON: Yes/No</th>
<th>RART Leader:................</th>
<th>Dispatch Officer:................</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICON Number:................</td>
<td>Signature:................</td>
<td>Signature:........................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RART Team Leader Deployment Checklist
Appendix E cont

Additional information:

Sketch plan of fire scene:
Appendix F – RART Dispatch Bases at 100 knots
Appendix G – RART Standby Triggers for LGA Based on 4 Day Outlook

NSW Rapid Aerial Response Team Standby Triggers for a Local Government Area Based on Four Day Fire Weather Outlook

Triggers
LGA
FDI > 25

Criteria

TOEAN

Lightning strikes previous 24 hours > 100
(NWS B76)

Forecast
LAL > 1
(DOFR Grid)

B(H) > 0.3
(DOFR Grid)

Forecast
Continuous
Hail to > B
(DOFR Grid)

FDI 25 Plus 2 Additional Criteria

RART Standby Discussion

Version 2.0