

RURAL FIRE NEWS



The Rural Fire Division has remained active throughout 2023, overseeing various projects and maintaining service delivery during what has already been a challenging bushfire season across the State.

In July, the inaugural Chief Bushfire Control Officer Forum was hosted at the Bushfire Centre of Excellence. This event was held for Chief Bushfire Control Officers (CBFCO) in Western Australia. The Forum's theme was 'Success through Collaboration' and aimed to empower the role of the CBFCO by fostering knowledge exchange, sharing experiences, and facilitating networking opportunities. Feedback from all attendees was encouraging and the Bushfire Centre of Excellence will continue to engage with the cohort.

The annual Bushfire Community Day was held on Sunday 15 October 2023 and was attended by 800 people. The aim of the day was to spread more awareness in communities about bushfire preparedness prior to the 2023/24 southern bushfire season. The event was a huge success with community feedback being overwhelmingly positive. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence are already planning next year's event!

DFES had the great honour of jointly hosting with Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) six Fire Managers from Portugal in October. The

delegation visited Western Australia to gain firsthand experience in bushfire mitigation. The visit provided the delegation with valuable insight into Western Australia's approach to burning operations, which are essential for WA to be a world leader in bushfire mitigation.

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence recently released two training products which are publicly available: Bushfire Fundamentals and Rural Fire Awareness. These online training courses mark a significant step to improve access to bushfire training, with the aim to engage a wide range of participants by promoting increased preparedness within Western Australian communities.

The Office of Bushfire Risk Management has also been working on updates to the 2020 version of the *Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan*, which is currently used by more than 90 local governments across the State.

The Bushfire Risk Mitigation Branch has been renamed to Bushfire Mitigation Branch (BMB) to better reflect the broad remit of work undertaken. The change is in name only and does not affect the core functions of the branch. All contact information remains the same.

The Rural Fire Division continues to support operational response having seen an early start to the bushfire season, alongside our regular and ongoing commitments. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday period and look forward to working with you all in the New Year.

Murray Carter
Executive Director | Rural Fire Division

KEY UPDATES



Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan (2023)

The Office of Bushfire Risk Management has recently released an update to the *Guidelines for Preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan*. The Guidelines are used by more than 90 local governments in the Bushfire Risk Management (BRM) program across Western Australia so they can develop a BRM Plan that reflects best practice risk management. The updated Guidelines were developed after extensive

engagement and consultation with BRM practitioners, local governments and other key stakeholders.

The new Guidelines reflect contemporary approaches to risk management including more guidance on how to embed the principles of risk management in an effective BRM Plan. The Guidelines encourage consideration of systemic risk and how its management can build community resilience.

Bushfires can trigger effects that cascade through the social fabric, economy and environment of a local community. These impacts may extend far beyond the initial location of the fire, continue to be felt long after the incident and cause more severe harm than the immediate damage to assets. The new Guidelines will help local governments to consider their community values, identify systemic risks and plan treatments to build a more resilient community to the impacts of bushfire.

The Guidelines can be found on the [DFES website](#). For more information, please email obrm@dfes.wa.gov.au.



Bushfire preparedness in focus at the 2023 Bushfire Community Day

On Sunday 15 October, the DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence (BCoE) held its third annual Bushfire Community Day that saw an impressive turnout of over 800 people. This marked a noticeable increase in attendance of 60 per cent compared to previous years.

The day's focus was on bushfire preparedness and raising awareness in

the community of getting themselves and their properties ready before the start of the Western Australian southern bushfire season.

Watch the [Bushfire Community Day 2023](#) video or [read more](#) about the day.

Save the date for the Bushfire Community Day 2024 to be held at the Kalamunda Community Centre on Sunday 6 October 2024!



Bushfire Fundamentals and Rural Fire Awareness online learning release

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence Training team is pleased to announce the release of two new online training courses - Bushfire Fundamentals and Rural Fire Awareness to the public.

These courses cater to individuals interested in learning more about bushfire. They are accessible via a public-facing portal to the DFES Learning and Development [e-Academy Portal](#).

Bushfire Fundamentals provides a basic awareness of bushfire and is available to anyone interested in learning more about bushfire. The course is specifically targeted at personnel supporting Incident Management Teams or utility companies, St John WA, contractors, WA Police and the Department of Defence working at bushfire incidents. The course provides an overview of bushfire characteristics and behaviour, bushfire safety and survival, the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS) and the role of WA fire agencies in bushfire response. Read the [Course Information Sheet](#) for more details.

The Rural Fire Awareness course also

covers similar topics to the Bushfire Fundamentals course. However, its focus is directed more towards farmer response brigades and seasonal workers, delivering basic awareness of fireground safety, suppression strategies and ensuring personal safety during fireground operations. Read the [Course Information Sheet](#) for more details.



Bushfire Centre of Excellence and Indigenous Desert Alliance partner to create innovative On-Country fire training

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence (BCoE) and the Indigenous Desert Alliance (IDA) have joined forces to create 'Ground Burning in the Desert', a new and innovative planned burning training course.

This unique course has been specifically designed with Traditional Owners and First Nations Ranger Groups in Desert Country to be culturally appropriate and delivered On-Country. It incorporates local, cultural and environmental needs and teaches valuable skills for deliberate burning around cultural sites, threatened species habitats and infrastructure to reduce fuel loads.

In June 2023, BCoE staff and IDA trainers travelled to Yagga Yagga to run a three-day pilot of the training course with the Ngururrpa Ranger Group. The trial consisted of a range of activities including burn planning, a burn site tour, weather monitoring as well as creating firebreaks and asset protection.

A second pilot was held in July 2023 in Cosmo Newberry with the Yilka Heritage

and Landcare Rangers. There was a shared enthusiasm by both Ranger Groups, IDA and the BCoE and feedback on this mutual learning was extremely positive.

Feedback and insights from both pilots will play a key role in the finalisation of the course and ensuring its sustainability. The course is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2023 and IDA will manage the training delivery with Desert Ranger groups.

TEAMS IN NUMBERS

BUSHFIRE MITIGATION BRANCH

95 Bushfire Risk Management
Plans under development



76 of these plans have been endorsed
by the Office of Bushfire Risk Management

41,465 assets have been identified and recorded in the Bushfire
Risk Management system

As of December 2023:

95 local governments now participating in the
Bushfire Risk Management Planning Program.

LAND USE PLANNING

Referrals
received last
quarter

160

% of vulnerable
land use referrals:

24%

% of referrals
by Region:

53%
Metro

47%
Regional



BUSHFIRE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

5,029 Participants trained in
BCoE training products for
2023

490+ BCoE training products
delivered across the state for
2023

Courses
under review

- Bushfire Safety Awareness
- Development of blended
version
- Aurora Bushfire Spread
Simulator



IN FOCUS



Portuguese Fire Managers explore bushfire mitigation in Western Australia

In October 2023, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) hosted a contingent of six Portuguese Fire Managers in partnership with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

During their stay, the Portuguese delegation toured a number of DFES and DBCA regional areas across the South West of the state, including Dwellingup, Collie and Walpole. At each stop the team engaged with local fire management teams actively participating in, and observing planned burning and bushfire mitigation activities.

The visit provided a unique opportunity for the Portuguese Fire Managers to learn and develop a greater understanding of the strategies used in Australia for bushfire mitigation. It is hoped that the visit will create long-term partnerships and collaborations between DFES and our international partners in Portugal, and that the knowledge and experience shared can be used to benefit both countries.

The DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence is proud to have had the opportunity to host the

delegation and looks forward to developing a strong and positive relationship with our Portuguese partners in the coming years.

BURNING QUESTIONS



The Danju Rangers delivering the fifth burn on day two of the training. Image: David Windsor (DFES)

What has the Cultural Fire Team been up to?

In September this year, the Danju Rangers had the opportunity to build their fire management capability while working on Country. As part of a collaboration between DFES' Bushfire Centre of Excellence (BCoE) and Wespine Industries, the Rangers participated in the *Assist With Planned Burn Training*.

The Danju – Jobs Together project is a venture initiated by the Leschenault Catchment Council (LCC) in 2017 which aims to build job opportunities and additional skills for local Noongar people in the Leschenault region.

Building on *Firefighting Skills and Bushfire Safety Awareness Training* undertaken in 2022, the two-day training provided a unique opportunity for the Danju Rangers, the BCoE and Wespine to work together to plan, prepare and deliver several small burns. Undertaken at the Wespine Boddington 2 Plantation, learning was consolidated through practical hands on burning, with the evening campfire setting allowing for further discussions and reflection.

Chris Howe, Danju and Conservation Works Program Manager with LCC, said "*The training is a fantastic opportunity for us and the Danju team to build our skills and confidence working with fire. We see fire as an important tool for practical land management and cross-cultural learning.*"

This training provided a unique opportunity for the BCoE to trial a range of facilitation approaches and will incorporate the learnings into future initiatives undertaken by the Cultural Fire Program.

Brad Barr, Resource Manager with Wespine Industries, summed up by saying "To get these things to happen you need people who are prepared to push it along and get behind things. We appreciate the collaborative approach between Wespine, the LCC Danju Team and the DFES Bushfire Centre of Excellence to support this training."

COMING UP

- 8 March 2024 - State Bushfire Advisory Council meeting
- 21 - 22 March 2024 - Bushfire Operations Committee meeting