

BUSHFIRE RESPONSE FOR IN-HOME CLIENTS

A Guide for Health and Community Service Agencies



**Bushfires can start suddenly
and without warning.**

This guideline provides instructions to Health and Community Service Agencies providing care, support and assistance to those Western Australians who are aged or living with a disability in their own home.

The guide assists agencies to adopt and embed policies that help their Agency to prepare and respond to bushfire emergencies affecting their Direct Care Workers and in-home clients.

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FOREWORD

SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITY

There are members of our community residing in bushfire risk areas who receive care, support and assistance from Health and Community Service Agencies (Agencies). These Western Australians may be unable to receive, understand or act on information prior to or during a bushfire emergency. Their Direct Care Workers who assist them on a daily or weekly basis, along with their employing Health and Community Service Agency can play a life changing role in better preparing their in-home clients for bushfire emergencies.

Emergency events including bushfires impose significant costs on Western Australia. With Agencies taking on a shared responsibility by being involved in their clients' bushfire preparedness and response, they are reducing the risk to their Direct Care Workers, and achieving better response and recovery outcomes for their in-home clients.



Fire is frightening; it roars as loud as a jet engine and the smoke plunges day into night.

1 OVERVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND

There are members of the Western Australian community that require care, support and assistance in their own homes. As the number of Western Australians ageing or living with a disability increases, there is an increasing demand for services that allow them to live in their homes. Western Australia is prone to bushfires every summer, with fires starting suddenly, moving quickly and affecting large areas. The effects can be devastating and have lasting impacts on people's lives and homes.

These at risk community members – those aged or living with disability that are provided care, support and assistance to continue living in their home, are particularly vulnerable to the devastating effects of bushfire. These community members may be at greater risk for many reasons including the length of time it may take them to safely evacuate.

Responsibility for bushfire planning and preparation must be a shared approach to better support at risk people in their home, particularly as their home becomes the workplace for Health and Community Service Agency Direct Care Workers.

1.2 PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDELINE

This guideline provides instruction to Agencies who are contracted to provide care, support and assistance to aged or people living with disability in Western Australia, in their own home.

The guideline will assist agencies in preventing injury or illness to their Direct Care Workers and clients from the effects of a bushfire when working in client's homes. It will also assist Agencies to prepare for and respond to bushfire emergencies affecting their Direct Care Workers and their in-home clients. Implementing the processes of this guideline forms part of business continuity planning that helps agencies prepare for a disruptive event.

Success relies on Agencies' participating. It requires their commitment to sharing the responsibility to assist in-home clients to be better prepared for bushfires, in turn, reducing the risk from exposure to bushfire emergencies to Direct Care Workers assisting clients at their homes.

1.3 SCOPE

This guideline applies to all Western Australian Health and Community Service Agencies who provide in-home care to those aged or living with a disability in bushfire prone areas (an area that is subject to, or likely to be subject to bushfire attack).

This guideline does not apply to out-of-home care including residential aged care facilities or lifestyle villages.

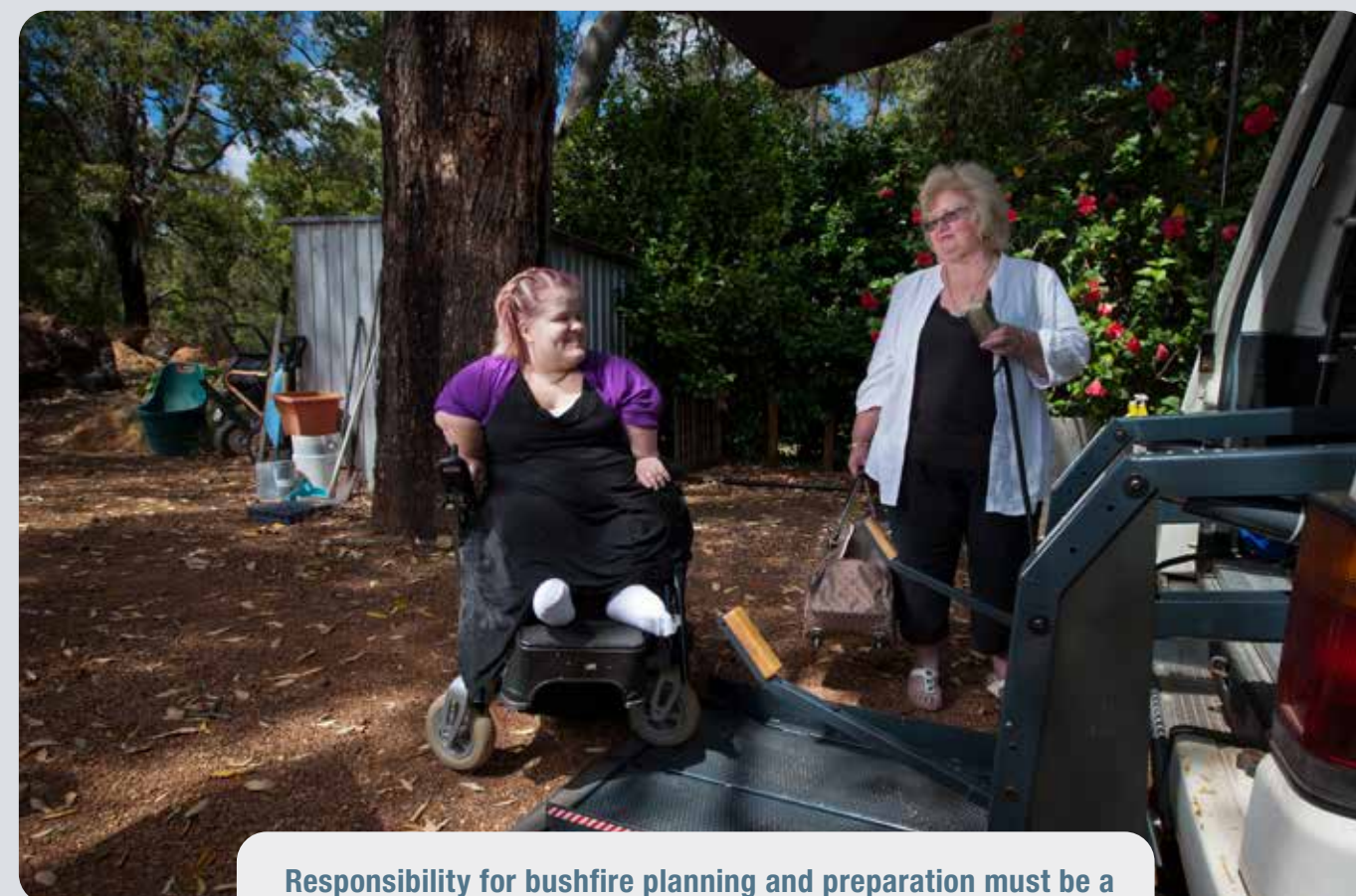
1.4 ASSISTANCE FROM DFES

Throughout this guideline, there are a number of specific ways DFES can assist Agencies to prepare and respond to bushfire emergencies affecting their Direct Care Workers and in-home clients.

However, DFES is unable to support organisations in the development and/or review of their Emergency Risk Management Plans for residential aged care facilities or lifestyle villages.

Organisations need to periodically review their emergency risk management plans to ensure they are current and practical. Testing key elements of documented emergency response actions should be done with all levels of the organisation and is essential to ensuring everyone involved with emergency response understands their role.

For support in the development or review of emergency plans, DFES recommends organisations contact a state or national body such as Fire Protection Association of Australia (FPAA) who are the peak body for fire safety that provides information, services and education to the fire protection industry and the community.



Responsibility for bushfire planning and preparation must be a shared approach, to better support at risk people in their home.

2 FACING THE FACTS

2.1 GETTING HELP IN AN EMERGENCY

Calling 000 for police, fire or ambulance is appropriate ONLY in a life threatening situation. Agencies and their clients should not rely on emergency services to be able to assist their clients during a bushfire. Proper planning and preparation by an Agency will reduce reliance on emergency services to assist the client and their Direct Care Worker in this emergency.

DFES' Emergency WA website can provide both Agencies and Clients with the best available information and community warnings about emergencies in Western Australia.

2.2 HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICE AGENCIES HAVE A MAJOR PART TO PLAY

Agencies must plan to ensure the safety and health of their in-home clients and Direct Care Worker staff. There are legal and moral obligations from an Agency to their Direct Care Workers and to their clients accessing their services, in their home.

In WA, the *Occupational Safety and Health Act* places duties on the employer aimed at preventing anyone being killed, injured or contracting an illness because of work or activities at a workplace.

As the employer, Agencies have a duty, as far as is reasonably practicable, to provide and maintain a working environment so that their employees are not exposed to hazards. When a Direct Care Worker is working in the home of a client, that home becomes their working environment. Direct Care Workers must be able to safely leave their workplace in the event of an emergency, and be instructed and trained on the evacuation procedures so they can exercise them in an emergency. WA's Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) laws are enforced by WorkSafe WA, under the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety.

Employers have a general duty of care, as required by the *Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)* to:

- provide safe systems of work (the coordination of work activities so the employee can work safely);
- provide necessary information, instruction, training and supervision to their employee so they can carry out their work safely and are not exposed to hazards;
- consult and cooperate with their employees about occupational safety and health matters, working together with the common aim to improve safety and health at the workplace;
- provide personal protective equipment free of charge; and
- ensure employees can safely use plant and substances provided by the employer, that are required for their work tasks.

The *Occupational Safety and Health Regulations* mandate the requirement for Agencies to ensure their Direct Care Workers can safely leave their workplace in the event of an emergency, and that the Direct Care Workers know of the evacuation procedures and can exercise them in an emergency.

Agencies have responsibilities to keep clients from harm whilst using a service. It is possible for an Agency to meet their responsibilities to clients and maintain their OSH duty of care obligations to keep their employees safe, but it is a balancing act!

3 WHO IS AT RISK?

3.1 IDENTIFICATION

Agencies must be able to identify if their in-home client's home is located within, or partially within, a bushfire risk area of WA.

Western Australia experiences frequent bushfires, reflected in over 90 per cent of the state being designated as bushfire prone. If an in-home client lives near bush, even in a metropolitan area, bushfire is a threat to them. Direct Care Workers that provide services to these clients are also at risk if a bushfire threatens.

Agency staff and their clients need to understand their risk so they can develop plans and processes, and know what to do when a bushfire starts. The DFES website provides advice and information on identifying Western Australia's bushfire risk.

Once an Agency has identified that their client lives in a bushfire prone area, they are then required to assess how prepared the in-home client is to respond to a bushfire, and assess the risk to the Direct Care Worker working in or travelling to that home.

For support with prioritising locations that are most at risk, Agencies are encouraged to access the map of bushfire prone areas on the DFES website. The map identifies land falling within, or partially within, a bushfire prone area of Western Australia.

If an Agency is aware that the client's home is in a bushfire risk area, they must then have systems in place for their Direct Care Worker to understand the risks attributed to them when working in or travelling to that home.

This result must be recorded and managed by the Agency/Client Manager, and be available to all Direct Care Workers attending to the client in their home. Collecting this information should be considered as part of a client's initial occupational safety and health (OSH) assessment.

To access bushfire prone areas mapping go to
www.dfes.wa.gov.au/regulationandcompliance/bushfireproneareas/Pages/default.aspx

3.2 ASSESS THE RISK TO IN-HOME CLIENTS

Agencies must establish how well equipped their client is to plan and respond to a bushfire affecting their home.

Agencies should ascertain information such as:

- cognitive, mobility or sensory impairments
- ability to receive and understand emergency information prior to or during a bushfire
- ability to act on information prior to or during a bushfire
- presence of a current bushfire plan (including relocation plan)
- presence and availability of a personal support network (people who will help the client in the case of a bushfire – it may be family, friends, neighbours etc.)

Agencies will then be able to determine the required level of involvement if the client is faced with a bushfire emergency.

Client Managers can ascertain the in-home clients' needs and capabilities by considering the following checklists:

DAILY LIVING

- Do they need assistance with personal care
- Do they need to use adaptive equipment to help them dress
- Do they need to use equipment that runs on electricity such as dialysis, electric lifts etc.

COMMUNICATIONS

- Do they need assistance to communicate with others
- Does their ability to communicate with others diminish when they are under stress
- Will their ability to communicate be affected by loss of power or phone lines
- Do they speak another language

GETTING AROUND

- Do they need assistance or adaptive equipment (e.g. cane or walking frame) to walk
- Do they require a specially equipped vehicle or accessible transportation
- Do they need assistance to get groceries, medications and medical supplies

EVACUATING

- Do they need help to leave their home
- Do they need assistance to speak or call for help
- Do they need assistance hearing
- Are they able to hear a siren
- Do they need assistance in seeing – and if so, do they have a service animal

3.3 ASSESS THE RISK TO EMPLOYEES

Agencies must also assess the risk to their employees who provide in-home care to clients in bushfire risk areas. The risks should be outlined in a client's OSH assessment for Direct Care Workers (and other applicable staff) to access.

In order to reduce the bushfire risk to Direct Care Workers, Client Managers must ensure their Direct Care Workers are aware of the risk; understand their role in the event of a bushfire, and are fully equipped for appropriate response.

DFES has a range of resources to support agencies to educate their Client Managers and Direct Care Workers. These resources have been designed to be embedded into workplace induction or staff development and training programs.



The radiant heat from a fire can kill from two football fields away. Plan to be safe and leave early.

4 ROLE TO PLAY – PRIOR

Agencies have an important and integral role to play in the prior planning and preparation for a bushfire to improve their in-home clients' readiness for such an emergency.

It is vital for agencies to clearly communicate to their client how they can assist prior to a bushfire and what services they can provide, or may not be able to provide in the event of a bushfire event or emergency. This may be determined in the Care Agreement. Agencies must review their Care Agreements to ensure they understand their contractual arrangements.

4.1 BUSHFIRE PLAN

Agencies should provide guidance to the client, and strong encouragement, to prepare a bushfire plan which addresses the individual client needs. This must include a *Be Safe and Leave Early Plan*. Direct Care Workers should provide their Clients with a copy of this plan to be completed by the client in consultation with their family or personal support network prior to the summer months, when bushfires are more likely. Bushfire plans should be updated annually or when circumstances change that impact the plan, and Direct Care Workers should remind their in-home clients of this requirement.

While it is not the responsibility of Agencies to develop their clients' bushfire plan, Agencies should ensure they provide instructions to their Client Managers and Direct Care Workers on preparing a bushfire plan as they may be asked by clients for resources or where to go for further information and support.

Agencies should keep a copy of these plans in the client's care plan file. DFES recommends collecting a client's bushfire plan when a new client signs up to an Agency, as part of their OSH assessment or during the client's review process.

DFES has tools and resources for both Client Managers and their clients to capture bushfire information. Agencies are encouraged to access these tools and resources. All resources can be accessed via the Service Provider webpage at www.dfes.wa.gov.au



Firefighters may be too busy fighting bushfires on the frontline to be able to defend your home and property.

Once completed by the client, the plan will identify:

- The trigger for the client to leave – with emphasis on leaving early. Triggers may include the forecast Fire Danger Rating (FDR), an emergency warning via the media, seeing or smelling smoke, or information from neighbours and friends.
- Presence and availability of a personal support network – people who will help the client in the case of a bushfire (could be family, friends, neighbours etc).
- Considerations for pets.
- Items that the client is to take with them including personal documents, medications, medical aids, keys, mobile phones, wallet/purse.
- How the client will get to their safer place.
- Leaving early relocation plan including relocation addresses.
- Consultation the client has had about the bushfire plan with others / Direct Care Worker.
- Actions needed to be taken specific to the client and their home.

4.2 EVACUATION PLANS

It may be that the Direct Care Worker is with the client when evacuation is necessary. With the employer having a legal obligation to ensure employees can safely leave their place of work in the event of an emergency, and the obligation on Direct Care Workers to ensure the safety of their client, evacuation plans must be documented and shared.

The Client Manager must ensure that the Direct Care Worker has a documented evacuation plan, for the instance of a bushfire emergency when working in the client's home.

Evacuation plans for in-home clients must take into consideration the clients cognitive, mobility or sensory impairments, specific items for the client to take with them, and identification of a safer place to go.

DFES' *Be Safe and Leave Early Plan* captures a client's bushfire plan and evacuation plan in the one resource. Client Managers and Direct Care Workers are encouraged to provide this resource to their clients to complete with their family or personal support network. DFES' *Be Safe and Leave Early Plan* can be ordered through DFES free of charge.

4.3 CLIENT DETAILS

Agencies should ensure they maintain a current database of their client's details at all times. This database should include alternative contact details for clients when they are away from their recorded residential address. To ensure effectiveness, agencies should have systems in place to ensure details for in-home clients are current, easily accessible, and highlights the client's needs in a bushfire.

Agencies may consider sharing information with their local government for inclusion in their local emergency management plans. All local governments have Local Emergency Management Arrangements (LEMAs). LEMAs are developed to provide a community focused and coordinated approach to the management of all potential emergencies within a local government area.

4.4 RESPONSIBILITIES TO DIRECT CARE WORKERS

As an employer, Agencies have legal responsibilities, under *WA's Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)*, to provide a safe and healthy working environment where their employees are not exposed to hazards, as far as reasonably practicable. Agencies have a legal duty of care to provide training and instruction to employees, so they can act in a responsible manner and respond appropriately in a bushfire emergency.

Agencies are required, under *WA's Occupational Safety and Health Regulations* to ensure that preparations have taken place for potential emergencies that might occur. It is expected that Agencies' employees are able to competently respond to an emergency if one occurs within their workplace, including when working in their client's home.

Agencies must inform and support their employees to:

- understand the bushfire risk to themselves and their in-home clients;
- identify where to get emergency information and warnings from;
- understand what the bushfire alerts and warnings mean; and
- be competent to respond appropriately in the event of a bushfire.

DFES has developed industry specific tools, resources and information to educate Direct Care Workers on these topics. It is recommended that Agencies embed these tools into staff induction materials and personal development schedules. It is critical that Direct Care Workers servicing bushfire risk areas receive the training as a priority in order to reduce their risk if faced with a bushfire.

DFES has industry specific tools and resources for Client Managers to use to educate and train their Direct Care Workers. Agencies are encouraged to access the tools and resources via the Service Provider webpage at www.dfes.wa.gov.au

4.5 COMMUNICATION TO CLIENTS

Client Managers must provide communications to clients, so they understand that:

- it is the clients' responsibility to develop and activate their own *Be Safe and Leave Early Plan* with the support of their family or personal support network;
- clients must provide their Client Manager with a copy of their plan before the start of each bushfire season; and
- assistance for the client cannot be guaranteed during a bushfire. It may not be possible for service providers and/or other emergency services to provide support when a bushfire threatens.

DFES has bushfire resources and information available for Client Managers to provide to their clients. These resources can be accessed via the Service Provider webpage at www.dfes.wa.gov.au

5 ROLE TO PLAY – DURING

Agencies are responsible for immediately implementing their agreed actions as soon as they are aware of a risk, of or actual bushfire emergency that will affect their clients. Agencies must also inform and instruct their Direct Care Workers to enact their agreed bushfire response actions. They should not wait for notification or advice from DFES. All employees must clearly understand emergency policies and procedures, in particular their role in an emergency.

5.1 BUSHFIRE WARNINGS

There are many different ways in which Agencies and their clients can keep informed of a bushfire.

Some of these are formal and are coordinated by the government through emergency agencies, whilst others can be informal and rely upon personal networks or even word of mouth.

The important part is that Agencies and their in-home clients are aware of how an emergency may affect them and their home. It is crucial that they understand what the different Bushfire warning levels mean, and where to source emergency information before a fire threatens.

There are a number of ways Agencies can be kept informed of a bushfire. DFES recommends using a range of resources to receive emergency information including:



www.emergency.wa.gov.au

The Emergency WA site has a map-based display with the best available emergency information from across the state.



13 3337 (13 DFES)

DFES emergency information phone line



**ABC local radio or 6PR
emergency bulletins**



**Other media outlets such as commercial
radio, television and the internet**



**DFES RSS feeds and social
media accounts**

RSS feeds – subscribe via
www.emergency.wa.gov.au

Facebook – www.facebook.com/dfeswa

Twitter – www.twitter.com/dfes_wa



Third party apps

Emergency AUS, WALGA's LocalEye, DBCA Alerts and National Bushfires.

Please note that these apps are not provided by DFES and DFES can give no guarantee that they will notify you in an emergency.

Emergency Alert

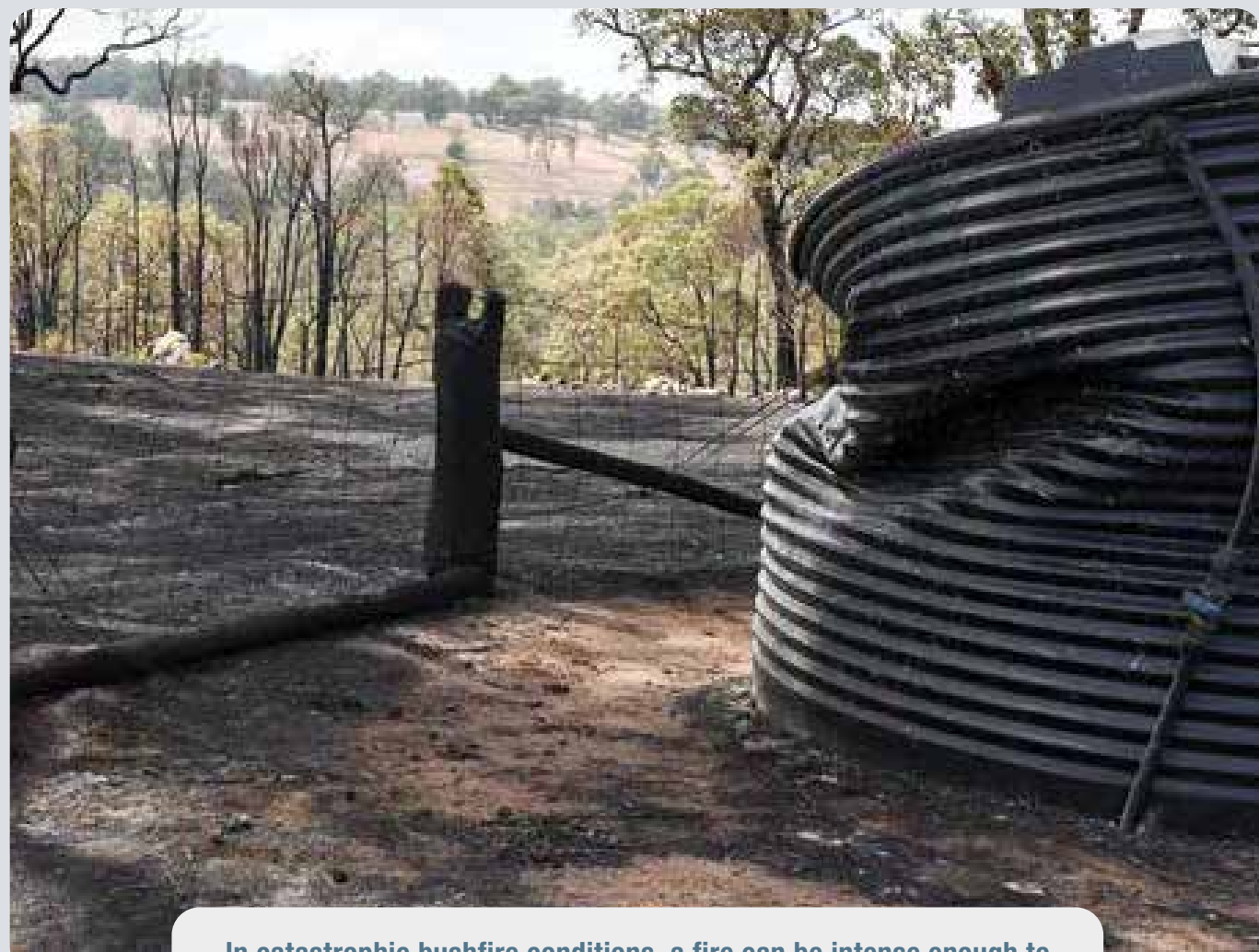
During an emergency, you may also receive a text or voice message from the emergency services to your telephone. Emergency Alert is the national telephone warning system used by emergency services to send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobile phones within a defined area about likely or actual emergencies. Emergency Alert is just one way of warning communities and will not be used in all circumstances.



Emergency Alert relies on telecommunications networks to send messages. Message delivery CANNOT BE GUARANTEED.

Agencies should have systems in place to regularly monitor warnings and circulate the information to their Direct Care Workers. They must be prepared to act when a bushfire threatens to impact clients or staff.

! DON'T WAIT FOR A TEXT MESSAGE OR A KNOCK ON THE DOOR from the emergency services.



In catastrophic bushfire conditions, a fire can be intense enough to melt metal; the only option is to leave the risk area before it's too late.

5.2 BUSHFIRE WARNING SYSTEM

Emergency Services issue community alerts and warnings for bushfires. The warnings provide information on the severity of a bushfire once it has started. The warning level reflects the risk to life and property.

FIRE DANGER RATING BEFORE A BUSHFIRE

CATASTROPHIC

The worst conditions for a fire. Homes are not designed or built to withstand a fire in these conditions. The only safe place is away from bushfire risk areas.

EXTREME SEVERE VERY HIGH

Seek out information and be ready to leave or stay and actively defend your property if a fire starts. Only stay if you are 100% prepared.

HIGH LOW-MODERATE

Be vigilant. Check your fire plan and continue to monitor conditions as they can change quickly.

BUSHFIRE WARNING SYSTEM DURING A BUSHFIRE

ADVICE

WATCH AND ACT

EMERGENCY WARNING

EMERGENCY WARNING

An out of control fire is approaching very fast. You need to act immediately to survive. If you haven't prepared your home it is too late. You must leave now if it is safe to do so.

WATCH AND ACT

A fire is approaching and is out of control. Put your plan into action. If your plan is to leave, make sure you leave early. Only stay if you are mentally, physically and emotionally prepared to defend your property and you have all the right equipment.

ADVICE

A fire has started but there is no immediate danger. Stay alert and watch for signs of a fire.

5.3 REGISTERING WHEREABOUTS

Red Cross' *Register.Find.Reunite.* is a voluntary registration and enquiry service for people within an emergency affected community to be traced, families reunited and enquires about individuals coordinated. *Register.Find.Reunite.* provides basic details on the whereabouts of people affected by an emergency to their family and friends, and to approved authorities supporting the emergency response.

The *Register.Find.Reunite* system is ONLY activated following a major emergency. Agencies should strongly advise their clients to register their relocation details regardless of where they relocate to. Registrations can occur online, by telephone or in person at an evacuation. The telephone number for *Register.Find.Reunite* will be promoted in Bushfire Alerts and Warnings once activated.

When activated, Clients can register online at <https://register.redcross.org.au/>

For further information on *Register.Find.Reunite*. Agencies are encouraged to contact waeoc@redcross.org.au or the on call duty officer on 0408 930 811.

5.4 AGENCY STRATEGIES

There are a number of strategies Agencies can plan and implement during the different warning levels. Client Managers play a critical role during this time.

Agencies, in collaboration with the Client Managers, will be responsible for making a decision regarding the preferred strategy for each in-home client during a bushfire emergency. The decision must be based on the level of preparedness information the Direct Care Worker has received from the client prior to the bushfire, and the information received from DFES via the alert level (Bushfire Warning).

It is important to remember that no two bushfire events are the same and strategies must consider the individual circumstances of a bushfire emergency or event. Agencies and Client Managers must ensure they are keeping informed with the latest bushfire advice and information in order to ensure the most appropriate strategy is adopted.

The Client Manager's role becomes critical in implementing the appropriate strategy, as Client Managers are often the decision makers during a bushfire emergency for the Direct Care Workers servicing at risk clients.

Strategies that Agencies may need to consider for their Direct Care Workers and their clients affected by bushfire could include the following:

1. STOPPING SERVICES

Services delivered by Agencies in the clients' homes may need to be stopped for a period due to a bushfire. Stopping services may be based on an Emergency Warning alert or a Watch and Act alert, where there is a possible or imminent threat to the clients' home or travel to or from the home may be deemed too unsafe.

Both Agencies and their in-home clients must be aware that stopping services is a real possibility in a bushfire. Roads may be closed for the safety of residents and for safe access to the fire by emergency services. The road closures are managed by police and they will not allow anyone other than emergency services to enter.

It may be several days before emergency services give the all clear to open roads and provide access to the clients and their homes. Agencies must clearly communicate this to their clients, and the clients must be prepared to take responsibility and activate their own bushfire plan.

Agencies should consider developing and communicating business continuity strategies so they can maintain, or reduce the cessation length of service provision.

2. RELOCATION

Clients may need to be relocated from their home to alternative accommodation. Relocation activities may commence based on the potential or actual bushfire threat, when the forecast Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is very high or above, or during the Advice or Watch and Act warning level.

When clients are in the physical care of Direct Care Workers, the Direct Care Workers must always relocate their client to a safe location when confronted with a perceived emergency, including bushfire. Agencies should relocate clients to safe destination areas that are not in high bushfire risk areas.

Clients need to be aware that it is unlikely a Direct Care Worker will be in their home when there is a perceived or actual bushfire emergency, and must always be prepared to activate their own bushfire plan. It is the client's responsibility to advise their Agency of their new location – whether it is short term or long term.

Agencies must ensure their Direct Care Workers are clear about their role when supporting clients to relocate, and having access to a copy of the client's bushfire plan will assist them greatly.

Agencies must never rely on emergency services to relocate their in-home clients.

3. EVACUATION

Urgent evacuation is required when the bushfire threat is imminent and serious as indicated by the Bushfire Warning Alert. The aim is protection of life. Evacuations must be planned for prior to a bushfire event or emergency.

Where directed to evacuate by a DFES warning (or directed from another designated control agency) because of a bushfire emergency in the area, the Direct Care Workers are to immediately comply with the notice if able to safely do so.

Emergency services will advise when it is too late to evacuate. Clients must never rely on emergency services or their Direct Care Workers to provide assistance. In a life threatening emergency, clients and/or their Direct Care Workers should always call 000.

4. SHELTER IN THE HOME

The safest place to be during a bushfire is away from the fire. To shelter in the home is a strategy where the client is to remain in their home during the bushfire emergency. The decision to shelter in the home should not be made lightly. Sheltering in the home includes actively defending the home while the fire passes, and may result in needing to quickly escape if the home is alight.

Sheltering in the home is NOT an appropriate strategy for in-home clients.

It is expected that no Direct Care Worker will be in a client's home when this is the only option. At all times clients are expected to activate their own bushfire plan. Clients should not rely on emergency services or their service providers for assistance.

Clients should monitor the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) daily during the bushfire season. Based on forecast weather conditions, the higher the rating the higher the risk of bushfire. If the FDR is forecast SEVERE or above, clients should leave the bushfire risk area the night before or early in the day.

6 ROLE TO PLAY – AFTER

6.1 PROVISION OF SERVICES

Agencies must consider how their organisation can continue to provide services to clients if the services are altered or stopped as a result of a bushfire. Altering or stopping services for a period of time during or after an emergency is a real possibility.

It is strongly advised that agencies work cooperatively to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that encourages the sharing of support and resources such as emergency sheltering, transport, and care arrangements, so to continue providing services to clients.

6.2 COMMUNICATION

Following a bushfire, clients will likely be overwhelmed with huge amounts of information regarding the events that have taken place and the actions to be taken.

RELEVANCE

Make sure your information is relevant. The in-home client will want to know what support your Agency can give them, and what they can do if they have any questions or concerns about provision of services after a bushfire has occurred.

CLARITY

After a bushfire, clients may have more trouble remembering or understanding information. Communications from Agencies to the client should be short and practical. Agencies should include a 'call

to action' if there is something they require the client to do. Utilise different formats of delivery to ensure clients can understand – taking into consideration sensory impairment, culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and large font for text.

TARGETED

Agencies should have an understanding of their clients and the best method of communication to reach them. The relationship and rapport built by the Direct Care Worker can often influence the method chosen for best communications with the client.

6.3 HEALTH AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIRECT CARE WORKERS

After a bushfire, the workplace in which the Direct Care Workers are required to work may have changed. It is important that Agencies appropriately manage any new risks to meet the duty of care and occupational safety and health obligations to the employees.

Bushfires can be traumatic events and can disrupt lives both physically and psychologically, creating intense emotional distress for those affected. Agencies play a vital role in assisting and supporting their Direct Care Workers following such a traumatic event.

Direct Care Workers will respond differently and may need different levels and types of support. Agencies must recognise the risk to the health and wellbeing of their Direct Care Workers and identify strategies to provide them support and assistance.

7 RESPONSE TESTING

To ensure adequate preparations are done by Agencies for a bushfire emergency affecting their clients, the response activities need to be put to the test.

7.1 DESKTOP REVIEW

The desktop review is usually the first test an Agency should do. It involves examining and reviewing all workplace emergency management policies and documents to ensure:

- All documents are complete
- All records and registers (in particular contact databases) are current
- Resources identified are serviceable and available
- All responsible people have been trained in their role and are prepared to assist

7.2 DESKTOP SIMULATION

The desktop simulation involves a discussion based table top exercise to discuss roles and responsibilities against the probable bushfire scenario affecting an in-home client and the Direct Care Worker providing care to them. It reviews the processes and procedures that would be used in a real bushfire emergency and will detect issues that may exist. Desktop simulation will help Agencies to determine whether workers understand their roles, and will identify areas requiring improvement or further training for better response outcomes.

DFES has developed bushfire emergency scenarios for Agencies to use. These resources and other information can be accessed via the Service Provider webpage at www.dfes.wa.gov.au

7.3 NOTIFICATION AND CALL OUT COMMUNICATION TEST

- Verify that contacts are accurate and current
- Update names, phone numbers

This test will also provide real time results of how quickly people can start the response activities.

7.4 LIVE SCENARIO

This functional exercise simulates a bushfire affecting an in-home client and Direct Care Worker, and involves specific employees testing their ability to fulfil their responsibilities in a realistic way. This robust testing requires significant time and resources.

7.5 CONTINUOUS REVIEW

After all types of testing, Agencies must update their response documentation and activities to reflect the lessons learnt during these exercises, as well as after any actual bushfire event affecting their Direct Care Workers and in-home clients.

7.6 LESSONS LEARNT

Following the bushfire event, it is vital for agencies to capture important lessons learnt, based on the actions taken and the processes implemented during that event. Having a way to identify and capture lessons learnt makes effective use of knowledge gained during the bushfire event.

Consider factors such as:

- leadership
- decision making
- channels of communication
- problem solving
- cooperation amongst staff.



It is vital for Client Managers to reflect on their involvement and actions, to capture important lessons learnt.

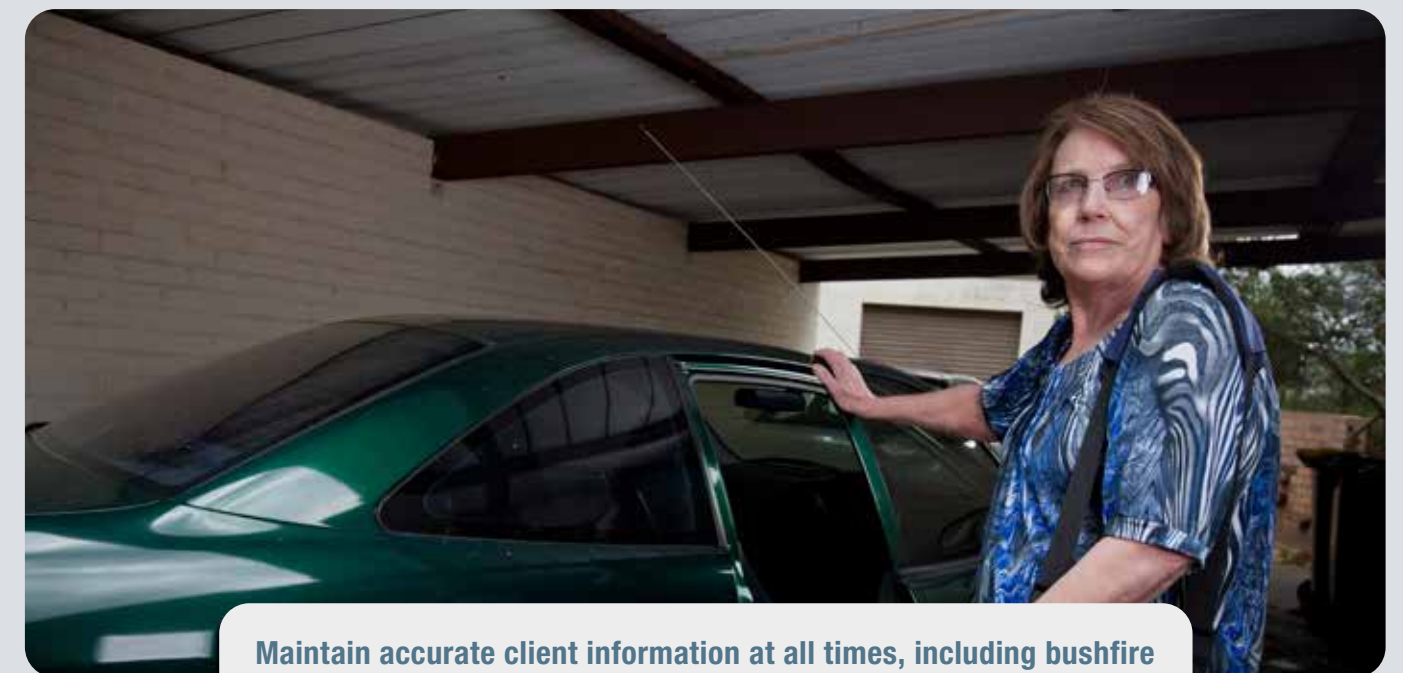
8 IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

The success of implementing this program relies on participation from Agencies, Client Managers, Direct Care Workers and the clients themselves. It requires all parties to be committed to sharing the responsibility to assist in-home clients to be better prepared for bushfires, in turn reducing the risk from exposure to bushfire emergencies to Direct Care Workers assisting clients in their homes.

The following steps summarise the actions of all parties, in order to successfully implement this guideline. It is important to note however that depending on the size and structure of an Agency, some responsibilities may vary between roles (i.e. Agencies and Client Managers).

8.1 AGENCIES

- Embed Guidance Documents and training into current workplace emergency management policies and procedures.
- Enable and support Client Managers and staff to understand workplace emergency management policies and procedures – ensuring all staff know their bushfire risk; know what to do when a bushfire threatens; and their role as a Service Provider.
- Maintain accurate client information at all times, including bushfire leaving early plans for those clients living in bushfire risk areas.
- Test and review policies and processes with all levels of the Agency regularly.



Maintain accurate client information at all times, including bushfire leaving early plans for those clients living in bushfire risk areas.

8.2 CLIENT MANAGER

- Ensure Direct Care Workers have received bushfire education and awareness training, and know what to do when a bushfire threatens.
- Understand areas most at risk of a bushfire to prioritise the rollout of staff training and awareness activities.
- Monitor Bushfire Alerts and Warnings and provide information to Direct Care Workers or clients if required.
- Coordinates capturing clients' bushfire plans as part of client review processes, focusing on those clients most at risk.
- Provide guidance and encouragement for clients and their families to prepare a "Be Safe and Leave Early" Bushfire Plan.
- Store a copy of clients' bushfire plans, ensuring these are also accessible to Direct Care Workers and Agencies if required.
- Ensure clients know that it is their responsibility to develop and activate their own bushfire plan.
- Participates in reviews of policies and processes with all levels of the Agency regularly.

8.3 DIRECT CARE WORKERS

Direct Care Workers should complete training and awareness activities to ensure they:

- Understand basic bushfire behaviours.
- Understand the bushfire risk to both themselves and their clients.
- Understand their role as a service provider.
- Know what to do if a bushfire starts.
- Participate in reviews of policies and processes when required.

8.4 CLIENTS

Clients, with the support of their families and personal support networks, should ensure they:

- Understand the bushfire risk to themselves and their household.
- Know what to do when a bushfire starts.
- Develop a "Be Safe and Leave Early" Bushfire Plan.
- Ensure this Plan is provided to their Service Provider.
- Be prepared to enact their own bushfire plan in the event of a bushfire.

Agencies, where possible should provide DFES' resources and information to their clients to capture this information as part of their OSH assessment or visitation schedule. For support with bushfire preparedness and information, including developing their plans, clients and their families should visit:

www.dfes.wa.gov.au/firechat

CONSULTATION

DFES would like to thank all stakeholders involved in the development of this guide including; both metropolitan and regional Health and Community Service Agencies; Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA (CCIWA); West Australia Department of Health; Australian Government Department of Health; St John Ambulance; Red Cross; The Office of Bushfire Risk Management (OBRM) and Office of Emergency Management (OEM).

ACRONYMS

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Agency | Health and Community Service Agencies |
| CCIWA | Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA |
| DBCA | Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions |
| DFES | Department of Fire and Emergency Services |
| FDR | Fire Danger Rating |
| LEMA | Local emergency management arrangements |
| OBRM | Office of Bushfire Risk Management |
| OSH | Occupational Safety and Health |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| WALGA | Western Australia Local Government Association |

REFERENCE

Occupational Safety and Health Act 1984 (WA)

- Div 2 General Workplace Duties
- s19 Duty of employers
- s20 Duty of employees

Occupational Safety and Health Regulations 1996 (WA)

- Reg 3.1 Identification of hazards and assessing, and addressing, risks at workplaces
- Reg 3.8 Emergency egress from workplaces
- Reg 3.9 Fire prevention
- Reg 3.10 Evacuation procedures
- Reg 3.12 First Aid

Codes of Practice

- Workplace amenities and facilities
- First Aid Facilities and Services

Guidance Note

- Preparing for Emergency Evacuations at the Workplace

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON HOW TO PREPARE



dfes.wa.gov.au



DFES Community Preparedness on
9395 9816



In a life threatening emergency call 000

BUSHFIRE ALERTS AND WARNINGS



emergency.wa.gov.au



13 3337 (13 DFES)



ABC local radio or 6PR emergency bulletins



Other media outlets such as radio,
television and the internet

Visit dfes.wa.gov.au

