



BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Committee Brief

To advise the Local Government regarding all matters relating to the preventing, controlling and extinguishing of bush fires, the planning of the layout of fire-breaks in the district, prosecutions for breaches of the Bush Fires Act 1954, the formation of bush fire brigades and the grouping thereof under group brigade officers and the ensuring of cooperation and coordination of bush fire brigades in their efforts and activities.

Executive Meeting of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee

Held at Shire Chambers Mount Barker WA 6324

3:00pm Wednesday 3 August 2022

Cameron Woods

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Committee Members

Cr John Oldfield, Cr Karen Woltering, Cr Len Handasyde (Deputy): (Resolution No 172/21), CBFCA Mr Norm Handasyde, DCBFCA 1 West Mr Iain Mackie, DCBFCA 2 East Mr Bryce Skinner, Mr Greg Sounness, Mr David Lynch and CESM Mr Mike Barnes

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Executive Membership:

Cr Jon Oldfield	Council Representative
CR Karen Woltering	Council Representative
Cr Len Handasyde	Deputy Council Representative/Chief Fire Weather Officer
Mr Norm Handasyde	Chief Bush Fire Control Officer
Mr Iain Mackie	Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer 1 West
Mr Bryce Skinner	Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer 2 East
Mr Greg Sounness	Deputy Chief Fire Weather Officer
Mr David Lynch	Executive Manager Works and Services
Mr Mike Barnes	Community Emergency Services Manager

1 DECLARATION OF OPENING / ANNOUNCEMENT OF VISITORS

Meeting opened at 3.02pm

2 RECORD OF ATTENDANCE / VISITORS / APOLOGIESPresent

Cr Jon Oldfield	Council Representative
Cr Len Handasyde	Deputy Council Representative/Chief Fire Weather Officer
Mr Norm Handasyde	Chief Bush Fire Control Officer
Mr Iain Mackie	Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer 1 West
Mr Bryce Skinner	Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer 2 East
Mr Greg Sounness	Deputy Fire Weather Officer
Mr David Lynch	Executive Manager Works and Services (EMWS)
Mr Mike Barnes	Community Emergency Services Manager

Apologies

Cr Karen Woltering	Council Representative
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3 RADIO OPERATORS REPORT FROM BFAC

Response requested from Base Radio Operator (Base) Report and responses below.

3.1 BASE RADIO OPERATORS RESPONSIBILITIES**Background**

There have been a few incidence where Base has received requests from people on the fire ground (not the incident controller) for HD trucks, light crews, as well as dozers and Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service (VFRS) to attend the running incident. These requests are always redirected back to either the CBFCO, the relevant deputy or the incident controller in the ground. We have also received requests from the CESM to activate the VFRS.

Proposed resolution

Base requests that we have clarity about what our responsibility is and to whom? As currently we redirect back to those listed above, however should we be taking direction from others?

Response

Requests may come from the Chief Bush fire Control Officer (CBFCO), either of the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officers (DCBFCO), the Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) or the Incident Controller (IC). These may include requests to turn our Brigades, contacting the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) Communication Centre (ComCen). Anything of the nature requires engagement of machinery, aircraft, additional resourcing etc. the CESM will organise.

Base always has the option to confirm any requests with the IC.

3.2 TRUCKS

Background

It has been noted that at times trucks are not being called in and out of the shed and at incidents. Some trucks have been going out of the area to attend fires in different shires and have not radioed Base to inform they are leaving the shire and where they are going.

This also happens locally within our shire. If a truck is scheduled to leave the shed before 6am to attend a fire for mop up, or head to a fire out of our shire, a text message to Base the night before to notify is preferred to give the Base radio operator the heads up.

If a truck comes back in the middle of the night, it is not expected that trucks call to inform Base they've returned, however a text message to the Base Radio Operator certainly helps us to ensure the safety of our crews and the Base radio operators' peace of mind. Often the only way we've known trucks are out is by checking the Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL) system. It is the responsibility of those on the truck to inform Base when they leave the shed, and when they return. It also helps us to know who's at an incident if the truck calls in to say they have arrived and when they are departing. Often, we will wait for all trucks to return to the shed to ensure the safety of our Brigade members and volunteers.

Proposed resolution

That the trucks are to call Base when they leave the shed, for any reason, and also notify Base when they've arrived at an incident (within geographical reason), when they're leaving an incident, and when they return to the shed. Please send text messages to Base for trucks arriving back to the shed in the middle of the night, or those trucks that are planned to leave the shed before 6am.

Response

A reminder to be sent to the Captains of all the Brigades for them to remind all crew leaders of the need to call Base when leaving and returning to their respective sheds as well as arrival and departure for all local incidents (within the Shire of Plantagenet).

Base operators all have access to the (AVL) System and that should be used in conjunction with radio messaging. As the AVL operates on both cellular and satellite networks.

3.3 000 RESPONSE

Background

It has been noted that at times with the 000 response that there is a lag time for Brigades contacting Base that they're responding to the call out, and organising crews. At other times when a Brigade is responding and organising crews for an incident, and then the incident no longer requires a Brigade response, Brigades have failed to let Base know that the incident has been dealt with and that ComCen has been contacted to close off the job.

The responsibility to follow up what is happening with an incident is then left to the Base radio operator, which is not their responsibility. Communicating with Base is

important, and Base is an important part of the team required to manage an incident.

During an open incident Base wait around close to a radio to respond, if required, and it is important they are notified if the incident is no longer open.

Proposed resolution

Brigade and Captains to ensure they contact Base to inform that are responding to a 000 call or an incident, and also ensure they contact Base to inform them when an incident has been dealt with and no longer requires a response. Furthermore, Base requests that some clear processes/procedures be clearly set out so both Brigades and Base understand their responsibilities when a 000 is received, during an incident and after an incident.

Response

As per 000 Agreement with DFES, the first call is the text messaging system to all on the list (82 Members currently). It is then the CBFCO role to contact ComCen to state who is attending to the incident. If this call is slow getting to ComCen.

i.e. the CBFCO is confirming the Brigade is activating, then ComCen officer will call the CBFCO directly, if there is no answer then the ComCen officer will call the CESM.

Current 000 SERVICE AGREEMENT for PLANTAGENET (S)

In order to advise Local Government of 000 calls promptly it is suggested that contacts are 24/7 numbers.
The 4th contact will always be DFES Regional Duty Coordinator

No more than 3 contacts per LGA will be recorded.

Our 24 hour, 365 day emergency 000 contacts from the Communications Centre are as follows:

Organisation	Role	Name	Contact Type	Number
1 Shire of Plantagenet	Plantagenet Shr BFB SMS	USE FIRST	SMS	Pager/SMS
2 Shire of Plantagenet	CBFCO	Norm Handasyde	Mobile (All Hrs)	0417 945 773
3 Shire of Plantagenet	CESM	Mike Barnes	Mobile (All Hrs)	0447 091 159
4 DFES Great Southern Region	Regional Duty Co-Ordinat	DFES Regional Duty Co-Ordinator		9842 9803

Note: Contacts may make reference to an SMS group which allows multiple pagers or mobile phones to be attached to that group.. An SMS list form needs to have been completed.

3.4 SHIRE TEXT MESSAGES

Background

For harvest and vehicle movement bans this season, text messages haven't always come out in a timely manner. They have often had typos and a mixture of 12 hour and 24-hour time clocks. In early February there was a situation where a ban was extended when the original message came out stating it would be lifted at 3pm, which was then extended to 5pm.

The text from the shire to amend this didn't come out until after 3pm (3.50pm to be exact) which left a period of time where people were potentially working in the paddock or with machinery.

During this same period, we also had some bans being put on well ahead of time which also included a time for the ban to be lifted, which caused confusion as the ban lift time was either extended or lifted early.

There appears to be some delay when information is amended and requested to be sent out via text message, and when the information is actually being sent out.

Proposed resolution

Suggestion is that the wording should something like:

'Shire of Plantagenet a Harvest and vehicle movement HVM Ban will be in place from (time) on (day/date). this will be reviewed at (time).'

Or

'SOP - a Harvest and vehicle movement HVM Ban will be in place from (time) on (day/date). this will be reviewed at (time).'

No mention to be made of end time only a review time, especially when bans are being placed as far out as 48 hours. Keep it simple and don't commit to anything.

Response

Agreed – messaging needs to be a simple use of the above suggestion to be placed in a template in the Telstra Instant Messaging System (T.I.M.S.)

3.5 PERMIT REGISTER

Background

This season there has been an increase in the number of permits that are not being read out on the morning sched. There is a lot of reliance on the permit register, which doesn't come out everyday and isn't necessarily available to everyone. This has the potential to waste a lot of time if the Base or others in the network are not aware of permits that have been emailed and if the register hasn't been updated. Emails have been sent requesting that permits are to be read out, but this still isn't happening consistently.

Some FCOs don't read any of their permits out, even if they do call in on the morning schedule (sched/s). If the scheds are being conducted during the restricted period, and the permits are not being read out, are they valid? What is the purpose of a daily sched during the restricted period if permits are not being read.

Proposed resolution

Base requests confirmation of permit protocol and what is required by the Fire Control Officers (FCOs) issuing permits? Ideally as Base Radio Operators, we request that all issued permits to be read out on the morning scheds when they're conducted. This helps with situational awareness, and communication to both Base and the network.

NB: Can we please remind FCOs to read just;

- Permit holders name,
- Permit dates,
- Size of the burn, and
- The location of the burn.

Not specific location numbers but a street address of where the burn is to be conducted.

This really assists with Base and the network having a clear understanding of where permits are going to be conducted.

Response

The permit register will no longer be used as this is doubling up on information that is already contained in the permits which need to be read out on the morning scheds.

A reminder from the CBFCO to all FCOs (via the CESM),

a) That permits are to be read out on the first available radio sched stating

- Permit number,
- Permit holders name,
- Size of the burn, and
- Physical address of the burn (*regulation 15b sub regulation 5*).

(regulation 15B sub regulation 5 states – A notice given under sub regulation (2) of this regulation shall contain full particulars of the locality where the bush is proposed to be burnt is situated.)

b) That all permits need to be sent to the CESM, as normal, and to the Captain of the locality for Brigade situational awareness.

The CESM will review all permits for validity and record for shire records.

3.6 PERMIT BURNS

Background

There are very few people calling Base to inform they are lighting their permit burn, and there seems to be an increase in reliance on WhatsApp groups.

The issue that arises is when 000 calls come through and Base and the network isn't necessarily aware that a burn is being conducted, and this can cause confusion and waste time.

With the increase reliance on WhatsApp groups, the BFB radios are being used less and this could then question their validity. From a Base perspective, communication is key and Base is often relied upon for information and situational awareness; the Base radio operators are not cross all of the WhatsApp groups, so are often unaware of burns that are being conducted. Base have also noted that not everyone is contacting DFES to inform them of their burn, which also means they're not listed on the Emergency WA website.

This hasn't been a major issue this season due to the wet start, but if there was a drier start, this lack of communication could prove problematic.

Proposed resolution

Those lighting burns who have a BFB radio to radio Base to inform a burn is being conducted and where. Those without radios to inform their Captain or FCO of their burn then ideally the Captain or FCO is to call Base to inform that burn is being conducted.

This notification to Base also informs the entire network, and gives others perspective of what is happening in the district and where, because as stated, not everyone is across ever Brigade's Whats App group.

Response

A reminder from the CBFCO to all FCOs (via the CESM),

- That FCOs are to enhance the need on permit holders to call DFES ComCen as the first condition on the permit this is nonnegotiable through the BFAC executive committee and the CBFCO.
- That those with BFB radios to call Base when conducting a burn, those without contact the FCO who wrote the permit, and in turn the FCO to contact Base.

NB: in addition to the above, the first condition on the permit is to call DFES ComCen on 9395 9209 prior to ignition.

This is then placed on to the Emergency WA web site as a 'Burn Off', giving situational awareness of where all the burns are.

3.7 RADIO ETIQUETTE

Background

It is noted that some members of Brigades require further training and clarification of radio etiquette: including how to call someone on the radio, ensuring that they're being clear with their communication, and reducing the amount of unnecessary chat on the radio.

This doesn't cause a major issue during radio sched, but could cause confusion and delay response times during an incident.

Proposed resolution

Training for those bush fire Brigade members who require it, with an emphasis placed on the use of radios during an incident.

Response

Education is ongoing through the Captains via training.

Courses available are:

Western Australian Emergency Radio Network (WAERN) Basic, and
WAERN Advanced.

3.8 DAILY RADIO SCHEDULES

Background

This season we trialled taking call signs off the schedule list who didn't call in regularly. Those who didn't call in for a period of 2 weeks were removed from the daily schedule list, but could always call in as a late check.

This made the scheds more efficient and saved time for Base and also those who call in daily.

It is worth noting that some Brigades have call signs/radios who haven't called in all season.

Proposed resolution

Base requests feedback as to what are Brigade thoughts about this change, and confirmation to continue with this process moving forward into the 2022/2023 season.

Response

Agreed with the changes.

Captains, and Base are to monitor radio use and make recommendations to the CBFCA, on the placement and movement of radios to FCO's that will use them.

3.9 BASE RADIO RESOURCING – AVL ACCESS**Background**

There have been a few issues relating to AVL access for the Base Radio Operators.

Proposed resolution

Request that the Base radio operators have access prior to the 2022/2023 fire season.

Response

All Base radio operators now have access to the AVL system

3.10 BASE RADIO RESOURCING – HANDHELD RADIOS IN VEHICLES**Background**

Could the option of an aerial being fitted to the Base radio operators' vehicles so the handholds can be used in a vehicle, please be explored?

This would mean that those of us who are working on farm and outside during our roster are able to utilise the handholds more readily. We require two to be fitted, one to Ron Caudwell's vehicle and one to Jacqui Burcham's vehicle. Apparently, the magnetic type are cost effective and transmit well

Proposed resolution

Request that appropriate aerials for use in vehicles be explored and purchase for the two Base radio operators that require them.

Response

Two antennas have been purchased and issued to Ron Caudwell and Jacqui Burcham.

Action

Inform Base Radio Operator of the decisions of the BFAC Executive meeting.

4.0 DEPARTMENT OF BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION AND ATTRACTIONS**4.1 PRE-SEASON TRAINING**

Wednesday 7 September – Le Grande, Albany 8.30am to 3.30pm

Invitations are extended to the CBFCO, DCBFCO 1 & 2 and the CESM

CBFCO – Tentative

DCBFCO 1 – Accepted

DCBFCO 2 – Tentative

CESM – Accepted

4.2 PORONGURUP AREA BUSHFIRE MITIGATION MEETING

Wednesday 14 September – Shire office – 1.30pm

Invitations to the CBFCO and the CESM

CBFCO – Accepted

CESM – Accepted

4.3 STIRLING RANGE FIRE WORKING GROUP

Tuesday 20 September – Stirling Range Rangers Office – 10.00am to 1.30pm lunch provided.

Invitations to the CBFCO and the CESM

CBFCO – Accepted

CESM – Accepted

5.0 SECURITY OF BUSHFIRE SHEDS

Background

Two shed have been broken into over the last three months resulting in loss of around \$27,000.

Suggestions for upgrading the security on the more remote sheds is requested.

Action

Outcomes, engage with security contractors for information and advice on -

- Cameras with off-site recording
- Security lighting – inside and outside of the shed
- Alarm system with loud sirens inside the shed
- Security screws to replace the lower half of the shed fixings

6.0 PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)

Half face masks have been purchased, 80 at the moment, Captains will be contacted for distribution to the more active Brigade members in the first instance. More face masks will need to be purchased over the next few years to ensure that all volunteers can be equipped with this PPE.

Action

Contact the Captains for distribution of PPE

7.0 BRIGADE LOCAL LAW AMENDMENTS

Attached

Moved CESM M Barnes, seconded CBFCO Norm Handasyde:

Page 1	Insertion of the Shire Logo
Page 2	Insertion of document history table.
Page 6	Remove Fire Control Officer from Brigade structure.
Page 7	Remove Fire Control Officer from Brigade structure.
Page 11	Update Brigade's AGM dates.
Page 16	Update Captain qualifications to align with new products.
Page 17	Update Fire Control Officer qualifications to align with new products.
Page 18	Update lieutenant qualifications to align with new products.
Page 22	Insertion of valid Working with Children's' Card.
Page 23	Change CBFCO to Shire.
Page 23	Remove CBFCO to endorse membership applications.
Page 23	Update conditions of membership to align with new products.
Page 28	Update Brigade's AGM meeting dates.
Page 32	Amend Fire Control officer term.

CARRIED

Action

Present to council for adoption.

8.0 PRESENTATION ON AUSTRALIAN FIRE DANGER RATING SYSTEM (AFDRS)

Attached

9.0 CLOSURE OF MEETING

4.30pm the Chairperson closed the meeting

ATTACHMENTS

Draft Brigade local Laws V1.1

AFDRS

ACTION LIST

Item No.	Date	Subject	By Whom	Action	Date Complete	Initial
3.1 to 3.10	3 August 2022	Base Radio Operators report	CESM	Inform, Base Radio Operator of the decisions of the BFAC Executive meeting		
5.0	3 August 2022	Security of bushfire sheds	CESM	Cameras with off-site recording Security lighting – inside and outside of the shed Alarm system with loud sirens inside the shed Security screws to replace the lower half of the shed fixings		
6.0	3 August 2022	Personal Protective Equipment	CESM	Contact the Captains for distribution of PPE		
7.0	3 August 2022	Local Brigade Laws amendments	CESM	Present to Council for adoption		