



# OPERATIONAL BRIEF

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July 2014

## Incident control at bush fires

Coordinated firefighting arrangements ensure the NSW RFS, Fire & Rescue NSW, National Parks & Wildlife Service, and Forestry Corporation, work cooperatively at bush and grass fires across the State. These arrangements have served NSW well for a number of years.

However, it has been identified that the issue of legal responsibility, including the responsibility for community warnings, requires some clarification.

A new protocol is now in place which:

- Clarifies that either the NSW RFS or FRNSW has ultimate responsibility for any bush fire (including a grass fire) in its jurisdiction, regardless of land tenure
- Prescribes who appoints the Incident Controller.
- Establishes the notification requirements for National Parks & Wildlife Service or Forestry Corporation when either of those agencies becomes aware of any bush fire and/or responds to any bush fire.
- Requires that an Incident Controller from National Parks & Wildlife Service or Forestry Corporation must provide situation reports and other information to the fire services, by way of the ICON system.
- Requires that an Incident Controller from National Parks & Wildlife Service or Forestry Corporation must discuss any proposed significant changes to strategy prior to implementation with the relevant fire service senior officer.
- Clarifies that the fire services have the right to assume control of any fire in their respective jurisdiction, regardless of the tenure of the land on which the fire is burning or which fire-fighting authority was first to respond.

For fire managers, it is most important that these arrangements are implemented at a local level in the spirit of open discussion and cooperation that has come to characterise coordinated fire fighting arrangements in NSW.



In particular, just because we can take over, does not mean we should do so at every fire. Rather, District Managers need to satisfy themselves that the fire is being managed effectively, that strategies and resourcing levels are reasonable and appropriate, and that appropriate ICON entries and alert levels are being recorded.

The decision to assume control will be made by the District manager.

These principles have now been approved by the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee. Local plans of operations will be progressively updated to reflect these principles.

**Rob Rogers AFSM**  
Deputy Commissioner



## 10/50 legislation

The new 10/50 clearing laws will come into effect soon, giving people another way of helping to prepare their home for bush fires. Here's the latest on the laws and what they mean.

While they have been approved by Parliament, the laws aren't in place yet. This means existing restrictions and penalties apply.

Put simply, the 10/50 laws allow people to clear trees within ten metres of their home, and vegetation other than trees within 50 metres. The law will apply to people who live in designated areas close to bushland. Residents will be able to check if they live in a designated area on the NSW RFS website.

There are some responsibilities and restrictions for landowners and a set of Frequently Asked Questions outline some of these.

The key things to remember are:

- The laws aren't in force yet. Until they come into force, existing restrictions and penalties apply.
- The 10/50 clearing entitlement applies for landowners on their land - it doesn't give a person the power to remove vegetation on neighbouring properties.
- The clearing of vegetation is just one way of preparing for bush fires - preparation around the home and having a Bush Fire Survival Plan remain important parts of being ready for bush fire season.

Check the NSW RFS website for regular updates.

The new 10/50 rule is expected to be in place by 1 August.

## Changes to State Operations Contact Numbers

The contact number for NSW RFS State Operations has recently changed.

**State Operations - 1300 OPS RFS - (1300 677 737)**

Contacts for incident reporting remain unchanged.

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