

**Shire of Merredin
Bush Fire Advisory Committee
Annual General Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, 17 March 2022 at 4.00 pm
North Merredin Primary School, Merredin**

1.0 Official Opening

The Chair opened the Meeting at 4.11 pm noting that a quorum was present and welcomed all in attendance.

2.0 Attendance and Apologies

Delegates

Name	Organisation	Position
Stephen Crook	Collgar Brigade	Chief Bushfire Control Officer Chair
Michael Caughey	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer
Nigel Edgecombe	Burracoppin South Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Kael Crees	Collgar Brigade	Lieutenant
Cam Gethin	Hines Hill Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
John Flockart	Korbelka Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Chris Hooper	Korbelka Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Neil Smith	Nukarni/Nokaning Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Cr Phil Van Der Merwe	Shire of Merredin (arrived 4.23pm)	Shire of Merredin Council delegate
Cr Mark McKenzie	Shire of Merredin	President (Zoom)

Officers

Name	Organisation	Position
Lisa Clack	Shire of Merredin (arrived 4.27pm)	Chief Executive Officer (Zoom)
Andrina Prnich	Shire of Merredin	Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Zoom)
Lindon Mellor	Shire of Merredin	Executive Manager of Engineering Services
Sheree Lowe	Shire of Merredin	Emergency Services Officer (Zoom)

Apologies

Name	Organisation	Position
Darren Major	Muntadgin Brigade	Captain/Fire Control Officer
Glenn Crees	Collgar Brigade	Fire Control Officer
Sam Hooper	Korbelka	Captain

3.0 Confirmation of Minutes

3.1 That the Minutes of the previous Bush Fire Control Officers Annual General Meeting held on 24 June 2020 be confirmed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

Moved: Chris Hooper

**Seconded: Michael Caughey
Carried**

4.0 Business arising

4.1 South Burracoppin standpipe

The EMES advised that the Shire purchased and installed a replacement tank, so this issue should now be resolved.

5.0 Election of Office Bearers – 2022/2023 Fire Season

To nominate for the vacant positions, nominations must be made by an accredited Fire Control Officer.

Motion:

That Lindon Mellor be nominated as Returning Officer.

Moved: John Flockart

**Seconded: Chris Hooper
Carried**

The Returning Officer declared all Bush Fire Brigade positions vacant and called for nominations for the below positions:

5.1 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Nominations for Chief Bush Fire Control Officer were received for:

Stephen Crook

Moved: Neil Smith

Seconded: Michael Caughey

There being no further nominations, Stephen Crook was re-elected to the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Stephen Crook accepted the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

5.2 Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

Nominations for Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer were received for:

Michael Caughey

Moved: Chris Hooper

Seconded: Kael Crees

There being no further nominations, Michael Caughey was re-elected to the position of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Michael Caughey accepted the position of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

5.3 Fire Control Officers

Nominated: As listed below.

Motion:

That the following people being appointment as Fire Control Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2021/22 fire season:

Name	Brigades
Chris Barnett	Burracoppin
Nigel Edgecombe / David Beck	Burracoppin South
Stephen Crook / Glenn Crees / Kael Crees	Collgar
Cam Gethin / Colin Miller	Hines Hill
Chris Hooper / John Flockart	Korbelka
Darren Major / Paul Wanless	Muntadgin
Michael Caughey / Neil Smith / Philip Gray	Nukarni/Nokanning
Sheree Lowe Phil Van Der Merwe (<i>subject to appropriate training completed</i>)	Shire of Merredin

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Neil Smith

Carried

5.4 Fire Weather Officers

Nominated: As listed below

Motion:

That the following people be appointed as Fire Weather Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2022/23 fire season.

Name	Brigades
Chris Barnett	North East
Nigel Edgecombe	South East
Neil Smith	North
Chris Hooper	South West
Stephen Crook	Central
Paul Wanless	South
Cam Gethin	West

Moved: John Flockart

Seconded: Nigel Edgecombe

Carried

5.5 Dual Fire Control Officers

Nominated: As listed below.

Motion:

That the following people be re-appointed as Dual Fire Control Officers of the Shire of Merredin for the 2022/23 fire season.

Name	Brigades
-------------	-----------------

Chris Hooper / John Flockart	Bruce Rock
Cam Gethin and Colin Miller	Kellerberrin
Michael Caughey / Neil Smith	Nungarin
Darren Major / Paul Wanless	Narembeen
Chris Barnett	Westonia

Moved: John Flockart

**Seconded: Nigel Edgecombe
Carried**

6.0 Brigade Reports

6.1 Chief Bushfire Control Officer

Plenty of action for the Merredin Bush Fire Services over summer.

While it was a mild start to harvest, we have had 13 callouts, along with 6 HB and 4 TFB's.

On Nov 14, we had trucks and crews out supporting the community harvest day at the Lynch property, following the tragic death of Jordan Lynch, Collgar BFB member.

17/11/21 (ID #551198): Railway fire west of Hines Hill. I spoke to Westrail Control at the time about the urgency to advise them of rail fires. They requested the IC ring them directly, or ask Com Cen, so that track and train can be inspected for damage. Westrail did also request copy of the Incident reports following rail fires, but Shire ESO agreed it best they go to DFES to get reports.

It was at this incident that the HH truck had pump failure, and was out of commission from 17/11/21 to 22/12/21. Thanks to ESO who worked hard with Ross's Diesel and DFES to get that truck back online.

18/11/21 (ID #471182): Fire at Mdn Refuse site. Nuk/Nok, FRS, Shire water tanker.

25/11/21 (ID #552733): Header fire in BK, (Doltons, header electrical), Korbalka and farmer units attending. Issues: no Com Cen callout, no incident control, very little PPE being worn.

27/11/21: Merredin St Johns Ambulance promotional photo shoots, farmer/harvesting interaction.

4/12/22 (ID #554002): Pole fire at Sth Burracoppin – Crees farm. Collgar, Sth Burra, Burra attending. Issues: Crews returning with a flare-up three days later.

19/12/21: Nuk/Nok BFB joined WAPOL, FRS, SES, St John Ambos in Merredin Emergency Services Christmas parade. It was a good PR exercise with Santa and lollies for the kids.

4/1/22: Shire DCEO informed us that DFES Water Tank grant application for Korbalka was knocked back for second time. Informed at DOAC to do funding through ESL.

2/2/22 (ID #559669): caravan fire at Totadgin Hall Rd, re-chargeable battery. Farmer unit assisted FRS, Korbalka on standby.

5/2/22 (ID #559980): Risen Energy Solar farm. HH, FRS, 5 farmer units attending. Cause unknown electrical failure. Issues: no Risen manager in town to disconnect power grid, gates chained locked. Merredin FRS is following up on Risen Energy fire safety compliance.

6/2/22 1530 hrs Com Cen, smoke 10 km NW Merredin, FCO investigated, dust, false alarm.

6/2/22 (ID #560030): BK shire - escaped permitted burn, 1630 hrs, Korbalka and Muntadgin to Babakin. Nuk/Nok crew on standby. Korbalka home 2200.

7/22/22: Nuk/Nok 0700 left for BK, phone hook-up 0824 hrs with BK Phill Negri, Tony Crooks. No further assistance required. Muntadgin home 1730 hrs, Nuk/Nok home 1800.

8/2/22 (ID #560280): 1130 hrs, Com Cen, road-side fire 17 km sth BK road. Merredin FRS and Korbalka attending. Truck gearbox explode, Merredin SES first on scene.

11/2/22 Clearing sale incident, when a farmer ignored instruction from an FCO not to drive into a stubble paddock until after the HB was lifted. Very unsavoury incident which turned physical when Nutrien Sale agents tried to remove the person from the paddock. I left DCBFO Mick and FCO Neil to keep an eye on the clearing sale situation and left to check on units fighting lightning strikes in the SE of shire. Collgar, Muntadgin, Sth Burracoppin and several farmer units. Five fires caused by lightning with rain assisting control.

I spoke to Shire CEO Lisa Clack and DFES advisor, Tanya Tramponi, about what course of legal action was available to me and the Shire in response to what was totally unacceptable behaviour. "Ignoring instruction from officers of the shire", \$250 fine. I decided I did not wish to take it any further.

13/3/22: Talgomine Reserve Fire over 2 days, Nuk/Nok, Nungarin new 3.4, with shire crew only, and five farmer units. Foam was supplied to farmer units with great results. I had informal discussions with Nungarin CEO about possibly closing the reserve over summer (three fires in recent history) and placing appropriate "no camping" signage at entrance.

Finally on March 15 we had several brigade members attend the Nungarin FCO training course.

We still have four brigade Captains/Lieutenants that need to attend the FCO course to be held in September this year.

Thanks to the Shire executive and especially the ESO for their support over the year.

Thankyou

6.2 Shire of Merredin

Dedicated AWARE funded position

The Shire of Merredin received funding from the AWARE (All West Australians Reducing Emergencies) Programme to appoint an Emergency Services Officer (ESO) part-time for 12 months in order to undertake a number of Emergency Management related projects including the review of the Local Emergency Management Arrangements; several capability exercises; emergency management training for Shire Executive Managers; and the planning and delivery of emergency exercises. Sheree Lowe was appointed to this role.

Executive staff training

The ESO delivered Bushfire Fundamentals to the entire Shire Executive team, which included a drive around town to look at the different fuel types around Merredin, to discuss bushfires that have previously happened, and ran scenarios discussing how those fires might have played out differently with different weather conditions/fuel types/hazard

reduction exercises in effect. This was an incredibly positive exercise and we've already seen benefits in the Shire's preparation and response this fire season.

Burn permits in Merredin townsite

The ESO travelled to Baker's Hill to undertake FCO training prior to the fire season, so that the Chief didn't have to cover the town site this year. There were 17 permits issued during the September/October restricted period and nil during the February/March restricted period. One permit request was declined due to inability of the applicant to adhere to the conditions of the permit, and another was not issued due to applicant's repeated failed efforts to meet the ESO on site for the inspection prior to the issuing of the permit.

Permit requests can be submitted online

The Shire launched our online permit request forms this year, and about five requests were received through the online request form.

Fire reports

Thank you to those brigades who completed the fire report forms, or communicated the information to Sheree so she could submit the reports online. We would like to remind all brigades that the OIC from every incident must contact Sheree with the info to allow her to submit reports online on your behalf, or must submit incident report forms. We haven't got a 100% completion rate yet, but we are close.

Thank you also to those brigades who have been contacting Com Cen from the fire ground. Please continue to encourage your members to do so.

This financial year to date our brigades have officially recorded with DFES 24 brigade callouts to 15 incidents.

By comparison, the previous financial year we officially recorded nine brigade callouts to seven incidents.

One of the benefits of reporting to DFES Com Cen from the fire ground and completing these incident reports is that we can make a much stronger business case for new trucks, stations and water tanks because we have more accurate data to back up our requests.

Brigade training burns

If any brigades do burning off as training for new members, or if you are asked to do one by a neighbour – please let Sheree know so she can give you written approval ahead of time. If your hazard reduction burns are authorised by the Shire then the volunteers and the appliances are covered by insurance.

South Burracoppin standpipe

EMES organised for the removal of the existing water tank due to its condition and installed a new 50kL tank with 1/3 fire reserve, with all new connections and pipework.

Hazard reduction

Ahead of the fire season, Shire crews slashed all Shire sites; some State Government sites; several private works; and along some road verges. A contractor is coming this month to do some more extensive clearing along Chandler-Merredin Road, and some other roads where vegetation has built up substantially.

6.3 Burracoppin BFB

Not present

6.4 Burracoppin South BFB

Burracoppin South attended three fires:

- Fire on Shaun Crees' property when a bird chewed through powerline, starting a fire in old hay paddock. Easily controlled;
- A number of fires were started by lightning on the day of the Clearing Sale. There was strong wind pushing the fires and they were all in the bush where access was difficult. All fires were shortly extinguished by rain;
- A week later, Warrakiri fire power poles. 3 poles snapped off, a week later they sparked. Easy to control, calm day. No problems. Just inside of Westonia Shire boundaries.

6.5 Collgar BFB

The brigade had a great turnout to the AGM on 27th October.

Attended two fires with South Burracoppin – the powerline fire on Shaun Crees' property, and lightning strike fires on the day of the Clearing Sale.

Volunteers attended the community harvest effort and was on active patrol around the paddocks all day.

The Collgar Light Tanker still has a little bit of damage (cracked windscreen and faulty air-conditioner) which was expected to be addressed during the annual service. ESO to organise repairs.

The shed that houses the Light Tanker is still deteriorating.

There is a leak at the Collgar standpipe. EMES to investigate and organise repairs.

6.6 Hines Hill BFB

The brigade AGM was held in September, where Cam Gethin was reappointed as Captain, Luke Growden as Lieutenant and Michelle Gethin as Secretary.

Volunteers took the appliance to the Lynch community harvest where it was on standby all day.

The brigade attended two callouts this year:

- Grass fire on the main train line at Hines Hill. The fire was controlled, but the truck plumbing had a major failure, and took a further six weeks to be repaired.
- Solar farm fire in February.

6.7 Korbalka BFB

Korbalka attended three fires.

The brigade is encountering issues enforcing the wearing of PPE as people focus on just getting to the fire without thinking about their PPE.

They have not held their AGM yet, Korbelka has not had AGM yet, but brigade Captain Sam Hooper Has said it will take place in March or April.

6.8 Muntadgin BFB

Not present

6.9 Nukarni-Nokaning BFB

Nukarni-Nokaning attended seven incidents.

The brigade attended a fire this week at Talgomine Rock and returned the next day to deal with flare ups. The incident was a learning experience for quite a few of the volunteers there, particularly from Nungarin, where a lot of the volunteers were new, the CBFEO was new and many didn't seem to know how to operate their new truck.

Five volunteers from the brigade attended the FCO course in Nungarin. The course is quite different to how it used to be, focusing more on legislation and permit writing. Took the Nukarni-Nokaning truck to the FCO course to practice with the crew protection system, and a couple of technical issues were discovered.

The AGM was held in September with a community barbeque, and there was a great turn out.

Stephen Crook commended Nukarni-Nokaning on the way the brigade uses WhatsApp, particularly at the Talgomine fire. Communications were efficient and good quality, meaning everyone had a good grasp of who was attending the fire, what was needed, who was taking the truck and the state of communications with the Nungarin Chief.

6.10 Shire of Merredin Council delegate

From the perspective of his role as Captain of Merredin VFRS, Cr Van Der Merwe commended brigade volunteers for their notable increase in professionalism and increased use of PPE at incidents. On behalf of Council, he thanked the volunteers for everything they do to keep the community safe.

Lindon Mellor has been great for the Shire, quickly understanding the importance of having the water tanker available, full and functional, and has been keen to learn; for example, spending time with Cr Van Der Merwe during the catastrophic weather weekend of the Shackleton Complex watching and learning how the dust patterns in the wind mirrored to potential movements of a fire, and how quickly fire can move. He felt that Lindon has been more involved and more interested in what the emergency services volunteers need than previous people in his role.

It has been good having Sheree Lowe in the new Emergency Services Officer role. If you've noticed a benefit to having this new position and to the role being extended, mention it to a Councillor or Executive staff.

The CEO advised the meeting that Council have recognised the importance of the continuation of the Emergency Services Officer role, and are in the process of putting that in action.

6.11 Report from DOAC Chair

The DOAC meeting took place on Monday 14th March (**Attachment 6-11A**).

There was a presentation from Tanya Ramponi, DFES Senior Regulation & Compliance Officer on Total Fire Bans and Harvest & Vehicle Movement Bans (**Attachment 6-11B**).

John Flockart has volunteered in the interim to fill gap on the Bushfire Service Training Advisory Group.

A brief overview of the Shackleton Complex was delivered by Superintendent Damien Pumphrey.

Merredin CBFCA Stephen Crook raised the possibility of holding an annual CBFCA forum.

Gavin Eva from the DFES Rural Fire Division presented on changes coming to the Australian FDR system which will go live this coming summer (**Attachment 6-11C**).

Tim McNaught from the DFES Rural Fire Division gave a presentation regarding a review of the Section 33 Notice (Fire Break Notice), which has been a collaboration between WALGA and DFES.

Volunteer training issues, particularly the FCO course in Merredin was addressed. More hands on courses should be encouraged for younger members.

There has been a spate of suspicious fires in Yilgarn. John recommends that if you are going to a fire, assume it's suspicious and tell Com Cen if you believe it to be so and they will inform police.

7.0 General Business

7.1 Brigade Incident Reports

As discussed in Shire of Merredin report -the majority of reports have been submitted online, with only a few outstanding. It is generally the same brigades each time who are not communicating report details to the ESO.

7.2 Standpipe Keys

It was asked if the new South Burracoppin standpipe was locked; the EMES confirmed that it is meant to have a padlock, but it does not have one yet.

The Deputy Chief asked for clarity on the standpipe protocols regarding access to keys. The Chief advised that every appliance was given a key when the standpipe locks were first rolled out. All brigades are advised to contact the Shire if at any point they discover they do not have keys to standpipes.

John Flockart advised photographing the meter when unlocking and locking the meter for reference of volumes of water being used.

The EMES will check if the Burracoppin townsite standpipe is locked.

7.3 Vehicle Fuelling

The Chief and Deputy Chief reminded all in attendance to use the Shire fuel cards to refuel the appliances, and to not use members' personal supplies. The Chief confirmed that all brigades had a fuel card for the appliance.

John Flockart said the last thing people want to do after an incident is drive to Merredin to refuel.

7.4 Safety at fires

The Deputy Chief stressed the importance of personal safety at fires.

Visibility of appliances and farm units is critical, as the thickness of the smoke can change quite quickly. Make sure all vehicles have headlights and/or hazard lights on and, that appliances have their red and blue beacons on. Farm units are to have their orange beacons on if they have them. It is critical to make sure you can see each other.

Wearing the correct PPE to every fire is important. A lot of people at the Talgomine fire from Nungarin brigades turned out in short sleeves and shorts. The Deputy Chief acknowledged that it's not always easy, but recommended keeping spare sets of PPE or jeans and long sleeved shirts in any farm units you might turn out in.

7.5 New fire danger rating system

The Fire Danger Rating system describes the potential level of danger if a fire were to start under the current conditions. The current Australian FDR system is based on an old system and dated science, and is in the process of being updated. The slideshow presented to DOAC regarding the new system can be viewed at **Attachment 6-11C**.

WA has also adopted the Australian Warning System, to bring us into line with other states. This refers to the symbols used to warn the public about emergencies currently in progress for Advice alerts, Watch and Act alerts and Emergency Warnings. A fact sheet has been included at **Attachment 7-5**.

7.6 Foam

A number of drums of foam have been brought to the meeting for brigades to take back to the appliances with them.

The Deputy Chief advised that Nungarin brigades didn't use any foam on the first day of the Talgomine fire, Nungarin didn't use it on the first day. Need to improve our awareness of using foam and flushing the appliances.

7.7 Training & Training Dates 2022

FCO training course has been confirmed for 7 September.

John Flockart suggested setting a date that is the same date every year earmarked for training. Pre-season before school holidays in the evenings was generally agreed to be the best time.

Motion:

That the ESO endeavour to organise DFES courses held locally annually July – September, open to all local brigades.

Moved: Michael Caughey

Seconded: Nigel Edgecombe
CARRIED

7.8 Firebreak Orders 2022/23

Motion:

Pursuant to Section 33 of the Bush Fires Act 1954, all owners and/or occupiers of land are required to carry out fire prevention work in accordance with the requisitions of this notice on or before 31st October each calendar year or within fourteen days of the date of becoming the owner or occupier of the land, should this be after the 31st October. All work specified in this Notice is to be maintained up to and including the 16th March the following calendar year.

Moved: Nigel Edgecombe

Seconded: Neil Smith
CARRIED

7.9 Prohibited/Restricted Burning Periods

Motion:

That the Restricted Burning Period will commence on 16 September 2022, and will continue until 14 November 2022 and from 17 February 2023 until 16 March 2022 (permits required);

and

The Prohibited Burning Period will commence on 15 November 2022, and will continue until 16 February 2023 (no burning).

Moved: Michael Caughey

Seconded: John Flockart
CARRIED

7.10 Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans

Following conversations regarding the clearing sale incident, Tanya Ramponi (DFES Senior Regulation & Compliance Officer) emailed some Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban template forms to the CEO and Chief (**Attachments 7-10A and 7-10B**). The Chief recommends we adopt these new templates.

It was asked if harvesters already in a paddock can be removed from the paddock after a HVMB is declared? The Chief advised that we've always assumed they can.

ESO is to go back to the DFES Regulation & Compliance Officer for further clarity on the question of exiting the paddock and emergency exemptions.

7.11 Standard Operating Bushfire Procedures

Most Local Governments have a Bushfire Operating Procedures document, but the Shire of Merredin doesn't (though one is referenced in the Bushfire Local Laws). The purpose of the document is to set out both administrative procedures and standard operating procedures (SOPs). The procedures and guidelines largely already exist in various forms (ie, the administrative procedures are an amalgam of the Bushfire Local Laws and DFES administrative procedures; and the SOPs are taken from DFES SOPs); the Bushfire Operating Procedures brings them all together in one easy to access, digestible form.

A draft Bushfire Operating Procedures document has been compiled and was distributed to all brigades to read and review over the summer.

A couple of corrections/amendments were requested as follows:

- a) Correct the error mentioning "Quairading" in SOP15
- b) Add a line in SOP3 that private vehicles must follow normal road rules at all times.

The ESO reminded all present that the SOP is meant to be a liquid document subject to annual review, as outlined in the document's introduction.

Motion:

That the BFAC adopt the draft Shire of Merredin Standard Bushfire Operating Procedures subject to the minor amendments as noted, and subject to twice yearly review.

Moved: Stephen Crook

Seconded: John Flockart
CARRIED

7.12 Water sources project

Arising from John Flockart's field exercise in 2020 was identified the need for a resource of local emergency water sources.

The ESO has drafted a booklet using information provided by Nukarni-Nokaning brigade members as a prototype example, and distributed a copy to all brigades present at the meeting for feedback, as well as a blank map and list for each remaining brigade to provide their own information. It had been suggested prior to the meeting that the booklet may be expanded to include farm machinery that may be useful to call on in the event of a fire.

Feedback at the meeting included:

- Not necessary to add the complication of farm machinery
- Good size booklet, would fit easily in glove box
- Good resource
- Coloured tabs need to be inside the cover, not sticking out

7.13 Other business

The Deputy Chief showed a burn permit form that Northam use; it's an electronic form that is simply laid out and can be pre-populated. ESO advised that we already have a version of the form, and will distribute after the meeting (**Attachment 7-13**).

The ESO mentioned that current brigade member listings were included in the brigade packets for the meeting. If any changes need to be made, please note on the lists and hand to Lindon.

The Deputy Chief responded to an invitation from the ESO to join a visit to the Merredin VFRS from two members of the DFES Wellness Team. He said the talk was very good. The two speakers were the Chaplain and an ex-firefighter who is a counsellor with the team. One of his biggest takeaways from the talk was that all volunteer firefighters and their immediate families are eligible for six free counselling sessions per person per year. Your issues donot have to be fire-related in order to make use of the counselling sessions. Mick has some pamphlets to distribute if anyone is interested. There is a fact sheet with more information available online at <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/Documents/DFES-Wellness-Branch-Support-Servcies-for-Family-Members.pdf>

The Shire of Bruce Rock had a portable standpipe/pump on a trailer that was used at the Shackleton Complex. The ESO will investigate getting one built for us and whether it can be paid for under the ESL or whether a grant would be needed.

7.0 Next Meeting

Schedule of Meetings:

Pre-season - Fire Control Officers 2021	October 2022
Bush Fire Control Officers AGM 2022	Thursday 16 March 2023

8.0 Meeting Closure

There was no further business and the Chair closed the meeting at 7pm and thanked all in attendance.



Shire of Merredin

Bushfire Operating Procedures

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AIIMS	Australasian Inter-service Incident Management System
BFAC	Bush Fire Advisory Committee
BFB	Bush Fire Brigade
BOP	Brigade Operating Procedures
CBFCO	Chief Bushfire Control Officer
CEO	Shire of Merredin Chief Executive Officer
ComCen	DFES Communications Centre
DCBFCO	Deputy Chief Bushfire Control Officer
DCEO	Shire of Merredin Deputy Chief Executive Officer
DFES	Department of Fire & Emergency Services
DO	District Officer
DPaW	Department of Parks & Wildlife
ESO	Shire of Merredin Emergency Services Officer
FCO	Fire Control Officer
FDI	Fire Danger Index
FDR	Fire Danger Rating
FIRS	Fire Incident Reporting System
FRS	Fire and Rescue Service
HMA	Hazard Management Authority
HRB	Hazard Reduction Burning
ICP	Incident Control Point
ICV	Incident Control Vehicle
FFS / BSA	Fire Fighting Skills / Bushfire Safety Awareness
IMT	Incident Management Team
LT	Light Tanker
OC	Operations Command
OIC	Officer In Charge
PPC	Personal Protective Clothing
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RDC	Regional Duty Coordinator
ROC	Regional Operations Centre
SOC	State Operations Centre
SOP	Standard Operation Procedure
SMS	Short Message Service
WAPol	WA Police

The *Bushfire Operating Procedures* are guidelines adopted by the Local Government.

This document incorporates both the Administrative Procedures and Standard Operating Procedures.

This document is considered to be a living document that may, from time to time, require updating and annual review.

Review

The Shire of Merredin Bushfire Operating Procedures will be reviewed annually at the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Annual General Meeting.

Interpretation

In these procedures, unless the context otherwise requires;

"The ACT"	means the Bush Fires Act, 1954 and amendments.
"The Regulations"	means the Bush Fires Regulations 1954.
"Council"	means the Shire of Merredin Council.
"DFES"	means the Department of Fire and Emergency Services.
"Ordinary Meeting"	means any meeting of the Brigade other than an annual general meeting, operational meeting or a special meeting.
"Absolute Majority"	means more than half of the total votes of those eligible to vote whether present or not.
"Normal Brigade Activities"	as defined in Section 35A of the Act.
"Fire fighter"	means a member of a Brigade with the competency and currency to carry out operational firefighting duties.
"Auxiliary"	means a member that provides support to operational fire fighters of the Brigade and must be a minimum of sixteen (16) years of age.
"Cadet"	means a member of a Brigade aged between twelve (12) and up to sixteen (16) years of age. The member is not allowed to carry out operational firefighting duties.
"CEO"	means Chief Executive Officer of the Shire of Merredin.
"CBFCO"	means the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer of the Shire of Merredin.
"FCO"	means a Fire Control Officer of the Shire of Merredin.
"Review Date"	will list the date a review has occurred via a Meeting of Council.
"Local Government"	means the Local Government established under the Local Government Act 1995.

Authorisation

These procedures have been produced and issued under the authority of the Shire of Merredin in accordance with the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and endorsed by the Shire of Merredin Council.



Section 1

Administrative Procedures

1.1 Objectives

The Shire of Merredin Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades shall undertake the following objectives:

- Provide timely, quality and effective emergency service;
- Minimise the impact of emergencies on the community;
- Work with the community to increase bush fire awareness and fire prevention
- Endeavour to ensure that active Brigade members' training requirements are maintained and documented to meet DFES standards and that prior learning is to be taken into consideration;
- Ensure all operational equipment is serviceable and available for emergencies;
- Provide a workplace where every individual is treated with respect, in an environment free from discrimination or harassment;
- Work cohesively with other agencies;
- Report to council on matters referred to the Brigades by the Council, through the Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee.

1.2 Values

Members are to adopt the following principles at all times when representing the Bush Fire Brigades of the Shire of Merredin. These values shall include;

- Put the community first;
- Act with integrity and honesty;
- Work together as a committed team;
- Strive to keep ourselves and others safe;
- Respect and value the contribution of others;
- Have open and honest two way communication; and
- Continuously develop skills to service the community.

2.1 New Membership Application

- A new member is to complete a DFES volunteer nomination form and accept the Shire of Merredin conditions for membership.
- The application must be endorsed by the Shire of Merredin and DFES.

2.2 Conditions of Membership

The conditions of membership shall refer to:

- Active Firefighters
- Cadets
- Auxiliary Members

All Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade members are expected to complete the DFES BFS Bush Firefighter Pathway, inclusive of the following DFES courses prior to the commencement of active fire fighter duties:

- AAIMS Awareness
- Bushfire Safety Awareness (3 Modules)
 - Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour
 - Bushfire Safety and Survival
 - Suppress Bush Fire
- Firefighting Skills (3-5 Modules)
 - Introduction to Map Reading
 - Introduction to Communications
 - Tools and Equipment
 - Ropes and Ladders (Dependent on Brigade Role)
 - Crew Protection (Dependent on Brigade Role)

It is recommended that active duty does not commence until the completion of the above training.

Members must comply with the legislative requirements of:

- *FES Act 1998*;
- *Bush Fires Act 1954 and Bush Fires Regulations 1954*;
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1984*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2020*
- *Equal Opportunity Act 1984*; and
- The established guidelines of the Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade;
- *Shire of Merredin Bushfire Operation Procedures*; and
- Any subsidiary legislation from the above mentioned acts.

2.3 Induction

All new members shall be provided with a formal induction. New members will be:

- Introduced to Brigade members and shown all Brigade facilities.
- Instructed about any safety requirements.

- Made aware of Brigade duties and responsibilities.
- Provided with a mentor until such time as they are familiar with normal Brigade activities and operational requirements.
- Be informed that all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) issued to them by the Brigade or the Shire of Merredin is for Brigade activities only and remains the property of the Shire of Merredin.

2.4 Brigade Commitments

Shire of Merredin Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade members are required to maintain currency in training and active firefighting.

If extenuating circumstances prevent a member from meeting his or her Brigade commitments, it is the responsibility of the member to notify the Brigade Captain or Lieutenant accordingly.

2.5 Change of Details

The Shire of Merredin and DFES are to be notified of any change of personal details by completing a DFES volunteer application form and forwarding it to the Shire of Merredin within fourteen (14) days of the change.

All drivers of vehicles are required to hold a current western Australian driver's license for the class of vehicle that is to be driven. Any traffic offence that results in a suspension or loss of license must be reported to the Brigade Captain or Lieutenant.

2.6 Termination of membership

Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade membership shall or may be terminated when a member;

- Provides written notification of resignation to the Brigade;
- Has not been active with the Brigade for a period of twelve (12) months that a member will be taken to have resigned from the Bush Fire Brigade.

If extenuating circumstances prevent a member from meeting his or her Brigade commitments, it is the responsibility of the member to notify the Brigade Captain or Lieutenant accordingly.

Where a membership is terminated, all property owned by the Shire of Merredin should be returned to the Shire administration personnel within fourteen (14) days of giving notice. Failure to meet these conditions may require the Shire of Merredin to seek reimbursement of costs against the member.

2.7 Suspension of membership

A volunteer member may be suspended by the CBFCO, DCBFCO or Brigade Captain where the member:

- Wilfully or negligently disregards the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, *Bush Fires Regulations 1954*, *The Shire of Merredin Bushfire Operating Procedures*; and
- Has performed an unsafe act that jeopardizes the safety of the member or others.

The suspended member will be excluded immediately from such Brigade duties and activities. The Brigade Captain must notify the member, in writing, advising of the suspension period and reason.

The period of suspension shall not exceed three (3) consecutive months and shall be determined by the CBFCO or the DCBFCO in concordance with the Brigade Captain.

On completion of the suspension period the member will be required to undertake refresher training before resuming active firefighting duties.

2.8 Rights of a Volunteer Member

Any person may lodge a written objection to the CEO or CBFCO should they consider they have been unfairly dealt with.

The CEO or CBFCO shall consider the objection and deal with it by either:

- Dismissing the objection
- Varying the decision after consultation with the Brigade Captain and Lieutenant
- Revoking the original decision and imposing a different decision

2.9 Equal Opportunity and Grievance Process

The Shire of Merredin policy is committed to providing a work environment in which all persons can expect to be treated with respect. It ensures that all employees and volunteers uphold State and Commonwealth laws concerning harassment and discrimination, and have a work environment that embodies the core values of the Shire.

All meetings of the Bush Fire Brigade shall be minuted.

3.1 Ordinary Meetings

- The Brigade may at any time call an ordinary meeting of its members.
- The Brigade shall hold a minimum of two (2) ordinary meetings between 1 July and 30 June each financial year, one to be in conjunction with the Brigade AGM and as per the *Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Local Law*.

3.2 Annual General Meeting

- The Brigade shall hold an Annual General Meeting;
- A report shall be presented to the membership by the Captain and Treasurer of the Brigade;
- At this meeting all positions will be declared vacant;
- The CBFCO, DCBFCO or other Shire representative will act as returning officer during the election of the new positions;
- The new office bearers will assume the positions as of the date of the AGM.

3.3 Special Meeting

- The Brigade Captain, CBFCO or DCBFCO may at any time convene a special meeting of the Brigade.
- The Secretary of the Brigade must convene a special meeting when a written request is made by not less than six (6) active members of the Brigade.
- The names of the members requesting the special meeting are to be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

3.4 Quorum

A quorum is required for all meetings this shall consist of:

- Shall consist of not less than 50% of the active Brigade members, exclusive of the Captain and Secretary.
- No business is to be transacted at a meeting of the bush fire Brigade unless a quorum of Brigade members is present.

3.5 Voting

- Each Active Brigade member present at the meeting shall be entitled to vote.
- In the event of a deadlock the Brigade Captain may during the meeting exercise the deciding vote.
- Proxy votes are permitted at an AGM for the election of Captain and Lieutenants subject to nominations being closed 7 days prior to the AGM.
- In the event of achieving no nominations for the Captain, Secretary or Lieutenant during AGM an election *'in absentia'* of the most qualified members may occur.

4.1 Nomination of Candidates for Brigade Elections

- Nominations are required to be presented at the Annual General Meeting.
- For an operational position a person can only be nominated by a listed active Fire Fighter brigade member who has been a listed active fire fighter brigade member for a minimum of twelve (12) months.
- A nomination for an operational position must be endorsed by a second listed active Fire Fighter brigade member with a minimum of twelve (12) months as a listed active fire fighter brigade member. Each member is only entitled to nominate one person per position.
- For non-operational positions, a person can only be nominated by a Brigade member who is from that Brigade with a minimum of twelve (12) months as a Brigade member
- A nomination for a non-operational position must be endorsed by a second Brigade member with a minimum of twelve (12) months as a Brigade member.
- Nominees must indicate acceptance of nomination.

5.1 Brigade Rules

The Brigade may create a list of rules for use within the Brigade Structure.

- The Brigade may not make rules inconsistent with:
 - *The Bush Fires Act 1954 and Bush Fires Regulations 1954;*
 - *The Shire of Merredin Bushfire Operating Procedures;*
 - Shire of Merredin Fire Break Orders; and/or
 - Any other Shire of Merredin Act or Regulation.
- Where the Brigade wishes to make a rule under this clause or vary or revoke such a rule, the Secretary must, within 14 days of acceptance by the Brigade at an Ordinary Meeting send a copy of the proposed rule or amendment to the CBFCO and CEO for consideration.

6.1 Amendment to Shire of Merredin *Bushfire Operating Procedures*

The Brigade may, by resolution, recommend to the Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee the *Bushfire Operating Procedures* be amended, if:

- At least one month's written notice, setting out the terms of the proposed resolution, is given to each member of the Brigade personally or by post; and
- The resolution is supported at a duly convened meeting of the Brigade by an absolute majority of the Brigade.

Any proposed amendment to the policy manual is subject to the approval of the Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee and Council in accordance.

The Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee shall review the Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade Administration Procedure Manual at the meeting held in September each year. Proposed rules or amendments are to be sent to the ESO by close of business on 31 July. The Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Committee will review any proposed amendments to the Administration Procedure Manual and make recommendation to Council for any addition, deletion or amendment.

7.1 Complaints and Grievances

Any member who is unhappy with any matter in relation to the operation of a Brigade should raise their concerns with the Brigade Captain, CBFCO or DCBFCO in the first instance. If still dissatisfied, the member can complain in writing to the Shire of Merredin ESO.

8.1 Duties and responsibilities of volunteer Bush Fire Brigade office bearers

The office bearers of a volunteer bush fire Brigade must be able to demonstrate current competencies for the position of office they are nominated prior to accepting the nomination or undertaking the duties and responsibilities of the said position.

8.2 Captain

Role

The Captain of a Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade shall be responsible for the leadership and management of Brigade firefighting activities. The Captain will also act as a role model and mentor for members of the Brigade. The Captain should always act with integrity and consider each member equally. All decisions should be in the interest of the Brigade and its membership.

The position reports to the CBFCO on Brigade related matters and represents the Brigade at Bush Fire Advisory Committee (BFAC). The Captain may delegate authority to another operational Brigade member to represent the Captain at BFAC.

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities of the Brigade Captain include:

- Demonstrate positive leadership and mentor Lieutenant and Brigade members
- Command, control and confidently manage firefighting activities at emergency incidents
- Ensure AIIMS Incident Control System is implemented and maintained during all emergency incidents
- Ensure an appropriate record and report of events and decisions that occur at an incident
- Conduct Brigade briefings and post incident analysis of any incident involving firefighting or Brigade management issues
- To ensure Brigade members deployed for operational duties have the competencies to complete the task or duty assigned and hold current qualifications to carry out the functions required, in accordance with this document and DFES Standard Operating Procedures
- To undertake responsibility for the proper management and maintenance of Brigade property and equipment
- Ensure conduct of Bush Fire Brigade members is in accordance with the Shire of Merredin Policies, Procedures, Operating Guidelines and SOPs
- Report any injuries of personnel or damage to fire fighting vehicles as soon as possible to the Shire of Merredin

Criteria of Captain

- Effective interpersonal skills
- Good written and verbal communication Skills

- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Experience in managing operations
- Ability to perform under stressful conditions

Qualifications of Captain

- A minimum of 5 years firefighting experience, and preferable time spent as a Lieutenant
- Following courses completed (or equivalent, if completed pre-2021):
 - AllIMS Awareness
 - Bushfire Safety Awareness (3 Modules)
 - Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour
 - Bushfire Safety and Survival
 - Suppress Bush Fire
 - Firefighting Skills (3-5 Modules)
 - Introduction to Map Reading
 - Introduction to Communications
 - Tools and Equipment
 - Ropes and Ladders (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Crew Protection (Dependant on Brigade Role)
- Recommended further training for leadership role:
 - Advanced Bush Fire Fighting
 - Crew Leader
 - Sector Commander
 - AllIMS 2017
 - Incident Controller Level 1
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Leadership Fundamentals
 - Fire Control Officer

If a member has not completed a required course they must endeavour to complete the next available course; in this situation the appointment will be confirmed at the discretion of the CBFCO and/or CEO.

8.3 Lieutenant

Role

The Lieutenant of a volunteer Bush Fire Brigade is required to provide both operational and administrative support to the Captain in managing the Brigade. The position reports to the Captain on all matters pertinent to the functioning of the Brigade and/or personnel whom they are supervising. In the absence of the Captain, the Lieutenant assumes all powers, responsibilities and duties of the Captain.

The Brigade should appoint a maximum of 2 Lieutenant Positions. If more than one Lieutenant is elected, the Brigade must rank Lieutenants in seniority. This will be determined by resolution at the Annual General Meeting. The Captain may exercise a casting vote, if required.

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities of a Brigade Lieutenant include:

- Provide support to the Captain and assist with the management of the Brigade
- Demonstrate positive leadership and mentor Brigade members
- In the absence of the Captain, administer all powers and responsibilities of the *Bush Fires Act. (Bush Fires Act 1954, Part iv Section 44(1))*
- Command and manage volunteer bush fire fighters during emergencies and other Brigade related activities
- Conduct briefings during and after incidents and maintain open lines of two way communications between fire fighters and management
- Encourage positive interaction and teamwork between volunteer fire fighters
- Ensure Shire of Merredin and DFES standard operating procedures are adhered to at Brigade activities
- Ensure fire fighters engaged in firefighting activities hold competencies relevant to the task
- To ensure the behaviour of fire fighters is in accordance with the Shire of Merredin and DFES codes of conduct

Criteria of a Lieutenant

- Experience in firefighting
- Experience within a volunteer organisation
- Ability and willingness to attend further fire and emergency management training where required
- Effective interpersonal skills
- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Ability to perform under stressful conditions

Qualifications of Lieutenant

- A minimum of 2 years firefighting experience
- Following courses completed (or equivalent, if completed pre-2021):
 - AllIMS Awareness
 - Bushfire Safety Awareness (3 Modules)
 - Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour
 - Bushfire Safety and Survival
 - Suppress Bush Fire
 - Firefighting Skills (3-5 Modules)
 - Introduction to Map Reading
 - Introduction to Communications
 - Tools and Equipment
 - Ropes and Ladders (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Crew Protection (Dependant on Brigade Role)
- Recommended further training for leadership role:
 - Advanced Bush Fire Fighting
 - Crew Leader
 - Sector Commander
 - AllIMS 2017
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Leadership Fundamentals

If a member has not completed a required course they must endeavour to complete the next available course; in this situation the appointment will be confirmed at the discretion of the CBFCA and/or CEO.

8.4 Secretary

Role

The secretary is to manage administrative matters of the Brigade. The position is not required to perform active operational duties and may be inclusive to an operational position held within the Brigade. The position reports to the Captain on administrative matters pertinent to the Brigade.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Secretary shall perform the following functions:

- Ensure members receive notification of Brigade meetings in accordance with this procedure manual
- Prepare an agenda for Brigade meetings and distribute to members and to the Shire of Merredin
- Ensure minutes of Brigade meetings are recorded and distributed to all members and the Shire of Merredin within fourteen (14) days
- Disseminate circulars and other information to all Brigade members
- Work cohesively with Shire of Merredin management and administrative staff on matters pertinent to Brigade administration

Note: The position of Secretary and Treasurer may be combined.

Qualifications of Secretary

- An understanding of meeting procedure and minute taking
- Computer skills

8.5 Treasurer

Role

The role of the treasurer is to manage and report to the Brigade on all financial matters. The position is not required to perform active operational duties and may be inclusive to an operational position held within the Brigade. The position reports to the Captain on financial matters pertinent to the Brigade.

A Brigade is not required to fill this position if they do not operate a Brigade bank account or conduct fundraising activities on behalf of the Brigade.

Duties and Responsibilities

The Treasurer shall perform the following functions:

- Manage financial affairs of the Brigade
- Maintain Brigade financial records and provide detailed report of income and expenditure at meetings

- Ensure that the Brigade Financial records are audited by an external body or agency annually
- Provide the Shire of Merredin with financial statements of Brigade income and expenditure after each financial year
- Work cohesively with Shire of Merredin management and administration staff on matters pertinent to Brigade financial matters

Note: The position of Secretary and Treasurer may be combined.

Qualifications of Treasurer

- Knowledge and understanding of accounting principles
- Computer skills

8.6 Fire Control Officer

Role

A Fire Control Officer is a delegated representative of the Local Government responsible for the administration of provisions within the *Bush Fires Act 1954*. The position is required to perform active operational duties in relation to both firefighting and fire prevention strategies within the local community.

A Fire Control Officer must be able to demonstrate experience in wild fire behaviour, AIIMS and knowledge of the area. The person in this position must be able to interpret provisions of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and the *Bush Fires Regulations 1954* and be confident with communication skills.

This position reports to the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer on all matters pertinent to bush fire management.

A Fire Control Officer may hold jointly the position of Brigade Captain.

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities of the Bush Fire Control Officer include:

- Authorise permits for hazard reduction burns within the Shire of Merredin in accordance with the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and *Environmental Act*;
- Identify and conduct risk assessments of fire hazards within the Shire of Merredin;
- Perform duties prescribed by the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and authorised by Local Government
- Maintain a personal log book to include a record of events and decisions during an incident
- Take control, command and manage resources during wildfire or hazard reduction burns within the Brigade area they are appointed
- To take control of firefighting operations at a wildfire outside their Brigade area where no other Brigade Captain or Fire Control Officer is present.
- Provide advice to the CBFCO and the Shire of Merredin as to when harvest bans and or movement of vehicle bans should be applied.

Criteria of Bush Fire Control Officer

- Knowledge of managing a volunteer organisation
- Knowledge of all Fire Response Plans in the Shire of Merredin

- Knowledge of the Bush Fires Act 1954
- Ability to attend further fire and emergency management training.
- Effective Interpersonal Skills
- Good Written and Verbal Communication Skills
- Leadership Skills
- Management Skills
- Experience in managing operations
- Ability to perform under stressful conditions

Qualifications of Bush Fire Control Officer

- Minimum 5 years of firefighting experience
- Following courses completed (or equivalent, if completed pre-2021):
 - AllMS awareness
 - Bushfire Safety Awareness (3 Modules)
 - Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour
 - Bushfire Safety and Survival
 - Suppress Bush Fire
 - Firefighting Skills (3-5 Modules)
 - Introduction to Map Reading
 - Introduction to communications
 - Tools and Equipment
 - Ropes and Ladders (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Crew Protection (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Fire Control Officer (prior to issuing permits to burn)
- Recommended further training for Leadership role;
 - Advanced Bush Fire Fighting
 - Crew Leader
 - Structural Firefighting
 - Sector Commander
 - AllMS 2017
 - Incident Controller Level 1
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Leadership Fundamentals

If a member has not completed a required course they must endeavour to complete the next available course; in this situation the appointment will be confirmed at the discretion of the CBFCO and/or CEO.

8.7 Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (DCBFCO)

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer will usually be voted in at the Shire of Merredin BFAC AGM, but may be appointed by Council.

Role

The role of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer is that of a leader, decision maker, and planner and assists the CBFCO in managing the Bush Fire Organisation.

The Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer may deputise in the absence of the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

If more than one FCO or Brigade is in attendance, the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer may take control of fire operations and be Incident Controller or part of the Incident Manager Team as delegated by the Incident Controller.

The Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer is responsible to the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

Criteria of DCBFCO

- Effective interpersonal skills
- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Experience in managing operations
- Ability to perform under stressful conditions
- Current appointment as Fire Control Officer
- Experienced in firefighting operations within the Shire of Merredin
- Knowledge of managing a volunteer organisation
- Knowledge of all Fire Response Plans in the Shire of Merredin
- Knowledge of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and *Bush Fires Regulations 1954*
- Ability to attend further fire and emergency management training

Qualifications of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

- Minimum 8 years firefighting experience
- Following courses completed (or equivalent, if completed pre-2021):
 - Aims Awareness
 - Bushfire Safety Awareness (3 Modules)
 - Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour
 - Bushfire Safety and Survival
 - Suppress Bush Fire
 - Firefighting Skills (3-5 Modules)
 - Introduction to Map Reading
 - Introduction to communications
 - Tools and Equipment
 - Ropes and Ladders (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Crew Protection (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Fire Control Officer (prior to issuing permits to burn)
- Recommended further training for leadership role
 - Advanced Bush Fire Fighting
 - Crew Leader
 - Structural Firefighting
 - Sector Commander
 - AIIMS 2017
 - Incident Controller Level 1
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Leadership Fundamentals
 - Ground Controller
 - Machine Supervision

8.8 Chief Bush Fire Control Officer (CBFCO)

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer will usually be voted in at the Shire of Merredin BFAC AGM, but may be appointed by Council.

Role

The role of the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer is that of a leader, decision maker, planner and manager of the Bush Fire Organisation in the Shire of Merredin and not as a 'hands on' fire fighter. The CBFCO is to ensure that the organisation is functioning to a standard commensurate to the risks within the Shire of Merredin and is to ensure that the following tasks are achieved.

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties and responsibilities of the Bush Fire Control Officer include:

- During wildfire incidents manage the fire resources of the Shire and Brigades and when necessary act as the Incident Controller in accordance with Westplan Fire
- Promote the AIIMS Incident Management system to all FCO'S, Brigades and volunteer fire fighters within the Shire of Merredin and ensure an Incident Controller is appointed for all Incident Levels (1-3)
- Ensure that FCOs, Brigade Officers and volunteers are trained to a standard commensurate to the risk and equipment within the Brigade and Council area
- Demonstrate positive leadership and mentor DCBFCOs, FCOs, Captains and Brigade members
- Promote community fire prevention as a priority, to identify and reduce fire hazards
- Develop the fire organisation to effectively and efficiently control wildfires
- Develop and promote the use of Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines, minimum training standards, identify hazards and assess risk to prevent injury volunteers and implement the principals of OHS for volunteers to develop a safe working environment for fire fighters
- Ensure welfare preparedness is arranged for the provision of food, medical aid and counselling services for volunteers
- Establish and maintain effective communication and liaison with the Shire of Merredin, FCO'S, Brigades, DFES, DPaW, Emergency services, statutory authorities and facilitate prompt response to fire incidents
- Ensure that Brigades are involved in the development of Policy for the preparation of ESL Fire Appliance program, maintenance programs for Shire and Brigade owned equipment, incident de-briefing of wildfires, welfare and safety of volunteers
- Promote the values of Volunteer Fire Brigades to the community and within the Brigades
- Delegate specific tasks to DCBFCO, FCOs, ESO or Brigades
- Liaise with the Shire of Merredin, DFES and other organisation to achieve the duties outlined above

Criteria of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

- Knowledge of managing a volunteer organisation.
- Knowledge of Fire Response Plans in the Shire of Merredin
- Working knowledge of the Shire of Merredin Local Emergency Management Arrangements
- Knowledge of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* and *Bush Fires Regulations 1954*
- Knowledge of the State Emergency Management Policy No 4.8 (Traffic Management During Emergencies)
- Ability to attend further fire and emergency management training
- Effective interpersonal skills
- Good written and verbal communication skills

- Leadership skills
- Management skills
- Experience in managing operations
- Ability to perform under stressful conditions
- Current appointment as Fire Control Officer
- Experienced in firefighting operations within the Shire of Merredin
- Currently holds all of the preferred qualifications of the Fire Control Officer
- Be a member of the DOAC, BFAC and LEMC

Qualifications of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer

- Minimum of 10 years firefighting experience
- Following courses completed (or equivalent, if completed pre-2021):
 - AllIMS Awareness
 - Bushfire Safety Awareness (3 Modules)
 - Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour
 - Bushfire Safety and Survival
 - Suppress Bush Fire
 - Firefighting Skills (3-5 Modules)
 - Introduction to Map Reading
 - Introduction to communications
 - Tools and Equipment
 - Ropes and Ladders (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Crew Protection (Dependant on Brigade Role)
 - Fire Control Officer (prior to issuing permits to burn)
- Recommended further training for leadership role
 - Advanced Bush Fire Fighting
 - Crew Leader
 - Structural Firefighting
 - Sector Commander
 - AllIMS 2017
 - Incident Controller Level 1
 - Mental Health First Aid
 - Leadership Fundamentals
 - Ground Controller
 - Machine Supervision

Section 2

**Standard Operating
Procedures**

INTRODUCTION

These Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a set of procedures, standards and guidelines approved by Council for the safe and efficient operation of Brigades and personnel at emergency incidents.

These Procedures for Bush Fire Brigades and Operations are a living document that may, from time to time, require updating and additions.

Input from Brigade members is welcome. Should a Brigade member feel that an SOP is unworkable, not practical or needs inclusion they should raise the matter at their local Brigade meeting. If the meeting agrees then it should be raised by the Brigade representative on the Bush Fire Advisory Committee. The Bush Fire Advisory Committee will discuss the matter and make a recommendation to Council that the SOP be added or amended.

SOP.1

DETECTION OF FIRES, SHIRE RESPONSE AND MOBILISATION OF BRIGADES

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Detection and Reporting of Fires

ALL fires are to be reported to '000'

Shire Response to Calls

Upon receipt of a report of a fire or other emergency call through 000 / DFES ComCen, the CBFCO/DCBFCO will make an initial assessment and decision as to how many brigades will be turned out.

A brigade may be placed on 'standby' if determined by the location and conditions of the fire.

Systems, procedures and equipment must be installed and maintained with due regard to this aim while ensuring firefighter and public safety.

Standby

For the purposes of this SOP 'standby' means that personnel are to make the appliance ready for departure should the need arise, and are to remain there until stood down.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Incident Controller

The senior officer on the first arriving unit at the fire becomes the Incident Controller (IC) until relieved by a more senior officer at the scene (*Bush Fires Act 1954 s.44*).

If the situation escalates then the Incident Controller will be nominated by the respective Hazard Management Agency (HMA).

The IC will, within 15 minutes of arrival, provide a verbal Situation Report to DFES ComCen detailing the situation and whether further resources are required.

IC will remain in contact with DFES ComCen for the duration of the incident, reporting regularly on the situation.

Brigades

The Officer in Charge (OIC) of all appliances in attendance shall notify DFES ComCen as follows:

- When mobile to the incident.
- Upon arrival at the incident.
- When leaving incident scene
- Arrival on station

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

Driving emergency vehicles under emergency conditions brings with it an added responsibility to the OIC and the driver of the vehicle. The safety of the community at large should be balanced with the urgency of the call.

Drivers should, in the first instance, ensure the safety of the crew and the public when responding to a call and, secondly, endeavour to arrive at the incident as soon as practicable.

Drivers should follow the principles outlined in this SOP. No risk is justified if it is likely to prejudice the safe arrival of the appliance and crews at an incident or the safety of others within the community.

Driving an emergency vehicle under emergency conditions comes with a set of responsibilities that may have dire consequences if they are not performed rationally, competently, professionally and with consideration for others (road users, pedestrians etc.).

Procedure

Driving Conditions for Bush Fire Brigade Personnel

- All drivers must hold a valid and current class of driving license for the vehicle type that is being driven.
- All drivers must have the approval of the Brigade Captain, CBFCO or DCBFCO to drive the vehicle.
- Drivers are recommended to complete the DFES approved course or the National Competency
 - On Road Driving (DFES0470), or
 - Drive Vehicles Under Operational Conditions (PUAVEH001B)
- Driver holding "P" Plates may drive appliances as part of driver training; however are not to drive to or at emergencies / incidents.

Fire Call Conditions Code I

When appliances are responding with haste where life/property is in danger:

- Emergency warning beacons, siren and headlights are to be on at all times when travelling to an Operational Emergency incident or at the discretion of the OIC or Crew Leader.
- Rail crossing signals and boom gates to be obeyed at ALL times.
- Drivers and Officers should also refer to DFES issued SOPs
 - SOP 3.3.1 Respond Under Emergency Conditions
- Only designated emergency vehicles may respond under emergency conditions; private vehicles and farm units must adhere to normal road rules at all times when turning out, while at the incident, and when returning from an incident.

Normal Road Conditions Code 2

When returning to fire station, attending training or exercises and general operations:

- No emergency warning lights and sirens are to be used.
- ALL road rules must be obeyed at ALL times.

General

- Firefighters must at all times, drive with due care and attention and continue to show consideration to other road users.
- It is essential that the privileges granted by law are not abused.
- Crew care and safety must be ensured at all times when driving.
- Emergency warning beacons and headlights are to be on at all times while operational at an incident.
- The maximum speed limit for the vehicle class is to be observed at all times on roadways.
- Brigade units are not to be used other than for call outs or normal brigade activities as defined the *Bush Fires Act* so as to receive insurance cover.

Turn Out Procedure

- All firefighting appliances are to respond as Emergency Vehicles (Code 1) unless instructed otherwise.
- For response to fire/incidents or alarms where there is a **HIGH LIFE RISK FACTOR** – e.g. Schools, Hospitals, Nursing Homes, incidents involving aircraft or buses, **ALL** emergency vehicles will respond Code 1 unless otherwise determined by the Incident Controller.

REMEMBER that to drive under Code 1 condition when it is not expedient or safe to do so is a breach of the Road Traffic Act and could result in driver prosecution.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Procedure

- Bush Fire Brigade personnel shall **NOT** respond to an incident or participate in any Bush Fire operation or activity if alcohol or drugs have been consumed in quantities that contravene any written Law or Policy.
- Alcohol or drugs shall **NOT** be consumed by personnel whilst undertaking any task or function associated with incident response, suppression or recovery phases.
- Alcohol or drugs shall **NOT** be consumed by personnel whilst engaged in training activities associated with operational tasks.
- When driving, personnel must comply with Road Traffic Regulations.

SOP.5

CREWING OF BRIGADE FIRE APPLIANCES

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Procedure

- Bush Fire appliances travelling to and from incidents shall only carry personnel who are safely seated in the cab.
- No Bush Fire appliance may turn out with a crew of less than 2.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Standard of dress for all firefighting personnel

Registered brigade personnel on the fire ground must be dressed in accordance with the DFES recommended industry standard or equivalent. Personnel turning up to fires without the minimum requirement will be advised to dress properly or asked to leave the fire ground.

Recommended standard for bush firefighting

- Approved coveralls or tunic and trousers as supplied by the Shire of Merredin.
- Approved helmet as supplied by the Shire of Merredin.
- Gloves and goggles as supplied by the Shire of Merredin.
- All personnel are responsible for the availability, condition, care and cleanliness of their own kit.
- Only correctly attired personnel will be permitted to crew Brigade appliances.
- The appearance and conduct of Bush Fire personnel members whilst wearing either operational dress or uniform is to be such that it will not cause any criticism upon the organisation or the Shire of Merredin.

Equivalent Standard

- Cotton or woollen long trousers, cotton or woollen long sleeve shirt and safety boots and leather gloves.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Procedure

Fire burning on or near road verges, with smoke obscuring vision, is potentially the most dangerous situation volunteers can find themselves in. More firefighters have been killed or injured in this situation than any other firefighting activity.

- Treat traffic like electricity! Do not attempt to work in smoke reduced visibility until you are sure the flow has been cut off.
- The IC is to request police provide traffic control at the earliest possible moment.

Firefighters working from or on a gazetted roadway that is part of a fire ground

- For the safety of firefighters, any roadway where firefighters are working must be closed if there is a risk of injury or accident
- Where possible fire fighters should look for alternative work environments other than the roadway.

Gazetted roads under the care & control of the Local Government

- If the road is a local road under the care of the Shire of Merredin, the Incident Controller will close the road. The CEO shall arrange for the road to be attended to by appropriate qualified staff.
- If police assistance is unavailable, and a detour is not possible, then the road or roads are to be closed regardless while fire operations being undertaken from any gazetted roadway.

Gazetted roads under the care & control of Main Roads (MRWA).

- If the Road is a major Highway or arterial road under the care of Main Roads then Main Roads shall be contacted via the police to have the Road closed and signed accordingly.
- The IC shall request MRWA to formulate and implement a Traffic Plan. The request shall be made via the DFES ComCen or the Police
- If police assistance is unavailable, and a detour is not possible, then the road or roads are to be closed when fire operations are be undertaken from any gazetted roadway.

If a motorist "IGNORES" instructions from a duly authorised person then the offender's registration number and the time should be noted and reported to the police at the first opportunity. Action will be taken. The IC must be notified by radio immediately when a motorist disobeys any direction and proceeds.

Fire appliances must have all emergency lights on and headlights dipped when working in a visibility reduced hazard.

BRIGADE PERSONNEL HAVE A DUTY TO THEMSELVES AND THE TRAVELLING PUBLIC TO ENSURE THAT ALL OPERATIONS ARE PERFORMED WITH MAXIMUM SAFETY

SOP.8

ACCIDENT REPORTING

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Procedure

All accidents and near misses on an operational fire ground must be reported to the CBFCO / DCBFCO, who will escalate to the ESO / DCEO. The CBFCO / ESO will arrange for the accident to be investigated and the report must be with the Area Officer within seven days using the correct form.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

It is necessary to have an efficient turnout of brigades within a Local Authority. This is to be supported by the Region Operations Centre (ROC) co-ordinating the turnout between Shires, which in turn must be supported by the State Operations Centre (SOC), co-ordinating mutual aid between Regions.

To ensure an orderly and effective turnout occurs the following procedures are to apply.

Shire turnout responsibilities

- CBFCO / DCBFCO are responsible for the turnout of all firefighting resources stationed within the Shire.
- The IC is responsible for ensuring that adequate relief has been arranged. The CBFCO / DCBFCO will ensure that some resources may be held in reserve for further outbreaks of fire or that mutual aid has been arranged to cover all eventualities.
- Call-out of these resources will be in accordance with the Local Authority and supported by the Local Emergency Management Arrangements.

Regional Operation Centre Responsibilities

- If DFES requires assistance in addition to the Shire's resources from adjoining Shires within their Region, such assistance will be activated through the DFES Regional Duty Coordinator (RDC).
- When making a request DFES will supply the following information:
 - Number and type of fire appliances and minimum crewing
 - The task the appliance are to perform
 - The duration the resources will be required for
 - Where and to whom will the resources report to?
 - When are the resources required?
 - Welfare and Relief arrangements
- Region Duty Coordinator will then:
 - Contact the appropriate CESM/CBFCO requesting the above be provided;
 - Once the request has been actioned, confirm back the arrangements made
 - Advise the State Duty Officer of action taken.

Resource Request

- When a request is made to the Shire of Merredin to supply resources (Task Forces/Strike Teams) to another Shire then the following should apply.
 - The CBFCO with the DCBFCO will decide on the number of resources that will be sent out of the Shire at any given time.
 - A delegated Shire representative should accompany the appliance(s).
 - Merredin VFRS will be alerted that Shire resources will be leaving the Shire and Brigades will be alerted via usual inter-brigade communication channels that resources are leaving the Shire.

- Crews responding to a mutual aid request should ensure they have eaten before being dispatched to the fire. Subsequent welfare will be the responsibility of the IC.

SOP.10

FIRST AID

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Procedure

- All volunteer firefighters are to be encouraged to complete the Senior St Johns First Aid Course or the DFES equivalent.
- The IC shall request a St Johns Ambulance Post be established at the Control Point when the number of attending firefighters and other staff agencies exceeds 50 personnel.
- The IC may request a St Johns Ambulance Post at any given time prior to the above number of personnel being reached.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Procedure

The Police have a requirement under the Coroners Act and Police Routine Orders **to view the body of a deceased person, in situ** so that evidential information and forensic details may be obtained. As a consequence, Brigade personnel are requested to assist the Police by strictly adhering to the following guidelines:

- At any incident where death occurs the body is to remain in situ and the area immediately secured awaiting the arrival of the Police and Forensic Services.
- Where the body is in a public place and visible by the public it should be screened if possible.
- Where removal of the deceased to a place of security is essential, the IC should attempt to obtain as much information as possible prior to the removal of the body with consideration being given to the following:
 - Status of the deceased (i.e. General public, fire fighter etc.)
 - Details of fire activity at the time of the incident causing death
 - Possible cause of death (i.e. burns, smoke etc.)

In order that Brigade resources are not unduly placed on standby for lengthy periods whilst awaiting the arrival of the Police, the IC is to request Police attendance as soon as possible after initial incident appraisal.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

Merredin Bushfire Brigades are not trained in fighting vehicle fires nor do they have breathing apparatus to use whilst fighting fires in toxic smoke. Given the fact that cars give off multiple types of toxic fumes and contain various metals and components which are considered explosive when encountering water, it is not safe for the Merredin Bush Fire Brigades to conduct offensive firefighting techniques on vehicle fires of any type.

Procedure

- Once the initial call has been received and the brigade has turned out to the vehicle fire incident, the crew leader or IC must advise DFES ComCen that the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue is required to attend due to the nature of the incident. The crew leader may also request that Police attend for traffic control if required.
- Once the brigade appliances arrive the units should be parked up wind or out of the toxic smoke and in the fend off position across the road to stop passing traffic.
- Beacons and head lights must be on to warn approaching motorist.
- The crew leader or IC shall conduct a scene size-up to determine if any persons may be trapped or located close to the vehicle. The information on the incident shall be relayed to DFES ComCen.
- Firefighting shall only be in the form of a defensive technique, meaning to protect any other assets or preventing the fire spreading to the road verge or surrounding bush or grass.
- Firefighters shall stop traffic from passing and keep public spectators away from the incident.
- The BFB crew leader or IC is to hand over control of the vehicle fire incident to the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue OIC upon their arrival.

Note

- Vehicle fires are extremely dangerous due to many pressurised vessels for example; LPG cylinders, tyres, and airbag deployment systems etc. These may cause explosions so maintaining a safe distance and wearing full PPE is required.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

Merredin Bushfire Brigades are not trained in structural firefighting nor do they have breathing apparatus to use whilst fighting fires in toxic smoke.

Procedure

- Once the initial call has been received and the brigade has turned out to the structure fire incident, the crew leader or IC must advise DFES ComCen that the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue is required to attend due to the nature of the incident. The crew leader may also request that Police, ambulance and Western Power attend if necessary.
- The crew leader or IC shall conduct a scene size-up to determine if any persons may be trapped or located close to the structure fire. The information on the incident shall be relayed to DFES ComCen. The BFB crew leader or incident controller shall look for any potential hazards to the firefighters and the public.
- Before any type of firefighting is conducted, power shall be isolated at the buildings power box by removing all fuses and shutting down the mains switch, the firefighter conducting the size up must also note if solar power modules are located anywhere on this structure. LPG cylinders shall also be isolated at the cylinder valves.
- Firefighting activities for the Bush Fire Brigades are limited to defensive techniques only and brigades shall not enter the structure at any time. Defensive firefighting is to protect surrounding assets and to prevent the fire spreading.
- The BFB crew leader or IC may conduct a thorough SITREP hand over and must hand control of the structure fire incident to the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue OIC upon their arrival.

Note

- Depending on the location of the structure fire incident, it is advised that extra water resourcing may be required and additional bulk water tankers may need to be sourced.
- BFB appliances should not obstruct access to the structure for the arriving Volunteer Fire and Rescue trucks, as they will need to park closer to the building than what the BFB does.
- The BFB appliances may be required to conduct relay pumping techniques to the Fire and Rescue appliances if required.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

Merredin Bushfire Brigades are not trained in fighting hazardous material (HAZMAT) fires, nor are they equipped with breathing apparatus, splash suits or gas suits to use whilst fighting fires in a toxic environment. Given the fact that various chemicals and other substances may give off toxic by-products when burning, may not give off a visible flame, or may react with water in harmful ways, it is not safe for the Merredin Bush Fire Brigades to conduct offensive firefighting techniques on suspected HAZMAT fires of any type. Due to the unknown fuels which may be present, any fire at the Merredin Refuse Site may be considered a HAZMAT fire unless confirmed otherwise.

Procedure

- Once the initial call has been received and the brigade has turned out to the HAZMAT fire incident, the crew leader or IC must advise DFES ComCen that the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue is required to attend due to the nature of the incident. The crew leader may also request that Police, Ambulance, or other relevant agency attend if required.
- Once the brigade appliances arrive the units should be parked up wind or out of the toxic smoke. Please note that some substances have an exclusion zone of a mile or more, so exercise extreme caution.
- Firefighting shall only be in the form of a defensive technique, meaning to protect any other assets or preventing the fire spreading to the road verge or surrounding bush or grass.
- The BFB crew leader or IC is to hand over control of the HAZMAT fire incident to the Merredin Volunteer Fire and Rescue OIC upon their arrival.

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

The Shire of Merredin has the right to impose the ban on activities such as harvesting crops, vehicle movement and hot works. The only exception to the ban is watering and feeding of livestock. This procedure is to define the way the ban is measured and implemented.

Procedure

- The CBFCO for the Shire of Merredin is also a delegated Fire Weather Officer for the Shire of Merredin; the CBFCO in this role must liaise with a minimum of 2 other Fire Weather Officers located throughout Shire of Merredin to conduct weather readings using the appropriate tools such as Kestrels weather metres. The information and readings that has been gathered by these FWO's must be recorded and relayed to the CBFCO. The CBFCO will then make the decision to impose a ban if required.
- The following information shall give reason for the CBFCO of the Shire of Merredin to impose a harvest and vehicle movement ban:
 - The weather readings taken have indicated a Grass Fire Danger Index (GFDI) of 32
 - A Total Fire Ban (TFB) that has been implemented by the DFES
 - Lack of firefighting resources located in the Shire of Merredin
 - Bushfire incidents currently ongoing in the Shire of Merredin
- The CBFCO may request that the delegated FWOs take readings every day during the Prohibited Fire Season.
- Once the decision has been made to impose the harvest, vehicle and hot works ban then the following notifications must be made:
 - Send SMS notification via the Shire message service
 - Email or phone the ABC harvest ban announcement service if Ban announced before cut off
 - Send notification to bordering Shires
 - The CBFCO shall record the readings and record them on the Shire of Merredin system

ADOPTED

REVIEWED

Introduction

In the right circumstances back burning can be an effective technique to stop the spread of bushfires or protect assets during emergency situations.

Back burning must be done under correct conditions and carried out by experienced personnel on the fire ground otherwise back burning may create dangerous fire behaviour or increase the size of the current fire.

Some reasons for conducting back burns:

- Asset protection
- Inaccessible country to fight the fire in traditional means
- Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) known areas
- Squaring up fire boundaries
- Burning out to firebreaks

Procedure

- All techniques of fire suppression must be explored to suppress the fire before the choice is made to conduct a back burn.
- A risk assessment shall be considered prior to the all-clear given for any back burn to be conducted.
- Weather readings may be taken prior to any back burn been conducted.
- **ONLY** the IC can give permission to carry out this task.
- All personnel shall record the proceedings of the back burn in their personal incident diary.

Note

- There is a difference between back burning and burning out pockets. Permission shall still be sought if burning out pockets is required.