



February 2019

HOT TOPICS

Celebrating our network

DEAN GOES DIGITAL

As part of the BEMS Volunteer Test Group Livingstone Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Captain Dean McManamny recently completed the BEMS induction process.

Dean now has full access to BEMS as a Fire Warden on Livingstone's designated iPad.

He joins another three Fire Wardens that have completed the induction.

That means that Dean is able to return his hand written permit book and complete the process digitally.

Field Connect, the BEMS offline interface is still being constructed but should be completed soon.

Once complete, BEMS development will be considered finished and the focus will go towards introducing BEMS to Volunteer Fire Wardens prior to the Top End fire season.

Fire Wardens interested in participating in a BEMS induction process should contact either their Regional Office or Bushfires Information Manager Steele Davies.



Bushfires NT Information Manager Steele Davies (left) takes back an old paper permit book from Livingstone Volunteer Bushfire Brigade Captain Dean McManamny who is happy to get hold of the brigade's new iPad.

FIRE WARDEN CHANGES

By Collene Bremner Executive Director

I would like to advise everyone that the tenure for all Fire Wardens will cease at the end of March 2019.

Bushfires NT is finalising a formal procedure that will be used for the appointment and induction of new or reappointed Fire Wardens into the future.

Fire Wardens appointed under the new procedure who will be issuing Permits to Burn will be provided access to do this through BEMS. This will mean that Permit to Burn books will no longer be used and will need to be returned to the Regional Offices.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the current Fire Wardens for the service they have provided during their tenure.

BIG BLAZE RUNS THROUGH NATIONAL PARK

By Joshua Fischer – Assistant Director Operations



It's been a very busy time for Bushfires NT staff and volunteers in Central Australia so far this year.

A significant fire, started by lightning, in a remote area of the West MacDonnell National Park on January 12.



The fire was successfully contained on January 29, but not before it had a huge impact, stretching more than 90,000ha.

The fire forced the closure of multiple roads and visitor sites within the National Park and surrounding areas.

An Incident Management Team was established at the Bushfires NT Office consisting of Parks and Wildlife, Bushfires NT and NTFRS staff.



Before and after!

Bushfires NT staff, members of the Alice Springs Volunteer Bushfire Brigade and Parks and Wildlife Rangers worked tirelessly to successfully save buildings and infrastructure at Standley Chasm during the morning of January 17.



During the morning of January 23 the fire continued west through the Ormiston Gorge area where fire crews undertook asset protection operations around the Ranger Station and Glen Helen Resort.



Top End Staff and volunteers were deployed and on hand to help with the fire until January 30.

A Big THANK YOU to all the volunteers and staff for their fantastic efforts!!



Pictures:

*Joshua Fischer
Bushfires NT and
Paul Johnston
from Lambells
Lagoon Volunteer
Bushfire Brigade*

PLANNING UPDATE

By Mark Gardener – Senior Risk Planner

Bushfire planning is about identifying risks and possible actions to reduce risks.

Bushfires NT and partners have been working at a number of scales ranging from entire regions to small rural blocks.

Four out of five Regional Bushfire Management Plans have been completed and were evaluated at recent Regional Committee meetings.

The Plans highlighted two common risks:

- the spread of high fuel load exotic grasses and
- the loss of capacity due to turnover of staff, volunteers and landholders.

The Barkly Plan will be developed in 2019.

The Fire Protection Zones – areas around major towns that have heightened risk because of density of infrastructure and other assets – are being updated for Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs.

The existing Fire Protection Zones are circles around towns that arbitrarily divide properties, which makes management difficult.

In Fire Protection Zones all fires need a permit regardless of the time of year, and all properties need a firebreak.

We are in the process of developing a Property Plan template for small rural properties.

This will include examples of a map, a checklist and fire action plan. This will be rolled out in the dry season of 2019.



The Vernon Arafura Regional Committee evaluation risk treatment actions in October 2018.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience's fifth and final round of the Emergency Management Volunteer Scholarships program are open for applications.

The Australian Government has established the million-dollar scholarship fund to equip volunteers with the skills and leadership required in the emergency and disaster management sector.

Through the scholarships volunteers may be eligible for financial support to access accredited vocational and higher education qualifications in emergency and disaster management fields.

To be eligible, applicants must be actively volunteering with an emergency management agency or organisation.

Applicants must maintain their volunteering commitment for the duration of the study program.

In order to be considered for scholarship funding, applicants must demonstrate a genuine commitment to ongoing participation in an emergency management-related field.

References supplied as part of the application process should reflect this commitment.

Applications for the scholarships close on March 4.

For more information: <https://www.aidr.org.au/resources/volunteer-scholarship-guidelines/>

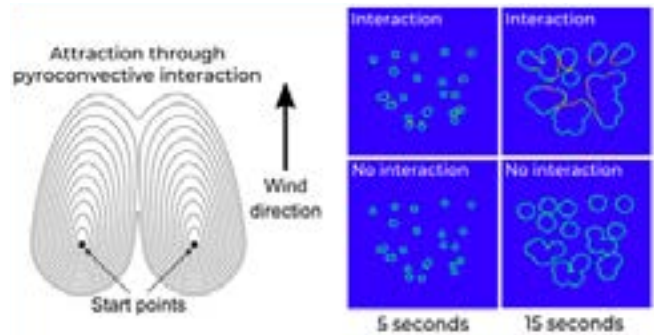
CONFERENCE CALLING

By Mark Gardener – Senior Risk Planner

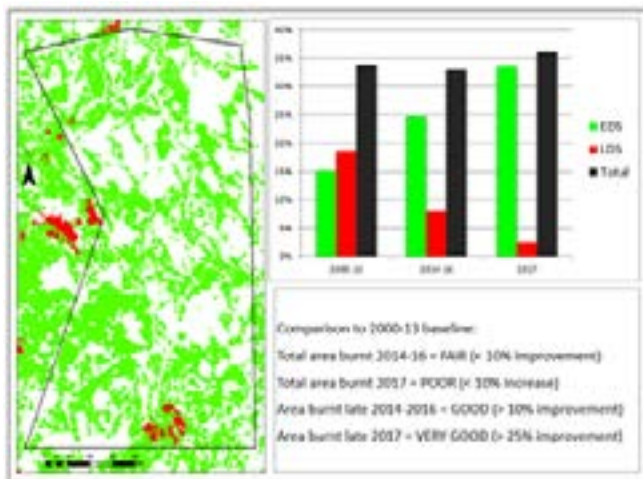
In November, I had the privilege of attending the Bushfires and Natural Hazards CRC Research Advisory Forum in Brisbane.

The CRC coordinates a national research into hazards including bushfires, flood, cyclone, heatwave and earthquakes and ensures researchers and end user partners work closely together.

There were over 20 presentations from an interesting range of research.



This diagram shows how spots can interact to form 'pseudo' fire fronts.



An example of an automated reporting tool being developed to be available on NAFI

Ian Stewart from the Queensland University of Technology has been looking at ways to manage heat stress for emergency workers wearing PPE.

Age, gender, fitness and body composition can all impact response to heat stress.

Ian and his team evaluated several commercially available cooling systems and found that many did not reduce core temperature and increase operating time.

Interestingly, one of the most effective ways of managing heat stress was to lower body temperature before work commenced. For example, a slushie can drop core temperature by one degree.

Andrew Edwards from Charles Darwin University gave a talk on monitoring and evaluation tools his group are developing to support fire management in Northern Australia.

Jason Sharples from the University of New South Wales is looking at fire coalescence and mass spot fire dynamics.

Under most burning conditions, spotfires play little role in the overall propagation of a fire.

However, under severe bushfire conditions, spotfire occurrence can be so prevalent that spotting becomes the dominant propagation mechanism and the fire spreads as a cascade of spotfires forming a 'pseudo' front.



The PPE worn by soldiers can quickly result in heat stress.



THE FESTIVE SEASON

Christmas parties, toy runs and good fun was the order of the day throughout the Christmas break for many of our brigades.

These pictures are just a sample of the Christmas cheer that many of our Volunteers brought to their local communities over the holidays.

Keep up the good work everyone!!!





SAFETY BULLETINS

Safety Bulletin 09/2019: Personnel and vehicle safety on the fire ground while driving

Fire management operations including suppression and planned burning activities often take place in complex and dangerous working environments with many variable elements. Such environments often expose BFNT members and the community to unpredictable and changing conditions and increased hazards caused by smoke and dust.

The safety of all Bushfires NT (BFNT) members (staff and volunteers) and the community is paramount at all times during fire management operations.

BFNT members when operating BFNT vehicles where dust and smoke is present must always drive safely with due care, attention and consideration for their crew/passengers, other road users and pedestrians.

Driving on dry unsealed dirt roads and fire access trails will always produce dust as you drive. Wildfires and planned burns often generate dense smoke. As dust and smoke can reduce your visibility as you drive you should:

- Always drive with your headlights on low beam with emergency warning lights activated, this will make you more visible to oncoming traffic and traffic ahead of and behind you.
- Never overtake if you cannot see what is coming the other way through the dust or smoke. Be patient, reduce your speed and stay alert – you may catch up to the vehicle in front but not see them through the dust or smoke.
- Do not stop unnecessarily as there may be another vehicle behind you. If you need to stop and it is safe to do so, pull off to the side of the road.
- Dust and smoke can linger in the air if there is little to no wind. If it lingers, keep your speed to a minimum until you have clear vision and remember **be patient**.
- Always maintain situational awareness and remain vigilant of potential hazards including other road users, members of the public and pedestrians.

Fire management operations occurring on or near public road user's present increased risks where the public may not understand the risks and drive unsafely or become more unpredictable than usual.

Please slow down, maintain situational awareness and drive to conditions.

Safety Bulletin 10/2019: Vehicle housekeeping and situational awareness

All personnel are responsible to ensure that their conduct in the workplace does not endanger the health and safety of themselves or others. This responsibility includes maintaining good vehicle housekeeping practices in work vehicles.

Performing regular housekeeping in and on your vehicle can make your workplace safer. Attention to general vehicle cleanliness, storage and housekeeping can reduce the risk of workplace accidents.

A cluttered vehicle cabin can restrict your movement and create the potential for loose items to become missiles in the event of a sudden stop or accident. A driver can be easily distracted if loose items become displaced leading to loss of situational awareness and increasing the likelihood of an accident.

From a health and safety perspective, comprehensive situational awareness is essential when operating machinery or undertaking any high risk activity, including driving a vehicle. Being aware of the surrounding conditions in your immediate work area and recognising and dealing with hazards before they cause problems is the key to maintaining a safe workplace.

Note: Always be mindful of what occurs inside a vehicle as well as outside.

GENERAL VEHICLE HOUSEKEEPING GUIDELINES

- Make sure your vehicle has adequate storage areas for frequently required items.
- Keep your vehicle clear of clutter and loose items - a place for everything and everything in its place.
- Store equipment in a secure manner which still permits ease of access if required.
- Regularly clean and tidy your vehicle and remove unnecessary items.
- Report any identified issues that interfere with your ability to maintain a good vehicle housekeeping standard.

Your actions to comply will make your job easier and help reduce the risk of vehicle accidents.

