



New South Wales Government

The Hon Steve Whan MP
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Small Business

New heightened bush fire danger warnings unveiled

Wednesday 10 September 2009

NSW Emergency Services Minister Steve Whan today announced a new Fire Danger Rating and public warnings, which would be introduced in NSW to help save lives in bush fires.

“These are part of the new nationally-agreed Fire Danger Rating and warning systems being introduced around Australia in the wake of the tragic bushfires in Victoria in February,” Mr Whan said.

“These will help people make informed decisions about what is best for them and their families in a bush fire.”

Mr Whan said the key change being introduced today was a new enhanced Fire Danger Rating system, adding a new top level category – **Catastrophic (Code Red)**.

“The current top level is Extreme but the new **Catastrophic (Code Red)** level recognises that conditions like those we saw in Victoria present a greater level danger to the community.

“It indicates that if there is a forecast of Catastrophic conditions, there is a very real likelihood of major loss of life and property.

“In these conditions, even homes that are well prepared and built to the highest standards of bushfire protection are likely to be lost.

“When a catastrophic forecast is issued, our advice will be simple – if you live in a bush fire prone area, leaving the day before is the best and safest option.

“People staying and defending their property need to understand the very real risks involved.”

The new category will be added to the Fire Danger Meter signs strategically positioned in bushfire prone communities around the State.

Mr Whan said a new system also would be introduced to deliver clearer information to the community to help people make informed decisions during bush fires.

“This bush fire season, the RFS will use three different alert levels for the public : *Emergency Warning, Watch and Act* and *Advice*,” he said.



New South Wales Government

The Hon Steve Whan MP
Minister for Emergency Services
Minister for Small Business

“The highest and most urgent is an Emergency Warning, which will be used when there is a major risk of people being killed in a bush fire.

“At this point, people will be advised to seek shelter and do everything possible to save their lives.

“These messages may be accompanied by the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal on radio and television.

“They will also be carried on the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) website, the 1800 NSW RFS information line, which has been upgraded.

“During an emergency warning, people need to take immediate action to protect their life, such as seeking shelter in a safe place.

“The highest priority during any bush fire is the protection of life. While homes can be rebuilt, you can’t replace a life and we all have a responsibility for our own safety.”

RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said the Service would launch a new ‘**Prepare, Act, Survive**’ public awareness campaign, with a clear emphasis on the protection of life.

“Now is the time to prepare for bush fire season,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

“**Prepare** not only means having a well prepared property but also preparing yourself both mentally and physically, such as having a Bush Fire Survival Plan and knowing where you will get information during a fire.

“During and even before a fire, people need to **Act**. You need to know the fire danger on each day and know what you and your family will do.

“At all times, acting to **Survive** is the most important thing. You should do everything possible to save your life such as seeking shelter in a safe place,” Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.