The Bushfire Centre of Excellence

Harnessing and providing valuable knowledge and experience to serve communities in bushfire management.

dfes.wa.gov.au/bushfirecoe
Achieving best practice in bushfire management

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services is proud to lead the establishment of a dedicated Bushfire Centre of Excellence. The State Government announced in March 2019 that the facility will be located in the Shire of Murray. To ensure recognition of local culture, heritage and history, the design of the centre will be influenced by the area’s Traditional Owners.

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will work closely with the rural and regional bushfire management sector including State agencies, local governments, non-government organisations, industry, Aboriginal groups, volunteers and the community. It will provide knowledge, technical expertise, science and research, plus training for bush firefighters and other emergency services personnel across the State.

As a shared connection point, the Bushfire Centre of Excellence will draw on the considerable local experience of volunteers and the broader community to share skills and develop new initiatives. This way, all parties can benefit from the transfer of valuable knowledge in bushfire management.

Bushfire Centre of Excellence concept plans include:
- Open spaces for public meetings, training, outdoor briefings and exercises
- Outdoor training space
- Training rooms
- Temporary locations for visitors, partners and collaborators
- Office space
- Secure area for training tools and equipment

A Centre for all

Bushfire management across our vast State is best approached together with all stakeholders. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will reflect this approach in the way it operates.

In 2018 we gathered valuable input and ideas from more than 200 stakeholders through workshops and forums. This informed the Bushfire Centre of Excellence proposed service delivery model and key functions:

1. **Bushfire Mitigation Forum:** 100+ attendees including volunteers, Volunteer Associations, State agencies and local governments. Recorded over 600 views and ideas in first part, and over 730 views and ideas in second part to inform the design of the Bushfire Centre of Excellence.

2. **Service Delivery Model Design Workshop:** 40+ attendees including volunteers, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), local governments and Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA).

3. **Traditional Burning Practice and Discussion Forum:** 30+ attendees including Noongar Traditional Custodians and DFES staff.

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence team will focus on:

- **Training**
  - Training Development
  - Training Delivery
- **Knowledge Management**
  - Traditional Fire Knowledge and Practice
  - Scientific Engagement
- **Engagement and Outreach**
  - Engagement
  - Influence
  - Lessons Management
- **Business Management**
  - Bushfire Centre of Excellence Facility
  - Business Support
Better training

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will focus on the development and delivery of bushfire management and prescribed burning training. It will support the development of new and updated training courses and improve access to courses already being offered across the sector.

A key focus will be on strengthening regional and local delivery of fundamental bushfire and prescribed burning courses by increasing support for current trainers and assessors. This will ensure everyone has access to the same resources whether they’re based in Esperance, Wyndham or in the Perth Hills. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will also improve access to training, knowledge and resources through innovative technologies used across the sector such as virtual reality, online learning and digital simulations.

A review of existing bush firefighting training courses is complete and a number of updated courses are in the final stages of development. By working closely with Volunteer Associations and volunteer representatives, training courses that needed to be the focus of initial delivery and updated as a priority were identified. The refreshed courses are modular and provide flexibility in delivery to suit local needs. Duplication in previous training courses has been removed and content, including videos, will be updated. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will continue to review and expand its training products over coming years.

Updated training courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Updated training courses</th>
<th>What’s new?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bushfire Safety Awareness:</td>
<td>These courses replace the current Introduction to Firefighting, Introduction to Bushfire Firefighting and Bushfire Firefighting training courses. Content has been updated and duplication has been removed. Bushfire Safety Awareness is the introductory course to bush firefighting and focuses on the knowledge required to operate safely at a bushfire incident. Bush Firefighting Skills is the next step to develop the skills and knowledge to effectively combat bushfires.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Bushfire Safety and Survival</td>
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<td>- Bushfire Characteristics and Behaviour</td>
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<td>- Bushfire Suppression</td>
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<td>Bush Firefighting Skills:</td>
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<td>- Introduction to Map Reading</td>
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<td>- Tools and Equipment</td>
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<td>- Crew Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Bush Firefighting</td>
<td>The new Advanced Bush Firefighting course has been updated with contemporary information and more clearly separated from the Crew Leader course.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crew Leader</td>
<td>The new Crew Leader course has been updated with contemporary information and made more interactive.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Prescribed Burning</td>
<td>A new course created to cover the skills and knowledge required to safely and effectively plan and conduct basic prescribed burns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prescribed Burning</td>
<td>Existing course which will be facilitated more frequently by the Centre. Covers the skills and knowledge required to safely and effectively plan and conduct more complex prescribed burns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fireline Leadership</td>
<td>Externally presented course which will be coordinated by the Centre. Focuses on practical leadership and decision-making in bushfire situations for operational personnel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Introduction to Fire Weather</td>
<td>New course which covers the knowledge to assess and interpret weather information in relation to its impact on fire behaviour.</td>
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<td>Fire Behaviour Analyst (including Fire Weather 2)</td>
<td>New course which covers the advanced skills and knowledge required to predict and analyse spread and behaviour of complex bushfires and to prepare fire suppression options.</td>
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Decentralised delivery

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will work closely with valued partners in the bushfire management sector to deliver training locally and to ensure lessons and ideas are shared and promoted across the State. Relationships, partnerships and well-established networks will support decentralised training delivery with the widest possible reach.

This will lead to quality training, sharing of best practice and easier access to a variety of training options. Stakeholder networks will also provide resources and knowledge (traditional, academic and experiential) that will help improve bushfire management. The hub and spoke system works as a network of regionally-based interconnected hubs or nodes that support communication flow. The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will be a key hub, but not the only one.
Knowledge management

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence will focus on gathering three kinds of knowledge from a variety of sources:

1. Traditional fire knowledge and practice.
2. Academic understanding of bushfire, its risk and management.
3. Lessons learned through experience working with bushfire and its risk.

With this, the Bushfire Centre of Excellence can manage and work with a wide range of bushfire knowledge in developing best practice for bushfire management.

Engagement and outreach

Through engagement and outreach, the Bushfire Centre of Excellence will continue to strengthen its partnerships and relationships with stakeholders. Clear communication will be established and enhanced so bushfire knowledge is available and accessible across the sector. Partnerships and communication are key to our success and a small, dedicated team will coordinate this important function.

Key principles of the Centre

The Bushfire Centre of Excellence is committed to these guiding principles:

1. Reflect and serve our bushfire management sector.
2. Recognise excellence everywhere in bushfire management.
3. Decentralise the delivery of our training programs and services.
4. Design our activities and services to be scalable across Australia and internationally.
5. Operate collectively across agencies through shared training and learning.
6. Represent our communities with diverse and inclusive staff.
7. Recognise and incorporate Aboriginal people’s fire knowledge and experience.

Find out more at: dfes.wa.gov.au/bushfirecoe / Email: BushfireCoE@dfes.wa.gov.au