



Service Standard 3.2.1

Coordinated Firefighting and Air Operations

Date of Issue 10 October 2013

Version Number 3.0

1. Purpose

- 1.1 Under the NSW Emergency Management Plan (EMPLAN) the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is the combat agency for all fire and related incidents in rural fire districts.
- 1.2 Under section 44 (s44) of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*, the Commissioner of the NSW RFS, or a person delegated s44 functions by the Commissioner, may take charge of bushfire fighting operations and bushfire prevention measures.
- 1.3 The NSW Rural Fire Service has established the State Air Desk (SAD) to facilitate coordinated aviation management during times of severe fire weather, major emergencies or when there is significant demand for aircraft across NSW.
- 1.4 This Service Standard outlines the basis for the safe, effective and efficient coordination of firefighting and air operations using the above powers.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **AIIMS:** Australian Inter-service Incident Management System. The incident control system used in the NSW RFS except that the AIIMS 'Public Information' function is referred to as 'Public Liaison'.

3. Policy

Coordinated Fire Fighting

- 3.1 The NSW RFS State Operations Centre is responsible for coordinating bush firefighting and related activities across the state on behalf of the Commissioner.

- 3.2 The Commissioner may delegate powers under s44 of the *Rural Fires Act 1997* to an Incident Controller from a relevant agency in order to coordinate firefighting operations at an incident or complex of incidents.
- 3.3 The AIIMS Incident Control System (ICS) forms the basis upon which an Incident Controller may delegate responsibility (but not overall accountability) for specific functions at an incident or complex of incidents under their overall control.
- 3.4 District Managers shall take all practicable steps to facilitate coordinated firefighting operations in the District.
- 3.5 District Managers shall develop and maintain an ability to form an effective incident management team (IMT) in their district promptly when needed.
- 3.6 District Managers should, wherever practicable, ensure any IMT includes at least one local senior volunteer NSW RFS member.
- 3.7 The State Bush Fire Plan, Bush Fire Coordinating Committee Policies, and any relevant regional and local bushfire management plans, constitute policy and procedure to be used during coordinated firefighting.
- 3.8 NSW RFS Service Standards, Operational Protocols and Procedures constitute the minimum practices to be applied by all personnel during section 44 incidents.

Air Operations

- 3.9 The NSW RFS State Air Desk (SAD) provides coordinated aviation management during emergencies or when there is a significant demand for aircraft.
- 3.10 The SAD shall maintain an Aviation Assistance Plan and a register of approved operators, aircraft and pilots.
- 3.11 The SAD is responsible for allocating aircraft to incidents across the state.
- 3.12 The SAD is responsible for monitoring and ensuring the safe, effective and efficient use of aircraft.
- 3.13 For non-bushfire emergencies and other events, the responsible agencies may access the resources of the SAD at any time.
- 3.14 Agencies shall consult through the Interagency Aviation Working Group and activate the Aviation Assistance Plan arrangements when triggered by:
 - (a) Multiple s44 fires;

- (b)** Large numbers of fires requiring aviation support;
 - (c)** A shortage of specialised aircraft; or
 - (d)** Other circumstances where State-wide coordination is warranted.
- 3.15** Where the SAD coordinates the allocation and/or tasking of aircraft and/or monitoring of aviation management during non-bushfire events the following applies:
 - (a)** Resources shall be allocated based on priorities assigned by the requesting agency and in consideration with existing or potential bushfire priorities;
 - (b)** The agency responsible for the incident or event shall remain responsible for all operational tactics and decisions;
 - (c)** All costs shall be the responsibility of the requesting agency;
 - (d)** Aircraft shall be tasked in accordance with the Inter-Agency Aviation Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); and
 - (e)** The SAD shall provide guidance in regard to what support arrangements are necessary for safe and effective operations.
- 3.16** Only qualified personnel may be used in aviation specialist functions and those qualifications shall be consistent with relevant national standards.
- 3.17** The Aviation Assistance Plan and the Inter-Agency Aviation Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) detail relevant procedures for the implementation of this Service Standard.

Links

- *Rural Fires Act 1997*
- Service Standard 3.1.6 Operational Protocols and Procedures
- BFCC State Bush Fire Plan
- Bush Fire Coordinating Committee Policies
- Local Bush Fire Management Committee Plans
- NSW RFS Incident Management Procedures and Operational Management Procedures
- Aviation Assistance Plan
- Inter-Agency Aviation Standard Operating Procedures

4. Who is responsible for implementing this Service Standard?

- Director Operational Services

5. Amendments

- Separation and reinstatement of SS 3.2.2 Assistance to other Agencies 10 October 2013
- Reviewed to reflect current practices