**Bushfire Preparedness**

Communications Plan 2016

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# Background

* In Western Australian, bushfire season starts in November and continues through to April. Bushfires can happen anywhere but generally impacts Perth, the South West, Great Southern, Goldfield and Agricultural and Mid-West regions (the North West Region’s bushfire season is from June to October and communications around this are managed by the region if necessary).
* Public water supplies cannot be guaranteed during a bushfire. Loss of electricity may cause pumps that transfer water to our storage tanks to fail. We may not be able to access water supply or respond to system failures in areas that are deemed by DFES or Western Power to be unsafe for our crews to enter.
* Residents who choose to stay and defend their homes during a bushfire need to ensure they have an independent water supply and pumping capability.
* In 2011 the [Perth Hills Bushfire Report](http://www.publicsector.wa.gov.au/public-administration/sector-performance-and-oversight/reviews-investigations-and-special-inquiries/special-inquiries/perth-hills-bushfire-inquiry), better known as the Keelty Report, identified that many customers are not aware of this, and noted that a survey showed around 57 per cent of respondents did not expect to lose water supply in the event of a fire (p48).
* On Monday 12 October 2015, *The West Australian* ran a [front page story](https://au.news.yahoo.com/thewest/a/29783280/our-bushfire-luck-is-running-out/) stating “WA fire crews are bracing for a once-in-a-century catastrophe this summer, akin to Victoria’s Black Saturday” and “a Department of Fire and Emergency Services survey showed an alarming number of West Australians were underprepared for the upcoming fire season and were failing to follow the most basic safety precautions.”
* Communications are needed to make sure that residents who choose to stay and defend their homes are aware they need to have an independent water supply and pumping capability.

# Key Messages

1. Although Water Corporation is well prepared for bushfire season, water pressure or water supply cannot be guaranteed in the event of a bushfire.
2. We will always do all that we can to maintain supply however fire damaged infrastructure or power cuts can result in a total loss of water.
3. People who plan to stay and defend their property during a bushfire need to have their own independent water supply and pumping capability, and must not rely on the public water supply.
4. If scheme water is available during a bushfire it should be considered a bonus, but it is not something that can be relied upon.
5. Full details about how to prepare for the bushfire season can be found on the [DFES](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/bushfire/pages/preparebeforetheseason.aspx) website.

*For FAQ’s please see Appendix A*

# Target Audience

Primary audience:

* Customers in bushfire prone areas
* [Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Brigades](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/contactus/pages/frsvolunteers.aspx)

Key external stakeholders:

* Minister for Water, Mia Davies
  + Media Adviser
* Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)
  + Media line: (08) 9225 5955
  + On-call MLO: 0427 479 499
  + Email: [media@dfes.wa.gov.au](mailto:media@dfes.wa.gov.au)
* Department of Parks and Wildlife
  + Media line: (08) 9219 9999

Key internal stakeholders:

* Operations Services
  + Corporate Incident Management Coordinator, George Basanovic
* Perth Region
  + Regional Manager, Garth Walter
  + Fire and Incident Management Coordinator, Robert Annells
  + Communications Officer, Joshua Hayes
* South West Region
  + Regional Manager, John Janssen
  + Regional Stakeholder Manager, Mick Irving
  + Communications Officer, Tony Snelling & Lauren Lane
* Great Southern Region
  + Regional Manager, Adrian Stewart
  + Regional Stakeholder Manager, Mick Irving
  + Communications Officer, Kate Duff
* Goldfields and Agricultural Region
  + Regional Manager, Sharon Broad
  + Regional Stakeholder Manager, Andrew Ducas
  + Communications Officer, Kathy Balt
* Mid West Region
  + Regional Manager, Steve Greeve
  + Regional Stakeholder Manager, John D’Arcy
  + Communications Officer, Veronique Thomas-Smith
* All WC employees

# Communication Strategy

* Work with DFES and other State and local government agencies to promote community awareness about bushfires and the limitations of the public water supply.
* Use advertising to circulate information about bushfire preparedness and the public water supply to communities in targeted areas.
* Proactive Ministerial media release to publish information about bushfire preparedness and the public water supply to communities in targeted areas.
* Proactive engagement with Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service Brigades to ensure these key stakeholders understand the limitations of the public water supply and can help educate their communities.
* Use social media to provide information and encourage users to share information. Social media has the ability to reach thousands of people in an instant.

# Budget

* The Perth Region Alliance communications budget for 2016/17 includes funding for advertising in newspapers in the Perth hills.
* Regions are responsible for their own budget

# Channels

* Social media – facebook/twitter
* Water Corporation website/homepage
* Electronic bill to Water Corporation customers
* Flowing Forward
* Watermark
* Local newspapers/radio
* Local Shire newsletters
* Sue’s Place
* Refresh
* Posters/A frames around offices
* Team Brief

# Implementation Plan

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Media/Digital/Comms** | | | |
| **Who** | **Date** | **Task** | **Status** |
| DFES | 23 October | State Government *Are You Ready?* Campaign launched | Completed |
| Digital Team  Marlo/Meryl | October | Marlo to link information on our [website](http://www.watercorporation.com.au/water-supply-and-services/bushfires-and-water-supply) from homepage. | Marlo on standby (waiting for media release) |
| November | Meryl to create Facebook post for WC. RECO’s to encourage other local pages to share. | Completed - Posted 3 Nov (See appendix D) |
| November | Place an article on Intranet homepage as an icon story. Alice to write. |  |
| Josh Hayes | August | Engage with DFES about timing of ‘Are you bushfire ready’ campaign and incorporate into our communications strategy. | Completed |
| November | Advertising in newspapers in the Perth hills area. |  |
| Media team | First week November | Ministerial media release – one metro plus regional versions. | In progress |
| Alice | November | Include message on electronic bill to metro and regional customers. Anna Lichovidova to advise if possible |  |
| November | Include bushfire preparedness article in *Watermark* newsletter during bushfire season. | Have contacted Shane Ploughman (vol. firefighter) for interview and photos |
| November | Article in internal newsletter *Refresh and Flowing Forward* asking staff to share information with friends and/or family. |  |
| November | Notice on internal plasma screens, encourage a Sue’s Place on the topic (with support from Jess Langoulant) and arrange posters/a-frame posters. |  |
| **Regions** | | | |
| **Who** | **Date** | **Task** | **Status** |
| South West  Tony / Lauren | November | Issue media statements to local newspapers, radio and TV stations in region. Proactively call local journalists (See Appendix B for media contact details) | Media team currently preparing media release. Available early Nov. |
| Book advert in local papers *(See Appendix C for graphic)* |  |
| Contact local shires |  |
| Meryl to create facebook post for WC. RECO’s to encourage other local pages to share. | Post put up 3 Nov (see Appendix D). RECO’s to encourage stakeholders to share. |
| Engage local fire brigades. |  |
| Great Southern  Kate | November | Issue media statements to local newspapers, radio and TV stations in region. Proactively call local journalists. (See Appendix B for media contact details) | Media team currently preparing media release. Available early Nov. |
| Book advert in local papers *(See Appendix C for graphic)* |  |
| Contact local shires |  |
| Meryl to create facebook post for WC. RECO’s to encourage other local pages to share. | Post put up 3 Nov (see Appendix D). RECO’s to encourage stakeholders to share. |
| Engage with local fire brigades |  |
| Goldfields & Ag  Kathy | November | Issue media statements to local newspapers, radio and TV stations in region. Proactively call local journalists. (See Appendix B for media contact details) | Media team currently preparing media release. Available early Nov. |
| Book advert in local papers *(See Appendix C for graphic)* |  |
| Contact local shires |  |
| Meryl to create facebook post for WC. RECO’s to encourage other local pages to share. | Post put up 3 Nov (see Appendix D). RECO’s to encourage stakeholders to share. |
| Engage local fire brigades. |  |
| Mid West  Veronique | November | Issue media statements to local newspapers, radio and TV stations in region. Proactively call local journalists. (See Appendix B for media contact details) | Media team currently preparing media release. Available early Nov. |
| Book advert in local papers *(See Appendix C for graphic)* |  |
| Contact local shires |  |
| Meryl to create facebook post for WC. RECO’s to encourage other local pages to share. | Post put up 3 Nov (see Appendix D). RECO’s to encourage stakeholders to share. |
| Engage local fire brigades. |  |

# Appendix A – FAQ’s

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BUSHFIRES AND WATER SUPPLIES**

**Why can’t I rely on scheme water during a bushfire?**

This is an important message to get out into the community because it could save people’s lives.

The Perth Hills Bushfire Review (the Keelty Report) in 2011 strongly supported Water Corporation’s view, and that of other water utilities around Australia, that while we make every effort to maintain water supply during a bushfire event, we cannot guarantee supply.

We prepare for bushfire season by readying our equipment and systems to cope with extreme conditions. However, while we work closely with other agencies during a bushfire emergency to supply water for as long as possible, *we are not able to guarantee scheme water supply.*

During a bushfire, infrastructure can be damaged and power if often unavailable. Water pressure can also be also be significantly impacted during a fire due to high demand (fire fighters, residents hosing down house etc).

Loss of electricity may cause pumps that transfer water to storage tanks to fail. Once we lose power, we are no longer able to move water from tanks through to people’s homes regardless of how much water could be in the tank.

**Why can’t Water Corporation install generators at pump stations as back up when power is lost?**

Diesel generators permanently installed at pump stations would also be vulnerable in the event of a bushfire. Like the rest of our infrastructure, they would not be immune to damage and can be affected by the extreme heat generated by a fire.

Generators would also need the capacity to be remotely switched on if the pump station lost mains power during a bushfire, and if communications are lost, which is often the case, this would not be possible.

Storing diesel at the pump stations would also add to the potential fuel for a bushfire.

The Corporation has mobile generators on standby in the event of an emergency, and installs them if the fire incident controller deems it to be safe to do so.

**What can I do to protect my home in a bushfire?**

People living in bushfire prone areas must have an independent water supply and pumping capability if they stay and choose to defend their home during a bushfire.

If scheme water is available then this should be considered a bonus, and not relied upon.

People should visit the DFES website for more information on how to be well prepared for a bushfire.

**How does Water Corporation support DFES and other agencies before and during a bushfire?**

During a bushfire, Water Corporation works collaboratively with DFES air and ground operations fire fighters have the best access to water supplies.

This includes assisting DFES to quickly locate fire hydrants.

Water Corporation works closely with emergency services at incident command centres to jointly coordinate and prioritise bringing critical infrastructure back online.

DFES also has unfettered access to Water Corporation dams so their aerial fleet can collect water during a bushfire.

Water Corporation works in collaboration with DFES at the start of each bushfire season to conduct a public education campaign.

**Who is responsible for fire hydrants?**

Following on from the 2011 Perth Hills Bushfire Inquiry, Water Corporation became responsible for the installation and maintenance of fire hydrants across WA.

Although there are currently more than 70,000 fire hydrants across the State, some gaps were found in the network. Water Corporation is working with DFES and other agencies to identify where these gaps are and installing additional fire hydrants.

Water Corporation also carries out maintenance on fire hydrants to ensure they are working properly in the event of a bushfire.

# Appendix B – Perth and regional media channels

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Stakeholder** | **Contact Details** | **Status** |
|  | | |
| **State-wide media** | | |
| The West Australian | @thewest\_com\_au  facebook.com/thewestaustralian |  |
| Perthnow | @perthnow  facebook.com/perthnow |  |
| WA Today | @WAtoday  facebook.com/WAtoday |  |
| DFES | @dfes\_wa |  |
| The West Australian | Use Media Portal |  |
| PerthNow | Use Media Portal |  |
| WA Today | Use Media Portal |  |
|  | | |
| **South West media** | | |
| Augusta Margaret River Mail | @AMR\_Mail  facebook.com/amrmail |  |
| Busselton-Dunsborough Mail | @BusseltonMail  facebook.com/busseltonmail |  |
| Donnybrook-Bridgetown Mail | @DonnybrookMail  facebook.com/donnybrookmail |  |
| Collie Mail | @collie\_mail  facebook.com/colliemail |  |
| Bunbury Mail | @BunburyMail  facebook.com/bunburymail |  |
| South Western Times | @swtimes  facebook.com/SouthWesternTimes |  |
| Bunbury Herald | facebook.com/BunburyHerald |  |
| Harvey-Waroona Reporter | facebook.com/HarveyWaroonaReporter |  |
| Harvey Mail |  |  |
| Augusta-Margaret River Times | facebook.com/AMRTimes |  |
| Busselton-Dunsborough Times | facebook.com/BusseltonDunsboroughTimes |  |
| Manjimup-Bridgetown Times | facebook.com/mbtimes |  |
| ABC South West WA | @abcsouthwestwa  facebook.com/abcsouthwest |  |
| GWN |  |  |
| Hot FM Radio |  |  |
| Shire of Augusta Margaret River |  |  |
| Shire of Boyup Brook |  |  |
| Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes |  |  |
| City of Bunbury |  |  |
| City of Busselton |  |  |
| Shire of Capel |  |  |
| Shire of Collie |  |  |
| Shire of Dardanup |  |  |
| Shire of Donnybrook Balingup |  |  |
| Shire of Harvey |  |  |
| Shire of Manjimup |  |  |
| Shire of Nannup |  |  |
| Shire of Waroona |  |  |
|  | | |
| **Great Southern media** | | |
| Albany Advertiser | @AlbanyAd  facebook.com/thealbanyadvertiser |  |
| Albany and Great Southern Weekender |  |  |
| Great Southern Herald |  |  |
| Denmark Bulletin |  |  |
| The Wagin Argus | Facebook.com/waginargus |  |
| Narrogin Observer |  |  |
| Esperance Express | @EspExpress  facebook.com/EsperanceExpress |  |
| ABC South Coast and Great Southern | @ABCSouthCoastWA  facebook.com/ ABC-South-Coast-Great-Southern |  |
|  | | |
| **Goldfields and Ag media** | | |
| Toodyay Herald | editor@toodyayherlad.com.au |  |
| Goldfields Local Radio | Radio West (Kalgoorlie) glenn.wilson@sca.com.au |  |
| Ag Area Local Radio | Radio West (Northam) jenny.verlinden@sca.com.au |  |
| Community Newsletters | [Community Newsletters/Media Contacts](pcdocs://PM/13976520/R) |  |
| Kalgoorlie Miner | elaine.cooney@kalminer.com.au (Editor) |  |
| Kalgoorlie Miner | @KalMiner  facebook.com/The-Kalgoorlie-Miner |  |
| Avon Valley & Wheatbelt Advocate | carla.hilderbrandt@fairfaxmedia.com.au |  |
| Avon Valley & Wheatbelt Advocate | @avon\_advocate  facebook.com/avonadvocate |  |
| Avon Valley Gazette | facebook.com/avonvalleygazette |  |
| Avon Valley Gazette | [justin.bianchini@communitynews.com.au](mailto:justin.bianchini@communitynews.com.au) (Editor) |  |
| ABC Goldfields-Esperance | @ABCGoldfieldsWA  facebook.com/ABCGoldfieldsEsperance |  |
|  | | |
| **Mid-West media** | | |
| The Geraldton Guardian | [editor@geradltonguardian.com.au](mailto:editor@geradltonguardian.com.au)  Ph: 9956 1031  @TheGtonGuardian  facebook.com/Geraldton-Guardian |  |
| The Dongara Denison Rag |  |  |
| Midwest Times |  |  |
| City of Greater Geraldton | 9956 6674 – Coordinator Corporate Communications [susanc@cgg.wa.gov.au](mailto:susanc@cgg.wa.gov.au) |  |
| Northern Guardian | facebook.com/Northern-Guardian |  |
| ABC Radio Midwest and Wheatbelt | facebook.com/abcmidwestandwheatbelt |  |
| Everything Geraldton | Facebook.com/everythinggeraldton |  |
| City of Armadale | @CityofArmadale |  |
| Shire of Kalamunda | @Shire\_Kalamunda |  |
| Shire of Mundaring | @Mundaring |  |
| City of Gosnells | @CityofGosnells |  |
| City of Swan | N/A |  |
| Shire of Serpentine Jarrahdale | facebook.com/ShireofSJ |  |
| City of Wanneroo | @CityofWanneroo  facebook.com/CityofWanneroo |  |
| City of Cockburn | @CityOfCockburn  facebook.com/CityOfCockburn |  |
| City of Rockingham | @RockinghamCity  facebook.com/CityofRockingham |  |
| Shire of Murray | @ShireofMurray  facebook.com/ShireofMurray |  |

# Appendix C – Graphic for newspaper advert

*Note: This graphic is from 2015. Graphic for 2016 is currently being created.*

*Alice 27/10/2016*

# 

# Appendix D – Action log

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Activity/media release** | **Managed by** |
| 24 October 2016 | The West Australian – Article in paper launching 2016 bushfire campaign and new Emergency WA website.  [PM-#15748176-Launch of 2016 bushfire awareness campaign](PCDOCS://PM/15748176/R) | Bec Horton |
| 3 November 2016 | Facebook post  C:\Users\LANCASA0\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Outlook\FN4V3071\image1.PNG  <https://www.facebook.com/WaterCorporation/posts/1247300745290927> | Meryl |
| 9 November 2016 | One page document created for stakeholders to hand out/share  [Bushfire messaging one page](http://aqua/Link/?doc=15879945) | Produced by Kate and Kathy. Proof read by Bec Lawson and Alice. |
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