

Preparing for catastrophic fire events

This guide outlines the preparation required for an Agriculture and Animals Services Functional Area (AASFA) response in the event of a catastrophic fire danger rating occurring for any part of NSW. An AASFA response should be expected in areas of the State with a catastrophic fire danger rating.

The NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) allocate [Fire Danger Ratings](#) to areas of the state based on predicted conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind and dryness of the landscape. Fire Danger Ratings range from low-moderate, high, very high, severe, extreme and catastrophic.

In the event of a catastrophic fire danger rating, the NSW RFS are likely to activate local, regional or state emergency operations centres (EOC) and request the attendance of Liaison Officers (LO) from the supporting services, including AASFA.

Regions that are declared a catastrophic fire danger rating should consider appointing staff to be:

On duty:

- as the AASFA LO in an EOC if requested by NSW RFS
- staff to undertake AASFA response preparation including identifying resources required

On call (as per award conditions if outside of normal business hours):

- key AASFA roles e.g. Incident management team (IMT), field crew for evacuation centres and field tasks

Roles and responsibilities prior to activation of a response

Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator (AASFAC)

- Hazard owner for natural disasters
- Monitors warning systems, receives notifications and distributes information
- Keeps Executive Emergency Management Committee/DPI/LLS executives informed of conditions and actions
- Notifies AASFA participating and supporting organisations
- Appoints 'on duty' staff for monitoring of conditions and preparation activities
- Ensures planning for the safety and well-being of impacted and response personnel
- Ensures the appointment of AASFA LOs to state (RFS headquarters) if requested
- Confirms key contacts for regions impacted by catastrophic fire danger and surrounding regions
- Identifies staff available for an SCC over the next seven days and places on standby
- Identifies LCC Incident Controller/s and places on standby
- Holds briefings with Regional AASFACs and LLS for affected areas
- Puts on standby the activation of systems e.g. WebEOC, Google Drive/Email and cost codes
- Assesses response impact on concurrent responses

Regional Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator (RAASFAC)

- May act as the AASFA LO for Regional EOC/RFS control centre (if established)
- Monitors warning systems and distributes information
- Ensures the appointment of AASFA LOs regional and local EOCs/RFS control centre if requested
- Liaises with LEMC representatives and liaison officers regarding standby, activation and requirements
- Provides assistance to AASFAC and LLS upon request
- Advises LLS of regional or local EOC being activated

LLS General Manager (GM) (or delegate)

- Ensures the safety of all personnel
- Distributes information from the catastrophic warning to regional LLS staff
- Appoints 'on duty' staff for monitoring of conditions and preparation activities within region
- Ensures local preparation is undertaken in consultation with LLS EM staff (see planning considerations below)
- Ensures continued liaison with local AASFA LO, RAASFAC and other AASFA supporting organisations
- Ensures stakeholders are informed including high risk enterprises e.g. feedlots, zoos, kennels
- Ensures local staff have updated availability status in WebEOC
- Ensures required roles are identified and AASFA personnel availability. (Refer to [Field operations in natural disasters guide](#) for potential tasks and resources required)

LEMC representatives

- May receive instructions from LEMC for AASFA LO attendance at local EOC/s
- Ensures AASFAC, RAASFAC and LLS GM are advised of EOC activation and attendance by AASFA LO as per concept of operations

AASFA Liaison Officer for Local EOC

- Liaises with RAASFAC regarding standby, activation and requirements
- Liaises with LLS/DPI staff undertaking local planning
- Prepares and mobilises resources required for EOC attendance e.g. LEMC planning package, AASFA vest, laptop

Planning considerations for preparation

Local planning should be undertaken and consider:

Resources

- Roles required and trained staff availability over the next seven days
- Facilities available to set up as a control centre and/or forward command post/s and/or evacuation sites noting safety issues
- GRN handsets and satellite phones are available and charged
- Vehicle availability
- Firearms/equipment checked and meet servicing requirements
- Use checklist in [Field operations in natural disasters](#) (Appendix 2)
- Use checklist in [Animal evacuation sites](#) (Appendix 1)
- Use checklist for [Setup of control centres](#) (Appendix 1)

Systems

- Ensure ICON and Biomap access and monitor awareness systems including Fires Near Me
- Use WebEOC to identify potential staff
- Establish a preliminary roster

Preparing

- Read latest NSW RFS briefing and monitor warning systems
- Begin Incident Action Plan (IAP) development
- Start terrain analysis e.g. what type of situation (farms versus domestic animals) is at risk etc, what are the key risks in the area, safety considerations including potential evacuations
- Gather state and local fire and/or emergency plans and information e.g. LEMC representatives planning package

Safety

[Fire Danger Ratings](#) issued by NSW Rural Fire Service indicate the consequence of a fire, if one was to start. The ratings should be used as a trigger to take action. Catastrophic fire events have the highest danger rating. People are advised to leave the area early. Considerations in planning for catastrophic events include:

- Potentially affected AASFA personnel (which will reduce availability)
- AASFA control centre facilities unavailable due to being located in catastrophic areas
- Shortages of resources in local area due to evacuations and fire impact

References

[Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area Supporting Plan](#)

[State Bush Fire Plan](#)

[DPI Emergency Management](#)

[DPI community information](#) e.g. preparedness actions for stakeholders

[Emergency management resources](#) e.g. policies, guides, forms, safe work method statements

- [Field operations in natural disasters](#)
- [Animal evacuation sites](#)
- [Set up of control centres](#)

Relevant concept of operations

Relevant local EM Plan

Relevant AASFA LEMC representative records/plans

Abbreviations

AASFA	Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area
AASFAC	Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator
DPI	NSW Department of Primary Industries
EM	Emergency Management
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
GRN	Government radio network
ICON	NSW Rural Fire Service incident management system
LEMC	Local emergency management committee
LLS	Local Land Services
LO	Liaison Officer
RAASFAC	Region Agriculture and Animal Services Functional Area Coordinator