Operational roles of NSW fire-related agencies

This document aims to assist NSW Bushfire Mission grant applicants, by providing a succinct summary of the operational roles of NSW fire-related agencies.

OVERVIEW

NSW land management agencies deploy firefighters and firefighting equipment and technology as part of their normal duties, as well as in response to disasters.
Land managers, rather than rural fire services, are responsible for managing most fires on the land under their control.

There are four statutory firefighting authorities in NSW as well as several NSW agencies support bushfire prediction, response, and management.

1) Fire and Rescue NSW (FRNSW)

FRNSW is one of the world' s largest urban fire and rescue services and is the busiest in Australia. Their purpose is to enhance community safety, quality of life, and confidence by minimising the impact of hazards and emergency incidents on the people, property, environment, and economy of NSW. FRNSW works closely with partner agencies to provide firefighters with the technology they need to perform their vital roles safely and effectively and to continually enhance capabilities.

2) Forestry Corporation of NSW

Forestry Corporation is responsible for managing over 2 million hectares of planted and native forests in NSW and is responsible for the prevention and suppression of bushfires in all state forests and assisting with fire suppression across the rest of NSW. Forestry Corporation employs over one hundred seasonal firefighters in different parts of NSW for either a ' maximum term ' (normally 3, 4, 5 or 6 months) or on a ' call when needed' casual basis each year to help suppress bushfires as well as assist in fire prevention works and general land management work.

Technologies used for bushfire management includes satellite technology, drones, camera detection technology and in field apps to capture operational data

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3) NSW Rual Fire Service (NSW RFS)

NSW RFS is the lead agency for bush and grass fires in NSW and all fires in Rural Fire Districts. The NSW RFS works closely with other agencies to respond to a range of emergencies including bushfires, structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, rescue operations and storms that occur within the rural fire districts that make up more than 95 per cent of NSW. NSW RFS is responsible for coordinating resources, such as sending firefighters to bushfires in NSW as well as interstate and overseas. The NSW RFS is widely acknowledged as the largest volunteer fire service in the world. Members of the NSW RFS are well trained to ensure they know what to do in an emergency.

Technologies used for bushfire management includes satellite technology, drones, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning. Multi agency systems, scanning, camera, and aviation for all hazards approach to emergency management.

4) NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS)

NPWS is part of the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) and manages about 9 per cent of the NSW land area. Under the Rural Fires Act 1997, NPWS is both a firefighting authority and a public authority and is responsible for managing fire on all lands under its control. This includes detecting and suppressing fires and implementing risk management programs to protect life and property from fires. NPWS also assists with suppressing fires on adjacent lands, as may be required under plans prepared in accordance with the Rural Fires Act 1997. NPWS undertakes a large annual program of hazard reduction works on its estate involving the treatment of over 130,000 Ha annually by prescribed burning and mechanical clearing. NPWS staff are highly trained to respond to bushfires. During the fire season, several staff work in key roles in incident management teams and at the NSW RFS State Operation Centre, to help coordinate bushfire incident response.

4) NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS)

Technologies used for bushfire management includes satellite technology, drones, predictive analytics, artificial intelligence, and machine learning, while ParkAir provides aviation response to bushfires through provision of helicopters for fire suppression.

NSW Department of Planning and Environment (DPE)

DPE is responsible for the development and delivery of research to support bushfire risk management planning for environmental and cultural assets. Science Economics and Insights Division has a new Applied Bushfire Science Program developed to respond to and operationalise recommendations of the NSW Bushfire Inquiry that focuses on addressing the major knowledge gaps around risk and appropriate fire regimes for environmental and cultural assets.

Spatial Services, Digital NSW

Spatial Services aids bushfire recovery efforts through the provision of up-to-date spatial data and is involved in emergency situations like bushfires, coordinating geospatial intelligence to minimise the impact of disasters on people and their homes and property. Projects that Spatial Services undertake include capturing airborne LiDAR and imagery of fire affected areas in NSW to be mapped and documented and working with Infrastructure NSW to conduct infrastructure and asset mapping that will allow for better planning, forecasting and response approaches to future bushfire and emergency events.

The NSW Spatial Digital Twin A program of work that is being led by DCS Spatial Services which will deliver a cross-sector, collaborative environment that will share and visualise location information, in a 4D model (3D plus time) of the real world, in near real time and will support improved decision making.

Resilience NSW

Resilience NSW leads an coordinates disaster and emergency efforts from prevention to recovery and is part of the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet.

NSW State Emergency Services (SES)

NSW State Emergency Services main responsibilities are flood, storm, and tsunami emergencies, although they also assist other emergency services such as RFS and Fire & Rescue NSW when they are performing major operations.