



WORKING WITH FIRE AGENCIES AT BUSHFIRES

Protocols for Media Agencies and Media Representatives



Department of
Sustainability
and Environment

INTENT

This protocol guides the working relationship between Media Agencies and Media Representatives, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) during bushfire events.

It is the intent of DSE and CFA (the Fire Agencies) to work in partnership with Media Agencies and Media Representatives during fire events, for the purpose of communicating critical community safety messages and newsworthy information, stories, interviews and images.

The Fire Agencies, Media Agencies and Media Representatives will have a partnership characterised by understanding, cooperation and goodwill.

The Control Agency, through the Incident Controller is at all times responsible for the safety, health and welfare of all Incident Personnel, including firefighters, Media Representatives and other emergency workers. The safety, health and welfare of Incident Personnel will be the overarching priority at all times for the Fire Agencies, Media Agencies and Media Representatives during bushfires, consistent with Victorian Occupational Health and Safety legislation and DSE and CFA's State Fire Control Priorities.

PROTOCOL

1 Minimum requirements for working with Fire Agencies at bushfires

- 1.1 In order to work with Fire Agencies at Bushfires, all Media Representatives must have:
- Current accreditation in "*Maintain Safety at the Incident Scene*" delivered by CFA on behalf of the Fire Agencies;
 - A current CFA and DSE Media Accreditation Card, issued only after Media Representatives have achieved accreditation in "*Maintain Safety at the Incident Scene*", delivered by CFA on behalf of the Fire Agencies.
 - Fire Agency approved personal protective clothing (PPC) and equipment, including CFA approved 'MEDIA' patches on the upper back, front left pocket and right sleeve of the equipment, all to be worn as directed during the time the media are on the fireground.

Media Representatives must have these at all times for the duration of an Incident in order to access the Fire Ground.

Media Agencies and Media Representatives will understand, respect and operate within the arrangements, processes and systems of work of the Fire Agencies.

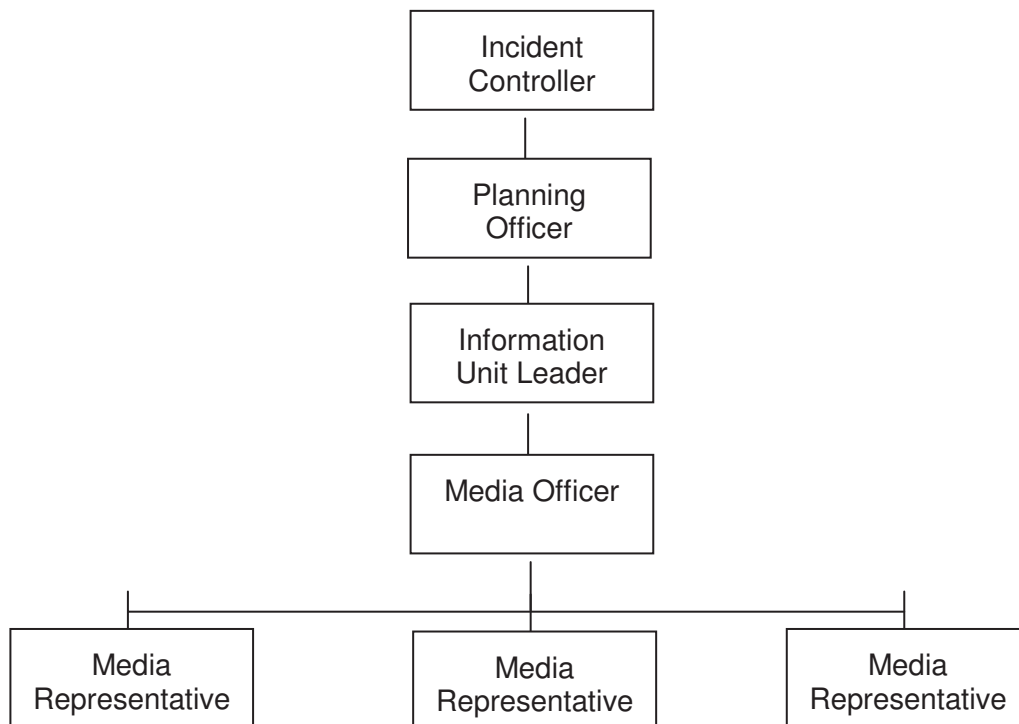
2 Access

- 2.1 Media Representatives wishing to attend an Incident, particularly the Fire Ground must contact the Control Agency. It is unacceptable for any person, including



- Media Representatives to access the Fire Ground without the approval of the Incident Controller.
- 2.2 The Incident Controller will grant permission to attend the Incident, particularly the Fire Ground only if it has been deemed safe to do so, and if the Media Representative/s have achieved all the minimum requirements for working with Fire Agencies at Bushfires specified in Section 1.
 - 2.3 Upon deeming it safe and appropriate for Media Representatives to attend the Incident, the Control Agency will articulate the specific conditions for that attendance on each occasion.
 - 2.4 The Control Agency will refer the Media Representative to the Information Unit Leader, who is responsible for the provision of timely, accurate, consistent and authorised information on behalf of the Incident Controller.
 - 2.5 The Information Unit Leader may appoint a Media Officer to work directly with Media Representatives.
 - 2.6 Reporting arrangements during an Incident will be as outlined in the diagram below. At all times, Media Representatives are under the control of the Incident Controller.

Reporting Arrangements for Media Representatives at Bushfires



- 2.7 Where the Incident Controller has deemed it safe, The Media Officer will work with Media Representatives to provide safe passage to a Designated Media Assembly Area.

- 2.8 If on the way to the Designated Media Assembly Point, Media Representatives arrive at a Traffic Management Point, the Victoria Police or Fire Agency representatives will contact the Incident Controller who will determine whether it is safe to go through the Traffic Management Point. Only Media Accreditation Card holders with appropriately badged PPC will be admitted access, where it is safe to do so.
- 2.9 Access through Traffic Management Points will generally only be permitted for Media Accreditation Card holders, and by prior arrangement with a designated IMT member. Access through Traffic Management Points will be coordinated by the Incident Controller via a Police Liaison Officer.
- 2.10 Under the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, Victoria Police are obliged to act on the instructions of the Chief Officer or Incident Controller and enforce their instructions. Under agreed protocols, discretion by police concerning road closures is granted as is directions for people to leave if an area is determined too dangerous. If a Media Agency or Media Representative believe there is a conflict they should immediately contact the Victoria Police Media Unit for advice.
- 2.11 Victoria Police officers may remove Media Representatives who are endangering their own lives and the lives of others from the Fire Ground.
- 2.12 Victoria Police are also permitted under legislation to implement a total road closure at a Traffic Management Point if deemed necessary. Media who access risk areas whilst unescorted or who endanger themselves or others may be referred to WorkSafe as a notifiable incident.
- 2.13 Upon arrival at the Designated Media Assembly Point, Media Representatives must make contact with Media Officer who may arrange access to the Fire Ground, where:
 - The Incident Controller has deemed it safe and practicable;
 - Appropriate resources and escorts are available to be provided; and
 - Media Representatives meet the Fire Agencies minimum requirements for working with Fire Agencies at Bushfires.
- 2.14 It is vital that all Media Representatives make themselves known to the Media Officer so they can be accounted for and managed safely whilst on the Fire Ground and in order for suitable opportunities to be matched to Media Agency needs.
- 2.15 The Media Officer will ensure that Media Representatives receive a safety briefing prior to entering the Fire Ground and that appropriate communication arrangements are in place.
- 2.16 The Media Officer will only arrange access for Media Representatives to aircraft and agency vehicles if this equipment is not required for suppression operations.
- 2.17 Some Fire Agency vehicles require particular firefighting competencies and endorsements for operation or travelling as a passenger. Access to these vehicles will only be granted for Media Representatives holding the necessary competencies and endorsements.

- 2.18 Whilst on the Fire Ground, Media Representatives must comply with any instruction provided to them by the Media Officer, Incident Controller or Victoria Police. This includes immediate departure from the Fire Ground, should this be deemed a necessary safety measure.

3 Non compliance

- 3.1 Media Accreditation may be withdrawn and Media Representatives may be escorted from the Fire Ground and not permitted to return in instances where a Media Representative:

- Has endangered their own safety, or the safety of others;
- Fails to comply with verbal instructions of the Media Officer, Incident Controller or any representative of the Fire Agencies or Victoria Police whilst on the Fire Ground;
- Fails to depart immediately from the Fire Ground after instruction by the Media Officer, or any representative of the Fire Agencies, or Victoria Police;
- Accesses any area beyond a Victoria Police Traffic Management Point and/or is not escorted by an Fire Agency Officer; and
- Has seriously breached these protocols.

- 3.2 The Fire Agencies may formally advise WorkSafe of the incident if appropriate.

4 Issues and Dispute Resolution

- 4.1 The Fire Agencies, Media Agencies and Media Representatives will in the first instance, make every effort to resolve issues at the lowest level possible, if it is safe to do so. The Incident Controller or Media Officer can direct that this discussion take place at an alternative location at their discretion.
- 4.2 Where the issue or dispute can not be resolved in the first instance, the Incident Information Unit Leader will be notified. The Information Unit Leader will gather information from those involved and attempt to resolve the issue with the individuals involved.
- 4.3 The Incident Information Unit Leader may be required or choose to notify the Incident Controller and the Control Agency's State Emergency Coordination Centre (SECC) Information Unit Leader. In conjunction with the Incident Controller, the Information Unit Leader may deny access to the fire ground for the remaining duration of the incident.
- 4.4 Once referred, the Control Agency SECC Information Unit Leader will work to contact the relevant Chief of Staff or involved Media Representatives to resolve the issue. This may include discussion on the Occupational Health and Safety responsibilities and will take place once information is obtained from all parties, including the operational staff involved.

4.5 The Control Agency may then choose to:

- issue a written warning to the Media Agency or deny access to the Fire Ground for the remaining duration of the incident
- Rescind the media accreditation of the media representative concerned
- Issue a notification letter to the relevant news director/ editor of the Media Agency and the respective Occupational Health and Safety representative
- refer the issue to WorkSafe for further clarification

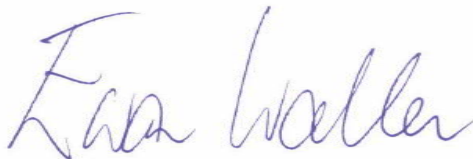
5 **Review**

5.1 The operation of this Protocol will be subject to review and analysis by the Fire Agencies and selected Media Representatives at the conclusion of the 2009/2010 fire season.



Russell Rees
Chief Officer
Country Fire Authority

Date: 30/9/09



Ewan Waller
Chief Officer
Department of Sustainability and
Environment

Date: 28/9/09

APPENDIX ONE - GLOSSARY

Fire Agencies	The Department of Sustainability and Environment and/or the Country Fire Authority.
Media Agencies	Any organisation or self-employed individual involved in the provision of Media and/or Journalist services.
Media Representatives	Any individual employed or contracted to perform media related duties for or by a Media Agency, or acting in a self-employment or freelance basis in the Media field.
Control Agency	The agency, service, organisation or authority which, by legislative authority, is responsible for the control of an incident.
Traffic Management Point	A point established to control and limit access to a fire area. It provides a means of managing the entry of residents of the fire affected area so that they can secure their property and extinguish fires caused by the ember attack after the passage of the fire front.
Designated Media Assembly Point	The location identified by the Incident Controller or his delegate as being the safe location for Media Representatives to gather prior to and post entry to the Fire Ground.
Media Accreditation Card	The acknowledgement provided to Media Representatives who have completed and been assessed by CFA as competent and current in " <i>Maintain Safety at the Incident Scene</i> ". The Media Accreditation Card must be displayed at all times when attending an Incident, passing through Traffic Management Points and on the Fire Ground.
Fire Ground	The area in the vicinity of the wildfire and fire suppression operations, and the area immediately threatened by the fire. It includes burning and burnt areas; constructed and proposed fire control lines; the area where firefighters, vehicles, machinery and equipment are located when deployed; roads and access points under traffic management control; tracks and facilities in the area surrounding the actual fire; and may extend to adjoining area directly threatened by the fire.
Incident Personnel	All personnel assigned to a role in the AIIMS structure, those they supervise, and those authorised to act in support or to operate on the fire ground.

APPENDIX TWO - AGENCY CONTACTS FOR MEDIA PERSONNEL SUMMER 2009/10

Control Agency contacts

Bushfires in rural Victoria, occurring on privately owned land (farms, townships etc) are generally managed by the CFA.

Bushfires that occur in Victoria's National Parks and State Forests are generally managed by DSE.

The fire and emergency agencies work closely in support of each other.

Concerns over the identity of the Control Agency for a particular incident can be quickly resolved by using the contacts listed below.

Non incident related media inquiries

Lachlan Quick

CFA

Tel. 03 9262 8539

Mobile. 0437 011 944

Teena Cardillo

DSE

Tel. 03 9637 8851

Mobile. 0417 547 121