

Framework

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DNRME wildfire response

Purpose

The intent of this policy is to clarify for the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (the department) and fire management agencies, including Queensland Parks and wildlife services (QPWS) and Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) and other relevant agencies, the approach the department will take when a wildfire occurs on lands for which the department is responsible for managing.

Rationale

As owner of freehold and non-freehold lands (departmental lands), the department has obligations under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990* (FES Act) with respect to unauthorised fires which occur on departmental lands. The FES Act states that an owner of land:

- Must take “all reasonable steps” to extinguish or control the fire, and;
- Must, as soon as practicable, report the existence and location of the fire to a fire officer, officer of a rural fire brigade, a member of an emergency unit, a chief fire warden or fire warden, a forestry officer, conservation officer or police officer

Due to the extensive number of land parcels and total area of departmental lands, the department uses a risk-based approach to mitigating the risks of fire on land under its control. The department’s hierarchy of fire risk management places highest priority on protecting human life, followed by protecting infrastructure and environmental values.

The department uses a combination of controlled burns, slashing, spraying, grazing, and the https://www.dnrme.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/1398737/strategic-plan-2018-22.pdf development of fire management lines to reduce the risk of the identified hazard.

Where a wildfire is identified on or near departmental lands, the department will contact the QFES and provide assistance to Incident Control (IC) or Incident Management Team (IMT) as required. It should be noted that the department is not recognised as an emergency response agency for the purposes of wildfire and does not resource itself as such.

Whilst the department is responsible for a substantial portfolio of freehold and non-freehold lands, it should be noted that a large proportion of the department estate consists of small parcels of land spatially fragmented across the state.

Many departmental lands are located in isolated areas, often many hundreds of kilometres away from regional work centre localities where State Land Maintenance (SLM) officers are based. This distribution of officers and resources provides sufficient coverage for achieving the department’s proactive Fire Management Program, but presents logistical challenges responding to unplanned events.

There are higher risks to staff in fighting wildfires as opposed to managing prescribed burns, and under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act), the department owes a duty of care to its officers to manage risk effectively. To continue to meet its WH&S obligations the department will not routinely provide on ground firefighting resources for wildfire incidents which occur on departmental lands.

Principles of the framework

According with the department's Fire Management Program and based on present resourcing and equipment the department has on hand, the department's adopted policy is that it will not routinely provide on ground firefighting resources for wildfire incidents on departmental lands.

This policy ultimately means that SLM officers are unable to be on the frontline of any wildfire response efforts unless otherwise endorsed by the department's representative Regional Executive Director.

The department adopts a 'landowner role' and regional SLM officers do not routinely attend wildfires as on-ground response resources. The department may provide an 'agency liaison officer or landowner representative role' to an established Incident Control (IC) or Incident Management Team (IMT). This can include provision of mapping resources and local knowledge, or provision of on-ground resources for 'mopping up/blacking out' activities once a wildfire is declared safely contained.

The department only takes on responsibility for a fire once an incident controller has deemed the fire to be safely contained and advised Firecom the 'fire has been left in the hands of the landowner'.

Exceptions

In the event of a declaration of disaster under the *Disaster Management Act 2003* the department will provide all assistance as it is capable of providing as requested by the State disaster coordinator and approved by the department's representative Regional Executive Director.

Legislation

Disaster Management Act 2003

Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990

Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011

Approval

Position	Name	Date
Executive Director	Graham Nicholas	17/05/2019

Version history

Version	Effective Date	Comments
1.00	17/05/2019	Endorsed

Further information

- Contact your nearest business centre (https://www.dnrme.qld.gov.au/?contact=state_land), or
- Refer to <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/state> , or
- Call 13 QGOV (13 74 68)

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