
Replacement of Essential Water Following Bushfire Policy

Guidance for Implementation by Local and State Government Agencies 2008/09 Bushfire Season

A Victorian
Government
initiative



Created by:	Date - Version
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Central Government Response Committee	2/12/2008

Document Purpose

This document aims to clarify the process for implementation of the Victorian Government's Essential Water Replacement Following Bushfire Policy.

In addition the document aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities of landholders, local government, state government agencies/ authorities / departments, and state owned enterprises or corporations.

This document should be read in conjunction with the Victorian government Essential Water Replacement Following Bushfire Policy.

General Water Replacement Process

1. When practicable fire crews record in their incident logs where essential water has been taken
2. When practicable and if landholder is present fire crews advise the landholder to contact municipality for essential replacement water.
3. Landholder contacts municipality / local council
4. DSE or CFA Regional Duty Officer OR ICC/IMT will contact the MERO
5. MERO will contact property owner to advise / discuss replacement of water. This process step will normally be prompted by the landowner lodging an "Essential Water Replacement Request" form available from customer services or on request.
6. MERO to determine if replacement is warranted and prioritise each delivery and complete a "water replenishment" form. NB – Validation & prioritisation may require liaison with the fire control agency regarding location of use, and emergency relief agencies (DPI and/or DHS) regarding need.
7. MERO will contact ICC (larger fires) or RDO (smaller fires) to verify the claim.
8. If the ICC is in operation it will confirm with MERO the taking of essential water or if no ICC is in operation the CFA or DSE RDO will confirm with local brigade or DSE office before confirming with the MERO.
9. MERO will forward approved water replacement form to water delivery contractors or to the local water corporation for action.
10. Upon completion of delivery, contractors/depot will forward all forms to the MERO for matching with earlier documentation and their account.
11. MERO to record replacement quantities and locations.
12. Upon completion of deliveries, council to lodge claim form plus supporting documentation with DSE area office.

Roles & responsibilities in relation to this policy

Note: see also process map following this section

DSE and CFA Fire Fighters

- The policy must not impact/hinder fire response activities
- Protection of fire fighters must remain the highest priority for response agencies.
- When practicable should note in his/her incident log where they believe essential water has been taken and estimate quantity taken and record address or grid reference.
- Where an essential water source has been totally depleted this must be communicated as soon as practicable via the chain of command to either the ICC or RDO
- Advises landholder that essential water may be replaced and that they should contact their local council.

Landholders

- The onus is on the landholder to notify their municipality / council if they believe that essential water has been taken by fire agencies during fire suppression from their property.
- The landholder will be required to complete a water replacement request / authority form and submit this to their municipality / council. This will then be checked and verified by the municipality / council with ICC during large fire events or with the CFA or DSE Regional Duty Officer for smaller fires.

Municipality / Council or MECC arrangements

- Will upon request of a landholder for replacement of essential water require the landholder to complete and submit to them a water replacement request / authority form.
- Will upon receiving the water replacement request / authority form liaise with either the ICC for large fires or the DSE or CFA Regional Duty Officer for smaller fires to verify the claim.
- Receive and record information provided by the MERC.
- Receive and record information provided by the landholder.
- Contact the Water Corporation and contracted water carter to organise replacement.
- Initially cover the cartage costs.
- Prepare and forward aggregate invoice and summary sheet to DSE areal office.
- Local arrangements will be made to replace essential water following the land-holder contacting the MECC / municipal relief officers. Where essential water has been exhausted the aim will be to replace water within 48hrs— where it is safe and practical to do so.

Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC)

- If an incident is of sufficient size the MERC should convene a meeting at local level of Municipal Emergency Response Officers (MERO's), Municipal Recovery Manager (MRM), other relevant emergency partners (DSE,CFA,DPI, &DHS), including local water corporations / authorities to determine local solution that will address:
 - Who co-ordinates requests

- What contact no is provided (Consideration given to 24/7 number)
- Who local water carter are
- Who local the DPI and DHS representatives are when specialist advice is required.
- Liaise with emergency agencies as above regarding policy implementation.
- Will liaise with the CFA or DSE Regional Duty Officer to verify any essential water replacement requests.

Incident Management Team (where formed and operating from and ICC)

- Log details of advice where essential water has been exhausted.
- Notify the MERC based at the Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) in the first instance, with the location of the private water supply exhausted.
- Record water points in Incident action Plans.
- Liaise with the MERC over priorities for water cartage vehicles (ensures consistent state-wide notification)
- Liaise with MERC to establish information and communication flows.
- Pass on relevant information from ICC to MERO or via the agreed local arrangements.

CFA and DSE Regional Duty Officers

- Where no MECC is in operation will advise the MERC, or MERO, or MRM of the exhaustion of essential water supplies during fire operations.
- Will check and verify with local brigades or officers for the MERC or MECC, or MRM of the taking of essential water if a landholder has made a request.

Water Corporations

- As per local arrangements, water corporations will provide the water from emergency water supplies at no cost for the water.
- Support municipal relief efforts through the provision of water delivery wherever practical.
- Will invoice DSE for any water delivery costs via the municipal arrangements.

Department of Sustainability and Environment

- Compile and maintain a list of relevant water authorities / corporations
- Arrange reimbursement of water delivery costs.
- Collate costs associated with water replacement for cost recovery purposes through the DSE area office.
- DSE has an allocated water replacement account: Fire Suppression Water Replacement – Cartage account.
- Provide appropriate messages and communication to explain the policy.

Department of Primary Industries

- Provide guidance on what may be seen as essential to sustain agricultural resources as requested.
- Provide additional on ground information about local water needs arising from fire agency control efforts as is available.
- Provide information to affected landholders as necessary.
- Assist if specialist advice about a claim is required.

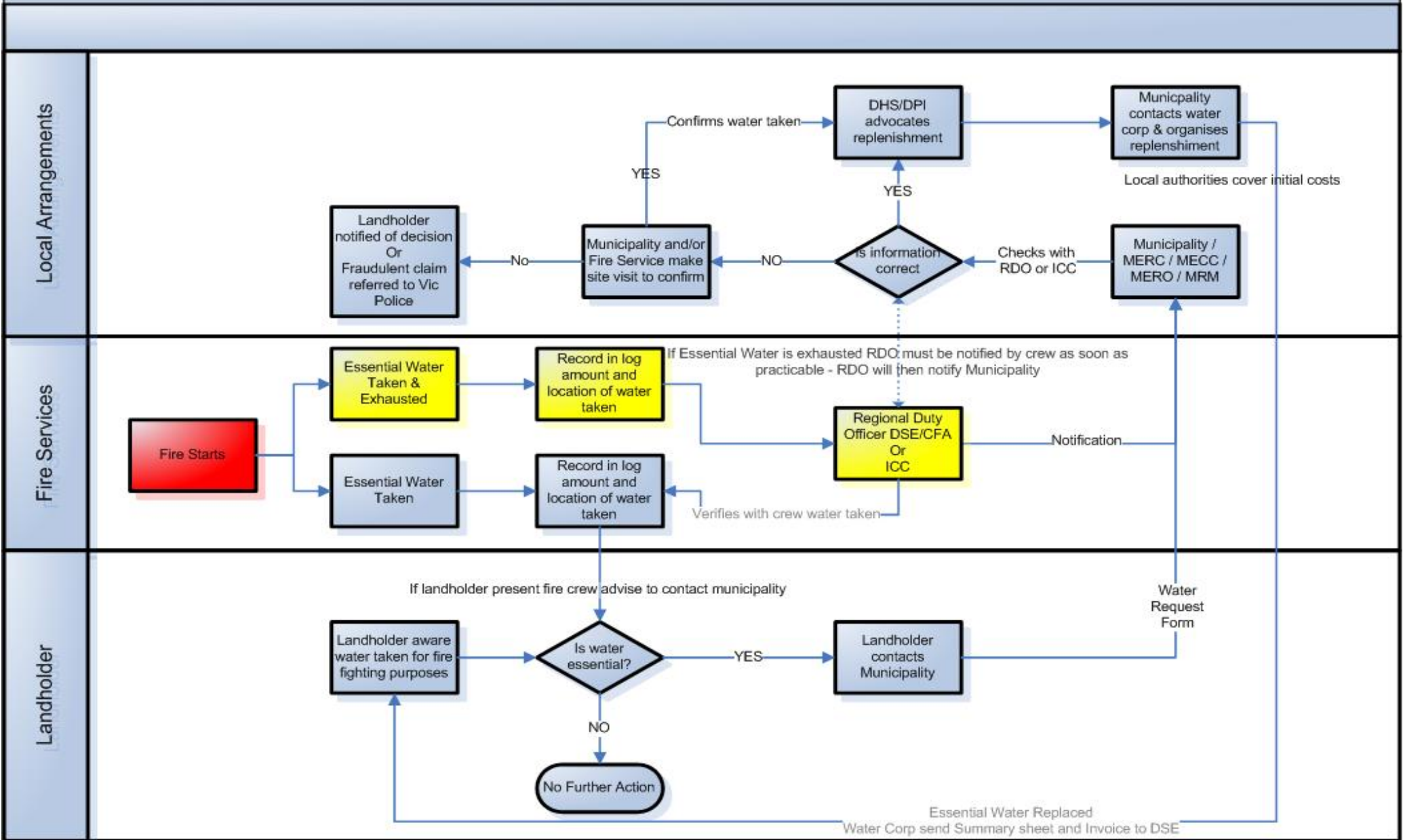
Department of Human Services

- Provide guidance on what may be seen as essential water to sustain human use as requested.
- Provide assistance on how the impact of water may be dealt with through DHS case management arrangements.
- Provide additional on ground information about local water needs arising from fire agency control efforts as is available.
- Provide information to affected landholders and/or occupants as necessary.
- Assist if specialist advice about a claim is required.

Department of Justice (DoJ) and Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner (OESC)

- Discuss policy with Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV).

Essential Water Replacement Policy - - - Process Map



RISK/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CONTACTS AS AT 1 MAY 2008

DSE Contacts		
DSE ECC 24 hour Emergency Contact	1300 13 4444 (State Duty Officer)	
Konrad Gill – Program Manager Critical Infrastructure Project	0431 500 111 03 9637 8622	
Siraj Perera – Manager Risk and Contingency	0408 110 939 or 03 9637 9125	
Metropolitan Water Corporations and Risk Manager	24hr Emergency Contact	Email Address
1. City West Water Helen Foster (03) 9313 8274	Faults and Emergencies 1300 363 200	hfooster@citywestwater.com.au
2. Melbourne Water Melissa Wallace (03) 9235 2279	Integrated Control Centre (ICC) 03 9614 6314	melissa.wallace@melbournewater.com.au
3. South East Water Phil Walsh (03) 9552 3675	Faults and Emergencies 132 812 select option 2	philip.walsh@sewl.com.au
4. Yarra Valley Water Frank Portelli (03) 9872 2634	Faults and Emergencies 132762	fporteli@yvw.com.au
Regional water corporations and Risk Manager	24hr Emergency Contact	Email Address
5. Barwon Water Ian Davis (03) 5226-9230	Faults and Emergencies 1300 656 007	ian.davis@barwonwater.vic.gov.au
6. Central Gippsland Water Peter Rees (03) 5177-4687	Faults and Emergencies 1800 057 057	peter.rees@gippswater.com.au
7. Central Highlands Water Katrina Baddeley (03) 5320 3177	Faults and Emergencies 1800 061 514	kbaddeley@chw.net.au
8. Coliban Water Neil Burns 03 5434 1280	Faults and Emergencies 1300 363 200	neilb@coliban.com.au
9. East Gippsland Water Gary Pini 5150 4421	Duty Officer 1300 134 202	gpini@egwater.vic.gov.au
10. Wannon Water Jamie Crowe 0400 994 578	Duty Officer 1300 926 666	jamie.crowe@wrwa.com.au
11. Goulburn Valley Water Les Goudie (03) 58320 470	Duty Officer 1800 454 500 0417 368 405	lesg@gvwater.vic.gov.au
12. North East Water Louise Maconachie 1300 361 644	Duty Manager 1300 361 644	lmaconachie@nerwa.vic.gov.au
13. South Gippsland Water Ravi Reveendran 5682 0444 option 2	Faults and Emergencies 5682 0444 option 2	ravi.raveendran@sgwater.com.au
14. Western Water Sarah Ray (03) 9218 5495	Duty Officer 0418 517 664	sarah.ray@westernwater.com.au
15. Westernport Water Peter Winterburn 59564155	Faults and Emergencies 1800 249 090	pwinterburn@westernportwater.com.au
16. Gippsland and Southern Rural Water Graham Hawke (03) 9974 4716	Duty Officer East – 0412 860 250 West – 0417 589 183	grahamh@srw.com.au
17. Goulburn-Murray Rural Water Martin Krywak (03) 5833-5621	Duty Manager 1800 064 184	martink@g-mwater.com.au
18. Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water David Birkett 1300 659 961	Urban – 1800 808 814 Rural – 5381 1026	dave.birkett@gmwwater.org.au
19. Lower Murray Urban and Rural Water Kevin Murphy 0409 044 656	Faults and Emergencies 1800 808 830	kevin.murphy@lmw.vic.gov.au

Note : For immediate response to water related incidents and emergencies please refer to the emergency management manual of Victoria Section 10.

This contact list is designed for water authority policy development and governance in the area of emergency management prevention, preparedness, response and recovery strategies.

This is not an immediate response contact list.

Key Messages

- DSE and CFA's main priority during the fire season is to save lives and property. However we recognise the need to ensure we replace essential water. In 2006 the government formalised the water replacement policy which outlines best practise for the replacement, but relies on the flexibility of landholders and fire agencies working in coordination to ensure essential needs are met in a timely fashion.
- A water replacement policy was reintroduced in 2007/08 after extended dry conditions following 2006. Given conditions across the state have not improved this policy will again be introduced for the 2008/09 bushfire season for drought affected farmers whose dams are used to supply fire agencies with water for fire suppression.
- The intention is to relieve genuine hardship in the community by replenishing private water supplies used during fire operations in the 2008/09 bushfire season.
- Only water for essential use will be replaced. This includes water necessary to sustain:
 - The health of affected residences and pets
 - The health and productivity of their stock and;
 - Agricultural and horticultural crops, permanent and intensive industries.
- The replacement of water will not exceed the amount of water made available to DSE or CFA for fire operations.
- Although the initial focus will be containing the fire, our aim will be to replace essential water within 48 hours of the need being established. Where operational issues impact on this, relevant emergency management personnel will negotiate timing or replacement and address the most immediate priorities.
- Under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* CFA and DSE can and must use water from local dams for fire operations. However, DSE and CFA attempt to obtain water from other sources and use dry fire fighting where possible.
- In the event of bushfire, regardless of where it starts, if water is taken from domestic and stock or irrigation dams, water needed for essential use will be replaced.
- This is a multi agency relief program involving DSE, CFA, DHS, DPI, DOJ, DPC, local water corporations, Victoria Police, and municipalities.
- The scheme will be coordinated at a local level by the relevant MERC and delivered via local arrangements.
- The water replacement policy recognises that, while farmers understand the urgency of fire fighting, the drought situation means that basic water interests have to be protected as well.
- Although the volume of water used for fire fighting across the state is usually less than what a large irrigator would use each year, the Government understands that the impact of taking water from farm dams could be severe this summer.

- Although DSE and CFA mostly use dry fire fighting techniques, water is used as necessary for water bombing by aircraft to assist fire fighters on the ground by slowing the spread of a fire, to protect homes and property, and for mopping up to ensure a bushfire does not reignite.
- Water bombing aircraft provide increased effectiveness to the on ground fire fighting effort.
- Both DSE and CFA are exploring greater reliance on fire prevention and fire fighting techniques that use less water and rely more on fuel reduction.
- The fire agencies are ready for a long and difficult fire season. This includes identifying areas and water points across the state where it is feasible to gather water for a first attack on a bushfire, and where it is feasible to gather water for a sustained attack on a long running bushfire.
- The fire agencies understand why people are concerned. None of us know how long the drought will continue. There is already a shortage of water in many parts of the state and farmers in particular have every right to be concerned about their livelihoods.
- Farmers and communities understand that water is essential for fire fighting, and that we will need to work together to get through the bushfire season.
- This is a coordinated effort across state and local government that links response to recovery and uses normal municipal recovery support arrangements.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

ABOUT THE POLICY AND ITS OPERATION

Q: How quickly will water be replaced?

A: Our aim is that essential water supplies are replaced as soon as possible and when safe to do so. Where essential water is exhausted the aim will be to replace this within 48 hours. This generally occurred in 2006 Grampians Fires and the 2006/7 Great Divide Fires.

Q: Who will replace the water?

A: The policy is designed to operate within the normal municipal recovery arrangement and will be coordinated and implemented at a local level by the relevant Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC) and local water corporation, or other arrangements put in place by the Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator (MERC). Local water cartage contractors may be engaged to replenish essential water.

Q: What does essential water supply mean?

A: Essential water is defined as enough water for people, stock, and crops. Stock and domestic water will be replaced to provide for essential stock and domestic needs only. Water taken from licensed/registered dams used for irrigation will be replaced to provide for agricultural and horticultural crops or permanent plantings.

Q: What if I don't have a tank?

A: We want to avoid placing drinking water into dams wherever possible so tanks are preferred. But where there is no tank, water will be provided to a dam.

Q: If I am not in a drought declared area, will my water still be replaced?

A: Yes, this is state-wide policy and all water required for essential stock and domestic services will be replaced.

Q: Will water taken from aesthetic or recreational dams be replaced?

A: Aesthetic or recreational dams are not in this case considered to be used for essential purposes and therefore water used for fire fighting will not be replaced.

Q: Who keeps track of where water is taken from?

A: When possible fire agencies will record where water has been taken and pass this onto the relevant local emergency relief personnel. Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres, or where these are not in action, local municipalities also keep records of where fire fighters have accessed water, and who has requested relief.

Q: What is a Municipal Emergency Coordination Centre (MECC)?

A: Municipal Emergency Coordination Centres are activated from council offices across the state to respond to an emergency in the municipality. Centres are staffed by council, emergency services representatives, and recovery organisation representatives. The centres provide logistical support to the agency responding to the emergency, and helps with community recovery as well.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Q: Do the CFA and DSE have a right to take water from my property?

A: Yes, The Country Fire Authority Act 1958 (s30 and s33) provides powers to the Country Fire Authority and Department of Sustainability and Environment to take water from any waterway or any other source of water supply; without any person being liable to any penalty or claim.

Q: How much water can the Erikson Air Crane (Elvis type helicopter) pick up in one stop?

A: Approximately 9,000 litres

Q: Can fire fighters take drinking water from my home tank?

A: Yes, in extreme situations where life or property is threatened all water available will be used.

Q: How much water fire fighters use to control a bushfire?

A: The volume of water used on fire fighting across the state is relatively small; the government understands that the impact of taking water from farm dams could be severe this summer.

As a guide, about 12 mega litres (a mega litre is one million litres) in total was used for fighting the Mt Lubra fire in the Grampians in January 2006 which covered more than 120,000 hectares. Following the Grampians fire, as part of recovery, local arrangements were made through the MECC to replace limited amounts of water taken for fire fighting into tanks. Local arrangements replaced about 100,000 litres (0.1 ML) taken from private dams.

The Great Divide Fires of summer 2006/07 saw approximately 1,116,000 hectares burnt after 69 days. The estimated water replaced was 10 mega litres.

10 mega litres equals approximately 4 Olympic sized swimming pools.

Q: Why is potable water used for replacement?

A: Potable water is used for replacement water and as such the preference is to deliver this to tanks when possible. Where there are no tanks, water will be provided to a dam.

Potable water is the most efficient and timely means of delivering replacement essential water. Cartage tanks would require cleaning and disinfecting if recycled or river water was used (dependant on availability).

Q: what preparations have CFA and DSE made to ensure water supplies during the forthcoming bushfire season?

A:

1. Sources of water for fire fighting on public land have been mapped state wide.
2. Victoria has State wide Emergency Water Supply Points for farmers. The Government is upgrading existing sites and establishing new sites in consultation with water corporations, the CFA and DSE.
3. Within 1-2 km of the coast, sea water can be used for aerial fire fighting.
4. CFA and DSE strategies for ensuring water supply during the bushfire season also include;
 - The purchase of additional floating collar tanks/portable dams.
 - The establishment of a bulk water carrying fleet to ensure continuity of supply from more reliable water sources during ongoing suppression.

- Working with Local Water Steering Groups to enhance our network of permanent water access through the use of standpipes and access to reticulated reserves and/or tanks and pumps at bores.
- The location of pre-filled reserves (fixed or temporary tanks) in public land areas and at aircraft refilling points.
- The placement of local bulk water tankers on standby to ensure water availability for first attack operations.

Q: Can DSE and CFA increase their use of dry fire fighting techniques?

A: DSE uses mostly dry fire fighting techniques however water is used as necessary, especially for water bombing and to try and extinguish a new fire while it is still small.

Both DSE and CFA are exploring greater reliance on fire fighting techniques that use less water and rely more on constructed fuel breaks.

Water is an effective fire fighting tool and can lead to ore rapid containment and mop up of bushfires.

Brining a bushfire under control by rapid and aggressive first attack is a critical part of fire fighting. A fire is easier to control and suppress when it is small. Sourcing water from the nearest source is critical to prevent a fire from spreading.

Q: How does DSE locate water for fire fighting during a fire?

A: Water points across the state have been identified by DSE Office of Water, where it is feasible to obtain water for first attack or for a sustained attack on the fire. These points are mostly located on public land i.e. National Parks and State Forest.

- The landowner must provide information regarding their contact details, property access etc, so as to allow the request to be efficiently processes and for the water to be replaced.
- If the situation changes and you no longer require this support, please inform your local relief agency of this.

Water Replacement Request / Authorisation Form

LANDHOLDER	
Name	
Address	
Contact Phone Number.	
Fire Name	
Municipality	

Water Required

Location of Water Source	Type of Water Source Dam or Tank	Quantity of Water Required	Units of Water (litres or Gallons)	Date(s) water was used for fire fight

Submit this form to your local municipality.

Signature	
Date	

OFFICE USE ONLY				
Key Questions	Decision	Name:	Signature:	Date:
Was the water used for fire fighting?	Yes or No			
Is the water essential?	Yes or No			

Date of Request Submission	
Name of Water Supplier	
Name of Water Carter	
Date of Delivery	

Confirmation of Delivery	Name	Signature	Date
Yes or No			

Summary of Water Use Record Form

Incident Name and Number									
Municipality (if known)									
Landholder Name	Water Source	Date							TOTAL
		Estimated Quantity litres							
Comments:									
Comments:									
Comments:									
Comments:									
Comments:									
Comments:									
Comments:									

Report prepared by: (Name)		Date:
Page Numbers	of	

Abbreviations

CFA – Country Fire Authority of Victoria
DOJ – Dept. of Justice
DHS – Dept. Human Services
DPI – Dept. Primary Industries
DSE – Dept. Sustainability and Environment
EMMV – Emergency Management Manual Victoria
IC – Incident Controller
ICC – Incident Control Centre
IMT – Incident Management Team
MAV – Municipal Association Victoria
MERC – Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator
MERO – Municipal Emergency Resources Officer
MFESB – Melbourne Fire and Emergency Services Board
MRM – Municipal Recovery Manager
NEO – Networked Emergency Organisation
OESC – Office of Emergency Services Commissioner
PV – Parks Victoria