



Service Provision and Fire Danger Ratings Policy

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose	3
Scope.....	3
Policy Context	3
Policy Statement	4
Roles and Responsibilities.....	6
References and Supporting Documents	6
Applicable Legislation:	6
Applicable Policy and Procedure:	6
Supporting Documents:	6
Privacy and Human Rights Consideration.....	7
Definitions	7
Revision History and Review	8

Purpose

The Service Provision and Fire Danger Ratings Policy (the Policy) outlines changes to Council's service provision to the community on days predicted to pose the highest fire danger risks to the public.

Scope

This policy applies to all Councillors, senior officers, employees, contractors, service providers and volunteers engaged in Council business.

This Policy will apply on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) may also enact parts of this Policy on days with a Severe or Extreme Fire Danger Rating based on advice from emergency services. Council's Municipal Emergency Management Plan ([MEMP](#)), if enacted, may override this Policy during declared emergencies.

Policy Context

Fire Danger Ratings, issued by the Bureau of Meteorology in consultation with fire agencies, predict how dangerous a fire would be if one started. The higher the rating, the more likely a fire will be dangerous. More information on fire danger ratings and preparedness can be found on the Country Fire Authority (CFA) [website](#). A Code Red Rating is the highest Fire Danger Rating, followed by ratings of Extreme and Severe. On Code Red Days the CFA advises people living in high risk bushfire areas to leave the area the night before or early in the morning and to enact their bushfire survival plans. The State Government may also declare a State of Disaster when there is an emergency that constitutes, or is likely to constitute, a significant and widespread danger to life or property.

East Gippsland Shire Council has been declared a bushfire prone area by the State Government¹. Consequently, it is anticipated that the public will be on heightened alert on days with the highest Fire Danger Ratings and vigilant for information that assists them in their contingency planning. It is therefore important that information is readily available to the public on Council's preparedness and service availability on such days to aid individual decision making. Fire Danger Ratings are usually forecast up to four days in advance enabling some level of preparation.

Council will operate with altered or reduced service levels on Code Red Days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster (and may do so on days predicted to be of Severe or Extreme fire danger based on local conditions and/or advice from emergency services) for the following reasons:

- Large areas within the Shire considered to be of high bushfire risk;
- A need to ensure Council's operations do not unintentionally cause a fire to start;
- A need to provide for the safety of Council staff and to ensure that the public is not placed in situations of undue risk when travelling to and accessing Council services;
- To ensure sufficient staff resources can be re-deployed to emergency response planning functions and, in the event of a fire event, provision of support to fire

¹ Declared by Minister of Planning – <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/policy-and-strategy/bushfire-protection/building-in-bushfire-prone-areas>

- combating agencies and emergency relief centres;
- A likelihood that some staff will take approved leave on such days to attend to family arrangements and to enact personal bushfire survival plans.

This Policy therefore addresses Council's responsibility to plan and manage for the provision of services and Council information on days with the highest fire danger risks in order to maximise employee and community safety, whilst ensuring appropriate emergency responses can be enacted as required.

Policy Statement

East Gippsland Shire Council is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy operation for all employees and visitors. The below outlines Council's commitments to service provision during Code Red Rating periods as declared by the Country Fire Authority and/or State Government declared State of Disaster.

Non-essential Travel and Council Meetings

All travel for Council business on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster involving Councillors, staff, contractors or volunteers will be reduced to the delivery of essential services subject to Manager approval. All non-essential travel and meetings will be suspended. Consequently, several services that typically involve extensive travel to remote sites or through bushfire prone areas will be suspended.

Due to the extensive travel that may be required by Council personnel and members of the public, any Ordinary or Special meetings of Council that are scheduled on a Code Red day and/or State Government declared State of Disaster will be postponed.

Customer Service, Visitor Information Centres and Libraries

Council will, as far as practicable, maintain access to its public facilities on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. Services will be suspended or altered on these days as required subject to qualified staff being available and the facilities proximity to nearby fire activity.

Infrastructure Works and Waste Management

In order to minimise the risk of unintentionally starting a fire and to avoid non-essential travel all infrastructure maintenance operations and capital works may be suspended on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster, with staff enacting in alternative duties including emergency standby arrangements.

Similarly, all Council's Landfills and Transfer Stations may be closed to the public if they are located in an impacted area, staff are unavailable due to fire or road closures and if there is no accessibility or capacity to clear/empty waste by designated trucks.

Council's kerbside waste and recycling collection service will be assessed on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster to ensure personnel safety can be achieved. Collection services may cease in the event of perceived or immediate risk from fire activity or other related factors out of our control.

Parks and Gardens

Council's works crew who provide ongoing maintenance of environmental assets, including mower operators and tree crew staff members, will as far as practicable maintain its level of operations on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster, providing there is minimal risk of unintentionally starting a fire.

These operations may be suspended or altered on these days as required subject to qualified staff being available and the operations proximity to nearby fire activity.

Recreation of Parks and Pools

Council managed outdoor recreation reserves, parks and open spaces will remain open, with visitors to these facilities encouraged to be vigilant for fire warning messages from emergency services. Council swimming pools will remain open on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster, subject to a risk assessment and qualified staff being available.

Council will, as far as practicable, maintain its level of service at holiday and caravan parks on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. Services may be suspended or altered on these days as required subject to qualified staff being available and the facilities proximity to nearby fire activity.

Livestock Exchange

Saleyard operations will be assessed on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. Livestock sales may be suspended in the event of perceived or immediate risk from fire activity or other related factors out of our control. Council will endeavour to provide advanced notice to stock agents, interested parties and the community regarding the postponement of livestock sales.

Regulatory and Compliance Services

Council's compliance activities, such as building inspections, community law enforcement, and environmental health and food safety inspections, will, as far as practicable, maintain its level of service on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. Services may be suspended or altered on these days as required subject to qualified staff being available and the facilities proximity to nearby fire activity.

Contractors

Where Council has engaged contractors to undertake any of the above operations, these operations may be suspended on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. In such instances, the relevant Council Officer will provide advice to contractors to postpone any scheduled works until appropriate, including providing advanced notice wherever possible as for the contractors to make suitable arrangements.

General Operations

The above represents Council's intended service levels on Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster, and this may apply to days of Severe or Extreme Fire Danger subject to local conditions and advice from emergency services. It is possible that service levels could change from those listed above at short notice due to the prevailing

conditions, the presence of a fire emergency and/or lack of available staff on the day. Therefore, Council will, wherever possible, issue media releases outlining its services available on Code Red days and/or a State Government declared State of Disaster, including on Council's social media platforms.

Council will endeavour to reschedule activities from disrupted services caused by Code Red days and/or State Government declared State of Disaster. Where appropriate, delivery methods may also be altered to allow for services to continue through alternative means, such as online platforms.

Roles and Responsibilities

These management positions are responsible for the implementation, communication and compliance monitoring of the policy in their work areas:

Party / Parties	Roles and Responsibilities
Chief Executive Officer	Overall responsibility for policy implementation.
General Managers	Ensure Managers, Coordinators and Supervisors under their supervision understand the Policy and when it's to be implemented.
Managers	To implement the Policy under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer and/or General Managers, until such time as the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) is enacted which may override this Policy during declared emergencies.
Emergency Management Coordinator	Provide advice and assistance to all parties involved.

References and Supporting Documents

Applicable Legislation:

Local Government Act 2020

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017

Applicable Policy and Procedure:

Municipal Emergency Management Plan 2018-2020

Business Continuity Plan

Workplace Health and Safety Policy

Working Alone and in Isolation Procedure

Extreme Temperature Procedure

Supporting Documents:

Council Plan 2017-2021

Driving and Vehicle Safety Guidelines

Staff Code of Conduct

Heatwave Plan

East Gippsland Fire Management Plan 2013-2016 (and it's sub plans)

CFA Total Fire Ban Restrictions: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings>

Privacy and Human Rights Consideration

All personal information collected by Council in connection with service provision activities will be handled in accordance with all applicable privacy legislation and will be used only for the purpose of investigating procurement matters.

The Service Provision and Fire Danger Ratings Policy has been assessed as compliant with the obligations and objectives of the Victorian Charter of Human *Rights and Responsibilities Act* 2006. Please refer to www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au for assistance with this section.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Code Red Rating	These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions. The safest place to be is away from high risk bushfire areas.
Community	People who live in East Gippsland. People and organisations who are ratepayers in East Gippsland. People and organisations who visit or conduct activities in East Gippsland.
Contractor	Person or company engaged to undertake works for Council, including service providers / service partners
Council	East Gippsland Shire Council
Councillor	Person who has been elected to the office of "Councillor" of East Gippsland Shire Council.
Fire Danger Ratings	Ratings are forecast using Bureau of Meteorology data for up to four days in advance, based on weather and other environmental conditions such as fuel load. It helps you to know when conditions are dangerous enough to put your bushfire survival plan in to action.
Staff	All staff engaged by East Gippsland Shire Council, including all full-time, part-time and casual employees, labour hire agency staff, contractors and volunteers.

Term	Meaning
State Government declared State of Disaster	<p>The State Government declares an emergency that constitutes, or is likely to constitute, a significant and widespread danger to life or property. The State Government has the power to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct any government agency to do, or refrain from doing, any function, power, duty, or responsibility; • Declare that the operation of an Act or subordinate instrument is suspended, if compliance by a government agency with that legislation would inhibit response to or recovery from the disaster; • Take possession and make use of any person's property to respond to the disaster; • Control movement in and out of the disaster area; • Compelling the evacuation of persons from the disaster area or any part of it.
Volunteer	Formally recognised, unpaid member of the public who assists with the provision of Council services e.g. Visitor Information Centre, Library.

Revision History and Review

Version Control	Approved Amended Rescinded	Date Effective	Approved By	ECM Document Reference	Summary of Changes
0.1		01.09.20	General Manager Business Excellence		Initial release.