

MAD Fire FAQ



Mallacoota and District Recovery Association – Info Sheet
Webinar 1 2019/20 Bushfire Snapshot | FAQ October 2020

Fire Management Working Group – Webinar Series

Planning for fire management requires a shared, respectful discussion between the community and fire management agencies, DELWP, FFMVic, Parks and the Shire. The Fire Management Working Group is working on a series of Webinars to inform and educate - how we can make good decisions on managing the country and supporting our community to live safely with fire.



Orchid emerges after hot summer fires. It is the symbol of our webinar series. [credit: L Harwood]

Be Fire Ready - Remember LACES

Lookouts, Awareness, Communication

Escape routes, Safety zones

Get in Touch

- Mallacoota.district.assoc.2020@gmail.com
- www.madrecovery.com
- The Webinar is available online at www.madrecovery.com or at

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J_mIAzLaqaQ

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY

A Snapshot of the 2019/20 Bushfire

The Wingan Inlet / Banana Track fire was started by lightning south of the Princes Highway. It was detected by satellite data, despite fire towers and aircraft surveillance, due to so much smoke covering Gippsland at the time. The extended dryness of the region meant that all fuels were available and a pyrocumulus cloud saw the fire create its own weather pattern. Pyrocumulus clouds can generate intense updrafts that draw in so much air that strong winds develop, coming from all directions towards the fire plume (feeling like a wind change).

During the fires, Mallacoota had access to 17-18 tankers, a couple of graders and slip-on trucks, compared to its usual local CFA team. The Local Incident Management Plan had identified critical infrastructure. When three strike teams were deployed to Mallacoota the day before the fire, local CFA members helped to familiarise them with the town layout. During the fire the town was divided into three sectors: Karbeethong, Mirrabooka & the commercial area and the town centre & Terra Nova area.

Situational awareness was important during this fire – eyes on the fire and eyes on the community. The crews had awareness of when the community moved and could move resources to follow and protect people as the first and core priority.

What our Speakers said

Darryl Burns (Forest Fire Management VIC)

“I’ve been a firefighter for some 25 years... I’m accustomed to these large wild fires...this was a very different scenario for me... impacting the community I live in, where my family are, friends are, our home is...it comes with an added degree of challenge.”

“... FFMV, CFA, Police, Ambulance, SES – all those agencies pulled together and we did the best we possibly could given the circumstances we were presented with... a large, fast moving intense fire baring down on Mallacoota... I’m particularly thankful that we didn’t have a terrible loss of life here because that was a real possibility.”

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MANAGING FIRE IN THE TOWN LANDSCAPE

There are 4 key risk factors to fire –

- weather on the day,
- the long-term climatic conditions,
- a strong correlation to drought events and fire events/dryness of the environment,
- fuel loads,
- and geography of a place (land use and access).

All of these factors were present for Mallacoota and District at the time of the 2019/20 Bushfires.

Fuel does reaccumulate but this normally takes 3-6 years before it builds to a level where it will significantly influence fire behaviour.

Beyond 8 years, the fuel load is likely to be back to previous levels and risk escalates again. Managing fuel loads over the next few years will be an important consideration.

Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC – Seasonal Outlook, Sep-Nov 20

<https://www.bnhcrc.com.au/hazardnotes/77>

“You need a continuum, good fuel management in the forest, good fuel management on the interface and people doing the right thing around their houses. It’s a collective effort.”
Peter West, DELWP

Stuart Johnston (Victoria Police)

“I requested all the emergency management agencies in Mallacoota to come to a meeting...about 4 or 5 days out from the fire that actually impacted us...to make sure we have people that can respond, ...being so far from assistance, we rely on what we have.”

“The Fire Brigade here has a plan to defend certain areas – the school, the people where they said they would go...the Hall and the other place that was vitally important was the Pub because it has a commercial kitchen and has the ability to feed this town ...that pretty much takes up all the equipment that this Mallacoota brigade has.”

Stewart Kreltszeim (CFA)

“We had eyes on the fire but we also had eyes on the community, so we knew exactly, an awareness, so that when that community started moving up to Karbeethong, ...we actually knew that was happening...so we could move resources up there.”

Peter West (DELWP)

“The weather you get on the day, the long term climatic conditions, particular droughts,...fuel loads and availability and geography where you are located in the landscape relative to the prevailing weather and winds and vegetation and the land use and access around you...all four of those boxes [in Mallacoota] were ticked or in play.”

“If you look back through history, there is a really strong correlation between drought events and bad fire seasons, such as 1939, 2009...so dryness is a really important aspect.”

Predictions for 20/21 Fire Season

The region has had average (and possibly above average) rainfall, although an underlying dryness is still there.

Many of the risk factors are reduced. CSIRO outlook is predicting a normal to below-normal fire season.

“The town should have a lot more confidence going into this year than last year.” P West, DELWP