

BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Statement by Minister for Emergency Services

MRF.M. LOGAN (Cockburn — Minister for Emergency Services) [12.12 pm]: I would like to take this opportunity to inform the house about the state's preparedness for the upcoming bushfire season. The outlook for the 2020–21 fire season is being driven by climate drivers that differ from the previous two fire seasons. This will mean dry conditions across the state. The south west and southern WA have seen much drier than average conditions in autumn and winter. WA recorded its second warmest July on record in 2020, second only to July 2019, while June 2020 was the warmest on record. Members, the drier and warmer conditions will increase the risk of bushfire this season.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services is doing everything it can to prepare, including conducting rural–urban interface exercises in metropolitan and regional areas; organising an upcoming multi-agency exercise to test actions taken during previous incidents; hosting a DFES pre-season forum to prepare level 2 and level 3 incident controllers; holding a deployment exercise of the DFES state logistics cache to support incident management teams; and allocating additional high fire season appliances across WA based on a comprehensive risk assessment. DFES and DBCA air operations have commenced training for additional air attack supervisors, air base managers, air intel officers, ground controllers and air observers. An exercise was undertaken to test the deployment of new communications equipment and infrastructure in the Norseman area. The state has 31 aerial firefighting and intelligence aircraft for the upcoming fire season, including the Erickson airframe high-volume Helitak and the King Air line scanner.

I was fortunate enough to recently attend the metropolitan volunteer pre-season forum, which brought together more than 120 volunteers to prepare for the bushfire season. Our career and volunteer emergency services do everything they can to keep our communities safe, but it is up to all of us to do our bit. People cannot wait for a text message or a fire truck to arrive; everyone must take responsibility for their own safety. I urge all members to encourage members of their community to visit the Department of Fire and Emergency Services fire chat website, firechat.wa.gov.au, to help them plan what to do in a bushfire. By knowing when to leave, where to go, and how to get there, our community will have the best chance of survival.

In closing, I wish all our emergency services personnel a safe season ahead and encourage all Western Australians to do everything they can to prepare themselves.