

PARKERVILLE STONEVILLE MT HELENA BUSHFIRE REVIEW — COMMUNICATIONS
ENHANCEMENT

3130. Ms M.M. Quirk to the Minister for Emergency Services:

I refer to the *Parkerville Stoneville Mt Helena Bushfire Review* which recommended that every effort should be made to enhance the ability of communications personnel to cope with fast moving and time critical fire events by providing and maintaining: ongoing extensive communications training; advanced vehicle capability for clear communication within areas of radio coverage dead spots; ability to receive Air intelligence live streaming; and, all Incident Control Vehicles with access to DFES Information Technology Systems, and I ask, how have these major issues been addressed in preparation for this fire season?

Mr J.M. Francis replied:

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) advises:

“ongoing extensive communications training”

Currently there are several training packages which incorporate communications. One of these training packages, *Introduction to Firefighting*, is a requirement for all operational firefighters. Throughout the year local DFES brigades conduct maintenance training for all the tasks they undertake. To aid in this maintenance training, DFES provide training activities and drills.

“advanced vehicle capability for clear communication within areas of radio coverage dead spots”

As part of the analysis of the radio communications capability for high risk bushfire areas, a VHF high band repeater (channel 141) is now in service at Canning Mills to provide an additional channel in the Perth Hills area. As part of this implementation the following has occurred:

The repeater was tested to validate its coverage;

The coverage maps were updated and distributed;

Dedicated preformed bushfire communications plans were developed; and

A circular was released to communicate the above information.

It is likely that there will always be coverage issues in areas such as Perth Hills due to factors such as terrain; however, DFES is developing systems to identify coverage issues and develop risk-based solutions.

“ability to receive Air intelligence live streaming”

DFES aerial intelligence helicopter provides two intelligence products to on ground firefighters and emergency planners: (1) Real-time full motion video streamed from the helicopter to the ground via the 3G network or by a microwave downlink; and (2) near real time fire mapping data via a 3G datalink. The State and Metropolitan Operations Centres’ receive the video and mapping data and re-broadcast it via internet infrastructure to DFES incident control vehicles (ICVs). When the ICVs can’t access the 3G network, the helicopter will land to deploy a portable microwave video receiver to enable transmission in the ICVs.

“all Incident Control Vehicles with access to DFES Information Technology Systems”

All ICV communication systems are configured the same, including the backup system. There are currently nine ICVs; a further three will be delivered as part of the new build program. All have 3G capabilities in addition to a BGAN with linkage to satellite phone capability. (BGAN is a mobile satellite service that offers high-speed data and voice.)

To comply with Government IT Security Policy, the way in which a local government ICV and a DFES ICV login to the DFES network may be different, but the functionality is the same. Additionally, where an ICV is located, training has been delivered to career and volunteer personnel on the operation of the ICV including its communications capability and operation.