



MEDIA RELEASE

31 AUGUST 2020

Bushfire outlook indicates a normal fire season for Victoria

The Australian Seasonal Bushfire Outlook indicates Victoria will have a “normal” fire season in 2020-21, however possible spring rainfall is likely to have an impact on fire potential in the lead up to and over summer.

The outlook, developed by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre with Bureau of Meteorology and relevant state fire and land managers, was released today.

The outlook indicates that above average winter rain has substantially reduced the risk of campaign fires in Victoria’s east for September to November. However, for parts of the Mallee, Wimmera, North East and Far South West are drier than normal.

While there is a high chance of above-median rainfall north and south of the Divide during spring this rain is likely to affect bushfire potential for the west and south west of the state.

Emergency Management Commissioner Andrew Crisp said the outlook was an early indication of what Victoria could expect in the summer season and would be updated in November as predictions firm up.

“The severity of fires in the west half of the state will depend on several factors including the amount, location and timing of rain in during spring and over summer,” he said.

Fast running grassfires and fires in dry forests and woodlands is likely by late spring, depending on fire and weather conditions and dryness in grasslands.

Country Fire Authority Acting Chief Officer Garry Cook said that as one of the world’s most bushfire-prone areas, even a normal fire season in Victoria presents a high risk to communities.

“We have to stay home as much as possible at the moment due to COVID-19 restrictions – why not use the time to clean up your property and make a plan on how to keep yourself and your loved ones safe this summer?” he said.

“Preparing your property means you minimise the chance of property damage during a fire, even if you plan to leave early.

“You also need to plan and prepare for your safety so that you, and everyone in your household, know what to do on hot, dry, windy days when fires will start and spread quickly.”

Forest Fire Management Victoria Chief Fire Officer Chris Hardman said: “FFMVic has fully assessed the risks and challenges associated with bushfire preparedness and suppression in a coronavirus environment and will be engaging additional project firefighters to ensure we’re equipped to deal with them.”

Fire Rescue Commissioner Ken Block said although a normal fire season was forecast there was no room for complacency.

“Grassfires are likely to be one of FRV’s biggest risks this season, particularly on the urban fringe. No matter where you live, you must be aware of the risks and start preparing early,” he said.

“This summer and every summer, FRV, CFA, FFMVic and SES will continue to work together to provide the best fire and rescue response for Victorians.”

Victoria State Emergency Service Chief Officer Tim Wiebusch said the increased potential of a La Niña this spring and predications for above average rainfall means the Victorian community needed to be prepared for the possibility of riverine and flash flooding over the coming months.

“We’re paying particular attention to late September and through October,” he said.

“From a flooding perspective, there are similarities in the climate outlook to what we experienced in 2016 and at its worst we could even see similar to what occurred in 2010 and 2011. That was the last significant La Niña event and the flood impacts in that event had devastating consequences right across Victoria.

“We know a protracted flood event is the last thing Victorian’s need in 2020, we’re preparing for it with our partner emergency services, and we need the community to be prepare for it too”

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Media contact

EMV Media

1300 287 289

media@emv.vic.gov.au