

Parks Victoria's actions in response to Fire Danger Ratings

All Licensed Tour Operators need to be aware of the safety issues during the fire season that may affect their tours and activities and that they meet their licence conditions.

Parks Victoria will continue to provide information regarding bushfire danger, recognising the need for individuals to take responsibility for their own actions and safety. While it is difficult, we will endeavour to do this in a way that doesn't discourage people from getting out and enjoying Victoria's parks and waterways at all other times.

The following information may assist you in planning your own response to bushfire risks.

Fire Danger Ratings

Victoria has adopted the new nationally agreed Fire Danger Rating scale to help communities understand information about fire danger. More information on the Fire Danger Ratings is available on the [CFA website](#).

Every day during the fire season the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts an outlook of the Fire Danger Index by considering elements of the predicted weather including temperature, relative humidity, wind speed, and dryness of vegetation. Fire agencies, in consultation with the Bureau, then consider a range of other factors relating to that area to set the Fire Danger Rating. Factors include the length of time the fire danger index has been elevated, the extent of fire already in the landscape, fuel and dryness and the likelihood of weather events such as lightning and grass fuel conditions.

Your customers will hear the Fire Danger Ratings in weather forecasts and through newspapers, radio, TV and on websites.

Parks Victoria will take the following action in response to the two highest levels of rating.

CODE RED DAYS

On days of forecasted '**Code Red**' Fire Danger Rating all parks and reserves identified as high bushfire risk will be closed. The closure will apply to the parks and reserves in the designated Bureau of Meteorology weather forecast district.

As many parks like the Otways and Alpine National Parks are large, open landscapes it is not possible to gate or fence off these areas so restricting access is difficult. For your own safety, act responsibly and don't enter parks and forests on these days.

A list of closed parks and information stressing the Code Red level of fire risk in these bushland areas will be provided on the [Parks Victoria website](#) and through the media. It should be noted that Code Red days are declared at noon the day before, so as soon as a decision is made to close parks it will be put on our website.

Advice to visitors will be that those planning to travel should review any plans to visit park or bushland areas. The best option is to avoid visiting the area until the warning period is over. For those who are already in a park or bushland area the safest option is to leave the night before.

Parks Victoria and DSE will encourage visitors already in these areas to contact the local Visitor Information Centre to find out about local risk, access routes and other tourism opportunities in lower risk areas, as well as the key communication points for bushfire updates.

In very high risk locations, a small number of parks will undertake closure at a Fire Danger Rating level below Code Red. These will be identified on the Parks Victoria website.



Planned Burns

Parks Victoria and the Department of Sustainability and Environment have a planned burning program in place to help protect communities and the environment from damaging bushfires. Planned burning remains our best available means for reducing fuel loads and bushfire risk, and we have a carefully planned program in place to take advantage of conditions to burn when it is safe and suitable to do so.

The wet weather can slow progress but as our parks and forests dry out we are getting burning going again. We appreciate that burning is sometimes inconvenient for you and your guests and customers, but every burn we do means we are better prepared for the fire season.

Please check the DSE website (www.dse.vic.gov.au) or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (1800 240 667) for the latest information about where planned burns are happening.

Licensed Tourism Operators and interstate travel

Arrangements for closing parks and reserves in South Australia and New South Wales may differ from those in Victoria. In South Australia and New South Wales parks and reserves are not automatically closed on a Code Red (Catastrophic) day. However temporary closures may be in place. You should check before taking your customers interstate.

Licensed Tourism Operators and Fire Danger Ratings

Operators need to ensure that they, and their staff, are in complete compliance with their licence conditions particularly General Conditions 3, 15 and 19.

Licence Tour operators need to ensure that their Emergency Response Plan outlines procedures to be followed including pre-planning for multi-day tours where weather conditions may escalate to Code Red, Extreme or Total Fire Ban days.

Licensed Tour Operators need to be aware that continuing tour operations and activities in a park that has been closed would, in Parks Victoria's view:

- (a) breach clause 19 of the general tour operator licence terms;
- (b) expose the tour operator and their clients to a foreseeable risk of death or personal injury;
- (c) may result in action being taken to suspend or cancel the licence; and
- (d) may have strong implications for the tour operator's personal legal liability and insurance if any person is injured or dies.

If tour operators are concerned about their legal liability they should seek their own legal advice.

We will continue to provide you with information. We urge you to keep in touch with the formal bushfire information channels listed below and through Parks Victoria's website and 13 1963 Info Centre.

For bushfire updates

- Tune into emergency broadcasters: ABC and local commercial radio stations and SKY NewsTV
- Ring the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667
- CFA website www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- Department of Sustainability and Environment www.dse.vic.gov.au