

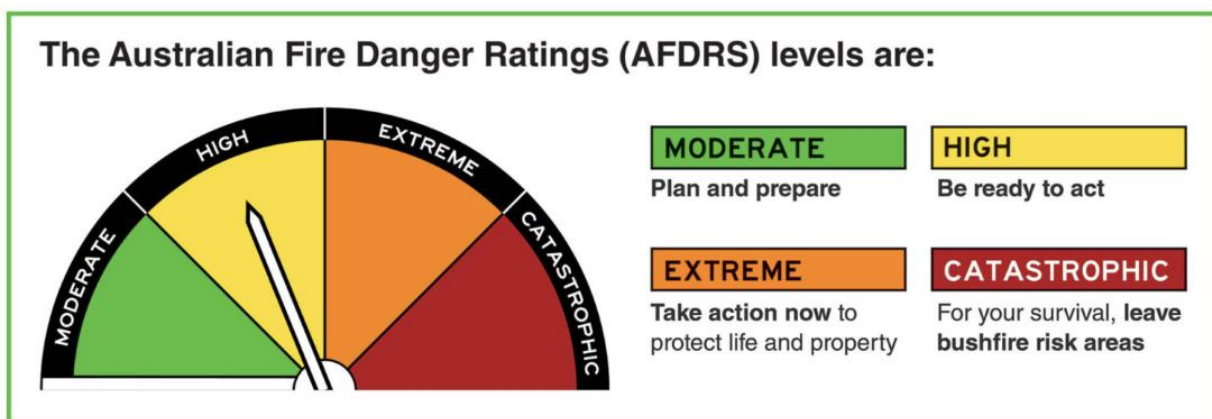
## 1. PURPOSE

This policy provides the service provision arrangements that need to be implemented within Horsham Rural City Council in the event that an Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger rating is issued by emergency management authorities in the state of Victoria.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Council is committed to ensuring that the safety of all employees, Councillors, contractors, labour hire staff, and volunteers (including Committee volunteers) and community is the highest priority.

Fire danger ratings describe the potential level of danger should a bushfire start. They are important because they provide people with information to take action to protect themselves and others from the potentially dangerous impacts of bushfires.



Source: [Australian Fire Danger Rating System](#)

This policy addresses Council's responsibility to plan and manage for the provision of services and Council information on days with the highest fire danger risk to maximise employee and community safety while ensuring appropriate emergency responses can be enacted as required.

## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to all employees, Councillors, contractors, labour hire staff and volunteers (including committee members) engaged in Council business.

*In the occurrence of an actual emergency event, which may or may not be on a declared 'Catastrophic' or 'Extreme' day, Council will enact the emergency management protocols as directed by emergency services which will take precedence over this policy.*

## 4. PRINCIPLES

Council will operate with altered or reduced service levels on '**Catastrophic**' days and may do so on days declared to be of '**Extreme**' fire danger for the following reasons.

- Large areas within Horsham Rural City Council are of high bushfire risk.
- Ensure Council operations do not unintentionally cause a fire to start.
- Ensure sufficient staff resources can be re-deployed to emergency response planning functions and in the event of a fire event provision of support to fire combating agencies and emergency relief centres.
- Provide for the safety of Council staff and ensure the community is not placed in situations of undue risk when travelling to and accessing Council services.

- Support staff that may take approved leave on Catastrophic days to attend to family arrangements and to enact personal bushfire survival plans.

## 4.1 Travel

All non-essential travel for Council business on Catastrophic days involving Councillors, staff, volunteers or contractors will be kept to a minimum. Non-essential travel and meetings will be rescheduled. Travel for the delivery of essential services will be subject to manager approval.

Any meetings of Council scheduled on a Catastrophic day where possible will be held virtually or rescheduled. This includes committee meetings of Community Asset Committee, Delegated Committee, Regulatory Committee, Community Reference Group and Advisory Committees.

Where appropriate, staff will be supported to work from home or work at alternative locations which result in less travel for them.

## 4.2 Services affected

The decision to close, adjust or reschedule Council services on a Catastrophic or Extreme fire danger day is based on the following principles:

1. Catastrophic days are very rare and very serious.
2. Extreme days can be very unpredictable, hot, dry and windy conditions.
3. The provision of any services will be subject to the availability of qualified and trained staff.
4. Community, staff, volunteer and councillor welfare is of significant importance.

## 4.3 Family Care Leave

4.3.1 Employees who are primary caregivers or have property threatened by fire or in a high-risk bushfire zone, may access Family Care Leave.

4.3.2 Process:

- Employees should notify their supervisor as early as possible if leave is required.
- Submit a leave application form for approval. In cases of insufficient prior notice, retrospective applications will be considered.

## 4.4 Personal Fire Plans

The Council acknowledges that individual staff members may have personal fire plans to protect their properties. These staff members should discuss their plans and circumstances with their supervisor to ensure appropriate planning for service delivery can be completed.

**For information relating to service delivery, refer to Appendix A of this policy.**

*Service levels could change from those listed in Appendix A at short notice due to the prevailing conditions, the presence of a fire emergency and/or lack of available staff on the day. Therefore, Council will wherever possible issue media releases and internal memo's outlining its services available on Catastrophic Days and if required Extreme Days.*

This policy is supported by internal protocols that support the operational implementation of this policy.

## 5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Implementation of this policy is the responsibility of all Directors and Managers under the direction of the Chief Executive Officer until such time as the Municipal Emergency Management Plan (MEMP) is enacted which may override this Policy during declared emergencies.

All employees, Councillors, contractors, labour hire staff and volunteers (including committee members) must be briefed on the terms of this policy, changes to services delivery and any procedures applicable to them during the declared fire danger days.

Council staff that are responsible for contractors, volunteers and labour hire staff are required to ensure that such individuals are enacting obligations outlined in this policy.

## 6. COMMUNICATION

This policy will be publicly available on Council's website and promoted seasonally internally and externally before commencement of the declared fire danger period.

## 7. RESPONSIBILITY

**Policy Owner:** Manager People and Safety

This Policy will be reviewed every 2 years or earlier as required by changed circumstances including changes to legislation and plans, strategies or policies of HRCC or change in Council's position on service delivery and emergency management.

## 8. DEFINITIONS

Term	Meaning
Australian Fire Danger Rating System	The Australian Fire Danger Rating System was introduced in 2022 across Australia. The Fire danger ratings tell you how dangerous a fire could be if one started. They are important because they help you decide what actions to take to protect yourself and others from bushfires and grassfires. Refer to the CFA website for further details.
Catastrophic fire danger rating	The State Government has the capacity through emergency services to declare certain bushfire prone days as "Catastrophic" in accordance with the Australian Fire Danger Rating System Catastrophic is the highest level of rating in Australia and it signifies the most dangerous conditions for a fire. It means that if a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost. Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. Refer to the CFA website for further details.
CFA	Country Fire Authority
Extreme fire danger rating	The State Government has the capacity through emergency services to declare certain bushfire prone days as "Extreme" in accordance with the Australian Fire Danger Rating System Extreme is the second highest level of rating in Australia and it signifies the dangerous conditions for a fire. It means that if a fire starts and takes hold, fires will spread quickly. Expect hot, dry and windy conditions. Refer to the CFA website for further details.
Fire Danger Period	Period of time when the CFA restricts use of fire in the community and is declared for each municipality at the commencement of the fire season.
Fire danger ratings	Indicators of how dangerous a fire would be on a particular day if one started and how hard it would be to put out.
Total Fire Ban	A Total fire Ban sets the legal restrictions on what activities can and cannot occur, with the aim to reduce activities that may start a fire. If a Total Fire Ban has not been declared, fire restrictions may still apply for each municipality. Total Fire Bans are normally declared by 5pm on the day before a ban but can be declared or revoked at any time.

## 9. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Document	Location
HRCC Risk Management Policy & Framework	HRCC Website & Intranet
Municipal Emergency Management Plan	HRCC Website & Intranet
Municipal Fire Management Sub-Plan	HRCC Website & Intranet
Vic Emergency	Internet & App
CFA	Internet
Heat Wave Help	Internet
Heat Health	Internet

## 10. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Version Number	Approval Date	Approval By	Amendment	Review Date
01	26 October 2015	EMG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New framework</li> </ul>	20 October 2019
02	20 December 2022	EMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed to reflect the AFDRS and changes to the organisational structure</li> </ul>	20 December 2025
2.1	October 2023	n/a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New logo</li> </ul>	20 December 2025
03	13 December 2024	EMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significant re-write of the former 'Staff safety during "Catastrophic" fire danger declared days policy' to broaden the parameters for provision of Council services on days declared extreme or catastrophic.</li> </ul>	13 December 2026

*It is recognised that from time-to-time circumstances may change leading to the need for minor administrative changes to Council and Administrative Policies. Where an update does not materially alter a Policy, such a change may be made administratively, without the need for formal adoption by EMT or Council. Examples include a change to the name of a Council Department/Position Title, a change to the name of a Federal or State Government Department, and a minor update to legislation which does not have a material impact. However, all changes will be noted in the document control section and version number updated.*



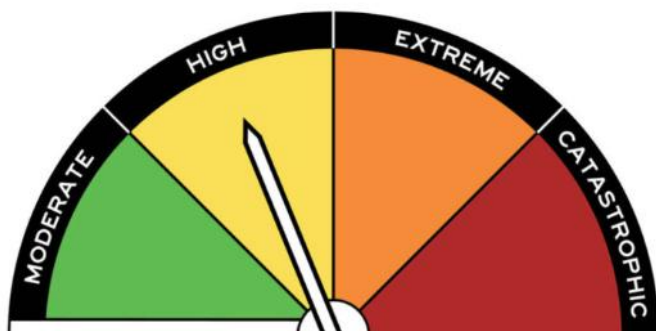
## Council services on Catastrophic or Extreme Fire Danger Rated days

Horsham Rural City Council’s services may be limited or cancelled when the National Fire Danger Rating System reaches a certain level.

On days of Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, Council will try to keep services running, but for safety of our community and staff we may make some changes or cancel them all together. This is a summary of the services that may or may not be provided during these times.

### Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS)

The Australian Fire Danger Rating System describes the potential level of danger, should a bushfire start. It provides people with information so they can take action to protect themselves and others from the potentially dangerous impacts of bushfires.



CATEGORY	MESSAGE
NO RATING	No proactive community action required
MODERATE	Plan and prepare
HIGH	Be ready to act
EXTREME	Take action now to protect life and property
CATASTROPHIC	For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas

### For Further Information

**VicEmergency**  
[www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond)

**CFA** [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

**Heat Wave Help** [www.heatwavehelp.com.au](http://www.heatwavehelp.com.au)

**Heat Health** [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

Service levels could change from those listed at short notice due to the prevailing conditions, the presence of a fire emergency and/or lack of available staff on the day. Therefore, Council will wherever possible issue media releases outlining its services available on Catastrophic Days and if required Extreme Days.

## Transfer stations and bin collection

Service	Extreme Take action now	Catastrophic Leave bush fire risk areas
Bin collection (general waste, recycling, FOGO, glass)	Normal Service	Services times may be affected
Dooen Landfill	Normal Service	Services times may be affected
Horsham Transfer Station	Normal Service	CLOSED
Mt Zero Transfer Station	Normal Service	CLOSED
Quantong Transfer Station	Normal Service	CLOSED
Toolondo Transfer Station	Normal Service	CLOSED

## Youth & Early Years

Service	Extreme Take action now	Catastrophic Leave bush fire risk areas
HRCC Youth Council	Normal Service	Reschedule
Immunisation services	Normal Service	No service outside the urban area, all appointments rescheduled
Maternal & Child Health Services including supported playgroups	Normal Service	No service outside the urban area, all appointments rescheduled. Wellbeing checks may be made via phone

## Facilities

Service	Extreme Act now	Catastrophic Leave bush fire risk areas
Civic Centre	Normal Service	Normal Service (subject to staff availability, access may be restricted)
Depot	Normal Service	Restricted or essential
Horsham Airport	Normal Service	Normal Service
Horsham Regional Livestock Exchange	Normal Service	Normal Service
Kalkee Road Children's and Community Hub	Normal Service	Normal Service
Library (Horsham)	Normal Service	Normal service (subject to staff availability)
Library (Harrow, Edenhope, Goroke, Kaniva)	Restricted service may apply in high risk areas	Closed or Restricted service in high risk areas
The Station	Normal Service	Access may be restricted, no volunteers onsite
Visitor Centre & Art Gallery <sup>1</sup>	Normal Service	Access may be restricted, no volunteers onsite
Wimmera Business Centre	Normal Service	Normal Service (subject to staff availability, access may be restricted)

## Additional Services

Service	Extreme Take action now	Catastrophic Leave bush fire risk areas
Animal Management	Normal Service	Restricted service
School Crossing	Normal Service	Subject to Department of Education's advice on school closures
Urban Roadside slashing, mowing & chainsaw usage	Normal Service	Restricted service
Rural Roadside slashing, mowing & chainsaw usage	Normal Service	Emergency management services only
Urban Road construction/maintenance	Normal Service	Restricted Service
Rural Road construction/maintenance	Normal Service	Emergency management services only
Community Engagement	In person community engagement may be rescheduled	In person community engagement postponed
Council owned and managed property (site inspections, maintenance) <sup>2</sup>	Normal service, may be restricted in high risk areas	Restricted or essential services
Events	Strong recommendation to cancel/postpone if event is outdoors or if there is a sizable gathering/movement of people. Advice may be sought from the CFA. Event organisers should refer to their risk assessment/emergency plan for Extreme, Catastrophic, and Total Fire Ban cancellation arrangements.	
Parks, Gardens & Reserves	Extreme Take action now	Catastrophic Leave bush fire risk areas
Council owned and managed outdoor open spaces	Will remain open, with visitors to these facilities encouraged to be vigilant for fire warning messages from emergency services and avoid these areas where possible.	

<sup>1</sup> Visitors are advised to contact the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 or download the VicEmergency app for travel advice

<sup>2</sup> Contractor response dependent on level of risk associated with property request

