



WORKING WITH EMERGENCY RESPONSE AGENCIES

**Protocols for media outlets and personnel
attending emergency incidents**



**FOREST FIRE
MANAGEMENT VICTORIA**

INTENT

This protocol guides the working relationship between media outlets, media personnel and emergency response agencies at significant fire and bushfire incidents (for simplicity, hitherto referred to as 'incidents').

Emergency response agencies recognise the importance of strong partnerships with media. Media play a vital role during incidents to communicate timely and relevant information to the public and relationships between media and agencies should be characterised by cooperation, goodwill, and understanding.

It is essential that all personnel, whether from an emergency response agency or media outlet, understand the risk inherent in incidents such as bushfires, and appreciate that incidents and emergencies are dynamic by nature.

The intent of these protocols is to assist media and emergency response agencies to work safely and effectively at an incident under the direction of the Incident Controller.

PROTOCOL

Minimum requirements for attending an incident scene

1.1 In order to attend an incident scene media personnel must have:

- Current Media Accreditation based on the successful completion and renewal of the 'Maintain Safety for Media' online course.
For details on media accreditation process, visit: news.cfa.vic.gov.au/news-media/media-room or email mediaaccreditation@cfa.vic.gov.au
- A current media accreditation card, which will be issued upon the completion of the Maintain Safety for Media online course, and the provision of an up-to-date photo.
- Personal Protective Clothing & Equipment (PPC&E) in line with relevant Australian Standards. (Current Standards are set out in **Appendix Three – PPC&E Guideline**). Note that PPC&E may be required at incidents other than bushfires and must have permanent "media" markings.

1.2 To attend an incident, media must be prepared to operate within the arrangements, processes and decisions set out in these protocols and to abide by the direction of the Incident Controller or their nominated delegate throughout the duration of the incident.

1.3 It is the responsibility of media to seek information and ensure they are aware of control arrangements in place, including the incident scene boundaries designated by the Incident Controller.

- 1.4 To qualify for CFA/FFMVic media accreditation, an individual must be one of the following:
- Employed by a recognised media organisation based in Victoria, or near the Victorian border (3-year accreditation issued)
 - Employed by a recognised Australian or international media organisation with plans to attend specific incidents in Victoria only in the near future (1-year accreditation issued*)
 - A freelancer commissioned by a recognised media organisation to attend specific incidents in Victoria only in the near future (3-year accreditation issued)
- 1.5 It is up to the discretion of the CFA and FFMVic Media teams to determine what constitutes a recognised media organisation. Social media channels without evidence of producing local news or operating in line with journalistic principles are not considered recognised media organisations.

*The media representative only has to do the Maintain Safety course every three years, but the accreditation will be issued for 12 months at a time, dependent on confirmation of status.

ACCESS

Note that reference to the 'Incident Controller' in this section may refer to the individual fulfilling this role, or to their nominated delegate.

- 2.1 Incident Management Teams may scale up or down (adding more or fewer roles) in line with the scale or complexity of the incident. The Incident Controller bears ultimate responsibility for all decisions taken throughout the duration of an incident, including the safety of all individuals at an incident scene.
- 2.2 Media representatives wishing to attend an incident must first contact the control agency media line for details about staging area access. (See **Appendix Two 'Contacts'** for details).
- 2.3 The media unit/officer will advise on relevant arrangements in place for the incident. This may include a local contact number, or the location of a staging area, Incident Control Centre or other designated gathering point for media.
- 2.4 On arrival at the designated gathering point, media wishing to enter the incident scene boundaries must first seek and gain permission of the Incident Controller.
- 2.5 Access to an incident scene is **not** guaranteed. Access – and any provisions or conditions – will be granted at the discretion of the Incident Controller.
- 2.6 Passage to an incident scene may require progression through a Traffic Management Point (TMP). On arrival, personnel staffing the TMP (usually Victoria Police) may contact the Incident Control Centre to determine whether it is safe to proceed.
- 2.7 Depending on the level of risk or status of the incident, media may need to be escorted by a suitably qualified and endorsed member of a response agency as they go through the TMP and at all times within the designated incident scene boundaries.

2.8 **Traffic Management Point Categories***

From Joint Standard Operating Procedure SOP J03.10

Access level		ID/authorisation	Responsibility and authority
A	Emergency Services Only Access - Media generally not permitted access. If permitted, media escort must be in place.	Agency media accreditation and media escort (if authorised)	Control agency
B	Essential Services Access - Media may be granted access under escort by emergency services personnel	Agency media accreditation and media escort arranged (from staging area)	
C	Authorised Access – Media generally granted access without escort – Local community/residents and media generally granted access without escort	Agency media accreditation	
D	Authorised Access – Media generally granted access Agency no longer requires TMP, but the road owner requires TMP to address road-related issues. Closed to public, open to local community/residents and media.	Agency media accreditation	Road authority
OPEN	Open to all	Not required, open to all	

*Note this is indicative only – permission may vary at the discretion of the Incident Controller.

2.9 On arrival at the incident scene, media **must** make their presence known to emergency response agencies and formally register their attendance if asked to do so.

2.10 Within the incident scene, an Emergency Response Agency Media Officer may assist by:

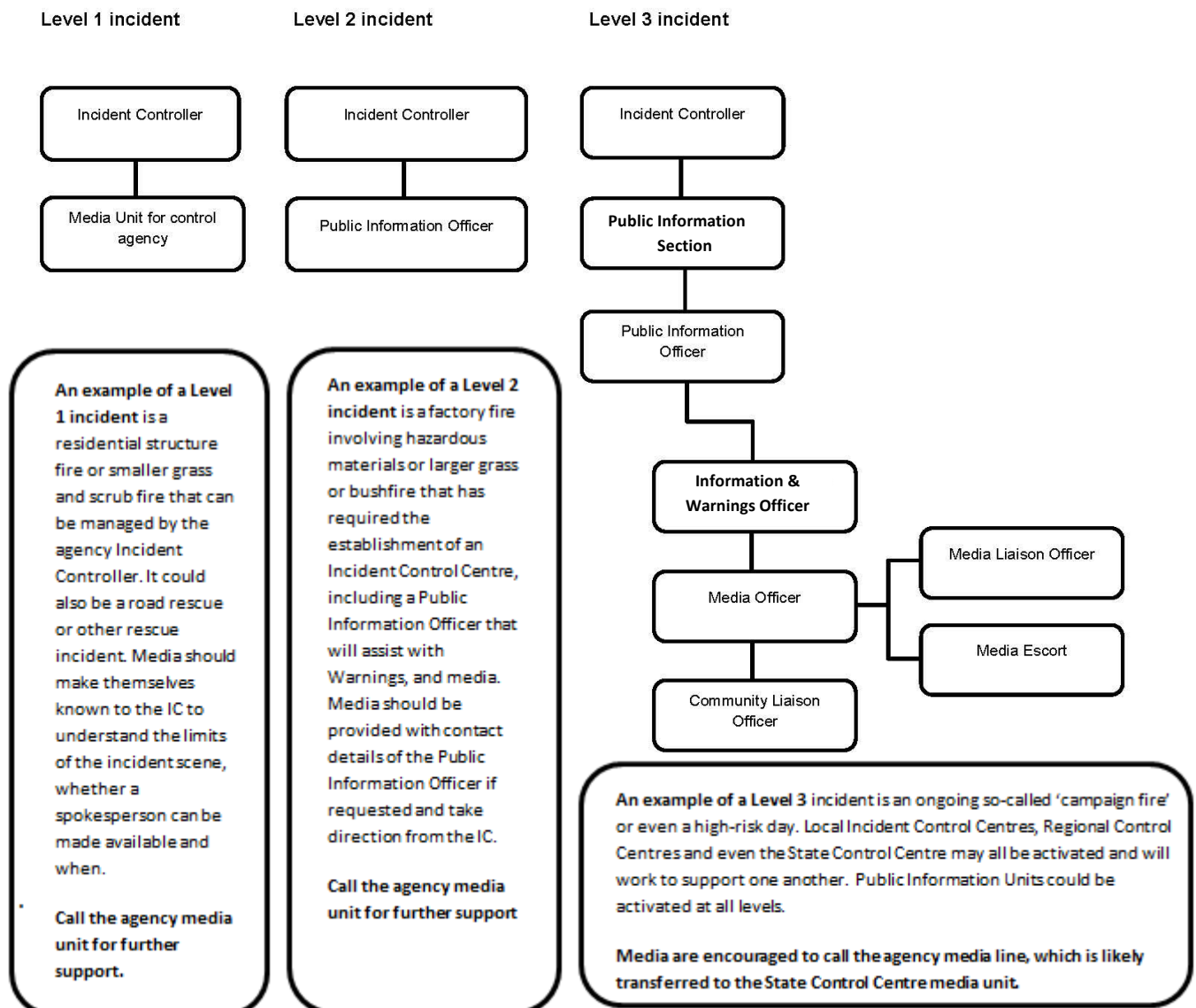
- Providing a safety briefing
- Ensuring appropriate communication arrangements are in place
- Arranging a media escort where available
- Providing or relaying instructions based on the current status of the incident
- Arranging media interviews

REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

Reporting arrangements for media representatives at bushfires

3.1 Media personnel can seek information from the respective control agency about the incident classification.

Incident Classification	Description
Level 1	Level 1 incidents are generally characterised by being able to be resolved through the use of local or initial response resources only.
Level 2	Level 2 incidents may be more complex either in size, resources or risk. They are characterised by the need for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deployment of resources beyond initial response; or • sectorisation of the incident; or • the establishment of functional sections due to the levels of complexity; or • a combination of the above.
Level 3	Level 3 incidents are characterised by degrees of complexity that may require the establishment of divisions for effective management of the situation. These incidents will usually involve delegation of all functions.



NON-COMPLIANCE


- 4.1 Media who do not follow these protocols, particularly if accessing an incident scene unescorted, endanger themselves and others. Emergency response agencies or police personnel required to deal with breaches of these protocols may be diverted from other high-priority tasks or may be forced to enter unsafe situations. **It is the responsibility of media outlets** to ensure the actions of their employees are consistent with the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety legislation.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of media to ensure they are aware of incident scene boundaries as designated by the Incident Controller and adhere to those boundaries.
- 4.3 Victoria Police officers may remove media representatives from an incident scene who:
 - Are endangering their own lives or the lives of others.
 - Fail to meet minimum requirements for attending an incident scene (see **Minimum requirements for attending an incident scene**).
 - Fail to comply with instructions from a police member or the Incident Controller.
 - Fail to depart immediately from the fire ground after instructed to do so.
- 4.4 Following breaches of this protocol the following actions may be taken:
 - Formal notification provided to WorkSafe.
 - Individual media representative banned for the duration of the incident.
 - Media agency as a whole banned for the duration of the incident.
 - Individual media accreditation rescinded.
 - Written warning to the media agency's OH&S representative.

ISSUES AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- 5.1 Where safe to do so, it is always preferable that issues or disputes concerning these protocols be resolved at a local level before formal measures are taken.
- 5.2 The Incident Controller or his/her delegate (such as the Public Information Officer or State Control Centre/agency Media Unit) will nominate and lead any dispute resolution procedures. These may include discussions with the Chief of Staff around OH&S responsibilities.
- 5.3 If media have any issues or queries about the classification or enforcement of specific safety protocols or TMPs in the field, they can contact the Incident Control Centre or agency media unit, if applicable.

REVIEW

The operation of this Protocol will be subject to review and analysis by the fire agencies prior to the commencement of each fire season.

<p>Jason Heffernan Chief Officer Country Fire Authority</p>  <p>13 October 2022</p>	<p>Chris Hardman Chief Fire Officer Forest Fire Management Victoria</p>  <p>1 September 2022</p>
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APPENDIX ONE – GLOSSARY

Media outlet	Any organisation, agency or self-employed individual involved.
Media personnel	Any individual employed or contracted to perform media-related duties for or by a media agency, or acting in a self-employment or freelance basis in the media field.
Control Agency	The agency, service, organisation or authority which, by legislative authority, is responsible for the control of an incident.
Traffic Management Point	A point established to control and limit access to the incident area. It provides a means of managing the entry of residents, media, emergency services and essential services.
Media Assembly Point	The location identified by the Incident Controller or his delegate as being the safe location for media representatives to gather at the incident scene. Media Assembly Points are most often designated at structure fires.
Media Accreditation Card	The acknowledgement provided to media representatives who have completed and been assessed by CFA as competent and current in 'Maintain Safety at CFA Incidents. The media accreditation card must be displayed at all times when attending an incident, passing through Traffic Management Points and on the fire ground.
Incident Controller	The individual responsible for the management of all incident control activities across a whole incident. The Incident Controller also sets the boundaries of an incident.
Incident Control Centre	The facility where an Incident Controller manages response activities, following the transfer of the Incident Control function from the field-based Incident Controller. This is also where various members of the Incident Management Team are based.
Incident Scene	An event, occurrence or set of circumstances that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field location from which the Incident Controller operates • Has a definite spatial extent • Has a definite duration • Calls for human intervention • Has a set of concluding conditions that can be defined • Is or will be under the control of an individual who has the authority to make decisions about the means by which it will be brought to an end

APPENDIX TWO – MEDIA CONTACTS

State Control Centre Media

Phone (N/A - Relevant agency media lines are forwarded to the State Control Centre when it is activated.)

The State Control Centre media unit may be activated in preparedness for, response to, or recovery from an emergency across Victoria.

The CFA media line will be forwarded to the State Control Centre media unit when it is activated for any of these reasons in relation to bushfires.

The State Control Centre media unit is staffed by Victorian public service staff from a range of government departments and agencies. While they have been trained, they are not always familiar with all aspects that may be raised by media outlets in relation to media accreditation and media access. Media can always ask for their question to be escalated to the Media Officer in charge of the media unit at the time, or to be referred to the agency (CFA) media duty officer on call.

CFA Media

Phone: 1300 CFA MED(IA) - 1300 232 633

Please note that outside business hours (7am-6pm Mon-Fri), the CFA Media line is diverted to an operational communications team that is also managing emergency incidents on behalf of the organisation.

During the bushfire season, the media line is often diverted to the State Control Centre when it is activated for major bushfires or high bushfire risk.

FFMVic Media

Phone: 03 8624 3400 (non-incident)

Phone diverts to on-call person after hours.

SCC Media Phone: 8684 7166 (during incident)

Please note bush or structure fires on private land (other than those within the FRV inner-metropolitan area and built-up areas on the suburban fringe and in regional centres – please see map at frv.vic.gov.au/response-area) are generally managed by CFA. Bushfires that occur in Victoria's National Parks and State Forests are generally managed by FFMVic.

The fire and emergency agencies work closely in support of each other. A range of agencies assist to staff the State Control Centre during the fire season.

Either agency's media unit should be able to assist if you are unsure which agency is managing a particular incident. View current incidents at emergency.vic.gov.au

APPENDIX THREE – Personal Protective Clothing & Equipment (PPC&E) Guidelines

It is mandatory that any member of the media attending a bushfire is wearing appropriate protective clothing on the fire ground. This must be procured/supplied by the individual or their outlet. Any media representatives found not using appropriate PPC&E may be removed from a fire ground or incident scene for their own safety.

Media may also be required to wear their PPC&E during major incidents such as factory fires or hazardous materials incidents. CFA recommends that media have PPC&E with them when attending any fire-related incident.

Each media representative on the fire ground must have all of the below items as part of their individual kit. Each item must meet the relevant Australian Standard.

Item	Standard	Additional information
Bushfire Helmet	AS/NZS 1801.Type 3	Helmet should be blue with the word 'media' printed in white lettering on both sides of the helmet.
Bushfire Coat and Pants (or overalls)	AS/NZS 4824: 2006	N/A
Patches		Patches with the word 'MEDIA' to be affixed to the upper back, front left pocket and right sleeve of the overalls.
Goggles	AS/NZS 1337	N/A
Firefighting Boots	AS/NZS 4824: Type 1 or Type 2	N/A
Disposable P2Class Respirator	AS/NZS 1716 or EN 149	N/A
Firefighting Gloves	AS/NZS 2161.6 Type 1	N/A



For more information, including details of suppliers, please contact CFA Media: **1300 CFA MED(IA) (1300 232 633)** or cfamedia@cfa.vic.gov.au