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JOINT SOP (header spanning)	
Title	Red Flag Warnings
Purpose	To ensure all emergency personnel at emergencies receive timely and accurate information relevant to their safety.
Scope	This Joint Standard Operating Procedure (JSOP) applies to all emergency personnel when attending emergency incidents and planned burning operations. Red Flag Warnings may not apply to fires under the control of the MFB, these safety messages will be disseminated via normal agency procedures.
Applicable Agencies	This procedure applies to the following agency personnel; • CFA • DELWP • MFB • VICSES
Content	The procedural contents of this SOP are: • Step 1: What is a Red Flag Warning • Step 2: When is a Red Flag Warning required • Step 3: Who can issue a Red Flag Warning • Step 4: Who needs to be advised of the issue of a Red Flag Warning • Step 5: Dissemination process • Step 6: Warning Format • Step 7: Acknowledgement Process • Step 8: Actions when a reissued warning is not acknowledged. • Step 9: Cancelling a Red Flag Warning
Responsibilities	CFA, DELWP, VICSES and MFB are required to ensure all their operational members are aware and have an understanding of this Joint SOP on the use of and processes associated with Red Flag Warnings.
Definitions	The following definitions apply to this procedure: **Briefing** A concise summary of the major factors of an incident. **Red Flag Warning** A process for passing critical safety information to incident personnel, to support decisions making regarding strategy tactics and deployment of resources.

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PROCEDURE

1. What is a Red Flag Warning

   1.1. A Red Flag Warning is a message issued when there is a significant change to any critical information that may adversely affect the safety of personnel located at an emergency.

2. When is a Red Flag Warning Required

   2.1. A Red Flag Warning should be issued when there is, or is predicted to be, a significant risk to safety due to changed circumstances, including but not limited to:

   - Weather conditions;
   - Incident conditions and/ or behaviour;
   - Equipment availability;
   - Communications arrangements;
   - Access.

3. Who can issue a Red Flag Warning

   3.1. A Red Flag Warning for a specific incident may only be issued by the following personnel, in their area of responsibility:

   - Sector Commander;
   - Division Commander;
   - Operations Officer;
   - Incident Controller;
   - State Response Controller, Regional Controller, State and Regional Agency Commanders, State Duty Officer, Operations Manager, and the rostered Area or District Duty Officer (to be issued via the Incident Controller).

   3.2. The personnel referred to in the last point above should only issue Red Flag Warnings for the geographic area likely to be affected by the changed circumstances.

4. Who needs to be advised of the issue of a Red Flag Warning

   4.1. Where a Red Flag Warning is issued, the person initiating the warning is required to also advise their immediate supervisor, who shall communicate the Red Flag Warning up the chain of command to the Regional Controller, and where appropriate, to other personnel under their supervision. In addition, the Red Flag Warning should be noted in the next scheduled situation report issued on behalf of the Incident Controller.

5. Dissemination Process

   5.1. Red Flag Warnings can be disseminated by any appropriate means including:

   - Radio;
   - Telephone;
   - Written notice (fax, email etc.);
   - Verbal.

   5.2. When broadcast by radio, a Red Flag Warning are required to be given priority over all other radio traffic except for a "Mayday" message.

5.3. Pagers are not a preferred method to disseminate Red Flag Warnings and should only be used where deemed appropriate.

    5.3.1. Personnel issuing the warning are required to consider that EAS pager messages can only be sent as 'Non-Emergency', and therefore may be delayed under some circumstances, that agencies utilise different paging systems and pagers may not be carried by all personnel.

    5.3.2. If used to disseminate warning, the pager message needs to contain the required acknowledgement process and details.

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6. Red Flag Warning Format

6.1. Red Flag Warnings, regardless of how they are disseminated, are required to be preceded by the words, "Red Flag Warning" and be communicated as follows:

"Red Flag Warning from (name, position). All personnel are advised of (actual / forecast where appropriate) conditions that may present a hazard to personnel as follows: … (actual / forecast conditions). All personnel are to take this information into account in determining strategy, tactics and deployment.
This warning is to be passed to all personnel under your command and is current up to *_____ hrs. __/__/__. Acknowledgement is required."*

6.2. The warning should be specific to the key audience (e.g. the Eastern Division) to minimise radio congestion.

7. Acknowledgement Process

7.1. Emergency Personnel who receive a Red Flag Warning are required to:

- Immediately confirm that they have received the Red Flag Warning,
- Repeat the key points of the warning (e.g. time, etc.) back to demonstrate that they understand the warning;
- Notify all responding and supporting agency personnel and any other resources that they are supervising or who are reporting to them of the Red Flag Warning; and
- Obtain a confirmation from the response and support agency personnel that they are supervising that they have received the Red Flag Warning.

Note: Refer to Schedule 1 for an example of the Red Flag Warning dissemination and acknowledgement process.

7.2. Should acknowledgement not be received, a reissue of the communication containing the Red Flag Warning is to be undertaken.

7.3. Any person, to Crew Leader level, who receives and/or forwards a Red Flag Warning are required to log:

- Who communicated the Red Flag Warning;
- The time it was received;
- What information it contained;
- How it was received (e.g. telephone, radio etc.);
- Who you disseminated it on to; and
- The time acknowledgements were received from those you supervise.

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8. Actions when a reissued warning is not acknowledged;

   8.1. If the repeated Red Flag Warning has not been acknowledged, the person sending the warning should take appropriate steps to determine the reason why the warning has not been acknowledged and report this to the Incident Controller or immediate supervisor.

9. Cancelling a Red Flag Warning

   9.1. If no timing was given in the warning when issued, consideration should be given to advising those warned when the dangerous situation has concluded. This should be done by normal means of communication.

SAFETY

Emergency Personnel need to ensure that the protection and preservation of life is maintained at all times.

In the application of this JSOP the following safety considerations apply:

- If a Red Flag Warning is issued, it is essential that all emergency personnel are advised and what actions they need to take for their safety.

REFERENCE

Related Documents	*Emergency Management Act 1986*
	Emergency Management Act 2013
	State Emergency Response Plan 1 August 2016 (EMMV Part 3)
	SOP J2.02 Incident Communications Planning.
	SOP J3.04 Incident Safety Management Functions
Environment	Nil

AUTHORITY		

The Emergency Management Commissioner has issued this SOP under section 50 of the Emergency Management Act 2013.

Approved	**Signature**	**Date**
Craig Lapsley Emergency Management Commissioner		

Endorsed	**Signature**	**Date**
Steve Warrington Chief Officer, CFA		
Darrin McKenzie, Acting Chief Fire Officer DELWP		
Paul Stacchino Acting Chief Officer, MFB		
Trevor White Chief Officer Operations VICSES		

Schedule 1

Example of Red Flag Warning dissemination and acknowledgement process


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Step 1: For example, if the Operations Officer initiates a Red Flag Warning, they issue it to Division Commanders. The Operations Officer then advises the Incident Controller.

Step 2: Division Commanders acknowledge receipt and repeat back the key points of the Warning to demonstrate understanding.

Step 3: Division Commanders issue the Red Flag Warning to Sector Commanders.

Step 4: Sector Commanders acknowledge receipt and repeat back the key points of the Warning to demonstrate understanding.

Step 5: Sector Commanders issue Warning to Strike Team/ Task Force Leaders and any others they are supervising, who acknowledge receipt (Step 6), and issue the Warning to their crew members (Step 7), who acknowledge the Warning (Step 8).

Incident Controller

Operations Officer

Step 1 → Step 2 →

Division Commander

Step 3 → Step 4 →

Sector Commander

Step 5 → Step 6 →

Strike Team/Task Force Leaders

Step 7 → Step 8 →

Crew members
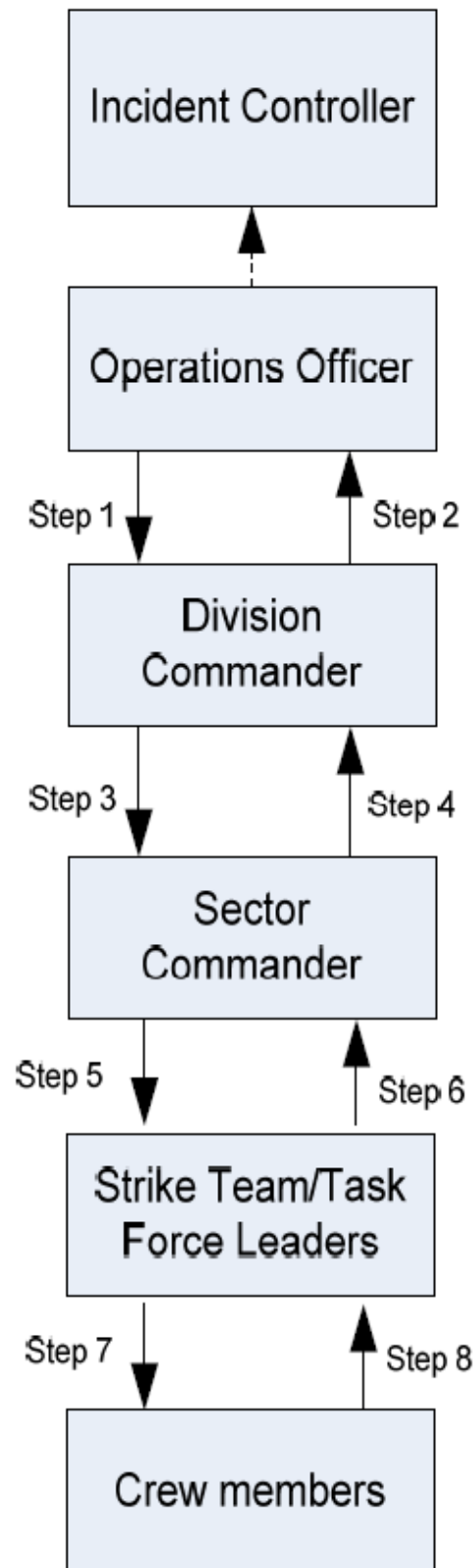
Note: Should acknowledgement not occur, Red Flag Warning should be re issued.