

PROCEDURE 3

Bushfire and smoke threat

Purpose: Leave early when the site's trigger is reached; avoid last-minute animal transport through smoke, flame, falling trees or closed roads.



SITE CUSTOMISATION REQUIRED. This national baseline must be adapted through a site risk assessment, worker consultation and advice from the relevant state or territory regulator, emergency services, council, insurer and veterinarian. Human life takes priority.

Business and site details

Business legal name		Trading name	
Site / branch		ABN	
Physical address		Emergency entry / cross street	
Site manager		Incident Controller	
Maximum dogs		Maximum people	
Operating hours		Main phone	

Document control

Issue date		Next review date	
Approved by		Position	

Activate this procedure when

- Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating where specified by the site plan; local fire in the district; Watch and Act or Emergency Warning; ember attack, smoke or road threat.

P Protect people	A Alert and activate	W Welfare and secure dogs	S Sign off accountability
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Step-by-step emergency response

1

Monitor and decide early. Use official fire-agency and Bureau of Meteorology information. Do not rely on receiving a warning.

2

Activate the pre-evacuation trigger. Suspend admissions, contact owners, secure every dog, load medicines and records, and relocate before fire is in the area. Leaving early is the safer option.

3

Confirm destination and routes. Check the primary and alternate route, fuel, road closures and that the destination accepts the number and types of dogs.

4

Load by manifest. Use secure crates or restraints, separate incompatible dogs, label every position and record vehicle, driver, departure time and destination.

5

Notify. Tell the nominated off-site contact where each vehicle is going. Follow emergency-services directions even if they differ from the plan.

6

If it is no longer safe to leave. Call 000 if life is threatened, follow local fire-agency instructions, shelter in the site's nominated safer location, keep dogs securely contained and do not attempt to outrun fire without a safe route.

Do not

STOP	Wait until smoke or flames are visible to start moving a high number of dogs.
STOP	Drive around roadblocks or through dense smoke.
STOP	Tie dogs where they cannot escape heat or embers.

After the immediate danger

- Assess air quality, ash, hot surfaces, fencing, water and utilities before return.
- Arrange veterinary review for smoke inhalation, burns, eye irritation or heat illness.
- Clean ash using suitable PPE and prevent dogs licking contaminated coats, paws, water or debris.

Assigned emergency roles

Incident Controller	Selects the safe action, liaises with emergency services and authorises recovery.	
People / Area Warden	Protects people, sweeps assigned areas if safe and reports status.	
Dog Movement / Canine FA	Secures, identifies, separates, triages and moves dogs within training.	
Communications / Recorder	Calls services and owners, maintains the time log and preserves records.	

Procedure readiness checklist

- ☐ Set written pre-evacuation triggers using local fire-agency warnings and the site's transport time.
- ☐ Monitor official fire information and weather conditions during elevated fire danger.
- ☐ Maintain secure transport capacity for the site's maximum dog occupancy, including medications and records.
- ☐ Confirm primary and alternate relocation sites that accept the number and types of dogs in care.
- ☐ Keep vehicles fuelled, routes checked and drivers available before conditions deteriorate.
- ☐ Provide suitable PPE for ash clean-up and a veterinary plan for smoke or heat exposure.

Site-specific arrangements

Pre-evacuation trigger	
Primary relocation destination	
Primary and alternate routes	
Vehicle / crate capacity	

Emergency contacts and notifications

Triple Zero if life is threatened		State or territory fire agency	
Owners, veterinarian and insurer		Primary / emergency vet	

Recommended drill: Load by manifest, depart before the trigger is exceeded and report vehicle destinations off site.

Drill, review and authorisation record

Last drill date		Participants	
Corrective action owner		Action due date	
Procedure authorised by		Authorisation date	
Gaps identified / corrective actions			

Sources and further guidance

[6] [Australian Warning System](#)
[8] [Bureau of Meteorology - Warnings and alerts](#)
[11] [CFA Victoria - Pets and bushfires](#)
[14] [CFA Victoria - Leave early](#)
[19] [Safe Work Australia - Incident notification](#)

Review date: source links and national emergency numbers were checked for the master manual on 31 August 2026. Confirm local numbers, warnings, laws, codes, licences and veterinary arrangements before issue and at every review.

