

	<p>ACT Rural Fire Service Standard Operating Procedure 1.6 Access to Private or Government Land</p>	<p>1.6 Administrative Management</p>
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Purpose

This procedure describes the processes to be followed by fire fighting crews when attempting to access a fire on lands where delays may occur because:

- An access gate is locked, or
- Easy access cannot be found.

It also describes the process to be followed when accessing a fire on private or leased lands where access is gained by cutting a fence.

The ACT Government Land Management Agencies (GLMA) manage much of the land within the ACT. On occasions members of the Rural Fire Service (RFS) will need to access these lands for either fire suppression, training, or for area familiarisation purposes. This SOP provides guidance on the access arrangements to GLMA areas by members of the RFS.

Operating Procedure

ACCESSING GOVERNMENT LAND MANAGED AREAS

While it is acknowledged that it is often necessary for fire fighters to gain access through locked gates or fences during fire suppression operations, fire fighters have a responsibility for ensuring that there is minimal impact to these areas as a result of this access. The following points will assist both fire fighters and government land managers in accessing fires:

1. If a land management staff member is present, follow their advice about how to access the fire, but do not compromise crew safety;
2. Never drive over a fence, always gain access by using a gate or only if absolutely necessary by cutting a fence;
3. If gaining access through a locked gate, always cut a link in the chain rather than cutting a padlock;
4. If cutting a fence, always cut halfway between two fence posts and not right up close to the fence post.
5. The Incident Controller is to do whatever they can to temporarily repair the fence or gate and is to advise the RFS Duty Officer (RFS DO) through ESA Communications Centre (COMCEN) of the location and the extent of the damage caused to the fence or gate.

ACCESSING PRIVATE OR LEASED LANDS

If necessary fences can be pulled down, severed or removed on private or leased land provided that the Incident Controller ensures that the fences are temporarily repaired and the landowner notified as soon as possible after this has occurred. Points 2 to 4 above also apply when accessing private or leased lands.

If for any reason fire fighters are unable to affect the temporary repair of a fence or are unable to contact the landowner, the Incident Controller is to be notified immediately.

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The RFS DO will then take all reasonable action for ensuring that the fence is temporarily repaired and the landowner notified. If there is stock in a paddock that has had the fence pulled down, severed, or removed, fire-fighting crews are to ensure that there is no possibility of this stock straying onto a roadway or adjoining paddocks. This may require the fire fighting crews to remain at the location of the fence damage until it has been repaired.

ENTERING GOVERNMENT MANAGED LANDS FOR FIRE SUPPRESSION

For the purposes of fire suppression, members of the RFS may, without prior approval of the GLMA, enter any land regardless of tenure. The RFS DO may advise the appropriate Agency Representative who can support the response by:

- Advising on best access and egress,
- Utilising supplied keys or arranging for appropriate gates to be opened,
- Advising on other activities that may be taking place in the vicinity of the incident, and
- Advising of any special considerations that need to be taken into account.

If necessary the RFS DO will, through COMCEN, advise the responding brigades on the best access to the incident and on any known hazards in or around the incident area.

ENTERING GOVERNMENT MANAGED LANDS FOR TRAINING AND AREA FAMILIARISATION

Before entering any locked off GLMA area for training or familiarisation purposes, brigade members must obtain prior approval from the appropriate land manager. This approval is to be obtained in writing at least 5 days before entering the land. Requests to obtain access to these areas are to be sought by the Brigade Officers or their nominated delegate to the relevant GLMA.

The GLMA may impose certain limitations or restrictions as a condition of entering their land for training or area familiarisation purposes. Brigade members are to ensure that limitations or conditions are adhered to.

In making access more readily available to ACT RFS members, the GLMA are acknowledging a significant level of trust and recognition of the valuable contribution of the RFS members in reducing the effects of bush fires on GLMA lands. Therefore it is imperative that all RFS members respect and support land managers security arrangements, and are diligent in ensuring the security of the keys provided.

Brigades are to ensure that all GLMA lands are left in a secure state upon their departure. This includes ensuring all gates have been locked. If a padlock has been cut to gain access, the Officer in Charge is to immediately notify the RFS DO through COMCEN so that a replacement padlock can be fitted. Where a fence has been cut to allow access, repair action is to be taken.

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The RFS maintains a register of all keys provided by the GLMA. An audit will be conducted annually by the RFS to ensure that brigades are able to locate all GLMA keys that the brigades have been issued. The RFS is to be advised immediately if any GLMA keys have been lost or are missing. Brigades are not permitted to have any copies made of the GLMA keys under any circumstances.

CAUTION WHEN DRIVING ON GLMA LAND

When driving on roads inside GLMA areas, care needs to be taken at all times as the condition of the roads in these areas may change dramatically in a short space of time. It must be remembered that logging trucks, heavy equipment, joggers and pedestrians often frequent the GLMA areas.

Driving in forest areas can be potentially dangerous especially if you are not familiar with the area. Always be aware that the roads that appear on the most updated map may well be impassable and can sometimes be non-existent. Roads may have been altered that do not appear on the map. **There is a 20 km/h speed limit on all GLMA Land.**

Maintained By: Manager, Operations

Approved By: Andrew Stark

Position: Chief Officer RFS

Signature:



Date: 15/02/2011

Cross Reference SOP/s:

Amendments: