

Working Around Heavy Plant

The ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer has issued this SOP under Section 38(1) of the *Emergency Act 2004* – A Chief Officer may determine standards and protocols.

Purpose

This procedure describes the practices to be followed to safely manage and mitigate the risk associated with operation of heavy plant during fire-fighting operations.

Scope

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is applicable to personnel from the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACT RFS) brigades, as defined in the Emergencies Act 2004, their subcontractors and crew deployed from other jurisdictions.

Background

The decision to use heavy plant at fires is risk based and must be authorised by the Incident Controller.

The plant is operated under the command and responsibility of the Officer in Charge at the incident.

It must only be used for fire-related tasks and must be used in a way to minimise impact to the environment.

Responsibilities

Plant operator	Check in and out. Follow instructions and comply with safety requirements.
Attendant members/Heavy Plant Supervisor	Maintain radio communications and visual contact with plant operator. Relay instructions to plant operator. Provide protection for plant operator. Ensure plant operator safely leaves fire ground. Report any WHS incidents.
Incident Controllers/Officers in Charge (IC/OIC)/Heavy Plant Manager	Make risk-based decision to use heavy plant. Provide instructions to plant operator. Ensure processes are in place for safe operation of plant.
RFS Duty Officer (RFSDO)	Engages plant when requested.

Operational procedures for working around heavy plant

Before requesting plant

The decision to use heavy plant at fires is risk based and must be authorised by the Incident Controller. The work record is to be signed by the Heavy Plant Supervisor.

The Incident Controller should assess the use of plant, based on the following considerations:

1. What is the plan for the plant to achieve the fire objective?
2. What specific tasks are required and for how long?
3. What type of plant and number is required?
4. Will the plant arrive in time to be effective?
5. Are there resources to support the safe and effective use of the plant? (Is there a tanker available for fire protection and to keep track of plant?)
6. Do the risks of using plant outweigh the gains?

Pre-work checks

Before the start of heavy plant operations, the IC/OIC must:

1. Ensure the plant is in good working order and fitted with appropriate falling object protection structures (FOPS) and roll over protection structures (ROPS) in accordance with AS 2294.1-1997 and AS 1636.1-1996 certified to level II (see 2.2.6 Managing Hazardous Trees SOP).
2. The plant operator is wearing appropriate PPC.
3. A fire tanker, which may be a light unit, is tasked for support and a radio channel assigned to maintain radio communications with the plant operator.
4. Brief the plant operator and supporting crew on the task, including principles to be applied during control line construction (described below).
5. Confirm radio check and emergency procedures.
6. Ensure there is a line start from a safe anchor point with safety zones and passing bays constructed along the way.

Safety during plant operations

While engaged in RFS activities, the plant operator's safety must be protected at all times. To achieve this, the IC/OIC ensures:

1. Plant operator checks in and checks out with IC/OIC/heavy plant supervisor at start and end of shift.
2. Plant operator is equipped with appropriate PPE/PPC.
3. Plant operator is accompanied at all times with a tanker to provide protection.
4. Visual contact and radio communications are maintained with the plant operator at all times.
5. Other traffic and personnel are kept at a safe distance from the plant (50m or 2.5 times tree height) and check in plant support before passing.
6. Plant operator fatigue is monitored.
7. Any incidents are reported using Riskman.

Control line construction

If heavy plant is engaged for control line construction, the following principles should be applied:

1. Minimise soil disturbance by blading off vegetation and minimising the depth of cut.
2. Avoid having trees “pushed”, unless absolutely necessary.
3. Lines should be made only as wide as necessary and must allow drainage.
4. Avoid areas of heavy fuels, steep slopes, ecologically or culturally sensitivity and waterways.
5. Use natural advantages and pre-existing lines where practical.
6. Ensure adequate turn-around points, passing bays and safety zones.
7. Debris is to be pushed away from the fire and spread for tanker access.
8. Use mulching plant where mineral earth breaks are not required.
9. Use plant supervisors where available.
10. Avoid leaving legacy issues for landowners.

On completion of work

The IC/OIC/heavy plant supervisor must ensure that the plant operator and equipment leaves the fire ground safely.

Additional agency involvement

Operations outside the ACT will follow the interstate organisation’s existing operating procedures

Document information

Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Rohan Scott	1.0 Draft	05/03/2020	

Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Joe Murphy	CO ACT RFS		05-03-2020

Document Owner

Position	Section
Manager	Operations

Next review due: 05/03/2022

Related documents

Document name
2.2.6 Managing Hazardous Trees Standard Operating Procedure
1.2.1 Using Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment Standard Operating Procedure
Work Health and Safety Act 2011
Riskman Incident Reporting form

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.