

Using PPE and PPC

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

Purpose

This SOP is to ensure that firefighters within the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACT RFS) are provided with appropriate levels of protective clothing and accessories.

Note: Protective clothing and accessories must always be used in conjunction with safe work practices.

Scope

This SOP is applicable to all personnel from the ACT Rural Fire Service brigades, as defined in the Emergencies Act 2004, engaging in firefighting or training operations within the ACT or cross border.

Background

Under the WHS Regulation (Section 44), a person conducting a business or undertaking who directs the carrying out of work must provide workers with information, training and instruction in the proper use of personal protective equipment or clothing.

Full Personal Protective Clothing (PPC) must be used when on an active fireground or when participating in a training activity, working on fire suppression activities.

Protective clothing and accessories should always be used in conjunction with safe work practices.

Responsibilities

Members	<p>Must follow instructions on use of full PPC.</p> <p>May only conduct operations without the outer protective jacket when approved.</p> <p>If wearing the approved agency-issued fireground shirt, it must be worn as directed, with sleeves down at all times on the fireground.</p> <p>Return PPE/PPC when leaving the Service.</p>
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Crew Leader / Incident Controller	<p>Conduct risk assessment, approve and monitor use of approved fireground shirt without the outer protective jacket only when no active fire is present.</p> <p>Ensure full PPC is used for all active fires and fire suppression activities.</p>
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Applicability of this SOP

The ACT RFS Chief Officer (CO) has the responsibility for providing the appropriate PPC for the safety of brigade members.

Operating procedure

In all circumstances, the appropriate protective clothing must be worn correctly when attending an incident. All personal protective clothing must meet the Australian Standard 4824.2006 for protective clothing.

Two-piece jacket, trousers and fireground shirts

- The two-piece jacket and trousers will be supplied to all ACT RFS firefighters. It provides operational and dressing flexibility to handle the various tasks that are required by the Service.
- The two-piece also assists in “down” dressing to an appropriate undershirt or other shirt when firefighters are away from an active fireground. Appropriate under garments should be manufactured of cotton, wool or approved fire-resistant material. Under garments should cover the shoulders to provide sun protection and a thermal barrier when the jacket is worn.
- Long sleeve fireground shirts, issued by the agency, can be worn with the outer jacket removed while undertaking mopping up operations. These must be worn with sleeves rolled down and fully buttoned. The decision to dress down is at the direction of the officer in command. For detail see the standard operating procedure 1.2.2 Use of Fireground shirt.

Firefighting accessories

For all activities undertaken by firefighters, the following accessories are to be issued to all ACT RFS Firefighters:

- Bush firefighting helmet x 1
- Bush firefighting gloves x 1
- Bush firefighting goggles x 1
- Disposable smoke mask x 1
- Flash hood x1
- Torch x1

Bush firefighting boots

- Bush firefighting boots obtained from the ESA Resource Centre.
- Safety footwear meeting the standard AS/NZS: 4821 (Int) 2014 is compulsory on the fireground.

Cold climate jacket

- A cold climate jumper is available as general issue for all ACT RFS firefighters. It provides the appropriate levels of thermal protection when working in alpine areas or at night.
- Cold climate jumpers generally must not be worn during grass/bush firefighting due to the potential for rapid development of heat stress.

Defensive firefighting

- Standard issue bush firefighting clothing and accessories may be used for defensive firefighting provided that crews work within an appropriate safety zone.

Bush firefighting emergency entrapment hood

- This item is to be carried (in the pocket of their PPC) by operational firefighters on the fireground. It MUST NOT be donned (or worn around the neck) unless it is required to improve thermal protection to the face as a result of a grass/bush fire entrapment of a firefighter.
- It MUST NOT be worn (or worn around the neck) during normal firefighting operations due to the effects of extreme heat stress which may develop.

Note: This item will only provide protection to the face for limited fire overrun situations. Under no circumstances should it be construed that the availability and use of these hoods will increase the chance of surviving a serious fire entrapment. Their availability must not encourage firefighters to deliberately place themselves or others into a situation where it might reasonably be predicted that they could be over-run by a fire. Normally accepted appreciation and size up of every fire situation must continue in a bid to ensure that fire overrun situations are avoided.

Alterations to PPC

- Only approved badges such as name and brigade name may be fixed to PPC. Slide-on Proban-treated Officers' epaulettes will be supplied by the ESA Resource Centre.
- No other alterations are to be made, without approval from the Service.

Care and Maintenance

- All members should ensure maintenance of PPE and PPC is kept to a high standard at all times.

- It is important to stow PPE and PPC in a dry and suitable environment while not being used.
- It is recommended that PPC is washed after each incident, following the manufacturer's care instructions on the clothing label and care information fact sheet supplied when PPC is issued to members.

Replacement of Faulty PPE & PPC

- All faulty garments and equipment should be reported to the Brigade Equipment Officer so that a replacement can be sourced. Members should check validity of bushfire helmets regularly to ensure they are still in date.
- Replacement PPC/PPE is done as a one-for-one. This allows for faulty or worn out PPC/PPE to be removed from service.

Using non-issue PPE and PPC

If members of the ACT Rural Fire Service wish to use non-agency issued PPE, it must meet or exceed the AS/NZ standard used by the ACT RFS for PPE. It is restricted to items listed below.

The applicable AS/NZ Standards are:

- Gloves: AS/NZ 2161.6:2014
- Respiratory mask: AS/NZ 1716:2012 with a minimum rating of P2
- Eye protection: AS/NZ 1337:2012
- Eye protection prescription: AS/NZ 1338.3:2012
- Protective wildland fire boots: AS/NZ:4821:2014
- All personal protective clothing: AS/NZ 4824:2021

Any substitute of PPE/PPC not listed above will need the written approval of the ACT RFS Chief Officer.

Returning PPE and PPC on completion of service

- A member of the Service who resigns, or whose membership/employment is otherwise terminated must, within seven days of the termination of their membership/employment return all items of PPE and PPC, equipment and identity or authority cards that have been issued or assigned to them by the Service.
- PPC and PPE must be properly cleaned and laundered before being returned.
- A receipt must be issued acknowledging the return of any equipment or other items that are returned.

Equipment and other items are to be returned to

- the member's immediate supervisor (for a staff member)
- the brigade captain (for a volunteer member).


All PPC/PPE returned by members must be passed onto ACT RFS Operations for inspection to be reissued or for destruction.

Document information

Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Andrew Stark	1.0	15/02/2011	
Rohan Scott	DRAFT	05/03/2020	Updated against AFAC Guidelines
Wayne Dalton	2.0	17/06/2021	Administrative review
Steve Quinlan	3.0	08/03/2023	Administrative review

Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	CO ACT RFS		08/02/2024

Document Owner

Position	Section
RFS Director	Operations

Next review due: 01/02/2027

Related documents

Document name
1.3.1 Issuing Uniforms, PPC and PPE Guideline
1.2.2 Use of Fireground Shirt Standard Operating Procedure
2.3.1 Managing Heat Stress Guideline
3.1.4 RFS Membership Service Standard
1.1.1 Proper Use of RFS Property and Equipment Service Standard
Work Health Safety Act 2011
Work Health Safety Regulation 2011

Document name
AFAC Guideline: Selection of Appropriate Respiratory Protection Devices (RPD) During Bushfires
AFAC Guideline: Selection, Use, Care and Maintenance of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.