



ACT Rural Fire Service
Standard Operating Procedure 2.3
Establishment Of Staging Area

2.3
Incident
Management

Purpose

This procedure describes the establishment and the management of staging areas

Operating Procedure.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE STAGING AREA

For any incident where there may be a significant number of units attending, access is difficult, or where there is to be a changeover of crews, a Staging Area will be established. Staging areas are the responsibility of the Operations Officer who, in consultation with the Incident Management Team (IMT), will determine where and when a Staging Area is to be activated and when it is to be deactivated. The decision to activate the Staging Area must be made early so that there is time for it to be ready to support operations as units arrive at the incident.

ROLE

The Staging Area is a designated area where people, vehicles, and equipment gather in preparation to their being assigned at an incident. It is also the area where off-going crews muster prior to departing the scene. There are a number of functions undertaken at a Staging Area, these include:

- Logging the names and call signs of all proceeding and responding crews, T-Cards are used for this,
- Logging the types and call signs of responding vehicles and the Brigades that they belong to,
- Logging the names of the crews and vehicles departing the incident,
- Having the Planning Section's Situation Unit provide a map that shows:
 - Access and road or track locations,
 - Location of sectors,
 - General fire conditions,
 - Briefing incoming crews,
- Maintaining communications contact with units en-route from the Staging Area to their assignment,

Defining and maintaining separate areas for:

- Incoming crews,
- Off going crews,
- A meeting point for the media and VIP's.



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There are logistical and welfare issues that also need to be considered by both the Logistics Officer and the Staging Area Manager when setting up a staging area. These include:

- Identifying an area that is separate but close to the Staging Area for catering, ablutions, and other welfare services,
- Arranging for the servicing of the welfare and other facilities outside of peak activity times,
- Using the Staging Area as the bases for mid shift change overs of support functions eg. Ground Support Units, Catering Unit, Supply Unit.

STAGING AREA MANAGER

Whenever a Staging Area is established someone will be designated as the Staging Area Manager. This person is responsible to the Operations Officer assigned to the incident and has the authority and responsibility for the proper functioning of the roles described above.

The Staging Area Manager will usually be an officer from either the ACT Rural Fire Service or the ACT State Emergency Service, though an experienced member from any Service can be appointed to this role.

The Staging Area Manager is identifiable by wearing a blue tabard marked “Staging Area Manager”, this tabard is to be worn by the Staging Area Manager at all times. For large incidents the Staging Area Manager will require supporting staff. Some of the duties may include: T-Card Officer, Records Officer, Marshalls, and Gatekeepers etc.

STAGING AREA LOCATION

There are several issues to consider when determining the location for a Staging Area, these include Accessibility. The Staging Area is set up so that it is easily accessible for the responding units, and for the Incident Management Team if they choose to operate from this point. An area that is relatively close to and up wind of the incident is usually preferred, near to the heel of the fire is often a suitable site.

When determining a location for the Staging Area, consideration is to be given to the number of units that may be expected to be in the Staging Area at any time, and an area of appropriate size is to be selected. There may be a need to stage both oncoming and off going crews at the same time and in separate areas within the Staging Area.

As an incident grows in size, so may the need for the Staging Area to expand. A site that can accommodate an unforeseen number of additional units may be preferred. The IMT will meet to discuss the likelihood and the implications of any escalation.

Because of terrain features, the choice of a reasonable Staging Area may be restricted. Consideration is to be given to the location of the Staging Area so that the likelihood of it being at risk from the incident is minimised.



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The Staging Area should be designed to allow for it to be relocated at short notice if it comes under threat from the incident.

The IMT is responsible for considering the likelihood of the Staging Area being at risk, and the consequences of this.

COMMUNICATIONS

There may be a need for the Staging Area Manager (or staff) to communicate with the Incident Management Team, or with the units enroute between the incident and the Staging Area. When choosing the site for the Staging Area consideration is to be given to whether or not it can support the communications arrangements as specified in the Communications Plan for the incident.

Units despatched to a Staging Area from their Brigade or returning to their brigade shed from the staging area are to maintain communications with the ESA Communications Centre (COMCEN), on arrival they are to report to the Staging Area Manager for tasking. The Staging Area Manager, on advice from the IMT (Operations Officer) will assign the unit and advise:

- What channel the unit will be operating on,
- Who to report to, and
- Where they will operate.

All units departing the Staging Area for the incident are to be on their assigned incident channel.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In addition to it being a location for oncoming and off-going people and units to muster, the Staging Area may also support a range of other logistical requirements.

Consideration is to be made as to where these requirements are to be located within the Staging Area. Some of the additional requirements may include Equipment storage. A secure location that is free of the weather elements and which can comfortably hold a range of stores, spare parts, and other equipment may be required.

Forward Communications Unit (FCU). The FCU may be staged at the Staging Area where it might be used as, for example, a communications relay, or a control point for the Incident Management Team. The FCU is to be located in an area from where it can be quickly deployed.

Fuel Store, extended operations may require that fuels are stored at the Staging Area to support the operation. The Fuel Store is to be in a separate area where any risks and dangers associated with the storage of bulk fuels are minimised, OH&S requirements are to be adhered to.

CATERING



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Wherever possible catering should not be located at the Staging Area. Experience has clearly shown that having catering and staging at the same place causes delays in deploying resources and confusion about which units are staging and which units are there for catering of crews.

RECORD KEEPING

The Staging Area Manager is to ensure that a log is maintained that indicates the time of arrival and departure of all units, the instructions given (eg. communications channel, who they are to report to) and their intended destination on their departure. The log is also to contain any other information required by the IMT. A copy of this log is to be forwarded to the Manager, Operations within 24 hours of the Staging Area being closed down.

Maintained By: Manager, Operations

Approved By: Andrew Stark

Position: Chief Officer RFS

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Stark', on a light green background.

Date: 15/02/2011

Cross Reference SOP/s: SOP 2.6 Establishing a forward control point

Amendments: