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Department of Biodiversity,  
Conservation and Attractions

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# WATCH OUT

## Ten Standard Fire Orders

1. Always stay in contact or tell someone where you are going.
2. Know where the fire is and its direction.
3. Know the terrain or have someone with you who does.
4. Plan an escape route.
5. Park your vehicle in a safe area.
6. Ensure your instructions are clear.
7. Build a fireline from a safe anchor point.
8. A full set and correctly worn safety gear is compulsory.
9. Don't panic – remain calm and make logical decisions.
10. Fight fire aggressively but provide for safety first.



### Firefighters "Watchout" when:

#### The potential of the fire has not been assessed:

- Until a fire has properly been assessed on the ground the full range of possible fire behaviour and possible safety threats will not be understood.

#### Building a control line downhill towards the fire:

- Fire is the fastest when burning uphill. Look where the fire is going and don't get caught in this situation. It can be particularly unsafe at the head of a gully where the wind may funnel the fire.

#### On a slope – rolling material can ignite fuel below you:

- There is the possibility of you being caught between the fire you are working on and a new one burning uphill toward you.

#### The wind changes speed or direction:

- A change in the wind direction will mean a change in how the fire burns, how it needs to be controlled and how much it threatens your safety. A wind change could change the direction of fire spread or it could turn the flank of a fire into the head.
- An increase in wind speed will lead to an increase in fire spread and intensity. A drop in wind speed may be the forerunner of a dramatic weather change.

#### The weather gets hotter or drier:

- This will lead to a decrease in fuel moisture and therefore more intense fire behavior. A fire that was mild and easy to control at the start of the day can be a major threat as the fuel dries out.

#### There are unburnt fuels between you and the fire:

- A heavy fuel load will mean a very intense fire and increased incidence and distances of spot fires.
- You are likely to be in the 'Dead Man Zone.'

#### Terrain or vegetation impedes travel or visibility:

- If you cannot move across the ground easily you will need to look for good refuges nearby. If visibility is impaired you cannot be sure of the whereabouts of the fire or how it is behaving. You may not be able to see others working around you and nor may they see you.

#### In country you have not seen in daylight:

- You may not be aware of potential hazards in the area. You will need good briefing information, good maps and good light.

#### Unfamiliar with weather and local fire behavior:

- Different parts of the state have different topography and fuel types. Steep terrain can cause unexpected wind channelling and unpredictable changes in weather patterns.

#### Frequent spot fires occur over your control line:

- Spot fires present fire control problems as well as safety problems.

#### Unclear instructions or tasks are given:

- Unclear instructions can lead to confusion about where people are and what they're meant to be doing.

#### Cannot see the main fire or cannot communicate with anyone who can:

- If you cannot see the main fire you cannot be sure of how it is behaving, how effective the work you're doing is, how far away it is and how much time you have before the fire reaches you.

#### Feel exhausted or wants take a nap near the fire:

- Let your supervisor know if you feel exhausted or fatigued and in need of rest. It is no longer safe for you to be working on the fireground.

#### Attacking a fire or constructing a fire control line without a safe anchor point:

- When building a fireline, be sure it starts at a safe anchor point like a well burnt ground rock, road track or clearing.

#### Working alone with no communications link to crew members or supervisor:

- Communication between crew members and their supervisor is the key to keeping all members of the crew informed of what's happening.

#### Not fully informed about strategy, tactics and hazards:

- A crew needs to have a clear understanding of what they will be doing, what standard of work is expected and what hazards they are likely to encounter.

#### Escape routes, safety zones have not been identified:

- Don't wait until an emergency arises to make an escape. Have an escape route planned and try to remain in an area free of hazards.

#### Walking under burning limbs or through hot ashes:

- Falling limbs are a significant hazard to crews involved in mopping up and patrol operations.
- Avoid travelling through deep ashbeds or smouldering peat areas.

### LACES: a safety check before fighting or lighting a fire, which must be continuously re-evaluated as conditions change.

#### L – Lookouts

Lookouts should have an uninterrupted view of the section of the fire for which they have responsibility. Regular patrols are necessary if the lookout cannot see the full length of the fire line.

#### A – Awareness

Remain aware of the fire situation including current and potential weather, terrain and aspect, fuel types and fuel loads, hazards and crew locations. All personnel have a responsibility to be alert and act decisively before situations become critical.

#### C – Communications

Stay in communication with your people, communicate changes in situation, provide regular updates and use briefing procedures.

#### E – Escape Routes

Know your escape route at all times and ensure your fireline colleagues are also fully informed. Vehicles must be positioned to allow rapid escape.

#### S – Safety Zone

Always have a safety zone to which you can retreat if fire behaviour escalates. Well burnt ground is a safe area. Safety zone must be large enough.