



Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority

RURAL FIRE PLAN

2015-2017

This plan should be read in conjunction with the Forest & Rural Fires Act 1977 and Forest & Rural Fires Regulations 2005.



ADOPTION AND REVIEW

Adoption

The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority **adopted** this Fire Plan on the 11 September 2000, in accordance with Section 12(4) of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, and Regulation 39 of the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005.

Review

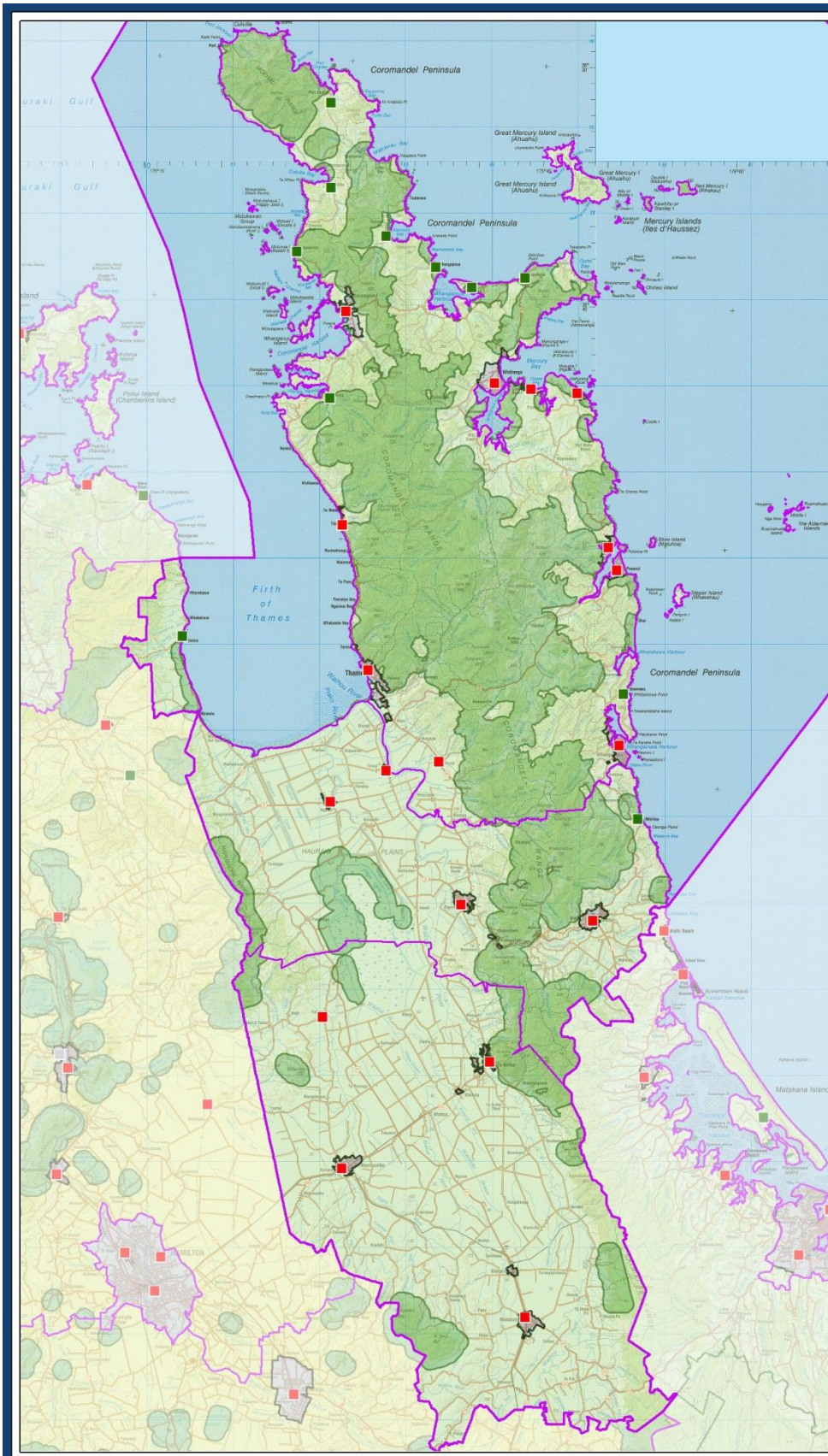
Section 40 (1) of the Forest and Rural Regulations 2005 requires that the sections of the Plan dealing with 'Readiness' and 'Response' be reviewed every two years, and the sections dealing with 'Reduction' and 'Recovery' be reviewed not more than every five years. The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority has subsequently **reviewed** the Plan in accordance with Section 40 (1).

The current review applies to the 'Readiness & Response' sections of the Plan.

Effective Date of Review: 30 September 2017

Gary Talbot
Chairman
Thames Valley Rural Fire Committee

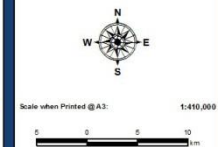
Date:



Thames Valley Rural Fire District

(incl. Thames-Coromandel, Hauraki, and Matamata-Piako District Councils.)

Produced By:	A Hansford
Job Request:	INC1286616
Date:	28/09/2013
Status:	Final
Projection:	NZTM



Legend

- Fire Stations**
 - NZFS
 - Rural
 - Other
- Fire Jurisdiction Boundaries**
 - Urban Fire District
 - Department of Conservation
 - Rural Fire District
 - Territorial Authority Rural Fire District
- Thames Valley Rural Fire District**
 - Thames Valley Rural Fire District
 - Territorial Authorities

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Distribution List

External

- National Rural Fire Authority – Wellington
- NZFS Eastern Area Commander - Thames
- NZFS Comms Center – Auckland
- NZFS Voluntary Fire Service Brigades within RFD (18)
- Department of Conservation – Thames
- Waikato RFA
- Waipa RFA
- Waitomo
- Otorohanga RFA
- South Waikato RFA
- Western Bay of Plenty RFA

Internal

- Principal Rural Fire Officer
- Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officers
- Voluntary Rural Fire Forces within RFD (11)
- TCDC Service Centres: Thames, Whangamata, and Whitianga
- HDC Service Centres: Paeroa, Ngatea and Waihi.
- MPDC Service Centres: Te Aroha, Matamata, and Morrinsville
- Spare

Foreword

The Fire Authority is committed to reducing the incidence and consequences of fire, through focussing on reduction, readiness, response and recovery. The Fire Plan is a major component in reducing the incidence and consequences of rural fire through the integration of wildfire management within the Thames Valley Rural Fire District.

The challenge for the Fire Authority is to continue to identify critical fire issues facing the Fire District, both present and in the future, to adapt to changing circumstances within the rural fire sector, and to establish and maintain effective working relationships with organisations and individuals in order to address those issues in the most effective and efficient manner.

The Fire Authority will demonstrate that prevention of loss of life and injury from wildfires, effective management of fire fighting resources, and promotion of fire awareness, fire safety and prevention within the Fire District is being achieved. That actions required for improvement are initiated and assessed.

Persons having designated responsibilities for fire control within the Fire District, and any others likely to be engaged or involved in fire control activities under the direction of the Rural Fire Authority, are expected to be familiar with their responsibilities and to have a working knowledge of plan content.

Del Read
Principal Rural Fire Officer
Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority

September 2013

Glossary

The Forest & Rural Fires Act 1977 defines the following terms and words used in this Fire Plan:

Exotic forest means a forest, woodlot, or plantation comprised principally or entirely of tree species not indigenous to New Zealand:

Fire control, in relation to forest, rural, and other areas of vegetation, means:

- (a) The prevention, detection, control, restriction, suppression, and extinction of fire; and
- (b) The safeguarding of life and property from damage and risk of damage by or in relation to fire; and
- (c) All measures conducive to or intended to further or effect such prevention, detection, control, restriction, suppression, extinction, or safe-guarding; and 'fire control measure' has a corresponding meaning.

Fire Officer or **Rural Fire Officer** means a person appointed as a Rural Fire Officer by or pursuant to section 13 of the Forest & Rural Fires Act.

Fire plan means a statement compiled and issued by a Fire Authority defining policy, chain of command, and procedure, in relation to fire control by that Authority:

Fire safety margin means

- (a) in relation to a State area (other than land administered by the Minister of Conservation pursuant to section 9A of the Foreshore and Seabed Endowment Re-vesting Act 1991), means the land outside the State area that is within 1 km of the boundary of the State area, excluding any land:
 - (i) specified in a Gazette notice given under section 11B;
 - (ii) in a fire district within the meaning of the Fire Service Act 1975
 - (iii) in a rural fire district; and
- (b) in relation to a forest area, means the land outside the forest area but within such a distance (not exceeding 1 km) from the boundary of the forest area as is approved by the Fire Authority for the area; but
- (c) does not include any land being the whole or part of a defence area within the meaning of the Defence Act 1990]

Firebreak means a natural or artificial physical barrier against the spread of fire from or into any area of continuous flammable material.

National Rural Fire Authority means the National Rural Fire Authority constituted under section 14A (1) of the Fire Service Act 1975.

Open season, or **open fire season**, means a period of time, whether of fixed or indefinite duration, during which period the lighting of fires in the open air in that area or district is neither prohibited nor restricted under section 22 of the Forest & Rural Fires Act.

Permit, in relation to the lighting of fires in the open air, means a fire control measure in accordance with which a person may light such fires without committing an offence against section 23(1) of the Forest & Rural Fires Act; and includes a special permit issued pursuant to section 24 of the Act.

Principal Rural Fire Officer means:

- (a) In relation to any State area for which a Principal Rural Fire Officer is appointed by the Minister of Conservation or any other district for which a Principal Rural Fire Officer is appointed by the Fire Authority, means that officer or, where he is absent or unavailable or unable to act, the person acting as Principal Rural Fire Officer pursuant to the Fire Plan for that area or district.
- (b) In relation to any district (*other than a State area*) for which there is only one Fire Officer, means that officer or, where he is absent or unavailable or unable to act, the person acting as Principal Rural Fire Officer pursuant to the Fire Plan for that district.
- (c) In relation to any State area for which no Principal Rural Fire Officer has been appointed by the Minister [of Conservation], means any Rural Fire Officer appointed under section 13(3) of this Act and any warranted officer appointed under section 59(1) of the Conservation Act 1987.

Prohibited season or prohibited fire season means a period of time, whether of fixed or indefinite duration, specified pursuant to the Forest & Rural Fires Act, during which period the lighting of fires in the open air is prohibited under the Act:

Restricted season or restricted fire season means a period of time, whether of fixed or indefinite duration, specified pursuant to the Forest & Rural Fires Act, during which period permits or authorities are required by the Act for the lighting of fires in the open air.

Vegetation includes:

- (a) all plants and the produce thereof, live or dead, standing, fallen, windblown, cut, broken, pulverised, sawn, or harvested, natural or disturbed, in use or as waste, rubbish, refuse or debris, stump, stubble, or otherwise, and
- (b) fossil fuel exposed at or lying within 20 metres of the surface of any land, and peat in any form, but does not include wood forming part of a structure, sawdust, compost or otherwise processed vegetation contained within a building, or otherwise in processed form.

Where the capitalised terms '*the Fire Authority*' or '*the Authority*' are used within the text of this Plan, they shall be read as referring to the Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority. Similarly, where the capitalised term '*the Fire District*' is used, it shall be read as referring to the Thames Valley Rural Fire District.

Part One – Overview

1.1 Introduction

This Fire Plan sets out how the Fire Authority addresses its statutory obligations, roles and responsibilities to overcome or reduce the effects of any fire within its rural district.

The Fire Authority recognises the need for community resilience, particularly in times of emergency and it employs a Principal Rural Fire Officer, whose role is to support, direct and coordinate rural fire management within the Fire District.

The New Zealand Fire Service is a strategic partner with the Fire Authority and provides first response to some reported fires within the Rural Fire District.

1.2 Structure of the Plan

The fire plan has been prepared to meet obligations set out in Regulation 39 of the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005. The regulations specify in detail the required structure and content of Rural Fire Plans. This Fire Plan is organised into the following parts:

Part One - Provides the introduction to the Fire Plan and the context within which Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority undertakes rural fire operations.

Part Two - Reduction.

Part Three - Readiness.

Part Four - Response.

Part Five - Recovery.

Part Six - Administration.

Operational detail is contained in a number of appendices, held in a separate document.

The **Rural Fire Committee** has delegated the responsibility of conducting on going reviews of the Plan, making any such amendments as may from time to time be required and of updating detail contained in the Appendices to its appointed Principal Rural Fire Officer.

1.3 Establishment

The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority is a formal partnership arrangement between Matamata-Piako, Hauraki and Thames Coromandel District Councils. The Authority was constituted by notice (07/09/2000) in the 'New Zealand Gazette' as the Rural Fire Authority for the Thames Valley Rural Fire District, for the purpose of providing and implementing fire control measures on lands within its boundaries. The Fire District was increased in size by the inclusion of the Kaiaua Block in Hauraki District Council's area in July 2013 (ref: NZ Gazette 18/7/2013 No 91, p.2471).

1.4 Aim & Mission

The aim of this plan is to outline the processes and procedures developed for management of rural fire within the Thames Valley Rural Fire District.

The mission is to safeguard life, and the environment by the prevention, detection, control, restriction, suppression and extinction of fire in forest and rural areas within the Fire Authority boundaries, and in such other suitably defined areas of urban vegetation as may be determined by agreement with the NZ Fire Service.

1.5 General Description of Rural Fire Area

The Rural Fire District encompasses some 391,715 hectares (more or less) comprising:

- Pastured farmland, horticultural and other lands
- Plantation forests
- Off-shore islands, comprising indigenous forest, pasture, horticultural, and other islands, except where administered by Department of Conservation.

The primary landholders within the Fire District are:

- Matamata-Piako District Council.
- Hauraki District Council
- Thames Coromandel District Council

The Fire District excludes those areas of land within its boundaries which fall under the jurisdiction of the NZ Fire Service (Urban Fire Districts) and the lands administered by the Department of Conservation.

Area of jurisdiction (including neighbouring Rural Fire Authorities) are depicted in map form at the beginning of the plan.

The Fire District topography comprises plains, coastal, rugged hill country and bush clad ranges. The variety of topographical features over the district does have an effect on weather patterns likely to impact on fire behaviour.

The Fire District has a mix of urban and rural communities with significant seasonal visitor numbers.

Major road transport routes serve the district including State Highway 2, 25, 25a, 26, 27, 28 and 29 with daily transportation of significant quantities of hazardous substances and liquid fuels.

1.6 Statutory Obligations

The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority has statutory obligations to carry out functions of a Rural Fire Authority as set out within the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 and the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005. The Fire Plan is produced in accordance with the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005.

1.7 Policies and Procedures

In order to meet its statutory obligations the Thames Valley rural Fire Authority has adopted a number of policies and procedures, documented within this Plan. The Fire Authority shall:

- a) Maintain a Fire Plan to deal with all matters relating to rural fire within the Fire District.
- b) Be consistent with and give effect to the statutory requirements of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 and Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005.
- c) Implement fire control measures including:
 1. The prevention, detection, control, restriction, suppression, extinction of fire and
 2. The safeguarding of life and property from damage and risk of damage by or in relation to fire and
 3. Taking all practical measures conducive to or intended to further or effect such prevention, detection, control, restriction, suppression, extinction, or safeguarding.
- d) Maintain liaison with New Zealand Fire Service, National Rural Fire Authority, Department of Conservation, adjacent Rural Fire Authorities, organisations enterprises and clients, for the provision, coordination and use of personnel, material and services for fire fighting purposes.
- e) Maintain an effective and efficient rural fire fighting capability in partnership with member agencies, the eleven Voluntary Rural Fire Forces and organisations throughout the District.
- f) Promote the observance of recognised safe practices on the fire ground.
- g) Facilitate core generic training for rural fire-fighting staff, including training to NZQA level.
- h) Operate a cost effective service and wherever possible, recover fire suppression costs for fires, in order to reduce the fiscal impact on funding providers.

1.8 Forest and Rural fires Act 1977

The Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 establishes Rural Fire Authorities, sets out their duties, powers and functions and the powers and functions of Principal Rural Fire Officers and rural Fire Officers.

Each Rural fire Authority is required to promote and carry out fire control measures within its district and in the interests of public safety, take appropriate fire control measures, including in particular:

- a) The observation of weather and other conditions and the assessment of fire hazard;
- b) The giving of warnings of the imminence of fire hazard conditions; and
- c) The giving of any information available in relation to fire hazard conditions.

1.9 Resource Management Act 1991

The purpose of the RMA is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources.

The Act defines how controls on the release of substances into the air and water are managed. Regional Councils functions with respect to the control of air and water

discharges are defined, as are the functions of local councils with respect to the control and use of land.

The Act specifies requirements for Regional Policy Statements and Regional and District Plans.

In its rural fire operations, the Fire Authority shall at all times endeavour to protect waterways and shall include information regarding smoke discharges into air in its public information material.

1.10 Fire Service Act 1975

The Fire Service Act 1975 establishes the Fire Service Commission and the National Rural Fire Authority, the function of which is to encourage and promote effective fire control measures.

1.11 Local Government Act 2002

The Local Government Act 2002 specifies the roles and functions of Councils, as local authorities. The Act specifies how Councils shall operate. The Act also specifies the principals a local authority must abide by in performing its role. Although the Fire Authority is an incorporated body in its own right, it shall abide by local government principals and processes in its governance and administrative functions.

1.12 Health and Safety Employment Act 1992

The Health and Safety Employment Act 1992 provides control measures that can be implemented. These are covered in Thames Valley Rural Fire Districts Occupational Health and Safety Manual for 'Voluntary Rural Fire Forces' and should be read and signed off annually by all fire responders.

1.13 Other Acts or Regulations

A number of other Acts impact on the control and management of rural fires. Of note are:

- The Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002
- The Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act. (HASNO)

Part Two – Reduction

2.1 Reduction

The Rural Fire Authority has a statutory responsibility for fire management within the Rural Fire District. This section details the provision of services and arrangements necessary to bring this responsibility into effect.

2.2 Policies and Procedures

The Authority has adopted a number of general policies and procedures that relate to reducing the risk of rural fires within its district. Specific policies and procedures relating to this aspect are outlined in this part of the Fire Plan.

2.3 Fire Hazard-scape

The fire weather in different parts of the district may vary considerably on any given day.

Vegetation fire risks arise from lightning strikes, spontaneous combustion of damp vegetation, power line faults, carbon soot emissions from vehicle exhausts, spark throw from rail traffic, vehicle accidents, chimneys or incinerators, stone strike from mowers or other machinery, and fire starts caused by people or animals. A seasonal influx of visitors generally coincides with the periods of higher fire hazard conditions, generating additional precautionary measures as required.

2.4 Hazard Management

The Fire Authority has participated in a 'Wildfire Threat Analysis' within the greater Waikato Region.

- Quantify the level of risk and help establish benchmarks to assist in determining appropriate fire control measures for wildfire events within the Fire Region; and
- Assist Rural Fire Authorities to determine appropriate fire control measures to mitigate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from, wildfire events within their territory.

The outcomes of the Wildfire Threat Analysis, as they concern the Fire District, will be detailed in the appendices of the Fire Plan in due course.

2.5 Fire Risk Mitigation

Hazards and risks form a significant part of the Wildfire Threat Analysis referred to above. The following steps are presently undertaken to mitigate hazards:

- Promotion of rural property fire protection and safe burning practise.
- Roadside grass mowing and spraying programmes by various agencies on roads/highways, with monitoring of vegetation re-growth levels
- Additional roadside mowing and vegetation reduction requests generated where a specific hazard is identified
- Volunteer Fire Forces maintained where higher risks exist
- Vehicles and equipment maintained to a high state of readiness
- Information provided to contractors regarding spark arrestors and vegetation fire hazards

- Public informed of changing levels of fire risk through media channels
- Daily graphing of fire weather indices for prediction purposes
- Year round 'Restricted Fire Season' in the Thames-Coromandel District Council area and 'Total Fire Ban' (Prohibited Fire Season) annually for the entire Fire Authority from 20 December – 8 February.
- Use of fire permitting, coupled with 'Fire Season' sign-posting.
- Active participation in strategy meetings with adjacent fire authorities during periods of increased fire danger.
- Active participation in a joint RFA/NZ Fire Service programme designed to identify high-risk structures within the Fire District, and facilitate the development of risk management plans applicable to individual structures.
- 'One-off' assessments of perceived fire hazard situations ie fire hazard complaints.

2.6 Risk Management Strategies

The Fire Authority's risk management strategy is to identify and assess the risk areas within the district and develop specific response procedures and capabilities as necessary. As identified risks may change in character over time, they are reviewed and re-assessed as part of the on-going threat analysis process.

The following Table illustrates the assessed levels of risk applied within the Fire District, with '**Level One**' indicating the highest level of risk, and '**Level Four**' the lowest. Note that a risk level of 'Four' does not imply that a fire will have a less significant impact than one with a higher rating, rather, that the opportunity for a fire to occur is less likely, or would be easier to contain under normal circumstances.

Assessed Level of Risk for Specific Areas

Risk Level	Geographic Area	Factors Affecting Hazard Assessment	Strategy
1	Coastal areas of Coromandel Peninsula. Commercial Forests across the Peninsula, Ernslaw/NZ Super Fund/Matariki	Coastal plain to rolling hills. Urban/rural interface Remote settlements, farms and lifestyle blocks, some high property values, Non-reticulated water supply in many areas, major recreational/tourism activities, Commercial forests, elevated and fine surface fuel hazards, access difficulties. Significant wind and drought impacted.	Section 15 agreement with NZ Fire Service. Helicopters on call. Other agreements in place, ie DOC. Some permanent water supplies established. VRFF's available for most areas.
2	Commercial and Industrial activities across the three Council areas (TCDC/HDC/MPDC)	The Industrial Estates and one off Meat and Fish Processing Plants. The large concentration of workers on site during periods of operation. Historically large fast moving fire events.	Section 15 agreement with NZ Fire Service. Some reticulated water supplies established. VRFF Crews available.

		Some processing plants are situated in remote locations, out of close proximity to VRFF and NZFS support.	Tanker and helicopter support available. DOC crews available
3	The Rural Farming areas of Hauraki District Council including the Kaiaua Coast. The Rural Farming areas Matamata - Piako District Council,	Urban/rural interface, coastal plains and rolling hills. Some high property values of farms and lifestyle blocks. Small rural towns/settlements. Restricted water availability in some areas, State Highways and narrow country roads, mostly low to medium traffic volumes.	Section 15 agreement. VRFF Crews available. Fire Fighters available in both councils. Tanker and helicopter support available.
4	Coromandel Forest Park. Peat Dome. (Administered by DOC) Offshore Islands around Coromandel Peninsula. (Some administered by DOC)	Significant conservation estate/values, scrub and other surface fuel hazards. Restricted road access. Low density isolated populations. Remote immediate access from Fire Force and NZFS support.	Section 15 agreement. VRFF Crews available. Forestry & DOC equipment available. Off-shore response capability developed with VRFF/NZFS.

2.7 Fire Prevention Measures

The Authority is committed to promoting and developing fire prevention measures, in association with the NZ Fire Service and the National Rural Fire Authority, in order to reduce the incidence and impact of rural fires in its district.

2.8 Directions on the Use of Fire as a Land Management Tool

The use of fire for land clearing operations or disease control must comply with any requirements of District Plans, Waikato Regional Council Air Plan, and provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991 and amendments.

All activities must comply with the provisions of Sections 20 and 21 of the Forest & Rural Fires Act 1977, as well as complying with the conditions stated on permits issued pursuant to Sections 23 and 24 of the Act.

Any fire must remain contained within the property on which it is lit and must not be permitted to spread to other properties or to structures. A burn plan must be prepared for any prescribed burning undertaken during a Restricted Fire Season.

2.9 Prescribed Fires

Prescribed burning involves the knowledgeable application of fire to a specific land area to accomplish predetermined land use objectives. The Authority is committed to minimising any harmful consequences of prescribed burning operations. This is achieved by the development and application of an operational plan for each prescribed burn, based on clearly stated objectives, and addressing environmental care and safe working practices.

2.10 Prescribed Fire Planning

The use of prescribed burning to achieve land clearing objectives must satisfy legal requirements, be thoroughly planned and carried out in accordance with clearly defined procedures that provide for safe work practices and manageable fire behaviour.

It is the responsibility of the land-owner/permit holder to obtain any resource management consents, or any other consents that may be required before burning can be approved.

2.11 Burn Plan

A formal burn plan is to be prepared, and approved by the PRFO/DPFRO for each prescribed burn.

The burn plan should describe particulars associated with:

- location
- burn objectives
- surrounding vegetation
- perimeter control lines
- prescribed burn conditions
- special conditions and resources required

Provision must be made to ensure that sufficient resources are available to immediately take action to suppress any fire that escapes beyond planned control lines.

Prescribed Burn Plans are to be approved and authorised the PRFO/DPRFO'S or a nominated Rural Fire Officer with experience in prescribed burning.

2.12 Burn Completion

Patrols are to be carried out by the person responsible for the fire until the burn is completed and declared safe.

2.13 Charges for Service

The Fire Authority may charge for burn planning and other assistance at private land-owner prescribed burns unless it is otherwise to the Authority's advantage (i.e. good public relations, training, protection of assets, etc.) to provide such services at no charge.

2.14 Firebreaks

Operational firebreak specifications for the management of any active fire will be determined by a qualified Rural Fire Officer on the fire ground, having regard to:

- Daily Fire Weather Indices
- Local climatic conditions
- Topography
- Hazards
- Risk to property
- Skill level of person conducting the burn, or establishing the firebreak

2.15 Enforcement Strategies

The Principal Rural Fire Officer shall declare Restricted or Prohibited Fire Seasons as weather and fuel conditions determine. The decision to impose a change of Fire Season status will generally be made in consultation with the Fire Authorities two DPRFO's and neighbouring Fire Authorities.

Warranted Rural Fire Officers may issue fire permits during Restricted Fire Seasons. Only the Principal and Deputy Rural Fire Officers may issue special permits during a Prohibited Fire Season. Inspections shall be undertaken as necessary to determine safety aspects of any proposed fires and the need for additional conditions to be imposed on any permits issued.

2.16 Public Education Activities

Public awareness of rural fire shall be maintained through a multi-faceted approach including:

- Proactive media releases during periods of increased fire danger.
- Media releases following fires.
- Erection of fire restriction or prohibition signs, and updating of fire danger indicator signs.
- Proactive investigation of fire/smoke sightings during periods of increased fire danger.
- Advice to land owners.
- Inspection of proposed burn-offs and issue of fire permits.
- Promotion of NRFA fire safety and other publications.

2.17 Public Awareness and Fire Signs

Notification of the imposition or lifting of a Restricted or Prohibited Fire Season shall be placed in the Public Notices Column of locally-circulated print media.

During a Prohibited Fire Season, or '*Total Fire Ban*' during a Restricted Fire Season, signs shall be erected at strategic locations throughout the Fire District, as soon as possible after such a declaration. The specific locations on State highways shall be determined in consultation with the Regional Manager NZTA at the time that signs are required. Sign installation on State highways shall only be carried out after approval by NZTA.

2.18 Fire Management Control Measures

The Rural Fire Authority shall promote and carry out fire control measures within its district, and in the interests of public safety, shall undertake appropriate fire control measures, including, in particular,

- The observation of weather and other conditions, and the assessment of fire hazard;
- The giving of warnings of the imminence of fire hazard conditions; and
- The giving of any information available in relation to fire hazard conditions.

2.19 Declared Forest Areas

Section 17 of the Forest & Rural Fires Act provides for the owners of forest land to apply to the Rural Fire Authority to have their land declared a forest area.

Before any land is declared a forest area, there are a number of conditions that must be met, the main conditions being:

- The land area must be greater than 20 hectares.
- The forest should be considered a fire hazard requiring continuous protection equivalent to a restricted season.
- The land-owner has arranged adequate fire protection.

There are currently no 'declared forest areas' within the Fire District.

2.20 Fire Safety Margins

The definition of '*Fire Safety Margin*' is included in the Glossary to this Fire Plan.

Fire Safety Margins apply around Department of Conservation administered lands and Commercial Forests within the Fire District. Any permit issued for fire within those fire safety margins shall be copied to the Department of Conservation or relevant Forest Manager.

2.21 Clean Air Requirements

The Ministry for the Environment has produced National Air Quality Standards, which came into effect on 8 October 2004.

Rules 5 and 21 of the Waikato Regional Council Air Plan, and Air Discharge Consent under Section 15 of the Resource Management Act apply.

Rules 5 and 21 refer to the discharge of contaminants and specify what may not be burnt.

2.22 Storage of Combustible Material

Regulation 54 of the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005 deals with the storage of combustible material. The regulation notes that it is an offence (*for an industrial operator*) if:

- (a) wood residues
- (b) wood products
- (c) hay, straw, or other plant cuttings, or
- (d) any product composed of more than 50% of one or more of the materials described at (a) to (c) above

are heaped higher than 3 metres above the ground, unless the materials are stored in a fireproof container or a building constructed for the purpose of storing the materials.

2.23 Spark-hazardous Engines

A spark-hazardous engine is defined by Section 31 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act as being:

- *any helicopter, unless its exhaust is protected from contact with vegetation,*
- *any locomotive engine, motor vehicle, tractor, traction engine, portable engine, or stationary engine, or any other steam or internal combustion engine whatsoever, which is not, to the approval of a Fire Officer, provided with safe and efficient means for preventing the escape of dangerous sparks or flame from funnel or exhaust and for preventing the escape of live coals or fire from ash-pan or firebox*

or the escape of petrol or other flammable substance (including fumes) from any appliance or container:

The Act explicitly excludes from the definition of spark-hazardous engines any milking machine plants, shearing plants, or irrigation or other water pumping plants, or farm vehicles, appliances, or engines, used in the ordinary course of farming operations in the vicinity of farm buildings or yards.

2.24 Fire Permits

Fire permits shall only be issued by warranted Rural Fire Officers and shall, in addition to standard conditions be subject to any other conditions deemed necessary at time of issue.

Where a proposed fire fails to meet required parameters at the time an application for a permit is made, no permit to burn shall be issued until the site has been first inspected by a Rural Fire Officer, unless it is considered that in the circumstances such an inspection is unnecessary.

Permits issued by the Authority for controlled fires within Department of Conservation or Commercial Forest 'fire safety margins' previously noted, shall at time of issue, be notified to the nearest Department of Conservation warranted fire officer or the relevant Forest Managers, and maybe subject to such additional conditions as may be required by them.

By agreement with NZ Fire Service the Fire Authority will take responsibility for fire permit issue in the 'urban areas' within the Fire District.

2.25 National and Regional Policy Statements, Regional and District Plans and Regulations made under the RMA

The Waikato Regional Council has produced a Regional Policy Statement and Regional Plan.

In addressing their rural fire responsibilities, the three Council's, (Thames Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata–Piako) take into account the rules contained in the Regional Resource Management Plan, their respective District Plans and bylaws.

2.26 Structural Risk Management – Building Register

The Authority has identified a range of commercial structures within the Fire District which meet specific risk criteria. In cooperation with NZ Fire Service, site-specific risk plans have been prepared and are contained in a Building Register maintained by the Authority and updated six-monthly.

The Register comprises three sections in line with council boundaries (MPDC, HDC, TCDC). DPRFO's hold (hard) copies of risk plans for their respective council areas, as do the NZFS brigade closest to the building concerned.

Fire Authority members contribute to the maintenance of the Register through notification of new commercial structures meeting the risk criteria, or of consented alterations to existing structures.

Part Three – Readiness

3.1 Readiness

The Authority is committed to maintaining a high level of fire readiness through planning, mitigation, public education, staff training, appliance and equipment maintenance, and monitoring activities.

The Authority is committed to reducing the incidence and impact of rural fires in the Fire District. Some activities to achieve this are carried out through a co-ordinated effort by our partnerships with NZ Fire Service and Department of Conservation. The Authority shall, however, implement independent programmes specific to the needs of the Fire District, as required.

3.2 Readiness Policies and Procedures

The Fire Authority has adopted a number of policies and procedures that relate to its readiness capability. Some of the more general policies and procedures are noted in Section One of the Plan. Specific policies and procedures relating to readiness responsibilities are detailed in this Part.

3.3 Rural Fire Area

The Thames Valley Rural Fire District is depicted in map form at the commencement of the plan. This shows the geographic boundaries as gazetted, and specified areas within the Urban Fire District areas administered by agreement with NZ Fire Service.

The map is intended as a general guide only. Its scale means that boundaries and other features are approximate.

3.4 Rural Fire Authority Responsibilities

Section 12 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977 requires Rural Fire Authorities to promote and carry out fire control measures in their districts. In carrying out these duties a Rural Fire Authority is required to comply with the standards set by the National Rural Fire Authority.

Section 18 of the Act sets out the obligations of a Rural Fire Authority, noting in respect of fire control measures within its district, a Rural Fire Authority is responsible for:

- (a) The observation of weather and other conditions, and assessment of fire hazard;
- (b) The giving of warnings of the imminence of fire hazard conditions; and
- (c) The giving of any information available in relation to fire hazard conditions.

3.5 Readiness: Objectives

The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority readiness objectives are to:

- a) Promote rural fire awareness in order to encourage:
 - Responsible use and management of fire
 - Appropriate methods for land management operations
 - Occupier-created defensible spaces around structures and areas of value
 - Adequate water supplies
 - Adequate access for fire appliances
 - Early detection and reporting of fires
 - Recognition and management of fire risk

- Incorporation of fire mitigation measures into District planning
- b) Suppress and control fires quickly without injury to the public or staff, and with minimal expense and deployment of equipment.
- c) Issue permits to burn and facilitate safe burning practises.
- d) Provide accurate and timely advice on rural fire management, mitigation, prevention and control, in order to reduce impacts on life, property, and environment.
- e) Inspect and act on hazardous vegetation complaints in a timely manner.
- f) Financially assist in the provision of resources, including equipment and training for volunteer Rural Fire Forces.
- g) Effectively and efficiently manage the response in accordance with best industry practice.

3.6 Fire Danger Management

Wildfires can occur throughout the year and as such, a state of readiness is maintained year round. Monitoring and assessment measures are intensified in relation to any escalation of fire danger indicators.

The Fire Authority monitors the risk of outbreaks of fire on a daily basis by recording, plotting, and analysing information assembled from:

- Daily Fire Weather readings
- Known fire hazards and previous fire history
- Local fuel loadings on the ground
- Local climatic conditions
- Intelligence provided by rural communities
- On-going direct observations by rural fire officers

Such information is crucial in enabling Fire Authority staff to ascertain risk of outbreaks, ease of ignition, likely spread rates, and potential fire behaviour.

3.7 Mass Crowd Events

The Fire Authority recognises that with mass crowd events such as outdoor concerts and fireworks displays being held during the fire season, there may be other factors that will need to be given consideration when evaluating Fire Danger Ratings. These have been identified as:

- Pressures on infrastructure and responder services
- Traffic/road access/aircraft support availability
- Fireworks/bonfires/climatic conditions
- Support and resource capability
- Water supply limitations due to event location or drought conditions

The Fire Authority requires that organisers of any such event make application for a **'Special Event'** fire permit and abide by all conditions specified by that permit.

Although this Fire Plan concentrates on *"business as usual"* during such events, the potential need for additional fire-fighting resources or specialist equipment beyond that listed in **Appendix 4 'Logistics'**, must be considered. This may include accessing additional ground and air attack resources.

Specific details for any contingencies or arrangements to be made in anticipation of any organised mass crowd event fall outside the scope of this standing Fire Plan.

Where necessary, the Fire Authority shall coordinate the preparation of 'one-off' contingency plans to cover any special activities.

3.8 Fire Seasons

We have a year round '**Restricted Fire Season**' in Thames Coromandel District Council area and a predominantly '**Open Fire Season**' in the Hauraki and Matamata-Piako District Council areas.

The Principal Rural Fire Officer shall in partnership with DOC be responsible for the declaration of a '**Total Fire Ban**' across the Fire District or parts thereof from 20 December to 8 February the following year. This may be extended if fire weather conditions dictate.

During any restricted or prohibited fire season the Fire Authority shall inform the public of the imminence and degree of fire danger conditions by the use of signs, public newspaper notices, media releases or any other means as needed.

During a '**Prohibited Fire Season**', no fire may be lit in the open, except in special circumstances as defined in the Forest & Rural Fires Act 1977, and then only with a '**Special Permit**'. Generally, the imposition of a Prohibited Fire Season will be considered during or in anticipation of periods of very high to extreme fire danger.

Certain activities may be prohibited in rural areas during periods of extreme fire danger, e.g. logging or tree felling operations, outdoor welding or grinding, outdoor concerts, car/motorbike rallies, fireworks, etc.

3.9 Other Preparedness Measures

Where fire weather and fuel conditions approach 'extreme', the Principal Rural Fire Officer shall notify member agencies, local Fire Forces, and communities, of the increasing danger level. An increased level of importance shall be given to proactive investigation of smoke sightings to reduce detection and reporting times of fires that may occur. Random fire patrols, both ground and air, may also be initiated.

Any significant alteration to fire danger levels shall be communicated to neighbouring rural fire authorities.

3.10 Fire Danger / Fire Weather Monitoring

The Fire Authority shall monitor fire danger and fire weather from the following sources:

- Compilation of fire weather data from sites within the Fire District.
- NIWA – National Climate Centre three-month predictions
- Five-day regional forecast – Met Service
- Intelligence direct from rural communities
- Regular consultation with neighbouring Rural Fire Authorities, and
- Direct observations of local conditions

During periods of '**Very High**' and '**Extreme**' fire danger, predicted fire behaviour and rates of spread shall be considered on a daily basis by the Principal Rural Fire Officer. Evaluation of standby requirements and notification to relevant agencies and liaison staff shall be undertaken daily as required by the conditions.

During periods of '**Very High**' and '**Extreme**' fire danger, consideration shall be given to implementation of ground and air patrols to facilitate early detection of wild fires and deliberately lit unauthorised fires.

The primary means of reporting fires shall be through the national '111' emergency telephone system.

(refer also to paragraphs 3.30 to 3.32)

3.11 Chain of Command

Section 36 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act sets out the powers of a Principal Rural Fire Officer and Rural Fire Officers at fires.

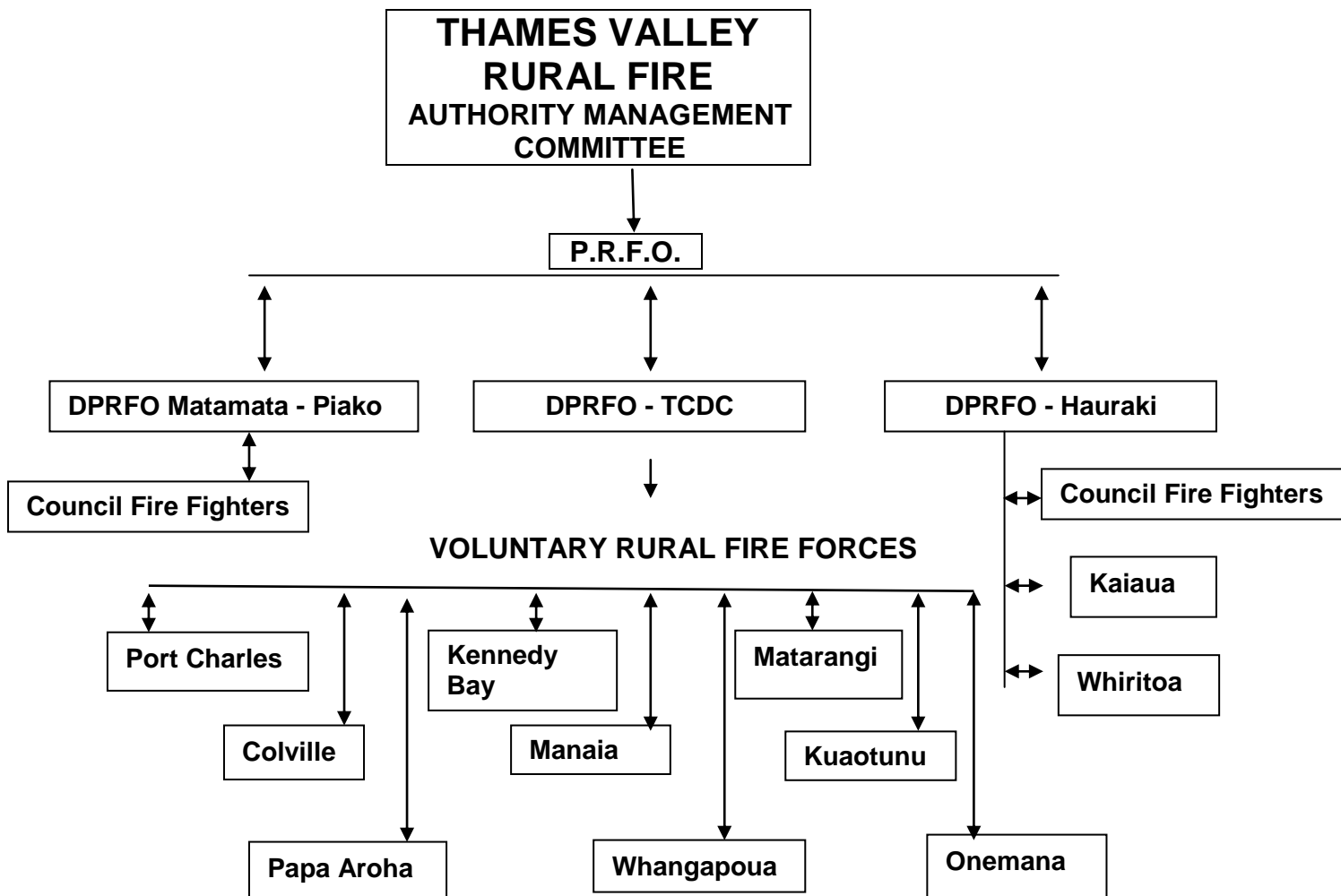
The Principal Rural Fire Officer, for the purposes of fire control shall, if in his opinion a fire constitutes a hazard to life or property, endeavour by all practical means to extinguish the fire and prevent the spread of the fire to save lives and property in danger:

The Act provides a range of specific powers to enable the Principal Rural Fire Officer and the people working under his authority to carry out their functions. Rural Fire Officers appointed by the Fire Authority are required to be familiar with those powers and the circumstances under which they may be exercised.

Under a standing agreement, NZ Fire Service provides some first response to fires within the rural fire district. Rural Fire Officers are notified by Fire Communication Centre of the event and, dependant on circumstances, shall also attend. The Act provides the Principal Rural Fire Officer (*or his deputy*) shall have control and direction of any brigade present at a vegetation fire and of any people who voluntarily place their services at his disposal, and of any persons (*not being engaged in essential services*) whose services he requires.

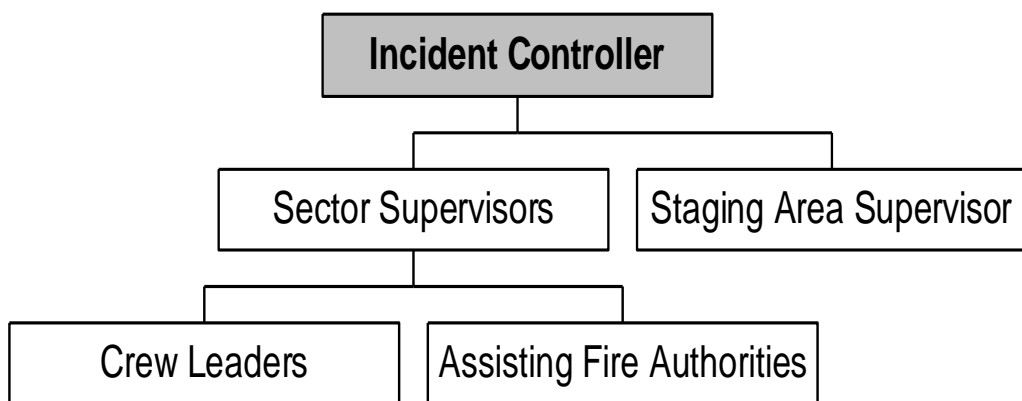
Where a fire affects a dwelling or other built structure within the rural fire district, NZ Fire Service has responsibility for managing suppression activities. A Rural Fire Officer may attend such fires in a liaison role, and rural fire resources may be despatched and used in support of such activities, provided that management of the fire is recognised as remaining with the senior NZ Fire Service officer at the scene.

Where the structure affected by fire is one that appears on the Building Register where a tactical plan has previously been prepared, the attending DPRFO/PRFO shall make this known to the senior NZFS Officer at the scene.



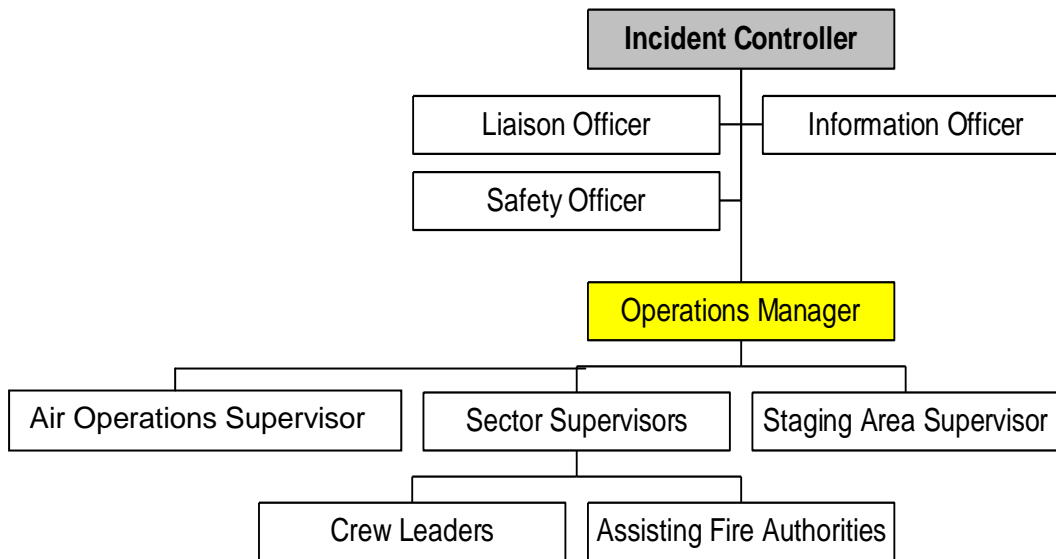
The following diagrams illustrate fire-ground command arrangements observed by the Authority:

Command structure - small fires



Note: In managing small events, it is probable that the Incident Controller will fill more than one position

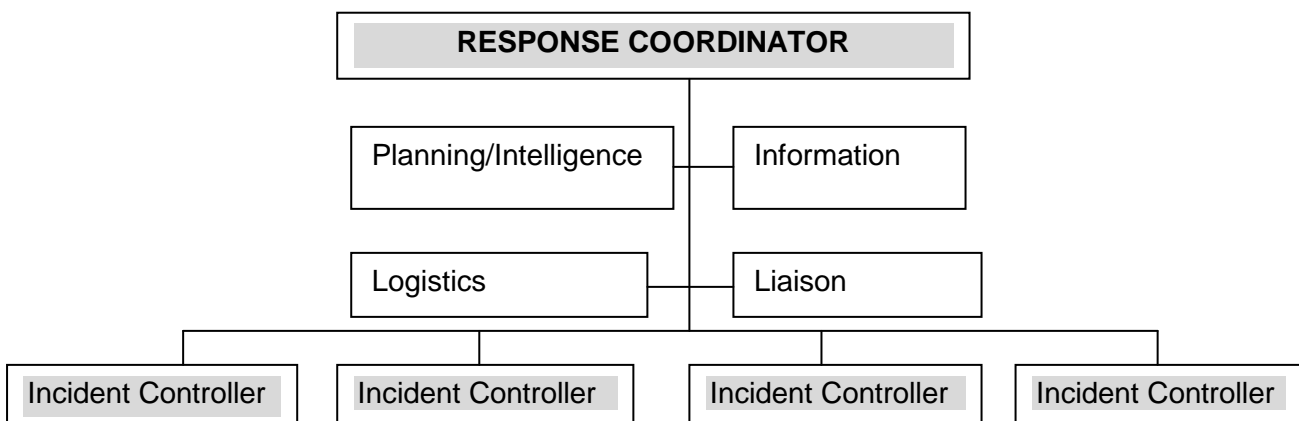
Command structure - medium fires



Incident Control Point (ICP) will generally be established at a site near the incident as per response plans.

Incident Controller may hold more than one function depending on the incident but Operations will normally be delegated at medium incidents.

Command structure - multiple incidents



3.12 Incident Command Support Personnel

Support personnel may be needed to assist incident management staff with matters such as fire suppression planning, fire-line operations, logistical resources, air attack delivery, or incident control during a large fire event. This will be particularly relevant during a Level 2 or Level 3 fire, when the fire is unlikely to be controlled within the first operational period, or during multiple outbreaks of fire.

The CIMS structure enables two or more Fire Authorities or agencies to operate a unified command structure for fires that cross, or threaten to cross, jurisdictional boundaries, and suits occasions when assistance may be requested from qualified people to implement control measures for Level 2 and 3 fires.

The Fire Authority has limited immediate access to experienced rural fire practitioners with advanced specialist skills. This shortage is partially overcome through availability of Department of Conservation personnel with additional incident management skills. Where protracted support is required, the Waikato Regional Rural Fire Committee has the capability to provide an Incident Management Team experienced in multi-incident, multi-agency operations. Senior members of this team hold CIMS Level 4 qualifications.

Thames Valley Emergency Operating Area also administers and operates an *Emergency Management Operations Centre (TVEOC)*, comprising senior managers of emergency services and support agencies. The Rural Fire Authority is represented on the TVEOA for the purposes of aligning rural fire operations with overall emergency management requirements, and maintaining effective working relationships with all emergency services and support agencies.

Individuals may be requested to assist with management of Level 2 and 3 fires through their respective agencies. Other persons with recognised CIMS skills may also be requested to assist.

The grading schedule for the different levels of fire incidents is based on the Rural Fire Management Handbook, as follows:

Fire Incident levels

Level I	A small to medium fire that will be contained by the initial attack resources. Can be controlled within 12 hours.
Level II	A medium to large fire that requires extended attack and may involve multiple agencies. High values at risk. May take up to 24 hours to control.
Level III	A large and complex fire that may take several days to control and suppress. Likely to occur at periods of Very High or Extreme fire weather. Significant values at risk. Likely to incur large suppression costs. A National Incident Management Team is likely to be required.

3.13 National Rural Fire Authority Regional Rural Fire Manager

At the request of the Incident Controller the Regional Rural Fire Manager may facilitate access to skilled incident management personnel from adjacent Regions.

3.14 Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer's

Designation	Name	Organisation
PRFO	Paul Shaw	TVRFA
Deputy PRFO	Peter Smith	Hauraki District Council
Deputy PRFO	Mike van Bysterveldt	Matamata - Piako District Council

Warranted Rural Fire Officers

A number of **Warranted Fire Officers** have been appointed by the Fire Authority pursuant to Section 13 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977. (Refer **Appendix 2** for names and contact details)

The Fire Authority has delegated full powers to appointees to perform their duties, pursuant to Section 36 of the Forest and rural Fires Act.

Notes:

The Principal Rural Fire Officer has overall responsibility for all operational matters relating to rural fire co-ordination and suppression.

3.15 Training Arrangements

The Fire Authority is committed to ensuring its rural fire personnel are trained and competent to National Standards.

The Principal Rural Fire Officer shall ensure that an adequate training programme for personnel undertaking fire suppression activities is undertaken.

A training program for Volunteer Fire Forces is undertaken in conjunction with the NZ Fire Service to meet the need for vegetation fire-fighting skills and knowledge.

Provision is made in annual budgets for staff training.

3.16 Unit Standards

Training courses are structured to meet industry requirements with the assessment process aligned to NZQA unit standards.

3.17 Competency Requirements

Staff will be trained to Unit Standard equivalent levels indicated by the Rural Fire Management Code of Practice 2000 to meet wildfire threat command needs, and in numbers deemed appropriate by the Fire Authority.

3.18 Fire-fighting Assistance

In the event of a major fire, standing agreements with adjacent Fire Authorities will be activated to access such qualified support staff as may be required.

3.19 Equipment Maintenance

Rural Fire equipment owned and/or operated by the Fire Authority shall be maintained in a state of permanent readiness. All equipment shall be checked regularly, (at least fortnightly, during periods of high to extreme fire danger). Faulty equipment is to be reported immediately for further action.

No fire equipment is to be used for other than fire-fighting purposes without the prior approval of the Principal Rural Fire Officer or Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer.

Hose & pump test records, appliance and equipment records will be maintained.

3.20 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Rural fire personnel under the control of the Fire Authority shall be issued with:

- Fire resistant boots
- Fire resistant overalls
- Safety helmets (with neck protection and visor)

Fire Forces (VRFF's) will be responsible for supplying:

- Gloves
- Goggles

Protective clothing is an absolute requirement on the fire ground, and must be worn by rural fire crews, in accordance with the Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992. Hearing protection must be worn by personnel operating fire pumps or working beneath helicopters.

Wet weather gear and other applicable PPE is to be made available to those personnel engaged in filling of monsoon buckets.

Vehicles operated by the Authority shall be equipped with fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and hi-visibility vests.

External agencies providing fire-ground assistance to the Fire Authority are to ensure their personnel are equipped, at a minimum, to the level referred in this Section.

3.21 Supporting Agencies

The following are key agencies available to support the Fire Authority in undertaking its rural fire duties:

- New Zealand Fire Service –Eastern Waikato Fire Region
- National Rural Fire Authority - Auckland Region
- Department of Conservation – through Hamilton/Thames offices
- Thames Valley Emergency Operating Area Office
- Member Authorities: Waikato Regional Rural Fire Committee
- NZ Police
- Coastguard
- St. John Ambulance

Contact details for these agencies are provided in **Appendix 4 'Logistics'**.

3.22 Emergency Contact Details

PRINCIPAL RURAL FIRE OFFICER: (PRFO)

Paul Shaw	(Thames Coromandel)	
Business		(07) 868 9590
Mobile		(027) 284 8636

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL RURAL FIRE OFFICERS: (DPRFO)

Mike van Bysterveldt	(Matamata-Piako)	
Business		(07) 884 0060
Private		(07) 884 8827
Mobile		(027) 499 3427

Peter Smith	(Hauraki)	
Business		(07) 862 8609
Private		(07) 862 6252
Mobile		(027) 476 4089
Pager		(026) 107 312

3.23 Personnel & Equipment Resources

The Fire Authority has agreed access to, or manages, sufficient equipment to effectively control and suppress the range of rural fires expected in the district. Trained staff and volunteer fire services are located throughout the district, and are able to respond to any fire.

Details of equipment and contact details for personnel are provided in **Appendix 4 'Logistics'**.

3.24 Arrangements and Agreements Made Under the Forest and Rural Fires Act.

The Fire Authority has a formal agreement in place with NZ Fire Service under section 15 of the Forests & Rural Fires Act. This provides for the supply of equipment and fire-fighting services from the NZ Fire Service in order to maintain an efficient response to fire incidents.

A formal agreement is in place with NZ Fire Service under section 9 of the Forests and Rural Fires Act. This provides for the exercise of the powers of a Rural Fire Authority in specified areas of vegetation within the Thames Valley Urban Fire Districts.

3.25 Agreements between the Fire Authority and Voluntary Rural Fire Forces:

The **11 VRFF's** established in the Thames Valley Rural Fire District, operate under signed agreements with the Fire Authority, pursuant to the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005.

National Rural Fire Authority registration number and details of some personnel are shown in **Appendix 3**.

A Section 14 Agreement (2005) is in place between the Fire Authority and Department of Conservation in respect to fire suppression initiatives.

3.26 Specially Protected Areas

There are no 'Specially Protected Areas' within the rural fire district, however, planning processes have identified certain areas within the district which require specific protection strategies to be implemented.

3.27 Fire Protection Works

The responsibility for protective works in and around private forestry blocks rests with the owners. The Fire Authority is able to provide or facilitate advisory services to land-owners in this respect.

3.28 Fire Season Status

The Fire Authority utilises the standard New Zealand Fire Danger Rating System, based upon daily fire weather readings. The Fire Authority monitors conditions on a regular basis to assist in determining Fire Season Status.

3.29 Trigger Points

The Fire Authority declares an annual '**Total Fire Ban**' across the whole Fire District from 20 December to 8 February the following year, this is achieved through the non-issue of fire permits and may be extended depending on the prevailing fire danger. This provides a degree of certainty to rural residents.

Outside of the 'Total Fire Ban' period, as a first step in responding to any such escalation in fire danger, fire permit issues may be suspended when:

- (a) The Drought Code (DC) index exceeds 300; or
- (b) The Build Up Index (BUI) exceeds 60, *and* the Duff Moisture Code (DMC) index exceeds 40.

The Fire Authority uses the trigger point of '**Very High**' to close off access to exotic forests within its district, however forest owners/managers may at any time impose conditions for entry into their forests according to company policies.

3.30 Fire Danger Rating (FDR) System

The **18 NZFS Brigades & 11 Fire Forces** within the Fire Authority provide the initial response to fires within the District on a 24/7 basis. Procedures are maintained by the Fire Authority in conjunction with NZFS regarding notification of fires, pre-determined attendance, beat lists, and Fire Authority response. These basic procedures are applicable regardless of fire season.

Additional procedures may be implemented according to the level of fire danger, as determined by daily Fire Weather indices:

3.31 Fire Danger Signs

The Fire Authority in partnership with the Forestry Companies & Department of Conservation (DOC) maintain '**Fire Danger Indicator**' signs within the Fire District. These shall be set to indicate the current fire danger.

A list of Fire Danger Signs and their locations are shown at **Appendix 9**. Where these are on State highways, exact placement on the road verge shall be determined by NZTA and the physical installation made only by a NZTA-approved contractor.

Where signs are located on district roads, placement for best effect shall be determined by the appropriate Councils' roading engineers.

If a Prohibited Fire Season is declared, standard '**Total Fire Ban**' signs shall be erected on all major routes leading into the District.

Response Levels

GREEN ALERT – LOW

BUI<20 BUI<21-81
ISI<3 ISI<1

Working Hours

Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy to be contactable.

After Hours

- As above.

BLUE ALERT – MODERATE

BUI<20 BUI 21-40 BUI 41-80 BUI>81
ISI 3-10 ISI 1-6 ISI 1-4 ISI 1-3

Working Hours

- Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy to be contactable.

After Hours

- As above.

YELLOW ALERT – HIGH

BUI<20 BUI 21-40 BUI 41-80 BUI>81
ISI 10-20 ISI 6-13 ISI 4-9 ISI 3-7

Working Hours

- Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy to be contactable and available.
- All staff to be advised of hazard rating.
- Press release, Council Websites to reflect conditions.

After Hours

- As above.

ORANGE ALERT – VERY HIGH

BUI<20 BUI 21-40 BUI 41-80 BUI>81
ISI 20-25 ISI 13-17 ISI 9-13 ISI>10

Working Hours

- Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy contactable and available.
- Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy carry out daily assessment of the fire danger.
- All staff to be advised of hazard rating.
- Liaise with DOC/Forest Owners Representative.
- Press release, update Council Websites as appropriate.

After Hours

- As above

Special Note: Alert to remain until otherwise directed by Principal Rural Fire Officer or Deputy.

<u>RED ALERT – EXTREME</u>	BUI<20	BUI 21-40	BUI 41-80	BUI>81
	ISI>25	ISI>17	ISI>13	ISI>10

Working Hours

- Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy contactable and available.
- Principal Rural Fire Officer/ Deputy carry out daily assessment of the fire danger.
- All staff to be advised of hazard rating.
- Liaise with DOC/Forest Owners Representative.
- Press release, update Council Websites as appropriate.

After Hours

- As above.

Special Note: Alert to remain until otherwise directed by Principal Rural Fire Officer or Deputy.

Part Four – Response

4.1 Response

The Fire Authority is committed to ensuring effective response with, and effective use of, available resources for the purpose of containment and suppression of fire.

The purpose of this section is to outline arrangements with agencies, organisations and fire forces, relating to training, operational procedures and action to prevent, suppress and control fires within the Fire District.

4.2 Policies and Procedures

The objectives of the initial attack on any fire shall be to contain the fire and protect exposures. However, personnel shall not place themselves or any equipment at risk by undertaking any fire-fighting task that they are not trained or equipped to carry out.

In particular, where a Rural Fire Force is the first in attendance at a structural fire, no attempt shall be made to enter the structure. This does not preclude the forcing of doors or windows, or the breaching of external walls in order to facilitate delivery of water to the interior of the structure.

When undertaking fire-fighting activities, all personnel must be familiar with the means of protection against elements and conditions that can become hazardous. PPE appropriate to the task shall be worn, and the 'safe person' concept observed at all times.

4.3 Response Procedures

Fire suppression operations shall take priority over all other activities, except in the case of a civil defence emergency duly declared to be in force over the area in which a fire occurs, **or any other situation where life is at immediate risk**. Where a civil defence emergency is in force, operational deployment and tasking shall be determined by the appointed civil defence controller and communicated via the normal chain of command.

Priorities in the event of fire are:

- **FIRST** Preservation of human life
- **SECOND** Protection of community assets, property, or special values.
- **THIRD** Conservation areas, Council reserves, commercial forests.

Where there is a need to respond to multiple fires, those assessed as posing the greatest threat if left uncontrolled are to be extinguished first.

In a major event or multiple incidents, the DPRFO/RFO nominated by the PRFO, shall perform the role of Response Co-ordinator at the Emergency Operations Centre. The primary function shall be to ensure appropriate prioritisation of available resources.

Key individuals from other agencies may be delegated this function by the PRFO during extended operations, supported by Emergency Management staff in a lead agency liaison role.

At any incident involving three or more fire appliances/crews, or at any incident where aerial operations are in progress, a Safety Officer shall be appointed to specifically monitor the safety of individuals and crews. This appointment must be recorded in the Incident Log.

4.4 Fire Retardants and Suppressants

Use of a hydro-blender with soap capsules, or alternatively, the use of Class 'A' foam, is recommended and encouraged for vegetation fire suppression activities. The exceptions shall be when fighting fires near waterways or environmentally sensitive areas.

Class 'A' foam may be used for direct fire suppression and mop-up. Foam is exceptional for mop-up, but loses effectiveness on deep sub surface fires and peat fires (*where soap capsules are cheaper and just as effective*).

4.5 Ground Application of Foam

Where foam is used, it should be applied as follows:

- Minimum foam, wetting agent only, suitable for grass fires.
- Soapy, suitable for light scrub fires and mop-up.
- Maximum foam, suitable for best results in heavy fuels.

4.6 Aerial Application of Foam

Aircraft loading crews working with foam must wear wet-weather protective clothing, eye protection, and gloves whilst carrying out this type of operation. Additional PPE for this purpose is carried on the PRFO's utility vehicle.

4.7 Environmental Considerations for Use of Additives

The Fire Authority **will not** use foam or soap additives in wetlands, swamps or other waterways. As foam is detrimental to aquatic life, even at low concentrations, precautions shall be taken to minimise contamination of any watercourse. The use of additives shall be avoided in environmentally sensitive areas where rare or protected life forms may be at risk. The Fire Authority shall treat all Department of Conservation reserves as 'sensitive' unless advised otherwise.

4.8 Preferred Control Methods

Wherever possible, fire control methods should minimise environmental impact, however, the control plan must remain viable. In major suppression operations, the following control methods must be given consideration:

- Minimise disturbance of vegetation and soil, side-cutting, fills and creation of windrows.
- Use existing roads, tracks or suitable natural features.
- Use hand trails or other less intrusive techniques.
- Construct helipads instead of new access tracks.
- Use aircraft instead of bulldozers.
- Use existing surfaces instead of side-cutting.
- Break highly visible long straight control lines with an occasional kink.
- Avoid removing vegetation on the skyline or other highly visible areas.
- Construct control lines away from stream beds or sides.
- Construct control lines following the contour on sloping ground.

4.9 Mop-up Procedures

Mop up operations shall be conducted at all attended fires. No burnt-over area shall be treated as safe until a 'walk-over' inspection has been carried out by the person in charge at the fire scene. The Incident Controller shall be solely responsible for advising that responsibility has been handed over to the land owner, or that the fire has been declared out.

The following tasks shall be carried out during mop-up operations:

- Hot spots shall be systematically searched out and burning spars felled. Where necessary, heat detection equipment (*thermal imaging camera, infra-red thermometer etc*) shall be used as an aid to detecting hot-spots.
- Adequate and reliable patrols shall be undertaken.
- Consideration shall be given to periodic inspections of the fire ground until heavy, or continual, rain has fallen.
- All equipment shall be collected and accounted for in a manner that will enable it to be immediately used again should the need arise.
- All rubbish associated with suppression operations shall be removed from the incident ground.

4.10 Stand down / Changeover

When standing down or changing over personnel at a fire scene, all personnel involved in the incident shall use standard Co-ordinated Incident Management System (*CIMS*) procedures to ensure that: -

- Their replacement is fully briefed.
- All personnel and equipment resources are accounted for.
- Details taken at the fire scene are recorded and passed on.
- Personnel are checked out at the Incident Control Point before departing.
- NRFA Guidelines on work/rest times are observed.

4.11 Post-Fire Action

Following any fire incident, all equipment used shall be re-commissioned immediately. The PRFO shall satisfy himself that sufficient personnel are available to respond to another call out should one occur.

4.12 Fire Site Rehabilitation

Fire site rehabilitation is work consequential to fire suppression activities, i.e. necessary because of direct fire damage, or as a result of damage done during suppression operations. The Fire Authority's policy is that any costs of fire site rehabilitation shall be included with the costs of fire suppression operations. In the first instance such costs shall be borne by the contributing landholder or stakeholder whose land has been involved or has been under threat.

Where significant fire damage has occurred, the PRFO/DPRFO shall arrange for the site to be inspected, and a damage report prepared. The report shall identify whether site rehabilitation is required under the requirements of the Resource Management Act, and shall describe any assets that may be salvaged and repaired or replaced.

Refer also to Part 5: 'Recovery'

4.13 Debriefs

The purpose of debriefing is to record what happened, what worked, what didn't work, and where operational aspects can be improved or lessons learnt. A debrief of each fire attended by the Fire Authority shall be carried out whenever:

- A claim is likely to be made on the National Rural Fire Fighting Fund.
- The fire has resulted in injury to fire fighters or members of the public.
- Significant operational shortcomings were noted or unforeseen events occurred.

In lesser events not otherwise meeting the above criteria, a quick informal 'tailgate' debrief may be carried out on-site prior to crews leaving the fire-ground, provided that any action points arising are subsequently investigated and addressed as required.

Operational debrief and review procedures are covered in the '**Recovery**' section of this Fire Plan.

4.14 Road Scene Safety

Hazard warning devices (*road cones, flares, beacons, safety triangles, etc*) must be placed well in advance, front and rear, of roadside operational areas (*at least 200 metres*) to protect the scene from oncoming traffic. Particular attention must be given to high-risk areas such as dips, crests, and blind spots, where personnel could be particularly vulnerable to oncoming traffic.

Personnel shall wear appropriate high visibility/reflective clothing whilst carrying out any task where there is the likelihood of road traffic. Reliance on the standard reflective stripes on protective fire coveralls is not sufficient in these circumstances.

Suitably equipped non-essential personnel or vehicles should be utilised in providing warning to approaching traffic, especially at night or when visibility is poor. Headlights and beacons/hazard lights of appliances and other attending vehicles shall be operated, day or night, to provide warning to oncoming traffic of the incident scene. The use of vehicle beacons, however, may need to be minimised when operating with helicopters, in order to reduce glare hazard for pilots, especially at night.

Orange road marker cones or fire signs shall be established on the road verge adjacent to the entrance to the fire ground, to clearly indicate the turn-off direction for all responding resources. In the absence of appropriate markers, a non-essential support person should be assigned to direct in-coming resources.

In extended roadside operations, Police or a specialist traffic management agency should be engaged to maintain operational and traffic safety.

4.15 Aircraft Safety

The majority of aerial operations involve deployment of a single helicopter. The Incident Controller will generally act as the Air Operations Manager. When helicopter support is requested, the Incident Controller shall identify an appropriate LZ and mark this as appropriate. Radio or cell-phone contact shall be made with the aircraft prior to the initial landing and the pilot advised of identified hazards in the vicinity of the LZ or near the approach path ie power lines.

Where two or more aircraft are working on a fire, aircraft operations shall be controlled by a designated Air Operations Manager, responsible for the safety of personnel, and for correct filling procedures. Notwithstanding this, personnel shall be briefed on safe

practices and safety rules prior to approaching or working near aircraft. **(Refer Appendix 1a Initial Response 'Incident management Team')**

Safety procedures shall be strictly observed. The Incident Controller shall ensure adequate safety procedures are in place before any personnel are committed to air support operations.

Where numbers of aircraft are utilised on an incident, a 'Lead Pilot' shall to be nominated by the Incident Controller/Air Operations Manager to co-ordinate and supervise all pilots engaged in aerial suppression operations. This appointment shall be recorded in the Incident Log.

At large fires where there are two or more aircraft working, or where a convection column of smoke may create a hazard to passing aircraft, consideration shall be given to requesting imposition of a temporarily restricted airspace. The Lead Pilot or Air Operations Manager shall advise the Incident Controller in this respect, having regard to the impact of other aircraft in the airspace on the safety of aerial fire-fighting operations.

4.16 Electrical Hazards

Under no circumstances shall fire-fighters be committed to extinguishing fires near, or under, power lines, particularly high voltage transmission lines and towers, without first ensuring that power is isolated. Use of water, or driving vehicles equipped with radio aerials underneath electrified lines, is particularly hazardous, and is to be avoided. Personnel must also be aware that heavy smoke, flame, and hot gases may conduct high voltage current.

All power lines shall be treated as 'live' until confirmed inactive by the appropriate power authority (*PowerCo, Transpower, Trustpower*).

Caution shall also be exercised in the vicinity of high-voltage electric fence wires passing over gates etc.

4.17 Fuel Hazards

Similar precautions to electrical hazards shall be observed when fires occur near gas lines, pressurised pipes, lines and cylinders.

Fire Forces in first attendance at motor vehicle accidents shall ensure that the vehicle is stabilised and battery immediately disconnected.

Persons operating portable pumps or other similarly powered equipment shall observe all usual safety precautions in carriage of fuels, and when refuelling.

4.18 Hazardous Substances

Personnel must be alert to the possibility of hazardous substances involved in fire. While the danger of flame impingement on LPG/CNG/Oxy-Acetylene cylinders, etc, is usually obvious, other substances that are less noticeable may also be involved.

It is common to encounter agricultural chemicals in quantity in the rural fire environment, and soft furnishings and some forms of natural vegetation can be hazardous when burning. The possibility also exists that industrial chemicals and solvents used in clandestine drug manufacturing operations may be encountered in the rural environment.

Where there is any doubt as to involvement of hazardous substances in an attended fire, the hazard must be assumed to exist until proven otherwise.

4.19 Reporting of Fire-related Accidents and Near-misses

Rural Fire staff shall report any fire-related accident, injury, or near accident to the PRFO/DPRFO or Incident Controller as soon as possible, but preferably at the time of the event. Where injury occurs, an Accident Report shall be prepared and provided to the Fire Authority. Where necessary, the Fire Authority may also require the production of a medical certificate.

If not already in attendance, the PRFO shall respond immediately to investigate all serious harm accidents, to assess welfare needs of the casualty, and to ensure correct procedures are followed. Where necessary, an independent Health and Safety consultant shall be engaged to undertake the detailed investigation.

The above procedure shall also apply to training or other activities controlled by the Fire Authority.

4.20 Emergency 111 System

All fire emergencies should be reported on the '111' telephone system. Key details about the fire should include: property RAPID number, road name, property name, district or region location, size of the fire, what is burning, terrain, weather conditions, and details about any life or property endangered.

4.21 Receiving of Fire Calls

The Fire Authority must be immediately notified of fires reported in the area under its jurisdiction, and of any actions being taken pending the arrival of a Rural Fire Officer.

The NZ Fire Service (NZFS) Communications Centre is the initial receipt agency for reports of fire on the 111 emergency system, and is responsible for notifying the nearest Fire Force or NZFS Brigade in accordance with the pre-determined attendance arrangements. The PRFO shall maintain routine liaison with the Communications Centre, to ensure that notification and pre-determined attendance arrangements are appropriate to the type of event reported.

4.22 Response to Fire Calls

Under the formal agreement operated between the Fire Authority and NZ Fire Service, the minimum predetermined turn-out of a Rural Fire Force or NZFS resource to fire incidents within the Fire Authority is a fire appliance and four personnel, responded from the Fire Force or Fire Brigade nearest to the reported incident.

During periods of increased fire danger, the potential need for additional resources shall be assessed daily in relation to fire weather ratings, and required resource levels modified as necessary. Key aerial operators and other contractors shall be placed on standby as appropriate.

Standby levels, pre-warning of key agency liaison staff, and the requirement to staff the Emergency Operations Centre shall be determined by the PRFO, based on observed and/or predicted fire behaviour and anticipated rates of spread.

4.23 Action on Receipt of a Fire Call

The Fire District is made up of the combined council areas of Thames Coromandel, Hauraki and Matamata-Piako. Council's telephone systems therefore provides the first point of public contact with the Fire Authority. Any person reporting a fire to either of the three Councils or Department of Conservation should be advised to hang up and immediately re-dial '111'. This will ensure that appropriate responses are made without delay.

On receiving notification of a fire, the PRFO or DPRFO shall contact the NZFS Communications Centre to identify the location of the fire and determine those assets which have been responded by the NZFS. If the address is adjacent to the boundary of the Fire Authority's area of jurisdiction, the adjoining Fire Authority shall be immediately advised of the details. Adjacent forest owners shall be similarly advised of any potential threats to their assets.

If applicable, persons who may be potentially trapped or otherwise affected by vegetation fire are to be warned by any available means.

Records are to be kept showing timing of notifications, decisions taken, tasks allocated, staff deployments, and any other information pertaining to receipt of the fire call. In lesser events/incidents, NZFS 'ICAD' reports shall be acceptable for this purpose.

4.24 Actions by Rural Fire Officer

On being notified of an incident, the following actions are required of the attending Rural Fire Officer:

- Contact the NZFS Communications Centre to determine the location of the fire, and those assets which have been responded by the Communications Centre.
- Pursuant to the Forest & Rural Fires Act 1977, proceed with all possible speed, due care and attention, to the fire scene.
- Liaise with, and seek a briefing from the agency or persons already in attendance, and make an assessment of the scale and seriousness of the fire.
- Take command of the incident as necessary and advise Fire Com and all support agencies in attendance accordingly.
- Establish an Incident Control Point (ICP) as necessary.
- Take appropriate action to suppress fires, in liaison with other fire authorities that initially attend the fire/incident, and identify and secure the area of origin pending a detailed fire investigation by the Fire Authority or by its appointed fire investigators.

- As soon as fire suppression operations permit, release NZFS resources, other fire authorities, and any additional resources in attendance, for redeployment to further incidents.

If the fire has, or is likely to develop into, a Level 2 or 3 fire ensure Fire Com notified and appraise the PRFO/DPRFO who will in turn arrange the following:

- Establish and staff a command structure commensurate with fire size.
- Establish communications networks and request activation of the Emergency Operations Centre.
- Call up, or place on stand-by, sufficient personnel and equipment to contain, control and suppress the fire, including other Rural Fire Forces, contract staff and equipment, adjoining Rural Fire Authorities, or any other resources required (**See Appendix 1a & 4 Logistics**).
- Notify the NRFA Regional Rural Fire Manager as soon as practical (*within 24 hours*) if the fire is likely to become a regional emergency, or likely to attract media attention, if fire fighters are injured or killed, or if a claim on the Rural Fire Fighting Fund appears likely.
- Take all necessary action to contain and extinguish the fire.
- Establish a staging area/s and record all incoming and outgoing personnel and equipment at this point.
- Request and maintain effective logistical support (*e.g. food, drinks, clothing, lighting, first aid, shelter, transport and/or additional communications*) to the fire ground, through the Emergency Operations Centre, especially where the fire is likely to be prolonged, i.e. more than six hours.
- Task crews with mop-up patrols to ensure the fire is completely extinguished, all hot spots are out, and that fire cannot re-ignite or spread.
- Secure point of origin and any evidence, photograph, impound or otherwise secure exhibits, establish the cause of the fire, obtain names and statements from any witnesses, including how the fire/incident was initially reported, complete a Fire Investigation Report and record relevant statistics on the Fire Incident Report Form.
- Complete fire incident forms and conduct operational critiques if required.
- Inspect and reconstitute all equipment upon return to depot or fire station. Log any defective resources.

4.25 Local Resources Contingent Capacity

Details of the local resources available to the Fire Authority to assist with fire-fighting are provided in **Appendix 4 Logistics**.

4.26 Command and Control at Incidents

Where any other Fire Authority initially attends a vegetation fire within the jurisdiction of the Thames Valley Rural Fire District, the senior person present shall be the person in charge until a Rural Fire Officer appointed by the Thames Valley RFA arrives at the fire ground. At that time, control of the fire shall pass to the Rural Fire Officer. In minor incidents, the attending rural fire officer shall act as Incident Controller

Where Rural Fire Forces are first in attendance at any fire or incident within the District, the attending Rural Fire Officer or most experienced Crew Leader at the scene will be the person in charge. Advice and assistance may be sought from experienced persons from other attending organisations but overall control of any incident will remain with Thames Valley RFA as the lead agency.

If the fire requires resources additional to those already deployed, the Rural Fire Officer shall activate the Fire Plan and arrange for appropriate logistical support.

All staff on the fire ground shall ensure that they have:

- A clearly defined job, within their personal capabilities.
- A clear understanding as to whom they are reporting, and for whom they are responsible.
- A clear understanding of the tasking each person is responsible for.
- A clear understanding of *Standard Safety Orders* prior to entering the fire ground.

4.27 Identification

All command personnel at a rural fire incident, especially those with key roles or functions, must be able to be easily identified by fire fighters or supervisors. Whilst on the fire-ground, Rural Fire Officers shall wear red or orange overalls or identifying tabards, and/or white helmets .

4.28 Communication Capability

Vehicles operated by the RFA are fitted with Fire Service land mobile radios (LMR) to meet NZFS requirements and to facilitate efficient communications. Fire Authority vehicles may also carry hand-held radios for fire ground use, and ground-to-air equipment for aerial operations.

Establishment of a communications network at a fire (*runners, hand-held radio, mobile radio, cell phone*) is also crucial. Sufficient radio channels, including Fire Service liaison channels, are available to facilitate separation of the various operational functions.

The following Table and subsequent paragraphs detail communications equipment and channels immediately available to the Fire Authority:

TVRFA Channel Set-up

Hand-held VHF Radio

Hand-held UHF Radio

Channel	Channel Name/Purpose	Channel	Channel Name/Purpose
1	NZFS Fire 1	1	Fire 1
2	NZFS Fire 2	2	Fire 2
3	NZFS Fire 4	3	
4	ESX15	4	
5	ESX 20	5	

6	ESX 23		
7	THAMES CD17		
8	MANUKAU CD ES130		
9	ROSS WALKER		(WHITIANGA SAR)
10	HAURAKI DC ES6		(CORBETTS RD)
11	HAURAKI DC ES44		(KARANGAHAKE)
12	DOC 6 ES121		(HIHI)
13	DOC 2 ES117		(COROMANDEL)
14	SAR CHANNEL 2		
15	LIAISON RES164		
16	LIAISON SIMPLEX ESX39		

The Fire Authority operates various VHF radios (*variable frequency*) for ground-to-air communications.

Department of Conservation operates an internal radio network, able to be utilised as necessary.

4.29 Monitoring Fire Behaviour

The Fire Authority maintains hand-held field weather monitoring equipment that can be deployed for monitoring and predicting fire behaviour if required. Other actions undertaken to routinely monitor fire weather and fire behaviour are detailed in **Part 3** of this Plan.

4.30 Recording of Personnel and Equipment

All personnel reporting at the fire ground, including those from other agencies shall:

- Check in at the Incident Control Point and provide names of personnel and status of equipment contributed.
- Receive a defined task identifying designation within the command structure, person to whom responsible, whom responsible for, task responsibilities and resources available.
- Receive a full briefing on fire ground communications systems and extent of fire (*disposition of resources, call signs, radio channels, fuel types, methods of suppression, fire ground sectors, threats, weather, escape routes or safe zones etc*).
- Brief accompanying personnel as required (*assigned tasks, responsibilities, and fire situation*).
- Be advised of additional hazards where appropriate.

When carrying out an assigned task, personnel shall:

- Ensure an effective and safe chain of command at all times.
- Ensure effective communications at all times.
- Provide regular progress reports through the chain of command.

- Accord the highest priority to safety in dangerous situations eg up slope danger, entering areas of unburned fuel, moving into natural chimney formations within gullies, etc.

4.31 Recording Fire Incidents

A log of events, radio, and telephone messages shall be maintained for all incidents. At minor events, the NZFS ICAD report will be sufficient.

For Level 2 and 3 events, the Incident Control Point shall chronologically record fire ground activities, including arrival and departure times of personnel and resources, all changes of command, changes of fire status/behaviour, relevant radio transmissions, and any other relevant data.

Incident Situation Reports will be completed on the common CIMS forms and attached to the Incident Log Form on completion of operations. Incident Action Plans will also be completed on common CIMS forms and attached to the log.

The Emergency Operations Centre, when activated, will use its internal messaging and logging facilities to record and time all its transmissions, telephone calls, notifications, EOC staff start and finish times, and other activities relevant to the event.

4.32 Air Operations Log

A log of air operations shall be kept using the appropriate NRFA forms. Additionally, a New Zealand Air Operations Flight Summary sheet shall be maintained, on a daily basis, for each aircraft deployed.

4.33 National Incident Management Forms

The Rural Fire Authority has adopted the use of common forms for incident management in line with the initiative led by Department of Conservation and National Rural Fire Authority to ensure consistency with other Fire Authorities. NZ Fire Service brigades operating in a rural role are encouraged to use the common form.

4.34 Rural Fire Force Reporting

Rural Fire Force staff shall report on all significant incidents using the Fire Authority '**Fire Incident Report**' form in **Appendix 8**:

4.35 Medical Assistance

At large or multi-incident events, St John Ambulance will be requested to provide first line ambulance attendance and to maintain same until released by the Incident Controller.

4.36 Logistical Support

If a fire requires more resources than are immediately available from member or local support agencies, the Incident Controller shall request further resources through the PRFO/DPRFO.

Contact details for personnel and equipment are contained in **Appendices 1, 3 & 4: 'Logistics'**.

4.37 Welfare Support

Fluid and refreshments will be provided to all rural fire personnel involved in fire-fighting.

If personnel have been working for four hours without a main meal before being called to the fire, action shall be taken to provide a substantial meal within two hours.

At fires of longer duration, substantial hot meals shall be made available to each person involved with the fire, every six hours maximum, and preferably four hours optimum.

Welfare resources will be arranged directly by the Incident Controller for fires of short duration. For fires of longer duration, welfare resources will be obtained through the PRFO/DPRFO.

4.38 Relief Crews

The Fire Authority will observe, as far as is reasonably possible, standard procedures regarding the length of time crews can operate at a fire scene, and regarding replacement of fire crews.

Part Five – Recovery

5.1 Recovery

The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority is committed to maintaining procedures to ensure all aspects of the post-fire phase (*'Recovery'*) are dealt with in an effective manner.

5.2 Policies and Procedures

Member agencies of the Fire Authority have established internal policies to meet the requirements of the Resource Management Act 1991, Health & Safety in Employment Act 1992, and other Acts and Regulations relating to protection of people and the environment. Member agencies have a responsibility for management of land resources, and for reinstatement of land damaged during fire suppression operations, pursuant to the RMA.

5.3 Protected Areas

There are no registered protected areas within the Thames Valley Rural Fire District. There are, however, a number of sites of environmental interest to member agencies, which may be affected by fire.

The Fire Authority shall consult, and work with, the owner/manager of any land deemed to be of environmental interest with regard to how best to assist with such recovery issues as may be required.

5.4 Recovery Considerations During Suppression Activities

Rural Fire Officers shall ensure that post-fire recovery is considered as part of the incident management plan, minimising environmental and cultural damage through the adoption of appropriate suppression strategies. This includes consideration of the impact of various fire attack methods, use of additives, and any pre-existing restrictions or limitations.

The Fire Authority operates a policy of removing all rubbish, foam containers, etc. associated with suppression operations, prior to final departure from the scene, and to reinstate staging and operational areas as best as is practicable.

The use of additives is discussed in **Part 4** of this Plan.

5.5 Fire Investigation

All fires requiring more than one hour to suppress, and therefore likely to be a cost to the Fire Authority, shall be investigated by a Rural Fire Officer, or by a contracted investigator as required, in order to determine probable cause and liability. **Refer also to paragraph 5.7 (below).**

5.6 Cost Recovery

The policy of the Fire Authority is to recover fire suppression costs wherever possible, in order to minimise financial impacts on the member agencies. In the first instance, recovery action shall be directed towards the person responsible for the fire. Where liability cannot be determined, the option of lodging a claim against the National Rural Fire Fighting Fund will be considered.

Claims shall be made against the Rural Fire Fighting Fund when appropriate for all vegetation fires that exceed \$1,500.00 in suppression costs. Where any such claim is denied, the Fire Authority may exercise its right to recover costs by way of a levy on land-owners, pursuant to Section 46 of the Act.

5.7 Post-Fire Actions

Following any fire incident, all equipment shall be re-commissioned, and crews rested as applicable. If necessary, arrangements are to be made for relief crews to be available to respond to another call out should one occur.

Recommissioning of equipment includes washing, checking and stowing used hose (or replacing it from store); refuelling of vehicles as required; checking and re-fueling portable pumps, replacement/charging of radio batteries, and generally making equipment immediately available for the next call.

The following post-fire actions shall be undertaken or initiated by the PRFO/DPRFO:

- **As soon as practicable** begin an investigation into cause, liability etc. as follows:
 - a. An *'Initial Wildfire Origin and Cause Investigation'* is to be undertaken where there is a possibility of a claim on the National Rural Firefighting Fund; or
 - b. A *'Full Wildfire Origin and Cause Investigation'* is to be undertaken when one or more of the following circumstances apply:
 - Suppression costs are expected to exceed \$30,000.
 - Damage to property exceeds \$100,000.
 - Where serious injury or fatality results to any person.
 - Where it is known that a crime has been committed and Police are investigating.
 - Where there has been an offence under the Forest and Rural Fires Act or Regulations, in respect of which the Authority is considering taking action against a person or party.
- **Within 10 days**, complete a *Fire Incident Report Form* for all fires, burn offs, and smoke investigations.
- **Within 14 days** of any large fire, conduct an *operational critique* on actions taken at the fire scene. Details must be recorded in all cases, and all remedial actions identified and implemented.
- **Within 28 days**, initiate action to recover fire costs from National Rural Fire Authority Fund, person responsible, or for assistance given to another authority.
- **Within 28 days** ensure initiation of payment to personnel, contractors, or other agencies utilised for assistance.

5.8 Operational Debriefs:

An operational debrief (*sometimes referred to as a critique*) is to be conducted within 14 days of any significant event, i.e. a fire requiring more than 4 hours to suppress.

The Fire Authority is committed to continuously improving performance, and shall give full consideration to all recommendations arising from structured debriefs of fires. A debrief of a fire shall also consider the cost effectiveness of the operation, particularly where a claim may be made on the Rural Fire Fighting Fund.

Consideration of any recommendation arising from an operational debrief shall take into account the views of member agencies, practicality, and affordability. If accepted, the recommendation shall be incorporated into operational procedures and documentation, including the Fire Plan.

5.9 Operational Review Policy

Note:

s.46 (3) of the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005 defines an Operational Review as '*an independent assessment of a significant fire in a Fire Authority's district, carried out under the procedure developed by the National Rural Fire Authority (NRFA) under s14A of the Fire Service Act 1975.*' It should not be confused with an operational debrief.

Consideration shall be given to initiating an Operational Review wherever a fire within the Authority's jurisdiction meets one or more of the following criteria:

- A fire causes significant loss or damage to the community in terms of its impact on property, heritage/cultural sites, or the environment.
- When death or serious injury is associated with a fire.
- When the costs of a fire incident exceed \$100,000.
- When the fire results in unfavourable media attention.
- When, in the opinion of the Principal Rural Fire Officer, lessons may be drawn from the conduct of an operation which should be brought to the attention of the wider rural fire sector.

Operational Review Panel:

Where an Operational Review is considered appropriate, the Fire Authority shall advise the National Rural Fire Officer of its intention to conduct a review and seek his assistance in the selection of a Review Panel. Panel members shall be drawn from a list of nationally-approved Operational Reviewers as agreed between the Fire Authority and the National Rural Fire Officer, with one of those members appointed as leader.

Terms of Reference:

The Terms of Reference, on which the Operational Review will focus, shall be jointly formulated by the Chairperson of the Authority, the Principal Rural Fire Officer and any others whom those two persons deem appropriate.

Operational Review Report:

The Panel shall review the subject operation according to the specified Terms of Reference, such review to include the study of pertinent documentation, interviewing of key personnel, etc, and shall produce a report to the Authority. The report shall broadly align to the requirements of NRFA Circular 2004/04 (*see NRFA website*) and updates, and may contain additional elements pertinent to

the Operational Review's specific circumstances, as agreed. The report shall cover, but not be limited to:

- Incident Overview.
- Executive Summary.
- Fire Cause.
- Fire Investigation Issues.
- Fire ground Operations.
- Accidents and Injuries, as applicable.
- Health and Safety Aspects.
- Environmental Issues, as applicable.
- Costs.
- Other Issues Arising.
- Conclusions.
- Recommendations.

5.10 Fire Site Rehabilitation

Fire site rehabilitation is work consequential to fire suppression activities, i.e. necessary because of direct fire damage, or as a result of damage done during suppression operations. The Fire Authority's policy is that the costs of any minor fire site rehabilitation work undertaken by or for the Authority are to be included with the costs of fire suppression operations. In the first instance such costs shall be borne by the contributing landholder or stakeholder whose land has been involved or has been under threat.

The co-ordination of recovery from cultural and societal impacts resulting from large wildfires will be determined within the appropriate partner agency guidelines.

The Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority work in partnership with Waikato Regional Council on environmental issues and, where necessary, the Regional Council shall be consulted regarding post-fire recovery issues.

Where significant fire damage has occurred, the PRFO/DPRFO shall arrange for the site to be inspected, and a damage report prepared. The report shall identify whether site rehabilitation is required under the requirements of the Resource Management Act, and shall describe any assets that may be salvaged, repaired, or replaced.

5.11 Personnel Health and Safety

The health and safety of personnel involved in rural fire operations or training is of paramount importance and is encompassed within the general Health and Safety policies of the Fire Authority.

- Regular reinforcement of the Standard Vegetation Orders and 'Watch Out' situations shall be provided to rural fire-fighters through training interventions, and interaction on the fire ground.
- Operational practises shall be routinely monitored by RFO's to ensure that safe work practices are adhered to.
- A Safety Officer shall be appointed at any incident which progresses beyond a second alarm. The position may be held in conjunction with

another command role at a small incident but safety must be addressed as a separate function at larger events.

- Each formal meeting of a Volunteer Rural Fire Force shall include a Health and Safety component as an agenda item.
- The Fire Authority shall maintain an Accident Register
- All accidents are to be reported, investigated, and documented. 'Near miss' incidents during training or operational activities are also to be reported and actioned as necessary.

5.12 Rural Fire Force Insurance Scheme

The Fire Authority provides life and accident insurance cover for registered Volunteer Rural Fire Forces within its district via the Rural Fire Insurance Scheme. The scheme applies to members of Volunteer Rural Fire Forces engaged in training or operational activity, including travel to or from an incident location.

5.13 Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) will be offered to all personnel directly involved in any serious harm event arising from any fire training or operational incident, or any fatality occurring during any fire training or operational incident. CISD shall also be offered to staff involved in long campaign-type fires or fires attracting high community/media involvement of a sustained or stressful nature.

Part Six – Administration

6.1 Rural Fire Committee

Regulation 42 (2) (d) of the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005 requires the Rural Fire Authority to note in its Fire Plan details of its Rural Fire Committee membership and a copy of the rules of the Rural Fire Committee. The following paragraphs provide that detail.

6.2 Committee Membership

Thames Valley Rural Fire Committee has a membership of four, appointed by the member agencies as follows:

Thames Coromandel District Council	1 member
Hauraki District Council	1 member
Matamata-Piako District Council	1 member
Principal Plantation Forest Owners	1 member

Note:

Other persons may be seconded as advisors (*non-voting*) to the Committee as deemed necessary.

Currently the following partner agencies are also represented:
NZFS. Eastern Waikato Area Commander.
Department of Conservation.

6.3 Constitution

The areas specified in the schedule of the Thames Valley Rural Fire District Gazette Notice 2000 Amendment No.1 (ref: NZ Gazette 18/7/13 No 91, p.2471) are constituted and declared to be a rural fire district, known as the Thames Valley Rural Fire District.

The TVRFA is administered for the purpose of the Act by a rural fire committee known as the Thames Valley Rural Fire Committee.

The Constitution of the Fire Authority is consistent with the provision and requirements of the Rural Fire Districts Regulations 1980 and Amendment No. 1.

Finance

Costs of administration of the committee including cost of the PRFO and the preparation and operation of the fire plan are met by the member agencies, based on proportions agreed in the Constitution.

The committee maintains financial records and prepares annual accounts.

Dissolution

The committee may be dissolved by a majority resolution of the committee. Any residue of funds will be distributed among stakeholders based on their contribution.

Business Rules

The following paragraphs briefly describe the business rules under which the Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority operates.

Interpretations

In these business rules, unless the context otherwise requires:

- “*Act*” means the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977.
- “*Committee*” means the Thames Valley Rural Fire Committee.
- “*District*” means the Thames Valley Rural Fire District.
- “*Fire Authority*” shall have the meaning given in the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977.
- “*Fire Control*” has the same meaning as given in the Act.
- “*Member Agencies*” means those agencies whose members make up the committee.
- “*National Rural Fire Authority*” means the National Rural Fire Authority constituted under Section 14A (1) of the Fire Service Act 1975.
- “*Principal Rural Fire Officer*” means the Principal Rural Fire Officer of Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority.
- “*Deputy Principal Rural Fire officer*” means a Deputy Principal Rural Fire Officer of Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority
- “*Rural Fire Management Code of Practice*” means the Rural Fire Management Code of Practice issued by the National Rural Fire Authority pursuant to Section 14A (2) (e) of the Fire Service Act 1975.
- “*Territorial Authority*” means a member agency Territorial Authority with the territorial jurisdiction in respect of their territorial area.

Definitions as may be required will conform to the definitions of the Interpretation section of the Forests and Rural Fires Act 1977, and any other definitions that may be required will conform to those of the Rural Fire Management Glossary of Terms.

Meetings

- (a) Meetings shall be held at least quarterly but may also be convened at any time by the Chairperson (*subject to the requirements of notice set out in the constitution*) upon receiving the written request of any member to do so.
- (b) At all meetings of the Authority four members shall form a quorum and no business shall be transacted at any meeting unless a quorum is present.
- (c) In the event of a committee member needing to be absent from a meeting, that member can be represented by another person from the relevant member’s agency, provided prior notice has been given to the committee in writing by letter, email or facsimile. That representative will then have voting rights at the meeting.

- (d) Notice of all meetings shall be conveyed or given to the members in writing at least five working days before the date of that meeting either by forwarding such notice to the address given by that member for notices or by facsimile or email to that address.
- (e) At each meeting each member shall be entitled to one vote. In the event of an equality of voting on any question the Chairman shall have the casting vote and where a status quo exists shall exercise that vote in order to preserve the status quo

Finances

- (a) All member agencies within Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority are required to budget for all costs of fire control on their own land.
- (b) Costs of administration of Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority including costs of the Principal Rural Fire Officer and the preparation of the fire plan shall be met by agreed levies determined in the Constitution.
- (c) Thames Valley Emergency Operating Area Office shall, by agreement, provide secretarial and administrative services to the Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority.
- (d) All moneys received by Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority shall be paid to the credit of accounts in the name of Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority.
- (e) The Thames Valley Emergency Operating Area Office in partnership with the three Councils (TCDC/HDC/MPDC) shall provide financial administration services, which include establishing and maintaining an accounting system to:
 - Meet all Fire Authority reporting requirements plus government and/or local body statutory reporting requirements.
 - Meet all government and/or taxation and levy requirements, as they become necessary.
 - Provide for the day-to-day financial management needs of the Authority including the remuneration and expenses of the Principal Rural Fire Officer.
 - Keep financial records and arrange for annual accounts to be prepared, including financial statements, showing all income and expenditure of the Authority since the preceding statement, as well as a general statement of assets and liabilities of the committee. Such accounts shall be subject to audit.
- (f) The financial year of the Authority shall end each 30th day of June.

Operating Rules

- (a) The committee shall appoint, on such terms and conditions as it may decide, a suitably qualified person as the Principal Rural Fire Officer for the Authority pursuant to the Act.

- (b) The Committee may employ such other person or persons as from time to time it may decide.
- (c) The Authority shall maintain a Fire Management Plan that states the policy and procedures which the Authority shall operate in order to meet its statutory obligations as a Rural Fire Authority, in particular for the prevention, detection, control and suppression of fire.
- (d) In accordance with the provisions of the Act a Fire Response Plan shall be prepared by the Principal Rural Fire Officer and updated by 1 September of each year.
- (e) A report shall be prepared by the Principal Rural Fire Officer and be presented at each Rural Fire Committee meeting. The report shall contain details on outputs achieved for the period reported on.
- (f) An annual budget shall be prepared and approved by the committee.
- (g) The member agencies of the Authority will maintain a fire control agreement, the intent of which is to:
 - Assist the Authority with its legal responsibilities of providing adequate and effective fire fighting resources and;
 - Set out an agreed process for requesting assistance, charging for costs of assistance and any other shared arrangements that may assist with effective fire fighting.
- (h) The operating and maintenance costs of personnel and equipment resources are the responsibility of the relevant member agency owning them.
- (i) Members of the Authority may charge any other member agency of the Authority for the cost of attending fires in the other agency's own land. The Committee shall determine what those operating costs shall be and such costs will be in line with:
 - The National Rural Fire Authority charge out rates for the hiring of fire fighting equipment, as updated annually, and;
 - The charge out rates for fire management personnel and fire fighters as specified in Schedule 1 of the Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority agreement on fire control or the National Rural Fire Authority guidelines.
- (j) Each member agency will be responsible for fire control measures in the areas of their own land, and carry out such measures in accordance with the Authority's Fire Management and Fire Response Plans.
- (k) The Principal Rural Fire Officer in co-operation with the agency in whose area the fire originates shall lodge all claims on the National Rural Fire Fighting Fund. Relevant costs including claim excesses will be borne by the agency on whose land the fire originates and payment from the fund will be directed to the member agency that made the claim.

- (l) Costs associated with prosecution actions and direct recoveries shall be borne by the agency where the fire originates. The Principal Rural Fire Officer is required to have reports prepared for the Authority which include recommendations for action or prosecution and direct recoveries.
- (m) The Authority will declare an appropriate level of fire season status as determined by the Principal Rural Fire Officer using the NZ Forest and Rural Fire Danger rating system.
- (n) Media statements and media enquiries relating to Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority will be handled by the Chairperson and Principal Rural Fire Officer as required. Member agencies will refer any Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority matters they receive from the media, to the appropriate person. Member agencies may maintain media contact and make statements on fire control business relevant to their organisation and their own land. In their advertising and publicity promotions, member agencies will identify themselves as member agencies of the Thames Valley Rural Fire Authority

Alteration of Operating Rules

These operating rules may be amended at a General Meeting of the Committee provided 21 days prior notice is given to each member.

6.4 Forestry Committees

There are no forestry committees operating within the Thames Valley Rural Fire District.

6.5 Rural Fire / CD Emergency Management Relationship

As a matter of policy, the Fire Authority will maintain a close working relationship with the Thames Valley Emergency Operating Area Office. The PRFO will be a member of the Emergency Operating Area Office staff, maintained by that office for the purpose of responding to large-scale multi-agency events.

6.6 Financial Arrangements

The policy of the Rural Fire Authority is to recover all fair and reasonable costs for any of the services it provides to the Rural Fire District. This includes securing full cost recovery for fire suppression activities pursuant to Sections 43 and 46 of the Forest & Rural Fires Act 1977

Charge rates for fire suppression equipment will be aligned to those set by the National Rural Fire Authority when approving grant assistance for claims against the Rural Fire Fighting Fund.

Prosecution action may be pursued for the recovery of costs or for dealing with offences.

6.7 Delegated Authority

The Rural Fire Committee has delegated full powers to its appointed Principal Rural Fire Officer to perform duties pursuant to Section 36 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act.

6.8 Confidentiality of Information

Regulation 42(3) of the Forest and Rural Fire Regulations 2005 notes that information relating to personnel is not required to be included in copies of the Fire Plan made available for public viewing. For this reason no public information relating to fire force crews is shown in public viewing copies of this Fire Plan.

6.9 Co-operative Arrangements and MOUs

In order to ensure an efficient response to fire incidents, the Fire Authority maintains agreements with:

- The Fire Service Commission, under Section 15 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, in respect of first response to fires
- The Fire Service Commission, under Section 9 of the Forest and Rural Fires Act 1977, in respect of specified areas of urban vegetation within Region 2 Bay Waikato Urban Fire Districts.
- Region 2 Bay-Waikato Region NZ Fire Service, in respect of housing rural appliances at specified NZFS fire stations.
- The Fire Authority is a signatory to a Memorandum of Understanding operated between member authorities of the Waikato Regional Rural Fire Committee for the purpose of coordination between those authorities.

6.10 Review of Rural Fire Plan

Regulation 40 of the Forest and Rural Fires Regulations 2005 specify the timeframes in which this Fire Plan must be reviewed:

- **Readiness and Response Sections**

In accordance with Regulation 40(1) (a), the sections of this Fire Plan dealing with Readiness, and Response must be reviewed within two years after the date of adoption.

- **Reduction and Recovery Sections**

In accordance with Regulation 40(1) (b), the sections dealing with Reduction and Recovery must be reviewed within five years of the date of adoption of this Fire Plan.

In addressing this requirement, the Fire Authority will conduct a full review of the total plan bi-annually.