



Across Transport, we are serious about supporting our people and communities during the current bushfire crisis. Your health and safety is paramount. We continue to put health and safety first and consider the health implications of smoke pollution, psychological distress, excessive heat and fatigue for our teams with a focus on reducing the impact of bushfires on our people's health and wellbeing.

Employee support and critical incident support

Critical incident counselling support continues to be available by phone and in person where possible for our people directly involved and/ or personally impacted by the bushfires.

- **Employee Assistance Program:** If you feel like you could benefit from talking to a professional, don't put it off. The EAP offers professional support and coaching for employees and their immediate families
 - Transport for NSW (including RMS) and Sydney Metro: 1300 360 364
 - Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink: 1300 364 213
 - State Transit: 1300 687 327
- **1:1 EAP Support:** Employees can arrange confidential 1:1 support, using the numbers above.
- **On-site critical incident support:** Managers can arrange on-site critical incident support. Call EAP and listen to prompts to arrange on-site support or access dedicated bushfire support. Please note:
 - The public sector is also considering on-site and critical incident support initiatives – so additional options may become available shortly.
 - The NSW Government is deploying specialist Bushfire Recovery Clinicians to bushfire effected communities.

Smoke

Smoke from bushfires is made up of very small particles and gases which can irritate your eyes, nose and throat. The particles are so fine they can also penetrate deep into the lungs. Fine smoke particles may be an issue for people with chronic or acute respiratory diseases, such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema, and also for people with cardiac disease.

Let your leader know if you have a medical condition which may be exacerbated by the poor air quality and talk with them about the bushfire smoke risk at your workplace, any special precautions you may need to take and/or flexible work or leave options you may need to help you manage your health.

The best time to talk about how you will manage the impact of bushfire smoke and poor air quality at work is before it becomes a problem.

A P2 / N95 mask can also help protect against smoke – but only [if used and fitted properly](#). They filter out very fine smoke particles from the air, and they help reduce exposure to bushfire smoke, poor air quality and associated health effects. P2 face masks are available from many hardware and general supply stores.

For more information, you can access the Department of Health's [bushfire smoke fact sheet](#), and also the [Asthma Foundations Key Tips information](#). You can also check the air quality for your region using the [Air Quality Index](#) (AQI) then check AQI and activity guide for what the AQI means and what activities you can do (eg enjoy normal activities /avoiding outdoor activities etc).



Some people are at greater risk from bushfire smoke, including:

- People with heart disease, or lung diseases like asthma and emphysema or other respiratory conditions.
- Older adults, because they are more likely to have heart or lung disease.
- Children, because they have developing airways and breathe more air relative to their body weight.
- Pregnant women, because they may be more sensitive to the effects of smoke.

If you, or someone you know, is in one of these groups, please encourage them to take proactive steps to protect themselves from the effects of smoke, including reviewing [NSW Health information](#).

Property / facilities damage

In fire affected areas, property or facilities may have sustained damage. Urgent or emergency property related service requests should always be logged by telephone with Cushman and Wakefield – 1300 922 853.

Looking after yourself and each other during and after bushfires

As bushfires continue to burn around Australia, it's important to reflect on not only the physical impacts to health and community but also the mental health of those affected, whether directly or indirectly.

Most people involved in an event as frightening and traumatic such as the bushfires will experience a strong emotional reaction. Some experiences can be direct and others indirect, through highly distressing media reports of loss and devastation.

If you are feeling overwhelmed by the ongoing news

- Know that it's ok to switch off from media for a while and take time to look after yourself. While we may want to keep going, sometimes it's important for our long-term health to take a break and consciously look after ourselves.

If you have colleagues or friends that are affected

- People affected may express their distress in various ways. Experiencing or being on the receiving end of these emotional response may be difficult, however it is important to remember these are normal reactions in a normal person to an abnormal event, and that recovering from such an event can take time. Showing your support and understanding is one of the most direct ways you can help them.

If you are helping through this crises

- [Bushfire Recovery Assistance fact sheet](#) is a great resource for all kinds of assistance. Please read it and share it where relevant.
- It is important to look after yourself. Taking action is powerful – however it can also be challenging and stressful. It is not uncommon for people to feel stressed, distressed, tired or overwhelmed, troubled or frustrated.
- If you are in a role where you are feeling stressed and affected, then please speak to your leader so they can support you and take action.
- If you are volunteering then please also consciously look after yourself. Looking after yourself is important to your ongoing health - and it means that you can be more effective longer term.

If you are in an area affected by fires

- Please prioritise your safety and follow the advice from the Rural Fire Service to plan and prepare.

- Take time to check (and re-check) for updates about your travel routes via [Live Traffic](#).
- Check in with your leader, and access flexible work arrangements or leave as you need
- Look after your psychological health, and [prepare psychologically for bushfires](#) if this may be needed.

If you are directly impacted by fires

- Let your leader know, so we can take steps to help.
- Please know that you are not alone. There are many people who want to help.
- The NSW Office of Emergency Management has released a [Bushfire Recovery Assistance fact sheet](#). This factsheet provides information on a range of assistance measures, from immediate, emergency assistance to longer term recovery support, provided by the state and federal governments.

Resources to help with coping

The Australian Psychological Society (APS) has [released a series of resources](#) that might help you cope – please click the links below to find out more on each topic:

- [Use your social connections](#) - Spending time with people who care helps remind us we belong, helps with reassurance and helps us share of emotional and physical burden.
- [Make time for activities you enjoy](#) – taking time to do the things we enjoy helps provide a sense of purpose and normalcy.
- [Challenge negative thoughts](#) – after a traumatic event, some people's way of thinking may shift to a negative focus. These thoughts are very understandable, but can cause additional sadness, fear or anger. This guide is about recognising unhelpful thoughts and finding ways of refocusing.
- [Problem solving after a traumatic experience](#) if problems seem overwhelming, this four step process can help.
- [Learn how to manage ongoing emotional distress](#) Some people continue to experience trauma and anxiety over time. It's important to remember that these reactions are a normal part of recovery and that finding ways to express these emotions in a healthy manner will help the healing process.

Manager Support

Outdoor Work Activities

When determining and planning outdoor work activities during periods where bushfire smoke impacts air quality and visibility, consider the following prompts to help you identify risk factors which should be assessed as part of your decision making process:

- How essential are the work activities and for what length of time will workers be exposed to bushfire smoke - will this exposure be continuous or intermittent;
- Can outdoor work activities be:
 - Postponed to a later time when the air quality has improved; and/or
 - Relocated to an alternative location e.g. indoors, potentially air-conditioned;
 - Modified to reduce exposure to smoke e.g. more frequent breaks indoors;
 - Modified to reduce the level of physical exertion required;
- Where outdoor work is required to continue, consult the current and forecast [Air Quality Index \(AQI\)](#) prior to planning and monitor air quality levels during works via [Air Quality Alerts NSW](#);
- Have any workers advised they have specific requirements due to pre-existing health conditions;
- What other specific factors relating to your operational activities might increase the risk;
- What PPE supplies are appropriate for the conditions e.g. P2 masks, goggles.

TfNSW's Safety, Environment and Regulation division are currently consulting with NSW Health and SafeWork NSW and collaborating with Group Rail's Chief Health Officer and Occupational Hygienist, to develop a formalised and consistent position for managing work health, safety and wellbeing during periods of poor air quality due to bushfire smoke. This will be communicated as soon as it becomes available and will be reviewed and revised as we experience any change in conditions.

Defence Reservists & Staff undertaking Emergency Services and other Emergency Support Work

Where employees or contractors have been approved or required to undertake defence reserve, emergency services volunteer activities or other emergency support work managers should confirm with the employee or contractor prior to returning to work that they have had appropriate rest and recovery and will be fit for duty.

Managers are encouraged to discuss with their employee or contractor the environment and nature of the work that they will be doing and check in regularly on their wellbeing.

Supporting your teams

We recognise that managing and supporting your teams through this current crisis is difficult, and that you may have team members who are distressed or potentially directly impacted.

Review the resources available, including the [Emergency Bushfire Leave Provisions Fact Sheet](#) and reach out to the Manager Assistance Program (MAP), your People and Culture Business Partner or the agency contacts below if you require additional support.

- The **Manager Assistance Program** (MAP) is a confidential service available to managers, to provide support. Please contact them on:
 - Transport for NSW (including RMS) and Sydney Metro: 1300 360 364
 - Sydney Trains and NSW TrainLink: 1300 364 213
 - State Transit: 1300 687 327.

Do you need more support?

- **NSW Mental Health line** provides access to mental health services on 1800 011 511
- **Disaster Welfare Assistance Line** helps with practical assistance on 1800 018 444
- **Beyond Blue's** information about mental health and disasters can be found here, and their support service can be reached on 1300 22 4636
- **Lifeline** provides 24 hour crises and suicide prevention support on 13 11 14
- **Mensline** 1300 789 978
- **Kids Helpline** 1800 551 800
- **Check in with yourself! Mental Health Online** lets you self-assess your mental health and access 12 weeks of treatment for free, including web-based eTherapists and evidence-based treatment programs that you can complete in your own time and at your own pace. Find out more at: <https://www.mentalhealthonline.org.au/pages/signup>
- The [Bushfire Recovery Assistance fact sheet](#) released by the NSW Office of Emergency Management provides information on a range of assistance measures, from immediate, emergency assistance to longer term recovery support, provided by the state and federal governments. If you are directly affected, or if you know people who are directly affected, then this is a great resource for all kinds of assistance. Please read it and share it where relevant.

Agency contacts

Please contact your People and Culture Business Partner or the relevant agency contacts for further information:

Transport for NSW (including RMS)	Danae Catterall, Danae.Catterall@transport.nsw.gov.au
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Sydney Trains / NSW TrainLink	Allison Da Silva, Allison.DaSilva@transport.nsw.gov.au
Sydney Metro	Roger Purcill, Roger.Purcill@transport.nsw.gov.au
STA	Mark Cox, Mark_Cox@sta.nsw.gov.au

Your agency Safety Partners are also available for advice and assistance.