

New South Wales Fire Brigades Operations Bulletin 2008/14 'LACES' — Firefighter safety at bushfires



Issue

The NSWFB will join other Australian fire fighting agencies in implementing 'LACES' (Lookouts, Awareness, Communications, Escape Routes, Safety Zones) as the memory aid used to assist firefighters to implement safe operations at bushfires.

LACES provides a simple way for firefighters to remember the key elements of survival and the avoidance of bushfire entrapment situations, including those within the bushland urban interface (I-Zone).

Background

LACES reduces the numerous safety principles (Standard Fire Orders, WATCHOUTS, etc) with an easy-to-remember acronym. It was developed in the USA to address concerns that firefighters are overloaded trying to remember the existing memory aides.

Application

Prior to and during any bushfire fire fighting operation (including prescribed burning) firefighters should constantly review LACES in relation to their own and their fellow firefighter's safety. The elements of LACES are:

Lookouts — Fire crews must LOOKOUT and ensure that they have a clear appreciation of current fire behaviour, location and size of the fire in relation to crew location.

Awareness — Firefighters must be aware of what is happening around them, including the impact of changes in fire behaviour caused by variations to fuel, weather and topography as well as other fireground and urban hazards.

Communications — All fire crews must maintain communication in accordance with the communications plan and ensure safety issues are discussed and addressed immediately.

Escape Routes — At least two escape routes should be agreed and made known to all relevant personnel. The suitability of escape routes should be reviewed continually to ensure they remain effective.

Safety Zones — Safety zones (refuge areas) should be identified and made known to all relevant firefighters. Firefighters need to consider escape time and safety zone size requirements, which may change as fire behaviour changes.

Operations Bulletin 2008/14

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Further Reading

Standard Operating Guidelines

- [SOG 3.3 Size up \(Wildfire\)](#)
- [SOG 3.4 Strategies \(Wildfire\)](#)
- [SOG 3.5 Firefighter Safety \(Wildfire\)](#)
- AFAC Discussion paper, [Lookouts, Awareness, Communications, Escape Routes, Safety Zones \(LACES\) Discussion Paper](#) February 2008

Station Commander	A	B	C	D	Other

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Previous Operations Bulletin: 2008/13 – Reversing fire appliances