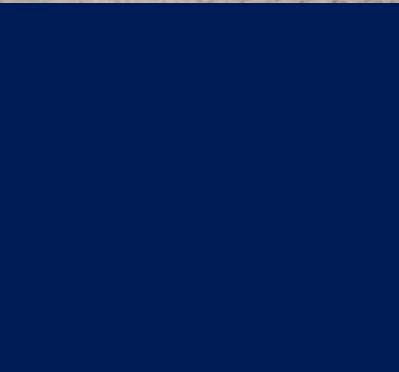




# Metropolitan Fire Service Organisational Doctrine

*Who we are, what we do  
and how we do it*



## Acknowledgments

The MFS would like to acknowledge the many MFS personnel who contributed their time, opinions and experiences in the development of this doctrine. In particular we would like to thank the MFS Senior Management Team and Incident Management Training section for their review and feedback of the many drafts of this document.

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“The Metropolitan Fire Service is comprised of good people doing good work. We will continue to strive to be the best we can be.

The South Australian community places great trust in us and our ability to keep them, and the things they value safe. Ultimately this can only be achieved through the efforts of our people.”

MFS Chief Officer Michael Morgan AFSM

## Foreword

I have been given the opportunity and responsibility of leading the MFS into 2019. The MFS is comprised of good people doing good work. We will continue to strive to be the best we can. I believe the MFS is one of the nation’s most progressive fire authorities and believe it is important that we outline a clear vision of the organisation we wish to be in the future.

Our vision remains a safer and more prosperous South Australia. We will continue to place the highest priority on protecting lives, property, our environment and economy. We have established three strategic priorities to ensure we provide the services our community needs.

These are:

1. Adopting a community focus
2. Striving for operational excellence
3. Ensuring effective preparedness and public value

We will continue to focus on these priorities and maintaining our current service standards. However, we have identified a number of areas where the MFS can improve the services or better support our personnel. We also recognise the need for change so that our organisation is more sustainable and better reflects the community it serves.

My priorities for change and improvement include:

- Ensuring the MFS is an organisation that reflects its community, where all employees feel respected, safe and valued.
- Developing a highly skilled and professional workforce with a modern culture that safely protects our community.
- Enhancing the health, wellness, safety and sustainability of our workforce.
- Ensuring our personnel develop the thinking and decision-making skills to work in high-risk situations supported by a contemporary policy and procedure framework.
- Where possible enhancing the efficiency of the services we provide.

I believe it is essential the MFS holds and displays values that reflect those of our broader community. As one of the professions most trusted by the public I also believe it is imperative that we show leadership when there are members of our community who are disadvantaged, at risk, or in need.

The MFS Doctrine was first published in 2018. The Doctrine clearly defines the values of the organisation and the behaviours we want our personnel to display. It demonstrates our commitment to organisational values that are consistent with the SA Public Sector and our community. The MFS supports programs including White Ribbon, Male Champions of Change and the CEO Sleep-out because they clearly align with our Doctrine and our commitment to protect the broader South Australian community and make South Australia safer.

The Doctrine clearly defines the mental, physical and emotional demands placed on our personnel and the characteristics we need to see in our current and future workforce. I believe accurately defining the demands of firefighting will allow us to place greater emphasis on attracting more diverse recruit applicants while maintaining valid standards of entry.

The Doctrine also communicates the key principles that we believe will promote operational excellence and employee safety. I believe that firefighting is a thinking profession, and it is essential we develop the ability of our people to accurately analyse complex situations and make effective decisions. The Doctrine provides guidance for our personnel concerning how to make decisions, whether they involve emergency incidents, interaction with other people, or their own safety, health and wellbeing.

The MFS faces a number of challenges in the immediate future. Over a third of our front-line personnel will soon retire, taking with them many years of service, knowledge and expertise. These retirements will place pressure on our recruitment and staff development systems. We will also need to develop and promote future leaders to replace those leaving. The Doctrine is a key strategy for ensuring we document and teach to new personnel the lessons we have learned our current workforce.

It is my expectation that all MFS personnel will carefully read this document, understand its implications and help communicate the key principle.

Michael Morgan AFSM  
CHIEF OFFICER and  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE





# MFS Doctrine

*Our best practice guide*



# MFS Doctrine

## What is doctrine?

In simplest terms doctrine is defined as *'that which is taught'*. In other words, doctrine forms the basis for how an organisation teaches its personnel accepted ways of doing business. Military organisations use doctrine to outline how they will approach conflict and more importantly to outline to their personnel how they should undertake operations.

Doctrine is often used to codify best practice on the basis of prior experience and analysis of what works well. Characteristics of doctrine include:

- A set of principles that can be applied in a range of situations.
- A guide on *how to think* – *not what to think* – and provides a common approach to practical problem solving.
- Capturing the official view of the leaders of the organisation on what is best practice and what should be done 'in the field'.
- Doctrine is evidence-based and is updated to reflect new learnings.

## Why do we need doctrine?

The MFS and its personnel do many things extremely well. However, much of our good practice exists only in the heads of our expert personnel but is not shared as effectively as it might be. Documenting what our experts consider to be best practice can provide support to other personnel faced with challenging situations.

Our doctrine will provide broad guidance to our firefighters and officers concerning how to behave and think in both operational and non-operational settings. In short this doctrine will establish the way in which we will practice our profession. Over time, a clear and consistent doctrine, combined with review of operational performance, will allow the development of more effective policy, procedure, equipment and training programs that better reflect how the MFS conducts its business.

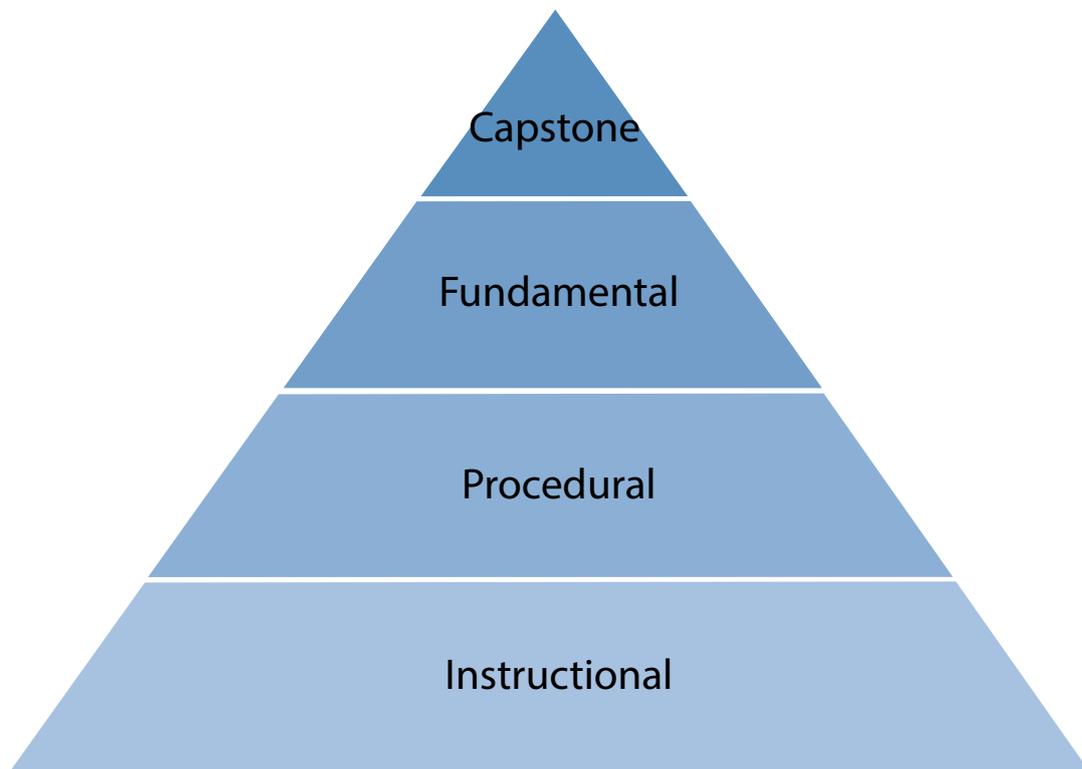
In addition this publication documents the key principles that will govern community service, emergency response and preparedness. These principles represent the official view of the organisation concerning how to think about situations and therefore the actions that should be taken.

# MFS Doctrine Framework

## Fundamentals of doctrine

MFS doctrine is consistent with the Fundamentals of Doctrine: A Best Practice Guide developed by the Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council (AFAC) that outlines four levels of doctrine. This document describes the Capstone and Fundamental levels of MFS doctrine. Other documentation including policy, procedure and training resources form components of MFS doctrine.

1. The *Capstone level* outlines the key purpose, vision, mission and values of the MFS. It states who we are as an organisation and what we aim to achieve.
2. The *Fundamental level* describes the key principles that we believe govern the way we operate as an organisation. This includes how we believe our people should think, decide and act.
3. The *Procedural level* provides detailed guidance for our personnel to behave and act in specific situations. Our policy and procedures guide decision making by detailing how we expect situations that have a known solution to be resolved. MFS policy and procedure are aligned and reflect our capstone and fundamental doctrine.
4. The *Technical (or Instructional) level* provides detailed 'how to' instructions. This level includes equipment manuals and supporting technical information. These are aligned to our other levels of doctrine and updated as we commission new equipment or adopt new work routines.





# Capstone Level

*Who we are, what we do and how we do it*

# MFS Vision and Mission

## MFS vision

### ***A safer and more prosperous South Australia***

Fires and other emergencies have the potential to harm the public and the things they value. We seek to actively reduce the number of preventable emergency incidents that occur and ensure our organisation and communities are better prepared for those emergencies that do happen.

## MFS mission

### ***Help protect South Australian lives, property, environment and economy***

First and foremost, the MFS is here to protect lives and where it is reasonable and practicable our firefighters will take measured risks to save members of the public. In addition, the MFS also seeks to reduce the potential economic, social and environmental impacts of fires and other emergencies by saving property and infrastructure. Each time an emergency is promptly normalised or contained lives, jobs and productivity are saved.

## What our vision and mission mean

### ***Our community comes first***

The MFS places the highest value on protecting the public. This means that the decisions we make, in emergency and non-emergency situations will be community focused and on the basis of community outcomes and public value.

To achieve our vision and mission we have prioritised three key areas of focus. These are:

1. **Adopting a community focus** - we will establish our organisational priorities on the basis of public benefit and value.
2. **Striving for operational excellence** - we are committed to delivering best practice frontline services and will take all reasonable steps to protect the South Australian community, economy and environment.
3. **Ensuring effective preparedness and public value** - we are accountable to the community and aim to ensure the services we provide are effective, efficient, appropriately governed and represent public value.

*'I believe it is essential the MFS holds and displays values that reflect those of our broader community. As one of the professions most trusted by the public I also believe it is imperative that we show leadership when there are members of our community who are disadvantaged, at risk, or in need'*

MFS Chief Officer Michael Morgan AFSM



# The Nature of MFS Emergency Service Provision

## MFS emergency service responsibilities

The MFS is responsible for the protection of the South Australian community from the effects of fires, road crash, dangerous substances, rescues and other emergencies. The role of the fire service includes prevention and education, preparedness, response and recovery activities.

## Frontline responsibilities

MFS personnel are required to undertake complex and technically demanding physical tasks and make decisions in high-risk, low-time environments. MFS personnel must have the ability to work effectively in teams. They must also be able to balance the requirement to follow all reasonable directions with the need to use their own initiative and decision making. MFS personnel have a responsibility to develop and maintain their professional competence and frontline operational capability.

## Public service responsibilities

The MFS is a public sector organisation funded entirely by the community. As a public sector agency the MFS must put the needs of the community first. We have a responsibility to provide the standards of service expected by the public and government and ensure our conduct and behavior is at all times helpful, ethical and professional.

We believe our organisation and its workforce should reflect the values and demography of the community it serves. We will commit to employing positive and inclusive work practices and make reasonable adjustments to ensure firefighting is an accessible career for more members of our diverse community.

We also have a responsibility to ensure the services we provide represent public value. We can do this by ensuring that we identify *what the community values* and prioritise and provide the services that most effectively and efficiently protect and enhance the community.

## The demands of emergency operations

The MFS responds to a broad range of operational incidents that include fires within structures, bushfires (or wildfires), hazardous materials emergencies, and a range of rescues involving vehicles, structures and the environment. Fire and emergency operations are characterised by:

- Complex and rapidly changing high risk situations.
- The need to perform technically and physically demanding tasks.
- The need to make decisions under pressure with little time.
- Significant consequences of failure including injury or death, and property, environmental and economic losses.

The demands of firefighting and emergency operations shape our workforce. Our personnel must have the knowledge, technical proficiency and decision making skills to operate in high-risk, low-time environments. They need to be the right kind of people, with the right behaviours, able to use their values to guide their conduct, decision making and risk taking. They must be able to undertake complex and physically demanding tasks and maintain their ability to think clearly in adverse conditions.

## Firefighting is a highly skilled and thinking profession

MFS personnel face significant risks every time they respond to an emergency. Accordingly our personnel are expected to continually develop their technical knowledge and expertise, and their ability to skillfully apply these on the fireground.

Saving lives and property without risking the lives of firefighters requires effective decision making. All MFS personnel must have the capacity to develop, and be assisted to develop, their ability to make effective and safe decisions.

## Firefighting requires the right behaviours

our personnel must be the right people, who are members of the profession for the right reasons. The MFS expects the highest standards of professional conduct and that our personnel will put the needs of the community first. Our personnel must be empathic, effective communicators and have the ability to balance teamwork and independent action.

We expect our personnel to behave consistently with organisational values and community and government expectations and standards. This may also include championing and supporting initiatives that are consistent with *'good people doing good things'*.

## Firefighting is a physically demanding profession

All MFS personnel may be required to undertake physically demanding fireground tasks. There is an expectation that all personnel will maintain their capability to:

1. Use personal protective clothing/equipment and other operational equipment safely.
2. Perform physically and mentally challenging tasks under adverse conditions.

Because fires and other emergencies place the same demands on all personnel it is vital that all MFS personnel are recruited to the same stringent standards and make every effort to maintain required fitness and operational capability levels.



# Key Focus Areas

*Putting the community first*





# MFS Key Focus Areas

## Community focus

We aim to help make the South Australian community safer and more prosperous. The MFS is community focused and will establish its organisational priorities on the basis of public benefit and value. It is expected that programs and resources will be prioritised and allocated on the basis of community benefit.

What we will do:

- Deliver first class emergency services that minimise social, economic and environmental loss.
- Actively engage with our community and government to identify risks and priorities.
- Ensure we provide public value by putting effective and efficient services in the right places.
- Allocate our budget on the basis of community risks and priorities and operate within it.
- Commit to recruiting a workforce that reflects the values and demography of the community it serves

We expect our people to:

- Exhibit the highest standards of professional conduct and work conscientiously for the betterment of the community.
- Be friendly, helpful and professional in all dealings with our community.
- Treat all members of our organisation and community respectfully and equally regardless of background, circumstance, needs and capabilities.

**“I had previous experience where we saved a piece of equipment that saved a company and all those jobs; so I knew these assets were of importance and worth taking some risks to save.”**

MFS Commander 20+ years experience

## Operational excellence

We aim to protect our community, environment and economy from the effects of fire and other emergencies by providing effective and efficient frontline services. The MFS is committed to working collaboratively with the volunteer emergency services to deliver best practice frontline services and will take all reasonable steps to protect the South Australian community, economy and environment.

What we will do:

- Prioritise the delivery of prevention programs that produce measurable reductions in community risk.
- Ensure that emergency response is timely, effective and efficient, and safety of the community and our firefighters is paramount.
- Ensure that front-line services are integrated and provide the community with the nearest, fastest and most appropriate response to emergencies.
- Ensure the community and our firefighters are supported after emergencies.

We expect our people to:

- Become experts in emergency settings through a commitment to continuous and ongoing professional development.
- Ensure they provide the best and safest possible response service at every incident they attend.
- Have a strong sense of personal responsibility for their position and providing leadership to others.

## Effective preparedness and public value

We are accountable to the community and aim to ensure the services we provide are effective, efficient and represent public value. We recognize that we are funded by the community and are committed to providing excellence in public service and value.

What we will do:

- Clearly define the public value outcomes that the MFS will provide to the community.
- Explain and provide evidence of the value of services provided by the MFS so that we are supported by key stakeholders.
- Ensure that the MFS maintains the operational capabilities required to safely and effectively achieve its stated public value outcomes.

We expect our people to:

- Put the needs and requirements of the community first.
- Identify and share ways of providing better and more efficient public value outcomes and front-line services.
- Commit to continually learning and improving personal and operational practices.

**“Previous experience told me it was important to save the business, not the stock which could be replaced.”**

MFS Assistant Chief 25+ years experience

# Values

*Good people doing good work*



# Our Values

## Community

### ***We will put the needs of our community first***

As an agency we put the needs of the community before our own. The MFS aims to work with the community and other agencies to enhance public safety and maintain the quality of living we enjoy in South Australia.

We will:

- Work with our community to identify and reduce risk.
- Maintain a visible and supportive presence in our community.
- Strive to provide public value for the community.

We expect our people to:

- Get to know their local community and the risks they face, engaging with them to understand their needs and take their views into account.
- Work collaboratively, respectfully and effectively with each other and personnel from other organisations for the benefit of the community.
- Help all members of our community who require assistance.

**“The MFS aims to work with the community and other agencies to enhance public safety and maintain the quality of living we enjoy in South Australia.”**

MFS Assistant Chief 20+ years experience

## Safety

### ***We will take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure the safety of the public and our personnel***

The MFS is committed to minimising the risks to our personnel by providing appropriate training and instruction, fit for purpose equipment and safe systems of work.

We will:

- Ensure our personnel have the ability and resources to identify and manage risks and hazards.
- Provide appropriate training, fit for purpose equipment and safe environs.
- Provide systems and resources that support the ongoing wellbeing of our personnel.
- Take all reasonable and practicable measures to ensure employees are not placed at or remain at undue risk.

We expect our people to:

- Put the safety of the public and themselves first.
- Assume direct responsibility and make decisions that improve the safety and physical and psychological wellbeing of themselves and others.
- Demonstrate a commitment to maintaining work-life balance and improving safe working conditions and equipment.
- At all times, act in accordance with our principles of risk, safety and wellbeing.

**“You need to have experience and knowledge to know if there is a saveable life.”**

MFS Assistant Chief 25+ years experience

## Professionalism

***Our personnel must be experts in what they do, committed to achieving the highest standards***

As emergency service professionals tasked with protecting life and property our personnel must be experts, capable of making life and death decisions in an instant. They must possess the professional knowledge, skills and technical excellence to operate in high-risk environments.

We will:

- Strive for excellence in all we do.
- Seek new and innovative solutions.
- Find ways to help others.

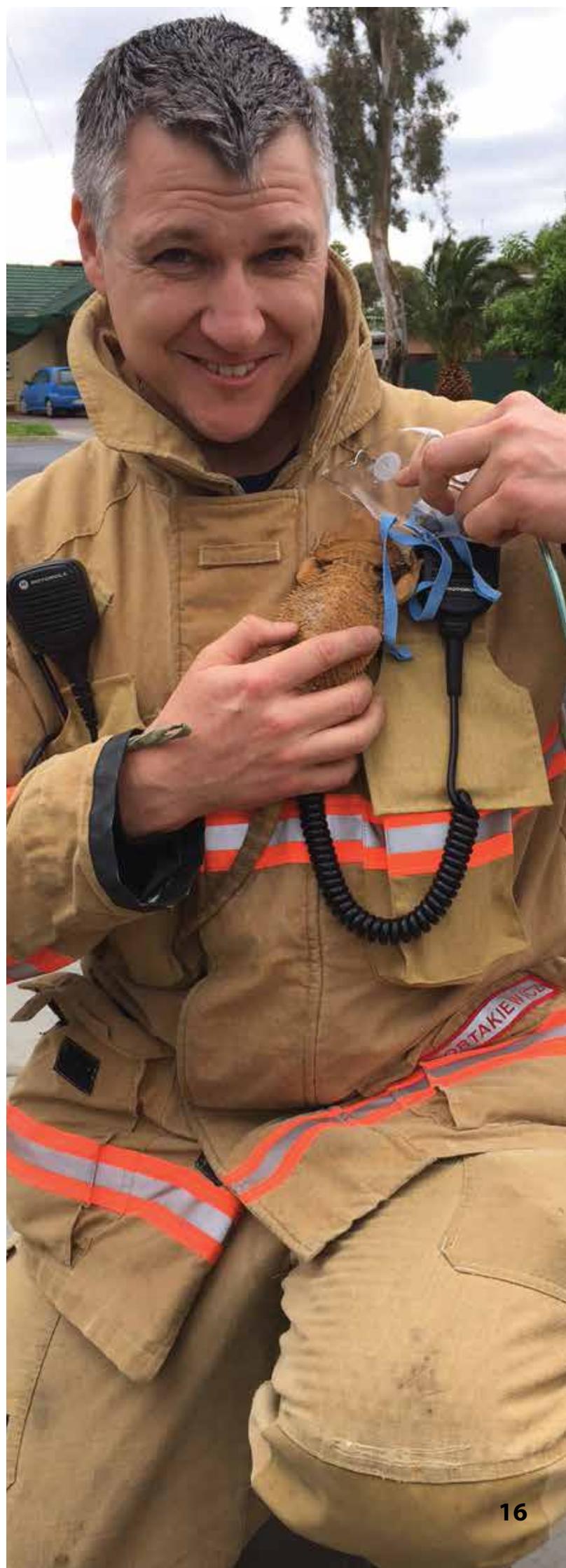
We expect our people to:

- Contribute to a professional and positive work environment.
- Take personal responsibility for appropriate workplace interaction and stop dangerous, negative or unprofessional behaviours and actions whenever they are encountered.
- Deliver on commitments made by the agency and themselves.

**“We have a responsibility to provide the standards of service expected by the public and government and ensure our conduct and behavior is at all times ethical and professional.”**

MFS Chief Officer Greg Crossman AFSM

(Retired)



## Teamwork

### ***Teamwork is essential in all aspects of emergency service provision***

Our personnel are expected to work as effective members of a team. They must be able to work towards common goals and support each other for the benefit of the community. This includes when they respond to emergencies.

We will:

- Work with other agencies for the benefit of our community.
- Employ cooperative, inclusive and supportive practices.
- Build professional relationships inside and outside the MFS.

We expect our people to:

- Work effectively with all other MFS personnel for the betterment of the community and each other.
- Listen to each other and value different perspectives.
- Engage in honest and open communication.
- Involve other people in decisions that affect them.
- Rely on and trust fellow first responders from the MFS and other agencies in pursuit of common goals and objectives.

## Loyalty, respect and integrity

### ***We will act with courage, tenacity and in the best interest of the public.***

The MFS holds a position of public trust and responsibility. Our personnel are committed to doing the right things in the right way and maintaining our standing within the community.

We will:

- Provide a modern supportive workplace that provides equal opportunities for all employees.
- Ensure the organisation serves all members of the community equitably without favour or prejudice.

We expect our people to:

- Act with integrity and be prepared to speak up or take action if they observe things they know are wrong.
- Treat and value all individuals equally; with dignity, fairness and without bias. Respecting their views and beliefs regardless of background.
- Involve other people in decisions that affect them.

**“My knowledge of the crews and the confidence I had in their capabilities allowed me to attack the fire. If I hadn’t had that confidence I would have been much more conservative.”**

MFS Commander 25+ years experience

## Responsibility, accountability and quality

***We aim to provide the best possible service and value to our community***

As a public funded organisation the MFS aims to ensure it provides the highest possible standard of emergency services to the community.

We will:

- Manage the performance of the agency and its personnel to meet or exceed recognised performance standards.
- Ensure compliance with legislation, regulations and expected standards of governance and compliance.
- Clearly define the roles and expectations of our employees and ensure individual and collective accountability to those we serve.
- Recognise and reward exceptional behaviour and performance.
- Strive to provide public value for the community.

We expect our people to:

- Accept individual and shared responsibility for their actions and performance.
- Actively monitor, evaluate and improve their performance and the service they provide.
- Inform the organisation when they identify risks or potential improvements.
- Ensure public funds are used productively and never wasted.

**“I think I made the decisions I did because I had confidence in the ability of my two officers and their crews.”**

MFS Commander 30+ years experience



## Learning and improvement

### *We seek to do things even better in the future*

We consider career-long learning to be essential to the safety of our personnel and the public. Firefighting is a high-risk industry and we expect our personnel to be experts rather than merely competent.

#### Agency responsibilities:

- Establish clear expectations of ongoing learning, thinking and mastery and not accepting mediocrity.
- Ensure the entire agency learns from experience and research.
- Provide access to safe, realistic and relevant professional development that improves the skill, expertise and decision making of our personnel.

#### We expect our people to:

- Actively participate in all required organisational training and development activities.
- Show initiative and establish their own learning objectives by learning from experiences (both good and bad), practice and independent study.
- Be able to accept performance appraisal and feedback and take responsibility for improving their performance or behaviour.
- Actively participate in change management and suggest and support new ideas and better ways of doing things.

**“A lot of my knowledge came from experience but it also came from training including courses I had recently undertaken”**

MFS Commander 25+ years experience



# Fundamental Level Doctrine

*How we do things*



# Principles of Risk, Safety & Wellbeing

## Risk

***We will take considered risks to save people and the things they value***

The community trusts and expects that MFS personnel will take action to save members of the public from fires and other emergencies. This may mean that in emergency situations where public life is at risk, our personnel will, when reasonable and practicable, accept a degree of risk to themselves.

Agency responsibilities:

- In situations where public lives can be saved by MFS intervention our firefighters may be exposed to risks. The MFS will ensure personnel are provided with appropriate systems, equipment and training that minimizes these risks.

We expect our people to:

- Be independently capable of identifying and evaluating risks that may impact on the public, themselves or other first responders.
- Only expose themselves or other personnel to risk if it is decided that the possibility of saving members of the public or things they value outweighs the risk to firefighters.
- Not place themselves or other personnel at undue risk in situations where the public is not at risk or there is no chance of successfully saving lives.

**“I was told firefighters were conducting internal operations to save a building. I felt this was wrong. My gut feeling was that the building was not saveable or worth the risk to firefighters.”**

MFS Assistant Chief 30+ years experience

## Safety

***All reasonable and practicable measures will be taken to ensure the safety of the public and our personnel***

The MFS is committed to minimizing the risks to its firefighters through the provision of instruction, training, equipment and safe systems of work. Safety is considered an organisational non-negotiable, that must be embedded in our culture and evident in all activities.

Agency responsibilities:

- We will provide our personnel with appropriate safe systems of work that include clear instructions, training development and fit for purpose equipment.

We expect our people to:

- Take responsibility and due care for the safety of themselves and others. This includes developing the knowledge, skills and abilities that enhance operational safety and effectiveness.
- Comply with all organisational safety directives including use of safe systems, equipment and protective clothing.
- Trust in one another, following all reasonable orders listening to the advice and opinions of others to help identify risks and the safest possible course of action.
- Actively contributing to decision-making and speak up when necessary to make others aware of risks or potential outcomes.

**“I was prepared to take significant risks to save lives and given the economic value some risk to save the businesses. I wasn't going to put firefighters at risk.”**

MFS Assistant Chief 25+ years experience

## Wellbeing

***All reasonable measures will be taken to ensure MFS staff maintain their wellbeing and wellness throughout their careers***

Most of our personnel have lengthy careers in the emergency services that may expose them to physical, mental and emotional stresses. Ensuring our personnel remain healthy during and after their employment requires that the MFS and its personnel are aware of the potential risks to wellbeing and pro-actively address them.

Agency responsibilities:

- We will ensure our personnel are provided with appropriate information concerning the risks they face and provide appropriate systems and support.
- We will encourage a culture that acknowledges the emergency services are a stressful profession and that does not stigmatize health or wellness conditions that may result.
- Where possible provide our personnel with flexible work practices that contribute to workplace wellbeing.

We expect our people to:

- Take personal responsibility for their own wellness.
- Consider and contribute to the wellness of others.
- Monitor their own work levels and work-life balance.
- Pro-actively and responsibly manage their access and use of leave and access and use of available wellness support systems such as the Employee Assistance Program.



# Principles of Incident Management / Emergency Operations

## Incident command

***Clear incident command will be established at all incidents***

It is a clear principle that there will be one Incident Controller at any time during an incident. The Incident Controller will hold responsibility for all fireground systems, decisions, actions and the safety of the public and personnel.

Principles include:

- The first arrival officer (or crew commander) will initially hold the position of incident controller.
- An Incident Controller will be appointed for every incident and remain in charge of the incident until control is handed over to another officer or until the incident is safely concluded.
- As an incident becomes larger an Incident Control Structure (ICS) may be employed to ensure effective management of key functions that include Operations, Planning and Logistics.
- Overall responsibility for controlling the incident cannot be delegated by an Incident Controller.

We expect our people to:

- Ensure that clear incident control is established as early as possible in a fixed position from where the incident can be most effectively and safely managed.
- Employ an ICS where key functions including Operations, Planning and Logistics are delegated as the incident becomes larger or more complex.
- Work within and support the established chain of command and the Incident Command System.
- Not self-respond, self-deploy or freelance on the fireground.

## Urban Interface and Rural Fires

***The MFS will respond to any Urban Interface or Rural fire where it is safe to do so***

MFS urban interface and rural firefighting operations will always prioritise the safety of the public and firefighters over the protection of property, assets or the environment.

Principles include:

- The MFS may adopt offensive, defensive or safeguarding strategies to protect life, property and the environment depending on the situation.
- Urban interface and rural fires will be managed in accordance with broader MFS incident management principles including clear incident control, objectives-based planning and risk versus benefit.
- Supporting the recovery of communities impacted by urban interface and rural fires will commence as soon as it is safe to do so.

We expect our people to:

- Establish and maintain situational awareness through a clear understanding of critical factors specific to urban interface and rural fires.
- Establish and work under clear incident command and consistently with incident objectives and intent.
- Ensure the effective and ongoing management and dissemination of urban interface and rural fire situational information through operational communication and public warnings.
- Prioritise the protection of lives and only undertake offensive attacks on a fire where the benefit exceeds risk, there is safe access and egress, appropriate capabilities and when firefighter safety is not compromised.

## Public information and warnings

***The MFS will freely provide information that informs and enhances the safety of the public***

The MFS will freely provide clear, timely and accurate information concerning emergency incidents that may impact on public safety.

Principles include:

- Providing the public with information concerning emergency incidents that is as timely and accurate as possible notwithstanding the need to prioritise emergency operations.
- Engaging with the community to identify strategies for information sharing that are effective and provide sustainable public value.

We expect our people to:

- Be friendly, helpful and professional when representing the MFS in all matters of public communication.
- Balance the need to provide accurate and timely information with the need to manage incident operations and safety.
- Ensure that incident information that may impact on or enhance public safety is disseminated as quickly and accurately as possible.

**“Communication is important, it becomes more important at larger and more complex incidents.”**

MFS Commander 30+ years experience



## Offensive firefighting operations

***We will undertake offensive firefighting operations when there is opportunity to save life or property without placing firefighters at undue risk.***

Offensive firefighting operations will only be undertaken where the probability of saving members of the public and things they value outweighs the risks to MFS personnel.

Principles include:

- Offensive operations will only be undertaken where the situation is deemed survivable for firefighters.
- Offensive operations will only be undertaken where safety measures including adequate firefighting water and a rapid intervention strategy are in place.
- Offensive will not be undertaken or continued where there is no potential to save lives or risks exceed the capability of personnel.

We expect our people to:

- Ensure they have a clear rationale for and the capability and resources to undertake offensive firefighting operations.
- Ensure there are clear short-term objectives and timeframes against all offensive operations.
- Continually monitor the interior situation and be prepared to abandon the structure immediately if there is no chance of saving lives or there is imminent life risk to firefighters.
- Monitor safety and welfare factors including fatigue and heat stress that may impact on decision making and safety.

**“Saveable life will influence my decisions; if life can be saved you go offensive otherwise you go defensive”**

MFS Station Officer 20+ years experience

## Situational awareness

***Incident Managers and officers are required to develop an understanding of the incident situation prior to making decisions***

Situational awareness is critical to decision making. This is especially true on the fireground. Personnel must access and interpret information to build a clear picture of situations and how they are likely to progress. At operational incidents they should undertake an appropriate size-up that gathers critical factors including incident type, scope and scale, the level of risk (including life risk) and resources available.

Principles include:

- Obtaining enough of the right information, knowing what that information means, and being able to accurately predict the future course of the current situation.

We expect our people to:

- Know what information to look for and gather. This includes critical factors.
- Employ a range of strategies to obtain comprehensive situational information. At emergencies these should include physical/visual inspection (360), radio communications, pre-plans, accessing technical experts and regular briefings.
- Be able to interpret and use the situational information to develop a clear mental picture of what is happening, the key risks, and what is likely to occur (the predicted outcome).
- Where possible, check their situational awareness by comparing the current situation to previous experiences and training.

**“Information alone is useless, you have to know what the implications are for the current and future fireground situation.”**

MFS ACFO 30+ years experience

## Incident decision making

***We expect personnel to make decisions that are appropriate, effective and timely***

The ability to make effective decisions in high-risk low-time situations is dependent on experience and training and thorough knowledge of relevant procedures.

Principles include:

- Recognising the need to make fast decisions under pressure must be balanced against the need to make the right decision.
- All decisions should be consistent with MFS values, principles, policies and procedures.
- Not blaming our people when a different decision may have been more effective. We will review and learn from such situations and share our findings.

We expect our people to:

- Employ a range of decision strategies but ensure they have the experience necessary to make intuitive decisions.
- Make timely decisions that are consistent with the MFS risk hierarchy of life, property and the environment, and the assessment of risk versus benefit.
- Where they cannot confidently decide on a course of action:
  - Employ conservative (risk adverse) tactics that minimise risk to our personnel.
  - Upgrade the response and transfer command to an officer of higher rank.

**“I relied on my experience to make rapid decisions, when necessary I followed procedure. I considered options when I had time.”**

MFS Commander 30+ years experience



## Incident planning

### ***Every incident will have an Incident Action Plan (IAP)***

All incident plans should be based on clear strategic and tactical objectives; that is, a clear idea of what should be achieved. Personnel should ensure that these objectives, appropriate for the situation, are established and clearly communicated.

Principles include:

- Every incident must have an objectives-based incident action plan (IAP) with aligned strategies and achievable tactics.
- At all incidents of Level 2 and above, and otherwise where practicable, the Incident Action Plan will be formalised and documented. At such incidents Incident Controllers will ensure the development of a Communications Plan.

We expect our people to:

- Ensure there are appropriate incident objectives, strategies and tactics are in place that are clearly communicated and acted on.
- Ensure the benefits of the tactics and their individual actions outweigh the risks taken.
- At all times ensure they and other personnel have a common operating picture and clear understanding of the incident action plan and their part in implementing the plan.
- Communicate any issues or risks that may prevent the successful implementation of the plan.

**“I got some initial objectives and tactics in place while I was still building a better picture of the fire and what was going on. Once I got things moving... I could start formalising the plan.”**

MFS Station Officer 20+ years experience

## Incident actions

### ***Every incident will involve clear communication and be effectively coordinated and controlled***

All MFS personnel are expected to contribute to the effective management of incidents. Officers are expected to ensure incidents are effectively and safely managed, personnel are expected to act consistently with the Incident Action Plan and monitor the safety and capability of themselves and others.

Principles include:

- An appropriate communications plan will be developed and used.
- At all incidents, levels of risk will be clearly shown and managed through the use of Control Zones. Only personnel appropriately trained and equipped will be allowed into the Hot Zone.
- At all incidents at 2<sup>nd</sup> Alarm or greater, staging will be employed. In all cases staging and sectorising should be considered.

We expect our people to:

- Ensure effective and ongoing communication and tasking for the duration of the incident.
- Work consistently with the Incident Action Plan; the MFS does not condone ‘freelancing’.
- Not undertake actions (tasks) where they either lack the capability (insufficient training or inappropriate equipment) or have reduced capability resulting from fatigue, injury or heat stress.
- Continually monitor the safety and capability of themselves and other personnel.

**“You need to get an effective incident management team in place early.”**

MFS Station Officer 25+ years experience

## Incident review

***All incidents will be reviewed dynamically (during) and after the incident***

Incident review must occur dynamically and continuously during an incident to ensure changes in the situation and emerging risks and hazards are addressed. Incidents should also be reviewed when concluded so that lessons can be learned and addressed.

Principles include:

- Incident review will occur on a timely and ongoing (dynamic) basis. This includes review of the incident situation and the effectiveness of the IAP for the duration of the incident.

We expect our people to:

- Ensure they continually monitor the incident as it evolves around them and act on and/or communicate any changes that may impact on safety or progress. This includes dynamic review of:
  - Changes in the incident (fire behaviour, risks and hazards etc.).
  - The effectiveness of current operations and making any required changes to the incident action plan or deployment.
  - Where appropriate the incident review will be documented and will identify lessons learned and potential performance improvements.
- Review their performance following every incident they attend.

**“I’m always reviewing the situation; are our current actions working, what can we change to be more effective?”**

MFS Station Officer 20+ years experience



