

## 17 November - Esperance Area Fires

### Event:

A bushfire in the Esperance area occurred during catastrophic fire weather conditions and resulted in 4 fatalities on Tuesday 17 November 2015.

### Event Summary:

On Sunday 15 November, lightning ignited fires in the Shire of Esperance. These fires continued to burn on Monday and became uncontained on Tuesday. During the evening of Tuesday 17 November, 4 people died in a fire near the localities of Grass Patch and Salmon Gums to the northwest of Esperance. Catastrophic fire weather conditions occurred on 17 November with very hot, dry and very windy conditions with a significant wind change.

### Warnings and Forecast Summary:

On Thursday 12 November, the Emergency Services Weather Briefing issued by the State Operations Centre Meteorologist (SOCMET) indicated that adverse fire weather conditions were expected across the Southwest Land Division, including Esperance, on Tuesday. On Monday 16 November, the briefing indicated that Extreme to Catastrophic fire weather conditions were forecast for Tuesday in the Esperance area together with a significant wind change. The briefing was reissued on Monday afternoon highlighting the severe to catastrophic fire weather conditions forecast for Tuesday.

On Sunday 15 November, lightning ignited fires in the Shire of Esperance. A Spot Fire Weather Forecast (Spot Forecast) was issued for Lake Mends at 1114 WST. The Spot Forecast issued on Monday 16 November made specific reference to the adverse fire weather conditions expected on Tuesday. Several Spot Forecasts were issued on Tuesday to reinforce the expected fire weather conditions and the timing of the significant wind change. As the fire has spread significantly, an additional Spot Forecast was issued for Scadden at 1718 WST. This indicated that the significant wind change was forecast between 1800 and 1900 WST. A preliminary analysis using all available observations showed that the wind change moved through the fire site at about 1800 WST.

A Fire Weather Warning was issued at 1505 WST Monday 16 November for Severe to Catastrophic Fire Dangers on Tuesday. This warning was reissued at 331 WST on Tuesday.

A Severe Weather Warning for Damaging Winds was issued at 1235 WST Tuesday for an area which included the fire site. Peak wind gusts recorded in the area

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included: Norseman Aerodrome 104 km/h, Salmon Gums Research Station 93 km/h, Munglinup West 93 km/h, Esperance Aerodrome 87 km/h and Esperance 83 km/h.

Catastrophic fire weather conditions were recorded in the Esperance area for a period between 3.5 and 4.5 hours on Tuesday 17 November.

**Criticisms of Service Summary:**

To date there have been no adverse comments made against the Bureau from the media or the public.

See [Esperance Fire Report](#) for further details.