

Bushfire Model: Benefits and Applications

An engaging way to learn and practise

The Bushfire Model is a portable, tactile training tool that firefighters use for training and scenario exercises.

For more than a decade, brigades across Australia have used the model to improve skills, strengthen decision-making, and build confidence at every level. Since 2016, the model has helped to deliver highly engaging, hands-on training that creates a collaborative learning environment and supports effective training outcomes.



With a flexible landscape and elements including vehicles, appliances, fire shapes, aircraft and assets, the model provides an engaging platform for learning and discussion. Scenarios can be created to involve bushfire, Rural-Urban Interface, urban structure fire, HAZMAT, crash/rescue, land search, and severe weather incidents.



What it's used for

Training & Exercises

- Training courses, trainer-led demonstrations, student activities and assessments
- Station-based training and exercises including Tactical Exercises Without Troops (TEWTs) and Tactical Decision Exercises

Operations Support

- Incident reviews, and debriefs

Engagement & Education

- Cadets, schools, community events, mitigation planning



Why trainers and brigades across Australia use it

- Builds skills at many levels; supports mentoring
- Supports learners with varied experience and Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) confidence; turns complex concepts into clear, real-world understanding
- Strengthens decision-making, situational awareness, prioritisation, and teamwork
- An engaging, supportive environment to practise decisions without operational risks

Why it works

- Portable and fast to set up; trainers can modify or reset scenarios in seconds
- Hundreds of elements can create almost any hazard or scenario
- Scales from short demonstrations to large TEWTs, including multi-agency use
- Improves consistency across trainers, shifts and training locations
- A low-tech design that delivers strong learning benefits with minimal resources

The Bushfire Model creates a shared learning experience that supports the development of operational capability across brigades and fire agencies.



Practitioner Insights: Supporting Learning with the Bushfire Model

This page outlines how trainers use the model in brigade and course training, and their perspectives on the learning behaviours it appears to support.

1. Supporting Early Engagement

Having the model in the room often shifts learning from a passive classroom format to a more interactive environment, supporting learners with varied fire experience and LLN confidence.

2. Helping Learners Understand Complex Situations

The model presents detailed scenarios clearly. Trainers have remarked that this appears to reduce the need for learners to mentally integrate information from multiple sources, helping them move more quickly from studying the scenario to considering tactics.

3. Making Reasoning Visible - Timely Feedback

As learners move items and explain their choices, their reasoning becomes more visible, allowing trainers to identify uncertainty and provide timely feedback during learning.

4. Practising Decisions in a Safer Space

The model allows learners to test ideas, adjust their thinking, and revisit decisions without the consequences of actual incidents. Focusing discussion on the scenario rather than the individual tends to reduce pressure associated with speaking up.

5. Encouraging Mentoring and Reflection

Working around a shared model often prompts experienced firefighters to explain cues, describe similar incidents, or demonstrate alternative approaches. These interactions support informal mentoring and collegial learning.

Using the Bushfire Model in Practice

Trainers have found the model useful for:

- trainer-led discussion during theory delivery
- student activities
- impromptu topic demonstrations
- students to use to frame their questions

Some agencies have incorporated the model into training doctrine and mapped its use to Nationally Recognised Units of Competency. In these cases, the model's consistent design supports more uniform learning across trainers, courses, and locations.

Bushfire Model

Sharing Firefighting Knowledge

bushfiremodel.com.au