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VICTORIA TO FACE ABOVE AVERAGE SUMMER FIRE SEASON

Victoria will face another significant fire season this year according to the latest seasonal outlook for southern Australia.

The Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook 2014-15 indicates Victoria is likely to see a fire season more active than the last, when the state battled heat wave conditions and firefighters fought more than 4600 bush and grassfires.

Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley said the forecast provided an early opportunity to focus on fire preparedness for all agencies and the community.

According to the seasonal outlook released by the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC in conjunction with fire services across Australia, the State can expect a warmer Spring with little rain in some areas.

“The forecast at this stage is for above average temperatures across southern Australia during Spring, and we are preparing for an above normal bushfire season for Victoria,” Mr Lapsley said today.

“January and February are traditionally the worst periods for bush and grass fires in Victoria and we saw this last summer in the Grampians, Mallee, Warrandyte, Kilmore and in East Gippsland.

“The last fire season challenged fire-fighters and community members alike and Victoria’s emergency management sector is already preparing across the state for the next.”

Mr Lapsley said the rainfall deficit and the potential for an earlier start to the season meant Victoria needed to be prepared for another significant summer.

The forecast indicates that West, Central, Northern Victoria and outer metropolitan Melbourne areas are at highest risk of fire this season.

“Areas including Ballarat, Bendigo Seymour and around Melbourne including Geelong and Healesville have grass, bush and higher populations, a combination that will challenge Victoria this season,” Mr Lapsley said.

Seventeen multi-agency pre-season briefings get underway in the next few weeks across Victoria to brief emergency management personnel on the predicted season and reiterate the operational and community priorities for this year.

Additionally, the State’s air fleet will continue to operate 42 aircraft, including helicopters and fixed wing aircraft positioned across Victoria in accordance with the risk.

“Victoria and its fire-fighters will be well prepared for the season ahead,” Mr Lapsley said.

The full seasonal outlook report is at www.bnhcrc.com.au

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