

Media Release

Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Attorney-General

Minister for Emergency Services



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AERIAL FIREFIGHTING FLEET READY TO TAKE TO THE SKIES

Victoria's aerial firefighting fleet is ready to respond to what is forecast to be one of the most high-risk fire seasons in recent years for much of the state this summer.

Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes today unveiled the fleet at Avalon Airport alongside Emergency Management Commissioner Rick Nugent and emergency services personnel.

This year's core fleet features 54 dedicated aircraft strategically positioned across the state to support firefighting efforts on the ground and gather crucial intelligence from the air to help faster tactical decision making.

Returning this year are two Large Air Tankers based at Avalon which can also be deployed from smaller regional airports, making them more agile to move around the state.

The fleet also includes a Black Hawk, other Type 1 helicopters, and a Super Puma which has a capacity of 4,000 litres. The Super Puma is supported by an Air Attack Supervision aircraft for detection and observation at night.

An important addition to the fleet this year is a Bell 214ST helicopter, which has the ability to pick up salt water – giving responders more options to help put fires out faster.

Two Aircranes will join the fleet after their service period ends in North America. Victoria will have three additional aircraft on short-term contracts until the Aircranes arrive, bringing the total contracted aircraft this summer to 57.

Victoria can also access a "call when needed" fleet of more than 100 aircraft and can request extra aircraft from the national fleet.

The AFAC summer outlook which was released last month made it clear that large parts of Victoria are facing their highest fire risk since the summer of 2019/20.

It indicates most of western Victoria, as well as south-west Gippsland, Mornington Peninsula, greater Melbourne and north-east Victoria are at an increased risk of fire activity. The risk for the rest of the state is forecast to be normal for summer – which means fires are still possible and everyone must do their part to be prepared.

For more information on how to prepare for emergencies, download the VicEmergency app. People can also create a fire plan online customised to their needs and sharable with family and friends via fireplanner.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Emergency Services Jaclyn Symes

"With hardworking crews on the ground and a strong aerial fleet, we are ready for the season."

"I'm excited to see the return of two Large Air Tankers to Victoria this year. From its base in Avalon it can reach Mildura in the north to Horsham in the west or Benambra in the north east."

Quotes attributable to Emergency Management Commissioner Rick Nugent

"We are well prepared for this higher risk weather season, with excellent support from our aerial firefighting fleet and thousands of dedicated emergency services personnel."

"Preparedness is a shared responsibility. Sit down with your household to talk about your emergency plan and what you will do in case of a fire or other emergency."

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