

Communication Strategy

for the

Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy

Version 1.0 Final
2 November 2009

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1. Introduction

This section provides background information about this document, describes the document audience and defines terms used.

1.1 Purpose of this Document

The purpose of this document is to describe the Communication Strategy required to support the delivery of the National Rural Fire Authority's Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy.

The document explains the strategic considerations and context for the Communication Strategy, identifies the communications objectives, and defines key messages and channels.

1.2 Intended Audience

The intended audience of this Communication Strategy consists of key internal and external forest and rural fire stakeholder representatives with an interest in the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy, including:

- The office of the Minister of Internal Affairs.
- The Department of Internal Affairs.
- Members of the New Zealand Fire Service Commission.
- Staff of the National Rural Fire Authority and New Zealand Fire Service.
- Members of the National Rural Fire Advisory Committee.
- Members of the National Rural Fire Stakeholders Group.
- Members of rural Fire Authorities.
- Members of fire-related agencies.

1.3 Terms used in this Document

The following table lists and defines terms used in this document.

Term	Definition, explanation
LGNZ	Local Government New Zealand
The Commission	New Zealand Fire Service Commission
The Minister	Minister of Internal Affairs, currently the Hon Nathan Guy

Table 1: Terms used in this document

2. Background

This section describes the context, current situation and other considerations for the Communication Strategy.

2.1 Context of the Communication Strategy

A long-held objective of the National Rural Fire Authority is the merging of smaller rural Fire Authorities into larger Fire Authorities through the creation of enlarged Rural Fire Districts.

While there have been some successful mergers in recent years, the rate of change has slowed considerably since 2004 due to uncertainty created by reviews in the sector from 2004-2008.

The Government has yet to consider any legislative reform that may be needed. It has, instead, endorsed the National Rural Fire Authority's Strategy to improve forest and rural fire management through voluntary amalgamations.

As a result, one of the key Strategies for 2009-2014 in the National Rural Fire Authority's Statement of Strategic Direction is:

- *"To develop a robust framework to promote the establishment of enlarged Rural Fire Districts."*

The Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy will be pursued by promoting and supporting the voluntary amalgamation of rural Fire Authorities in the regions.

The National Rural Fire Stakeholders Group meeting held 21-22 July 2009, in Wellington, identified the need for a rural fire sector Communication Strategy to support the successful delivery of the Strategy.

2.2 Current Situation

For the purpose of establishing enlarged Rural Fire Districts, the National Rural Fire Officer and Rural Fire Managers have been engaging with rural fire stakeholders including existing rural Fire Authorities, territorial authorities, forest owners, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Defence Force and others for some time. This has achieved good level of general support from the higher levels of most stakeholder groups and organisations.

However, the engagement has been relatively ad hoc to date. Key messages relating to the Enlarged Fire Districts Strategy have not been consistently framed. Consequentially, general stakeholder awareness and understanding of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits is variable.

Some stakeholders have requested more detailed information about the Strategy and the transition process, but there is presently a lack of formal documentation to support this.

2.3 SWOT Analysis

The table below identifies the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for this Communication Strategy. (Note: strengths and weaknesses are internal to the National Rural Fire Authority, opportunities and threats are external to the National Rural Fire Authority.)

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Existing relationships with stakeholders held by National Rural Fire Officer and Managers Rural Fire	Limited resources to deliver such a large scale change in a timely manner	Department of Conservation, Local Government New Zealand and forest owners stakeholder representatives are committed to the Strategy in principle	Variable awareness and understanding of the enlarged Rural Fire District Strategy purpose and benefits
Strong change leader (i.e. the National Rural Fire Officer)	Business as usual activities impact on National Rural Fire Authority staff availability due to seasonal severity e.g. extended wildfire events	Alignment and consensus of National Rural Fire Stakeholders group members has improved since its inaugural meeting in 2008	Very diverse stakeholder group with differing interests and information needs
National Rural Fire Authority staff have a good historical knowledge of the forest and rural fire sector and of the various rural Fire Authorities		Strong interest and commitment of the Minister and the Commission	Some stakeholders wish to preserve the status quo
		Established enlarged Rural Fire Districts provide actual operating examples, models etc.	Rural Fire Authorities will seek cost savings as a primary objective
		Increasing stakeholder recognition that enlarged Rural Fire Districts may assist rural Fire Authorities to better meet the performance and audit requirements of the National Rural Fire Authority (via offering alternative ways of delivering the required outcomes)	Some stakeholders have a personal financial interest in the outcomes of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy
		Additional grant assistance funding for enlarged Rural Fire Districts meeting certain criteria	Legislative change unlikely in the short to medium term
			Sector perception of National Rural Fire Stakeholders group is variable (i.e. some negative and suspicious)
			Territorial authority mergers may slow enlarged Rural Fire Districts progress in some areas

Table 2: Strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats

2.4 Assumptions

The following assumptions underpin the design of the Communication Strategy.

2.4.1 National Rural Fire Authority leadership

The National Rural Fire Authority will lead the promotion of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy. The National Rural Fire Officer will be the change leader of the transition. The Communication Strategy will support the National Rural Fire Officer in this role.

2.4.2 Political and Board commitment

The Minister and the Commission are committed to the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy and will demonstrate a strong presence and interest throughout the transition.

2.4.3 Advocacy of National Rural Fire Advisory Committee and the National Rural Fire Stakeholders group

The National Rural Fire Advisory Committee and National Rural Fire Stakeholders Group members support the National Rural Fire Authority's Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy and are expected to provide individual and collective constructive input into the delivery of the Strategy

2.5 Principles

The following principles will underpin the design of the Communication Strategy.

2.5.1 Transparency

The Communication Strategy itself and the communications executed as a result of the Strategy will be visible to, and open to feedback from, all stakeholders.

2.5.2 Consistency

The information and key messages contained in the communications will be fit for purpose and consistent.

3. Communications Strategy

This section describes the communications objectives, audiences, strategies and tactics, messages and channels, and how feedback will be gathered and used.

3.1 Communication Objectives

The table below lists the communication objectives and outcomes.

Number	Objective	Outcomes
1	Ensure that forest and rural fire stakeholders have a consistent understanding of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy and the framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest and rural fire stakeholders' understanding and expectations of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy and framework are consistent and correct
2	Facilitate and encourage positive participation of forest and rural fire stakeholders in the delivery of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest and rural fire stakeholders are supportive of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy Forest and rural fire stakeholders contribute to progressing the creation of larger Rural Fire Districts in their geographical area of interest
3	Support the successful delivery of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The number of rural Fire Authorities is reduced (i.e. the number of enlarged Rural Fire Districts is increased) The effectiveness of forest and rural fire management is improved
4	Demonstrate a transparent process of engagement, consultation, and information sharing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forest and rural fire stakeholders are involved A comprehensive record of engagement, consultation and information sharing is created

Table 3: Communications objectives

3.2 Target Audience for Communications

The target audience is grouped into the following stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group	Includes...	Information needs
Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister of Internal Affairs • The Commission • NRFA • New Zealand Fire Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy implementation approach, progress and results • Risks and issues
Stakeholder advisors to the National Rural Fire Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Rural Fire Advisory Committee • National Rural Fire Stakeholders Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy implementation approach, progress and results • Risks and issues • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes
Local and central government and associated organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Internal Affairs • Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry • Territorial authorities (includes City Councils and District Councils) • Local Government New Zealand • Regional Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines
Managers of State and defence land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Conservation • New Zealand Defence Force 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines

Stakeholder group	Includes...	Information needs
Existing rural Fire Authority governance, management and operational groups and individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Fire Authority boards and committees • Principal Rural Fire Officers • Regional Rural Fire Committees • Rural Fire District Committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines • Role-specific training
Forest owners organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Zealand Forest Owners Association • New Zealand Farm Forestry Association 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines
Rural organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federated Farmers • Farmers of New Zealand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines
Forest and rural fire organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest and Rural Fire Association of New Zealand • Volunteer rural fire forces • Rural fire contractors • Other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines

Stakeholder group	Includes...	Information needs
Other industry-related or research groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Fire Research Programme • Fire and Rescue Services Industry Training Organisation and Board members • National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) • SCION • New Zealand MetService • Landcare Research • University of Canterbury 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts framework • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts guidelines
Rural communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits • Enlarged Rural Fire Districts transition process, impacts and changes

Table 4: Stakeholder groups and information needs

3.3 *Generic Messages*

The execution of the Communication Strategy will be guided by generic messages that will provide a broad frame for developing specific messages targeted to stakeholder groups.

The generic messages are:

1. The purpose of the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy is to improve rural fire management outcomes and results in order to better service forest and rural landowners and rural communities.
2. The Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy provides an opportunity for rural fire stakeholders to make real, tangible improvements to forest and rural fire management.
3. The benefits of enlarged Rural Fire Districts are:
 - a. increased capacity through better organisation of resources
 - b. better management of threats and risks
 - c. better results from more focused efforts
 - d. fair and equitable funding
 - e. better advice to communities
 - f. improved consistency
 - g. less confusion.
4. The transition to enlarged Rural Fire Districts is a managed process, and will be suitably supported by appropriate resources.

3.4 *Strategies and Tactics*

The communication strategies and tactics that will be employed for this Communication Strategy are:

1. Develop professionally presented information packs and materials.
2. Create an online information resource.
3. Present at relevant stakeholder forums and conferences.
4. Use face to face meetings to progress key engagement discussions and negotiations.
5. Provide regular progress updates to stakeholders via email, letters and formal reports.
6. Promote success stories via media releases and interviews.
7. Publish feature articles in relevant publications and on websites.
8. Develop relevant and appropriate training courses.
9. Convene awareness workshops for stakeholders.
10. Provide numerous and flexible feedback mechanisms.

3.5 Channels

The following channels are considered most appropriate for reaching and collecting feedback from target audiences.

3.5.1 Information packs and materials

The information packs will include the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Guidelines¹, and may also include presentations, pamphlets, and booklets explaining the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits, and the transition process, impacts and changes.

The information packs and materials will undergo peer review before dissemination. The information packs and materials will be made available online, and hard copies will also be obtainable from the National Rural Fire Authority.

3.5.2 National Rural Fire Authority website

The National Rural Fire Authority website (available at <http://nrfa.fire.org.nz/firenet/regions/rural>) will be used to provide access to relevant background information, documents (including the information packs and materials) and progress updates. A 'Q & A' section will also be developed. The website will be promoted widely as the most up to date source of the latest and most relevant information.

3.5.3 Forums and conferences

The National Rural Fire Officer and Managers Rural Fire will present the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy to relevant forums and conferences (e.g. the LGNZ Zone meetings).

3.5.4 Face to face meetings

The National Rural Fire Officer and Managers Rural Fire will organise face to face meetings. Face to face meetings will be critical for building and maintaining relationships between stakeholders, and progressing key engagement discussions and negotiations. The proceedings of face to face meetings will be documented.

3.5.5 Email, letters and formal reports

Email will be used for communicating mass messages to stakeholders, and will be a supporting communication mechanism, rather than a primary mechanism.

Letters and formal reports will be used where a formal communications approach is required, for example updating the Minister or the Commission on the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy progress and results.

¹ Co-authored by the Department of Internal Affairs and the National Rural Fire Authority.

3.5.6 Media releases and interviews

The National Rural Fire Officer will organise media releases and interviews as and when opportunities arise. Media releases and interviews will involve other forest and rural fire stakeholders (for example, the Minister, members of new enlarged Rural Fire Districts, Chief Executives of territorial authorities, Mayors etc.), and will be the primary channel for reaching the general public.

3.5.7 Publications and other websites

Feature articles will be published in relevant publications (e.g. magazines) and appropriate websites. Publications and other websites will be secondary channels for reaching the general public.

3.5.8 Training courses

The National Rural Fire Authority will ensure that relevant and appropriate training courses are developed and available to support stakeholders in the transition to the enlarged Rural Fire Districts model.

Training courses will cover specialised roles and topics that require in depth and detailed information needs and skill development, for example, a course for Principal Rural Fire Officers operating within the enlarged Rural Fire District governance and management model, and a course for stakeholder members of Boards that govern enlarged Rural Fire Districts.

3.5.9 Awareness workshops

Awareness workshops will be used to target specific stakeholder groups or stakeholders within a geographical area (e.g. specific regions) with additional or different information needs. Awareness workshops provide similar benefits to face to face meetings, but allow a greater number of individuals to be reached.

3.6 Feedback

Audiences will have the opportunity to provide feedback through various channels. Feedback collected will be recorded, and used to inform and update the Communication Strategy.

The main feedback channels are:

- The National Rural Fire Authority website - contact details of relevant individuals will be published on the website.
- Forums and conferences - stakeholders will have the opportunity to approach members of the National Rural Fire Authority directly.
- Face to face meetings - stakeholders will have the opportunity to approach members of the National Rural Fire Authority directly.
- Email and letters - stakeholders can submit feedback to members of the National Rural Fire Authority through email or letters at any time. The National Rural Fire Authority will respond in writing to all feedback received.
- Awareness workshops - stakeholders will have the opportunity to approach members of the National Rural Fire Authority directly.

4. Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

This section describes the plan and schedule for executing the Communication Strategy, and how it will be monitored and evaluated.

4.1 Management

The execution of the Communication Strategy will be overseen by the National Rural Fire Officer.

In consultation with stakeholder advisor groups to the National Rural Fire Authority and other key stakeholders as required, the Managers Rural Fire and other National Rural Fire Authority staff will execute the activities of the Communication Strategy including:

- Design and preparation of publications;
- Development of messages and content for dissemination;
- Preparation of feature articles, letters, formal reports and responses to feedback; and,
- Maintenance of the National Rural Fire Authority website with the latest and most relevant information.

4.2 Schedule

This Communication Strategy needs to be executed and maintained over a period of years. The schedule for the execution of the Communication Strategy has three overlapping phases that focus on evolving information needs:

- Background information - this is an immediate and short term need, explaining the Enlarged Rural Fire Districts Strategy purpose and benefits as widely across the target audience as possible.
- Transition - this is a short to medium term need, where communications will be tailored to support existing rural Fire Authorities and other stakeholders through the transition from the current state to the enlarged Rural Fire Districts model.
- Business as usual - this is a medium to long term need, where enlarged Rural Fire Districts become the status quo. Communications will support the ongoing information needs of stakeholders.

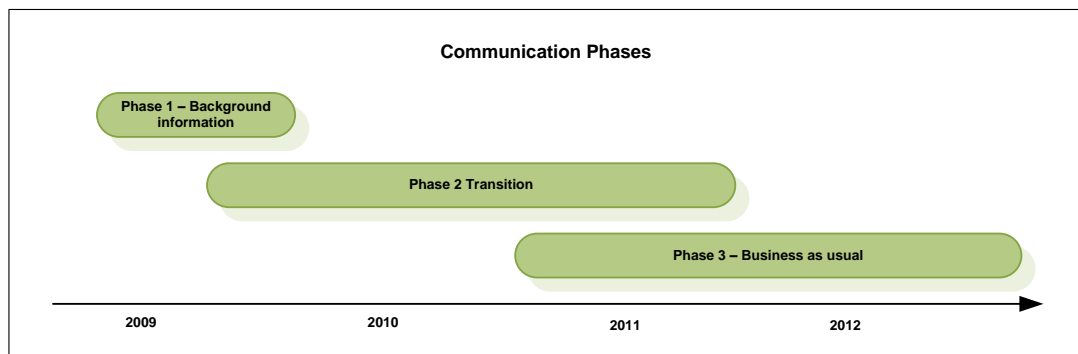


Diagram 1: Communication phases

4.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

The communications outputs will be peer reviewed or pre-tested wherever possible, to ensure that the communication is correct, suitable for purpose and of acceptable quality.

Feedback on communications will be solicited and documented, then reviewed. Relevant changes, improvements and new ideas will be incorporated into the Communication Strategy on an ongoing basis.

Appendix 1 - Associated Documents

The table below lists documents related to this document.

Document name	Description	Author	Version/date
National Rural Fire Authority Statement of Strategic Direction 2009-2014	Strategy	National Rural Fire Authority	2009-2014
Enlarged Rural Fire District Communication Plan	Plan and schedule of communications	National Rural Fire Authority	To be developed

Table 6: Associated documents

Appendix 2 - Document Control

The table below lists the version history of this document.

Version	Date	Author	Reviewed by	Notes
0.1	19 August 2009	Kym Fowlie		Initial draft
0.2	21 September 2009	Kym Fowlie	Murray Dudfield, Paul Baker, Gary Lockyer, Rob Goldring, Abi Davidson	Updated with changes from initial review
1.0 Final	2 November 2009	Kym Fowlie		Final, issued to stakeholders

Table 7: Document control

Appendix 3 - Contributors

The table below lists the contributors to this document.

Name	Position	Organisation
Murray Dudfield	National Rural Fire Officer	National Rural Fire Authority
Paul Baker	Manager Rural Fire Napier	National Rural Fire Authority
Gary Lockyer	Manager Rural Fire Operations and Legislation	National Rural Fire Authority
Rob Goldring	Manager Rural Fire Auckland	National Rural Fire Authority
Abi Davidson	Personal Assistant	National Rural Fire Authority

Table 8: Contributors