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Predictions in public: understanding the design, communication and dissemination of predictive maps to the public

RESEARCH TEAM

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Project duration: 12 months (Phase 1)

Background

The use of fire predictions has received increasing attention since the 2019/2020 fire season when “Red Maps” were released to the public in NSW and the ACT.

Questions about the value of producing fire spread predictions during future fire seasons across Australia have arisen.

This project offers an opportunity to reflect on the purpose of public-facing predictive maps and to collect empirical data to build an evidence base to support and inform agency decisions related to future use of predictive products for public information and warnings.

SUPPORTING ORGANISATIONS

Victorian Country Fire Authority
Emergency Management Victoria
Department of Land, Water and Planning, VIC
Tasmanian Fire Service
NSW Rural Fire Service
South Australian Country Fire Service
Department of Environment and Water, SA
Department of Fire and Emergency Services, WA
Bushfires NT
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Australian Bureau of Meteorology

Project description

The Predictions in Public project aims to define the role of fire predictions in agency communications with the public during an emergency.

There are three phases to this project:

Phase 1: Understanding the status quo. What do agencies aim to achieve by using the current public information and warnings products? How do members of the public comprehend and intend to use existing products?

Phase 2: Developing and testing national predictive map concepts. How should predictive bushfire maps be designed, communicated and disseminated across Australia?

Phase 3: Development of fit-for-purpose outputs. How can the results of the project be directly translated into agency policy and practice?

Intended outcomes

The project is highly collaborative with the intention to work with organisational partners to define the scope of the project and develop outputs that can be directly used by fire agencies.

The results of this research will:

- Produce scientifically robust contributions to a range of academic disciplines.
- Provide a set of evidence-based principles for predictive map design, communication and dissemination that is endorsed by the AFAC Predictive Services and AFAC Warnings groups.
- Deliver outputs that are developed with and used by emergency management staff.
- Improve community comprehension of map-based public information and warnings products.

Translation and implementation potential

Because the organisational partners are involved in the definition of the research problem and scope, discussions related to solutions and the implementation of those solutions, the project has a high translation and implementation potential.

The design of the project is deliberately collaborative, inclusive and flexible. This means that there are opportunities for organisational partners and stakeholder input throughout the project from beginning to end. This approach promotes scientifically robust results as well as practical outputs that meet the needs of emergency management staff and the communities that they protect.

Further information

For full project details head to: <https://www.naturalhazards.com.au/research/research-projects/predictions-public-understanding-design-communication-and-dissemination>

Or contact Chloe.Begg@cfa.vic.gov.au

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