



MEDIA RELEASE

Rob Johnson: Western Australian State Minister for Police; Emergency Services; Road Safety

SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN BUSHFIRES SUPPORTS NEED FOR SECOND TYPE 1 HELICOPTER

23 December 2009

Portfolio: Emergency Services

Emergency Services Minister Rob Johnson today warned of a long, hot summer with firefighters already responding to a massive 35 per cent increase in the number of bushfires this season compared to the same time last year.

Mr Johnson said there had been more than 500 additional bushfires reported to the Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) so far this season. He said these staggering statistics supported the State Government's decision to operate a second Type 1 water bombing helicopter in the high fire risk region of the South-West.

"What is a major concern is that the bushfire season has only just begun and already our firefighters have been working extremely hard to protect local communities," he said.

"While the worst of the bushfire season is still to come, it is reassuring that Western Australia has one of the best aerial firefighting fleets available to support fire crews in the tough battle ahead."

The Minister said 2,109 bushfires had been reported to FESA across the State from October 1 to December 21 this year - 547 more bushfires than at the same time last year.

He said the Government was committed to protecting Western Australians from bushfires and had joined forces with the Federal Government to boost the State's aerial firefighting resources with additional funding for a second Type 1 water bombing helicopter.

The Type 1 is capable of dropping nearly 4,000 litres of water per dump on a bushfire and can carry up to 15 firefighters with their equipment

Mr Johnson today inspected the second Type 1 helicopter which will operate from Busselton to protect lives and property in the highly-vulnerable South-West region.

"This is the first time that we have had two Type 1 water bombers based in WA," he said.

“This type of aircraft has a proven track record in our State having flown nearly 100 successful missions in the last two seasons.

“Last week, the Type 1 based in Perth dropped more than 21,000 litres of water on a fire in dense bushland near Armadale.”

The Minister said the State Government had invested nearly \$6.5million this season on WA’s aerial firefighting fleet which included two Type 1 helicopters, four helitacs and an air intelligence helicopter operated by FESA. The fleet also included eight fixed wing aircraft operated by both FESA and the Department of Environment and Conservation.