

## Bushfires and your water supply



Steve McKenzie,  
Managing Director

“While we make every effort to maintain a reliable reticulated water service in the event of a bushfire, supply can’t be guaranteed due to intense customer demand, potential damage to our assets or prolonged power interruptions.

“It’s therefore important that customers choosing to stay and protect their property during a major fire event plan accordingly.

“CFA advice is that leaving early is the safest option to protect you and your family, as the reticulated water supply is only designed to cope with everyday needs. Excessively high levels of demand from East Gippsland Water customers and emergency services place this supply under extreme load, which may lead to a drop in water pressure, or loss of supply altogether. It may also affect water quality.

“In addition, supply availability may be impacted by damage to the reticulated infrastructure itself, or even by sprinklers left on at properties evacuated – leaving firefighters with insufficient water to extract from hydrants, particularly at the end of a system or at a high point.

“Situations may prevent East Gippsland Water staff entering a bushfire zone to get to infrastructure, which in turn may make it impossible to maintain normal water pressure, quality or an uninterrupted supply to every household.

### Bushfire readiness

“We prepare for every bushfire season by keeping our water storages topped up to maximise available water, with back-up generators located at critical sites - designed to kick in automatically in the event of a power outage.

“Upgrades to the water supply system implemented since last summer’s bushfires include:

- extra fire protection at the Woodglen Water Treatment Plant, serving the Mitchell River Water Supply System and 85 per cent of our customers
- doubling water storage capacity in Sarsfield to 12 million litres
- upgrading infrastructure to increase water flow to Bruthen, enabling the water storage to be filled 50 percent faster than previously during high customer demand
- upgrading infrastructure at Sarsfield and Buchan to improve water flows in peak periods
- upgrading water treatment plants at Orbost, Buchan, Cann River and Bemm River – to treat river water impacted by bushfire ash and debris.

“Should you decide to stay and defend your property, CFA recommends having at least 10,000 litres of water stored for emergency use, a firefighting pump that is not reliant on mains power supply, firefighting hoses that reach all the way around your home, and personal protective clothing. In addition, ensure there is a CFA fitting on water tanks.

“To help prepare a bushfire plan consult CFA’s website [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au) for free information and advice. For details of fires visit the website [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au). In addition there is the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.

“Finally, where a bushfire poses an imminent threat to property, please note that any water saving rules or water restrictions are automatically waived.”

One of the Mallacoota water storage covers badly damaged by the bushfires at the very end of 2019



## Help us to help you by registering your mobile

The bushfires at the turn of last year highlighted the value of being able to SMS customers with important information about service disruptions and water quality very quickly.

We are keen to make our SMS messaging service even better, which means having more customers register their mobile contact details with us. This will make it easier for us to get in touch with you when we need to. Simply call our Customer Business Team on 1800 671 841, or go to the home page of our website and click on ‘Change billing details’.

## Concessions

Residential customers holding a Centrelink Health Care, Pensioner Concession, or Department of Veteran Affairs Concession Card, may be entitled to receive a discount on their East Gippsland Water bill, for their principal place of residence.

Concession card holders are also able to pay by instalment using Centrelink's Centrepay service. To know more contact the Customer Business Team.

## Email option

It is fast, efficient and convenient, so why not opt to receive your East Gippsland Water bill by email?

Simply go to the home page of our website and click on the 'Online Forms' section. Then click on 'My Account' and complete the 'Change of Customer Details'. Alternatively, give us a call.

## Check your details

Please check and make sure that your postal and personal contact details for East Gippsland Water are up to date. If not give us a call.

## Water update

As this newsletter goes to print there are no staged water restrictions in force in East Gippsland.

Common-sense Permanent Water Saving Rules do apply. For more, please refer to the back of your bill.



Target Your Water Use is a voluntary program to assist regional Victorians to use water efficiently, both in the garden and around the home.

Visit our website for information and links to Smart Water Advice for tips on how to save water.

## Assistance for those in Financial hardship

We recognise that there may be many residential and business customers experiencing financial hardship at the moment.

This is why our update to water service and usage charges on 1 January (following a delay of six months to assist customers) has only seen these charges increase by the rate of inflation.

We have a range of financial assistance available to residential and small business customers - including assistance programs and payment options, such as flexible payments. These can be arranged on a case-by-case basis.

There is also independent financial counselling available at no cost to the customer.

For more information and advice, call our Customer Business Team in confidence on 1800 671 841.



We welcome your feedback on this newsletter. Please contact:

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