



File Ref. No: BFS18/633 (8000003332)
 TRIM Doc. No: D18/36148
 Contact: Senior Firefighter Lachlan Haar

30 May 2018

The Department of Planning & Environment
 C/- Natasha Homsey
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 SYDNEY NSW 2001
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Dear Ms Homsey

**Exhibition of Development Application and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
 Proposed Gunnedah Solar Farm (SSD8658)
 165 Orange Grove Road Gunnedah**

I refer to the above development application and associated EIS. Fire & Rescue NSW (FRNSW) have reviewed the development application and EIS and the following comments and recommendations are submitted the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) for consideration.

FRNSW notes that the facility's proposed location is within a NSW Rural Fire Services' (RFS) Fire District. Notwithstanding the above, in the event of a significant fire event (either on or off-site near the development) or hazardous material incident, FRNSW will be responded to either assist the RFS or to fulfill the role of designated combat agency.

It is FRNSW experience that small and large scale photovoltaic installations present unique electrical hazard risks to our personnel when fulfilling their emergency first responder role (N.b. the Fire Brigades Act 1989 imposes specific statutory functions and duties upon the Commissioner of FRNSW).

In addition, the Work Health and Safety (WHS) Act 2011 (and its subordinate Regulation) classify FRNSW as a person (entity) conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU). Clauses 34 and 35 of the WHS Regulation impose specific obligations upon a PCBU to identify hazards and manage risks at workplaces.

Due to the electrical hazards associated with large scale photovoltaic installations and the potential risk to the health and safety of firefighters, both FRNSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service must be able to implement effective and appropriate risk control measures when managing an emergency incident at the proposed site.

Recommendations

Should a fire or hazardous material incident occur, it is important that first responders have ready access to information which enables effective hazard control measures to be quickly implemented. Without limiting the scope of the emergency response plan (ERP), the following matters are recommended to be addressed:



1. That a comprehensive ERP is developed for the site.
2. That the ERP specifically addresses foreseeable on-site and off-site fire events and other emergency incidents, (e.g. fires involving solar panel arrays, bushfires in the immediate vicinity or potential hazmat incidents).
3. That the ERP details the appropriate risk control measures that would need to be implemented to safely mitigate potential risks to the health and safety of firefighters and other first responders (including electrical hazards). Such measures would include the level of personal protective clothing required to be worn, the minimum level of respiratory protection required, decontamination procedures, minimum evacuation zone distances and a safe method of shutting down and isolating the photovoltaic system (either in its entirety or partially, as determined by risk assessment).
4. Other risk control measures that may need to be implemented in a fire emergency due to any unique hazards specific to the site should also be included in the ERP.
5. That two copies of the ERP (detailed in recommendation 1 above) be stored in a prominent 'Emergency Information Cabinet' located in a position directly adjacent to the site's main entry point/s.
6. Once constructed and prior to operation, that the operator of the facility contacts the relevant local emergency management committee (LEMC). The LEMC is a committee established by Section 28 of the State Emergency and Rescue Management Act 1989. LEMCs are required to be established so that emergency services organisations and other government agencies can proactively develop comprehensive inter agency local emergency procedures for significant hazardous sites within their local government area. The contact details of members of the LEMC can be obtained from the relevant local council.

For further information please contact Fire Safety Assessment Unit, referencing FRNSW file number BFS18/633 (8000003332). Please ensure that all correspondence in relation to this matter is submitted electronically to firesafety@fire.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Station Officer Mark Castelli
Team Leader
Fire Safety Branch