


Internet | Extranet | Schools | Conference Centre  

[Home](#) | [Introduction](#) | [Advanced Search](#) | [Reports](#) | [By Region](#) | [By Zone](#)
| [By Title](#) | [By Cost](#) | [Help](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Resource](#)

Event Details

Event Title	Caledonia Fire, Vic: Bushfire
Event Category	Bushfire
GLIDE Number	
Event Start Date	31/12/1997
Event End Date	12/01/1998
Duration of Event	12 day/s

Location

Zone	Victoria
Region	Cooma (Vic)
Map	96

Human Casualties

People Killed	
People Injured	2
People Affected	
People Homeless	
People Evacuated	50

Property Damaged**Damaged****Destroyed****Financial Cost**

Insured Cost	
Loss Assessment Cost	
Commercial/Industry Cost	

Total Cost	\$0.00
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Cost Source	
Cost Type	

Information Sources

Source/s	Government Agencies - DSE VIC Printed Press - Major Daily Newspapers Country Fire Authority Victoria Printed Press - Border Mail (Albury) Government Agency - Dept Natural Resources & Environment Victoria
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Description

Severity/ Impact	Nil
Impact Range	ACT

Details

A large fire in the Heyfield/Gippsland region burnt 32,000ha of high country (including 22,000ha of the Alpine National Park & 10,000ha of the Carey River State Forest). At 4pm on New Year's Eve 1997, the fire, suspected to have been started by a campfire, was reported on the eastern side of the Caledonia River in the Alpine National Park, 28 km north of Licola. Firefighters spent 12 days around the clock in steep, rough country battling the blaze before it was brought under control.

The fire was fought from the air with fixed, and rotary-wing aircraft including two Royal Australian Navy helicopters and a leased, large capacity American helitanker used to water-bomb the less accessible hotspots in the park. With inaccessible terrain preventing bulldozers to smother the fires, bush firefighters worked long shifts with hand tools to create containment lines. Control lines were established around the 125km perimeter of the fire. No private property was threatened. Injuries were attributed to firefighters, with one serious injury.

Loss of valuable timber and the high cost of firefighting operations (involving over 1000 personnel, 38 bulldozers, 127 tanker trucks & 25 aircraft) plus restoration work resulted in large costs for the Victorian Government.

The rain that helped firefighters contain the massive blaze caused another environmental disaster when tens of thousands of tonnes of ash, dust, top soil and fire retardant were washed daily into the Macalister River, creating a thick black sludge more than 40km long.

The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment provides further information on this fire (referred to as the Alpine National Park Fire 1998) on its website:
[http://www.dse.vic.aov.au/DSE/nrenfoe.nsf/childdocs/-](http://www.dse.vic.aov.au/DSE/nrenfoe.nsf/childdocs/)

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[Back to Top](#)

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