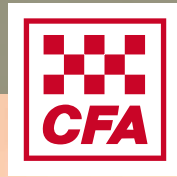


# On The Land

AGRICULTURAL FIRE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)

### **Version 3 - March 2023**

Version 1 published 2007

Version 2 published 2019

CFA makes this information available on the understanding that you take reasonable care when using it. If you have any uncertainty about the application of the information to your particular circumstance, you should obtain further professional advice.

CFA does not accept responsibility for how you apply, or rely on the information in this publication.

# Table of contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Using On The Land</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Part 1: Plan</b>	<b>4</b>
Fire Management	4
Your fire safety objectives	5
Plan for bushfire or grassfire events	7
<b>Part 2: Prepare</b>	<b>8</b>
Understanding Fire Behaviour	8
Protecting your property against fire threat	12
Fuel breaks	13
Plan to protect the environment	16
<b>Part 3: Using fire on your property</b>	<b>18</b>
Burning off	19
Machinery, vehicles and equipment	21
Fire danger period: Farm restrictions on machinery, vehicles and equipment	23
Powerlines and electric fencing	24
Total Fire Bans	25
Managing hay and flammable material	26
Who's who at your local council	27
<b>Part 4: Response, Suppression and Recovery</b>	<b>28</b>
When fire breaks out	28
Preparedness and response for plantation owners and managers	29
Access for fire trucks and vehicles	30
Access to water supplies for emergency services	31
Recovery planning	32
<b>Part 5: Resources</b>	<b>33</b>
20 Essential Steps: Before the Fire Season	33
CFA programs and services	34
Essential Resources	34
Organisations: Fire and Emergency Roles and Responsibilities	35
Contacts	35
Legal References	36
Codes of Practice	36

# Introduction

The fire season poses a significant threat to all those living, working or travelling in Victoria. Managing the risk of fire on all fronts is vitally important.

*On the Land* has been developed by CFA as a key resource and will be especially valuable for landholders in the process of property planning, or for those who are new to farming.

Land and fuel management is central to a bushfire survival plan, as is ensuring that machinery is safe and can be relied upon in times of need.

As well as maintaining equipment, the protection of livestock and crops needs to be a priority for all farmers over summer.

Undertaking preparations or works around your property is just one part of becoming ready for summer. CFA urges all farmers and landholders to have a written survival plan that takes into account family members and employees.

CFA recognises and appreciates all the support provided to us from the State Government when developing and updating this publication. We encourage all those involved in planning or promoting fire management on agricultural land in Victoria to use *On The Land* as a day-to-day and year-round resource.

# Using On The Land

## Who is this document for?

On the Land is an important resource for farmers, land and plantation owners or managers, bush block owners, rural educators, government and industry.

## What information does this document provide?

On the Land combines information about legislated responsibilities\* for landowners and managers along with practical advice on fire management.

## Why is this document important?

Running a farm is a business, but there are not many businesses that tie you so closely to your place of work. Farmers are at the mercy of the climate in good years and bad, but good planning and a common-sense approach can minimise risks – including that of fire.

Grassfire and bushfire pose a very real threat to lives and property in rural Victoria. Farmers need to know the risks and include both fire protection and response in their operational plans.

## Understanding the terms in this document

› <b>Fire</b>	Can refer to both grassfire and bushfire
› <b>Fire Management</b>	Using fire to reduce vegetation
› <b>Have a responsibility</b> › <b>In accordance with legislation</b> › <b>Are required to</b> › <b>Must</b>	Means the information being provided is a legislated responsibility
› <b>Advised to</b> › <b>Encouraged to</b> › <b>Should</b>	Means the information being provided is advice or good practice, but is not a legal requirement.
› <b>Taking reasonable steps</b>	Means considering the safety of people, property and the environment as well as legal responsibilities
› <b>Fire suppression</b>	Actively fighting fire
› <b>Fire risk days</b>	Generally speaking, days with a Fire Danger Rating of Extreme or above – but this may differ for different properties or areas, depending on factors such as vegetation and topography.

\*Most of these responsibilities arise from the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, *Forests Act 1958*, *Summary Offences Act 1966* and *Crimes Act 1958*. Landowners and managers may have additional responsibilities under other State or Federal legislation or local government requirements.

# Part 1: Plan

## Fire Management

Fire management is not just about responding to fire. It's about taking action to prevent fires from starting and knowing how to reduce the impact of fire should one break out.

Fire management is just one component of a whole farm plan that might address stock, weeds, soil and water. This process is commonly known as fire management planning.

Fire is an all year risk. Sound fire management is a **continual process** that involves:

- › **planning** for fire safety
- › **implementing** these plans
- › **checking** that what was planned has been done and is effective
- › **reviewing** and changing these plans when necessary.

At a property level, plans may range from simple to complex and documented depending on the level of risk.

As part of your planning process, consider the long term sustainability of your property. This might mean planning for the stage where trees and crops are fully grown, and planting crops that will re-shoot or regenerate.

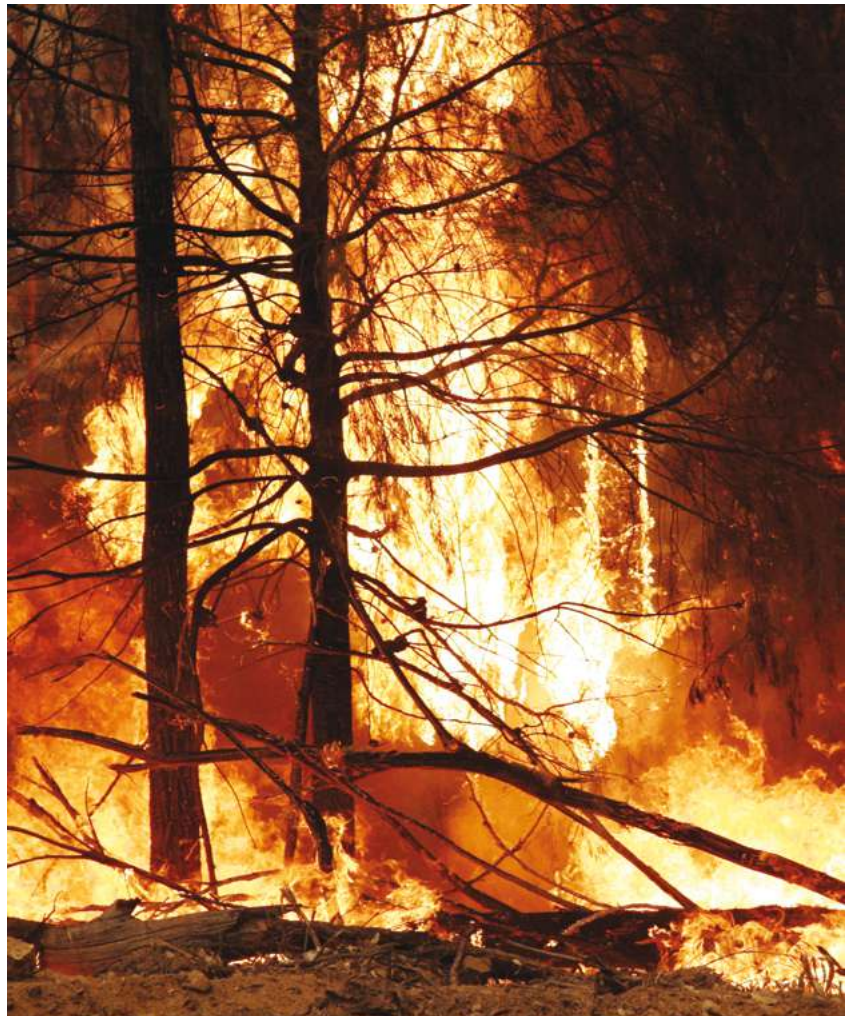
### Risk management

Risk management involves considering both the likelihood of a fire and the consequences should one occur. While the chance of a fire occurring might be extremely small, its consequences may be major or even catastrophic.

**Plans are needed to minimise risk.**

### Did you know?

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) offers Whole Farm Planning courses that cover risk management issues.



# Your fire safety objectives

The five objectives below should form the basis of your fire management planning and activities. The left hand column indicates **legislated responsibilities** for landowners and managers. The right hand column indicates **key advice**.

## Objective 1: Plan for and undertake fire safety, asset protection and asset recovery activities, with safety as a priority

### Under legislation, landowners and managers:

Have a responsibility for their own personal fire safety.

Have an additional responsibility for the **safety of all people living, working on or visiting** their property.

### Landowners and managers are advised to:

Consider safety, environmental and legal issues and long-term sustainability with **safety as a priority**.

Take into account that it may not be possible in all circumstances to protect all assets from fire or have fire suppression services available.

Consult and work with adjacent landowners, managers and users to achieve mutual benefits.

Locate fire management works within their property boundary unless the works are part of a cooperative approach.

Remove or reduce fire risks on their property and consider recovery from a fire.

## Objective 2: Take reasonable steps to prevent unplanned fires starting and planned fires escaping

### Under legislation, landowners and managers:

Have a responsibility to minimise the risk of starting an unplanned fire, particularly when operating machinery, vehicles and equipment or using fire on their property.

Must ensure that private powerlines will not start a fire.

### Landowners and managers are advised to:

Consider fire risk before harvesting, grinding and welding, slashing and mowing, or driving vehicles and motorbikes through dry grass or crop. Avoid these activities on fire risk days.



### **Objective 3: Take reasonable steps to limit the spread of unplanned fire**

#### **Under legislation, landowners and managers:**

Have a responsibility during the Fire Danger Period to extinguish unplanned fire on their property and to report the fire to Triple Zero (000) if they believe they are unable to extinguish it.

Must report any fire burning in the Fire Danger Period This also applies to the general public.

#### **Landowners and managers are advised to:**

Have strategic fuel breaks on their property. Implement fire prevention works set out in planning permits or fire prevention notices.

Have access to appropriate firefighting equipment (in addition to that required under legislation). This applies to anyone operating machinery and equipment on rural properties.

### **Objective 4: Take reasonable steps to provide access to property, assets and water for firefighting**

#### **Under legislation, landowners and managers:**

Must provide access to property, assets and water for firefighting purposes, if this is a requirement of a permit.

#### **Landowners and managers are advised to:**

Provide access to property, assets and water for firefighting purposes.

### **Objective 5: Participate in groups to strengthen your community's resilience against fire**

People living and working in rural areas are encouraged to join their local fire brigade or other community-based groups to help improve fire safety.



# Plan for bushfire or grassfire events

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world. Planning ahead can save you and your family from being killed by fire.

CFA urges anyone in a high fire risk area to develop a survival plan that takes into account **all people** who live or work on their property. Plan for contingencies such as children at school.

A written plan will help you to respond and communicate with others more effectively during fire events or on fire risk days.

Be proactive about assessing and understanding your property's level of risk. See the Resources section of this document for more information about CFA services that can assist you to do this, or speak with your local brigade.

On or before fire risk days, have routines in place: for example checking machinery, moving stock or postponing use of equipment. 'Fire risk days' are days with a Fire Danger Rating of **Extreme** or **Catastrophic**.

Use the Fire Danger Rating as your trigger to leave early and to make sure children or the elderly are safely away from your property. Every property is different and no one rule applies to everyone. It is up to you to make a plan and carry out that plan.

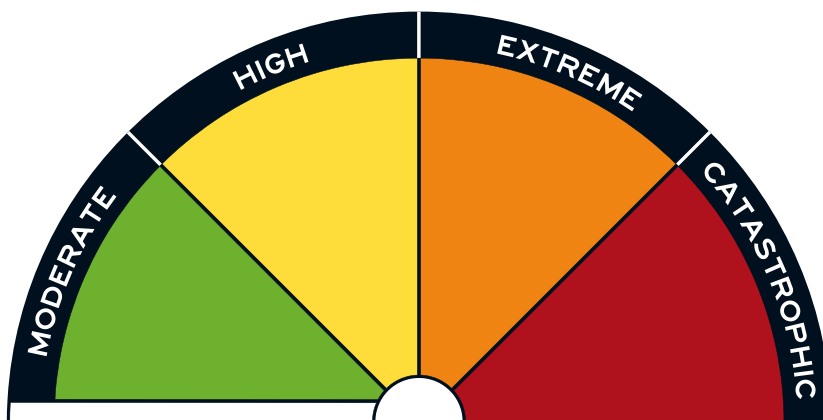
**Have a backup plan in case you are caught in a fire.** Identify well-prepared buildings in your area or on your property that could be a safer place to shelter from radiant heat if you are unable to leave the area or you are trapped on your property.

## If your property is in a high bushfire or grassfire risk area:

On a **Catastrophic** day, all people should plan to leave early that morning or the night before. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires on **Catastrophic** days.

On **Extreme** days, consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to the highest level. Children, the elderly, people with special needs or a disability should be fully prepared to leave early on these days.

On **High** days, homes can provide safety if they are well-prepared and actively defended. Defending a house or assets is very risky – it requires at least two able-bodied, fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally prepared to work in difficult and dangerous conditions.



For more detailed information about the Fire Danger Ratings, visit the [CFA website](#) or contact the Vic Emergency Hotline on **1800 226 226** (NRS **1800 555 677**).

## Part 2: Prepare

# Understanding Fire Behaviour

Planning for fire requires a basic understanding of how fire behaves, particularly in farm and rural settings.

### FIRE SPREAD

Fire spread occurs in three main ways: direct flame contact, ember attack and heat transfer, of which radiant heat is the most noteworthy method of heat transfer.

#### Embers

Embers are propelled by wind and air currents, carrying fire across fuel breaks and starting new spot fires well ahead of the main fire front (commonly known as spotting).

The impact of **ember attack** is sometimes underestimated. Most structures that burn down during a fire ignite as a result of embers that create initially small fires in fine fuels but grow to ignite heavier building materials.

Some trees with fibrous bark (such as stringybark) can cause significant short-distance spotting. Trees with ribbons of bark may cause long-distance spotting under some circumstances.

### Radiant heat

Radiant heat has a significant impact on fire spread, by increasing the flammability of unburnt fuel. As a general rule, if the distance from the fire is halved, the radiant heat load on people and property increases up to four-fold.

### FUEL

Fire can occur in any type of vegetation, such as grasslands, trees, crops or shrubs.

### Fuel load

Reducing fuel loads can help to protect assets from fire and make fires easier to suppress. Fuel load is commonly expressed as tonnes per hectare, or the quantity of fuel per unit area.

### Fuel size

Fine fuels (leaves, twigs, grass and bark) burn quickly and contribute most to the heat of a fire front. Reducing fine fuels near key assets minimises the threat of fire.

Heavier fuels like branches and logs are slower to ignite than fine fuels and give off heat more slowly. Nevertheless, they can be a continuing source of fire after the fire front has passed and need to be extinguished.

### Did you know?

Radiant heat from the flame front of a fire scorches vegetation well in front of its path. People and animals can die if they do not seek protection. Death is caused by heat stroke, when the body's cooling system fails, leading to heat exhaustion and heart failure.



FIGURE 1: Radiant heat



## Weather

Weather and conditions are a major factor in the ignition of fire. For example, a combination of high temperature, low humidity and strong wind helps create conditions in which fires are more likely to occur.

### Temperature and humidity

The higher the air temperature and the lower the humidity, the more easily fuel will burn. Fine fuels are impacted most by weather conditions, as they gain and lose moisture more than heavy fuels.

### Wind speed

A fire burns hotter as the wind strengthens. This is due to wind pushing flames into unburnt fuel. Wind has a significant influence on the:

- > **speed** at which a fire spreads
- > **direction** in which a fire travels, and the size of the fire front
- > **intensity** of a fire by providing more oxygen
- > likelihood of **spot fires starting**, as embers carried ahead of the fire by winds cause new fires to ignite.

Be aware that fuel breaks in **timber plantations** (see [page 15](#)) may serve to increase the speed of the wind. This in turn can increase fire activity near the breaks.

## Wind change

A change in wind direction is one of the most unpredictable aspects of fire behaviour. Wind change is one of the major ways in which people – and assets – are ‘caught out’ in a bushfire.

In Victoria, hot, dry winds typically come from the north and northwest and are often followed by a southwest wind change. In this situation the side of the fire can quickly become a much larger fire front.

Given these common wind patterns, it is important to give priority to fire management on the northern and western sides of your property and assets. However, as fire can come from any direction, some level of preparation for fire is still needed for the whole property.

## Drought conditions

When conditions are dry, most trees shed leaves. This leaf litter in turn dries out and contributes to the overall fuel load. Dry soil conditions associated with drought also increase the chance of tree roots igniting. These fires are difficult to suppress.

Be aware that fire can travel across paddocks with very short grass in times of drought. Although grass paddocks tend to be heavily grazed in times of drought, fuel reduction measures still need to be carried out.

- A** Fire being blown by a northerly wind
- B** Southwesterly wind change
- C** The eastern flank has become a much larger fire front

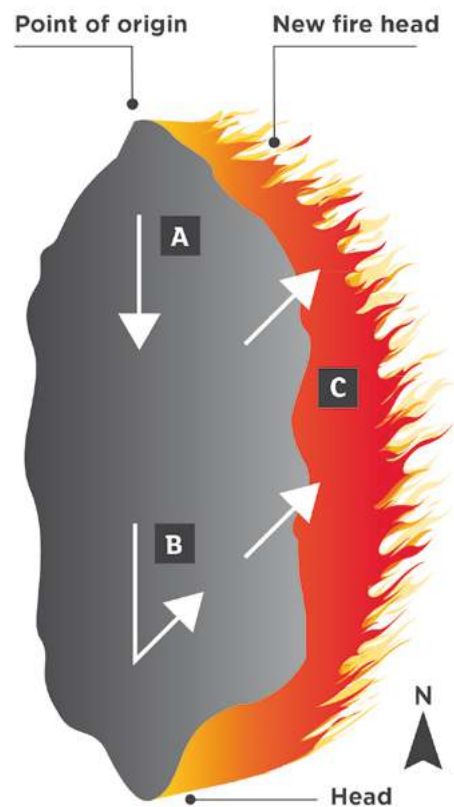


FIGURE 2: Fire spread

## Terrain

### Fire burning uphill

A fire will burn faster uphill. This is because the flames can reach more unburnt fuel in front of the fire. As a general rule, for every 10 degree slope, the fire will double its speed as it travels uphill. For example, if a fire is travelling at five kilometres an hour along flat ground and it hits a 10 degree slope, it will double in speed to 10 kilometres an hour up that hill.

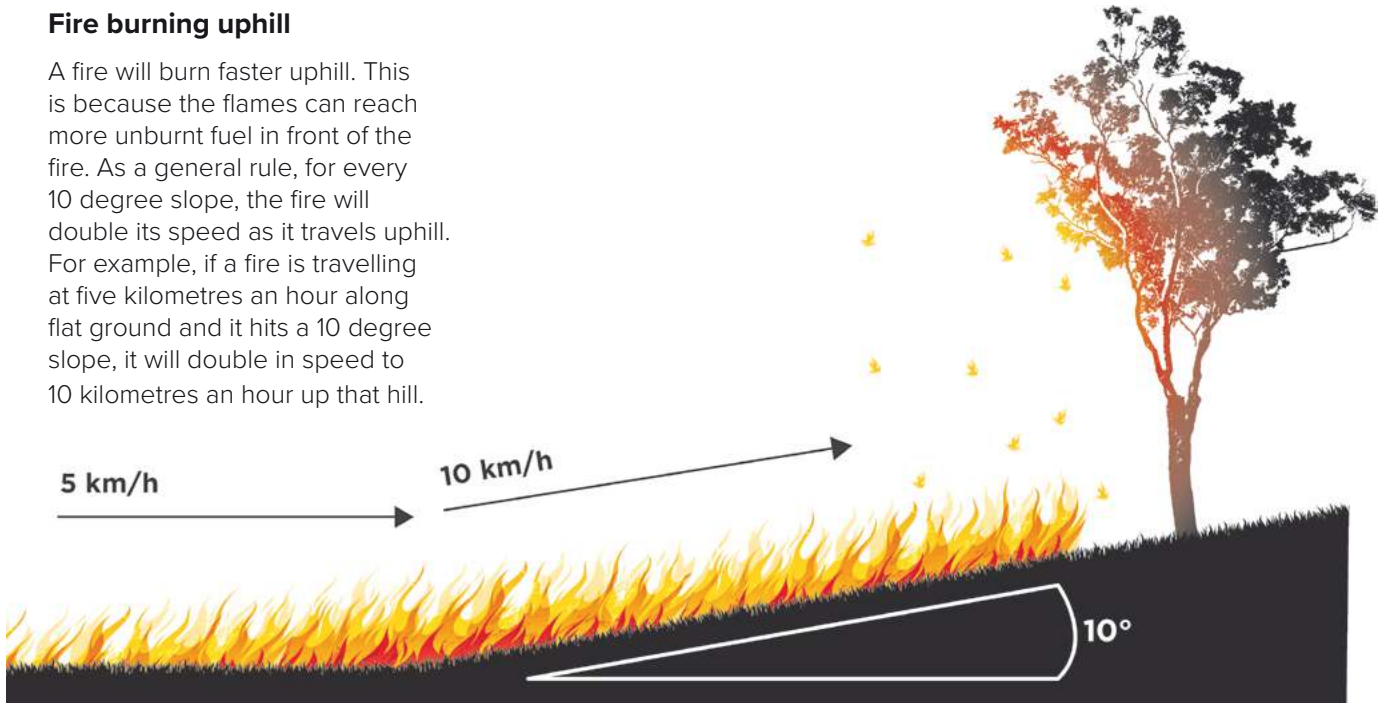


FIGURE 3: Fire burning uphill

### Fires burning downhill

The opposite applies to a fire travelling downhill. The flames reach less fuel, and the level of radiant heat pre-heating the fuel in front of the fire is lower. For every 10 degrees of downhill slope, the fire will halve its speed.

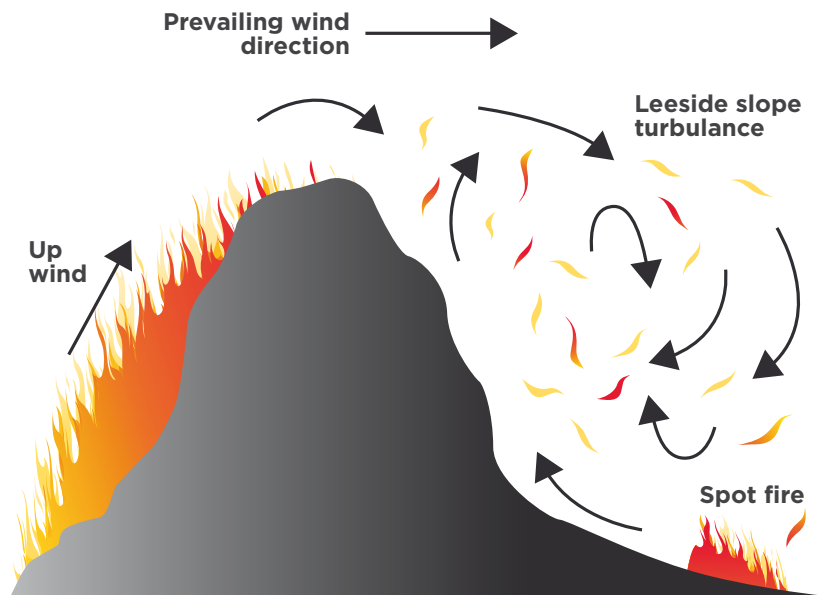


FIGURE 4: Fire burning downhill



## Topography

Topography can also influence how the wind behaves. As wind passes over a hill or windbreak – for example – the wind can tumble, creating turbulence and erratic fire behaviour. Valleys and gullies can channel and strengthen winds, increasing the rate of fire spread and its intensity.

New landowners should ask neighbours and previous owners about local wind conditions when planning fire management on their property.

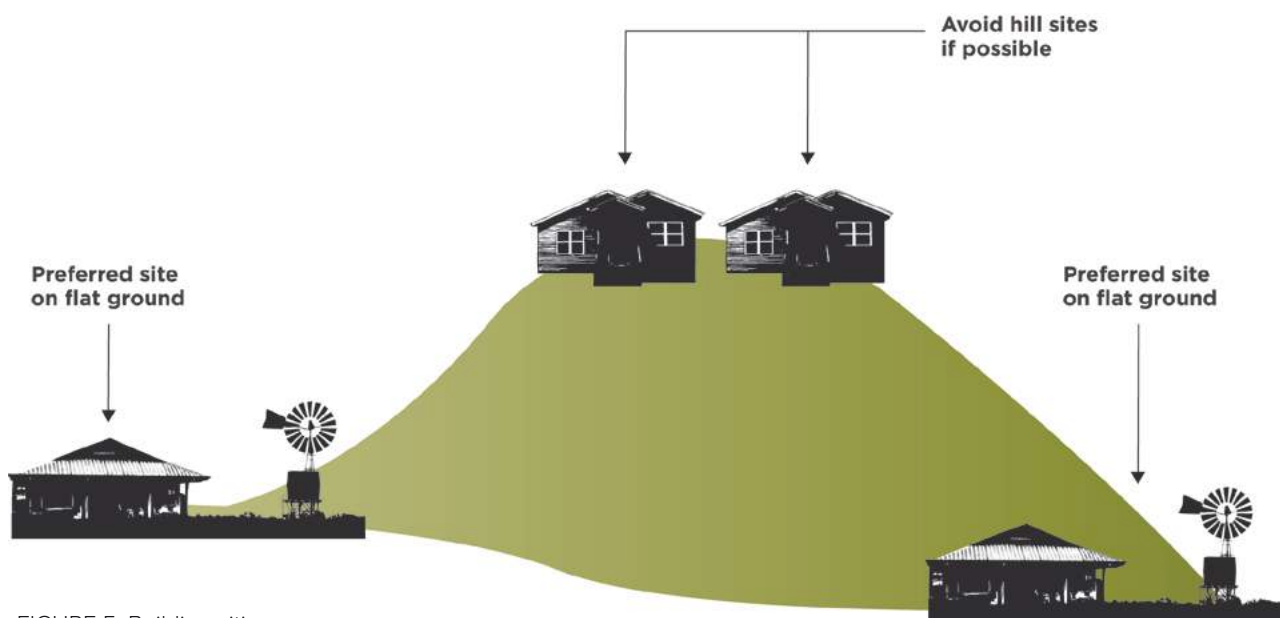


FIGURE 5: Building siting

# Protecting your property against fire threat

## Retrofitting and maintaining buildings

Taking steps to retrofit or maintain buildings can significantly reduce the impact of embers on your assets. Research shows that decks, windows, doors and roof areas contribute most to a building's overall bushfire risk. More information on how to improve these can be found in the Victorian Building Commission's and CFA's *Guide to Retrofit your Home for Better Protection from a Bushfire*.

In a fire risk area, the most severe fires usually approach from the northwest under the influence of hot, dry and gusty winds, or from the southwest under the influence of strong gusting winds associated with the passage of a cold front later in the afternoon. The northern and western aspects of any buildings therefore require the most protection.

Consider using windbreaks or shelterbelts to slow wind as it approaches key assets and to catch embers before they reach important assets. This should be a consideration when reviewing your whole farm plan or revegetating areas around key assets.

Make sure that there are no gaps between the cladding and the ground or slab of your sheds to prevent embers getting inside.

## Vegetation Management

Vegetation (trees, grass and shrubs) is an important asset, and managing this asset on your land can have both fire safety and environmental benefits.

### Reduce fuel loads ahead of the Fire Danger Period

Protect assets, including house blocks, sheds and fences, by reducing fuel loads and keeping them free of vegetation and weeds. Options include strategic grazing, slashing and herbicide use.

Manage weeds or other fuel loads in fenced-off areas, particularly if they are near key assets. Fenced-off areas include rivers or streams that are classified as Crown land or riparian areas.

### Selecting vegetation

It is difficult and complex to suggest specific plants for fire safety – the way a plant burns depends on issues including how old it is, how well watered and managed it is, and what is growing nearby. Plants that burn easily and produce embers should be located away from buildings. This includes plants that:

- › create dry, dead debris
- › have loose, flaky bark
- › have a lot of fine leaves, particularly if they are continuous from the ground up
- › have very low moisture content.

While some plants may burn more readily than others, under the right conditions all plants will burn.

**Do not rely solely on plants being fire resistant for fire safety.**

## Managing vegetation around your assets

As a general rule, a minimum radius of 10 metres around your assets (dwelling, shed or fuel depot, for instance) should be kept clear of mulch and significant vegetation. If your property is surrounded by dense forest, the distance you require might be significantly greater than 10 metres.

# Fuel breaks

Fuel breaks are natural or constructed breaks in vegetation, used to stop or control the spread of fire. While fuel breaks are usually constructed by slashing, spraying or other means, natural features such as water bodies or green crops can also act as breaks.

## Fire and fuel breaks

Weather conditions and fire behaviour (especially whether embers are being produced) influence the effectiveness of a fuel break on any given day, as does the width or proportion of the break.

A fuel break will be more effective under the following conditions.

- › The break is close to the source of fire ignition so that the fire has not built to its maximum potential
- › The break is approached by the side (flank) of the fire, which has lower intensity than the front (head) of the fire
- › The break successfully disrupts the continuity of the fuel, thereby reducing fire intensity
- › Nearby trees are not producing embers.



FIGURE 6: Using bare earth fuel breaks to reduce ember attack

## Types of fuel breaks

### Bare earth breaks

- › Are ploughed, graded, burnt and/or sprayed
- › May stop a fire under low fire danger conditions without anyone actively fighting the fire
- › Will behave more like a slashed break if there is some fuel left sitting on the surface (fire will often move across slashed or mown breaks unless someone actively puts it out)
- › May require a permit if they remove native vegetation.

### Slashed or mown fuel breaks (grasslands)

- › Are the most common types of fuel breaks
- › Will **NOT** prevent fire spread (the rate of fire spread in dry slashed grass is about the same as in dry standing grass). However, a fire in slashed grass will be easier to control or suppress as the flame height is approximately halved in slashed grass.

Wider fuel breaks will stop more fires in different conditions. Fuel breaks under three metres are only effective under the mildest of conditions. Wider fuel breaks of five metres and above may provide access for fire suppression.

### Burnt breaks

- › Can be effective if properly established
- › Should only be carried out with appropriate permits and by people with experience in burning operations
- › Should be carried out with consideration for environmental issues.

### Vertical breaks

Fires that burn through the crowns of trees are intense and difficult to suppress so it is important to minimise 'ladder fuels' that allow fire to move upwards. Reducing bark can limit the production of embers in a fire.

Vertical breaks can be made by pruning, slashing, or removing bark:

- › Long ribbon bark can be removed by hand
- › Some types of bark can be burnt
- › **Always seek specialist advice before burning or removing bark to maintain good tree health.**

You can also reduce ladder fuels by:

- › Pruning lower branches to around two to 2.5 metres
- › Pruning shrubs so that their tops are well away from the lower branches of trees
- › Pruning the lower branches of shrubs to separate the foliage from the surface fuels underneath.

### Internal fuel breaks (timber and farm forestry plantations)

These can limit the spread of fire. Breaks that incorporate an access track can also be useful for fire suppression purposes. Consider having internal fuel breaks between different enterprises such as farm forestry and cropping.



A well constructed fuel break



## Perimeter fuel breaks

Where practical and environmentally responsible, landowners and managers are encouraged to have a fuel break around the perimeter or boundary of their property.

When establishing the break, consider fire behaviour factors and fuel loads on adjoining lands. With agreement between neighbours or a relevant public authority, perimeter fuel breaks could be located partially or entirely on a neighbouring property.

## Breaks created with herbicide

Herbicide can be used to create a bare earth fuel break or a break where dry fuel is still present but the fuel load has been reduced. It can also be used to reduce fuel loads to make fuel reduction burning safer and to keep fences – including electric fences – clear of weeds and grass.

The most effective time to apply herbicide is in early spring before grasses and weeds have grown.

## Wind breaks (shelterbelts)

Windbreaks are areas of vegetation that are designed and planted to reduce wind impact on stock and crops on farms. These should be managed for fire risk, but consider options such as reducing adjacent fuel loads rather than pruning or thinning.

## Managing stock

Create a heavily grazed area where stock can be moved during a bushfire situation. This could be a grazed or green paddock or a laneway, with access to water.

Consider having a central laneway to assist moving stock before a fire threatens. You will also need to identify a possible containment area where stock can be fed after a fire. In addition to containing stock, this reduces the risk of weed spread across the property following a fire.

# Planted timber areas and plantations

## Fuel reduction and fuel breaks

Fuel reduction in and around timbered areas such as timber plantation, woodlots, farm forestry, windbreaks and shelterbelts may help prevent fires moving to the crowns of trees.

Options to reduce fuel loads include:

- › slashing, ploughing and grazing in early spring in and around timbered areas
- › mulching or chopper-rolling of waste thinning, pruning or harvesting material to keep it low to the ground and help the decomposition process
- › burning waste material
- › managing weeds.

As a general guide, managers of timber plantations should establish perimeter breaks free of trees for **at least 10 metres** and incorporate an access track. Consider pruning and thinning the first few rows of trees to increase the effectiveness of fuel breaks.

Consider developing a mosaic of compartments of different ages to avoid heavy continuous fuel accumulation.

## Establishing a plantation

In accordance with legislation, commercial forests on private land must be established and harvested in accordance with the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production (produced by DEECA).

If you are establishing a new plantation, contact your local council about permits, setbacks from dwellings and buildings, and plantation development notices (planning scheme requirements).



10 metre perimeter break

# Plan to protect the environment

Protecting and improving the environment is integral to fire management planning and increasingly recognised by rural land management experts. Agricultural quality assurance systems often take environmental factors into account.

Landowners and managers are encouraged to identify environmental assets on their properties. Waterways, habitat for native fauna, and revegetation sites all need protection from both fire prevention works and fire threat.

Some fire management strategies have both safety and environmental benefits. For instance, the wick wiper machine (pictured below) can be used to apply herbicide to taller introduced grasses such as phalaris, leaving shorter native grasses (for example, kangaroo grass) that have a lower fuel load.

Planning permits are usually required if you wish to remove native vegetation. To find out what exemptions might apply in your area, contact the planning department at your local council.



Wick Wiper

## The 10/30, 10/50 or fence line rule

Generally, a planning permit is required to clear vegetation on your property, including around buildings. However, if you live in a Bushfire Prone Area or Bushfire Management Overlay, the 10/30, 10/50 or fence line rule might apply to your property. These rules allow you to clear vegetation without a planning permit in specified circumstances.

Before clearing any vegetation, you need to visit [planning.vic.gov.au](http://planning.vic.gov.au) to find out if these rules apply to you.

### The 10/30 rule

If your property is located in a designated **Bushfire Prone Area**, you will not need a permit to clear:

1. any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of your house,
2. any vegetation, excluding trees, within 30 metres of your house.

### The 10/50 rule

If your property is located in a **Bushfire Management Overlay**, you will not need a permit to clear:

1. any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of your house,
2. any vegetation, excluding trees, within 50 metres of your house.

### The fence line rule

This rule allows landowners and residents to clear any vegetation to a combined maximum of 4 metres width along both sides of a boundary fence.

Where land has already been cleared 4 metres or more along one side of the fence, then up to 1 metre can be cleared along the other side of the fence.



### Environmental planning checklist

- ✓ Ensure that fuel reduction works do not result in large areas of bare ground that may cause erosion and encourage the growth of weeds
- ✓ Watch out for signs of erosion or weed invasion in large areas of bare ground
- ✓ Remove weeds that have high fuel loads for fire safety and environmental benefits
- ✓ Minimise soil disturbance around trees to protect their health
- ✓ Avoid removing trees with hollows that are habitat for native fauna
- ✓ Rehabilitate fire-affected areas as soon as possible
- ✓ Check if permits are required.

### Removing native vegetation

If your home or assets are located:

- › near a river or stream, you will need to contact your local catchment management authority and/or DEECA office to discuss any removal or modification of native vegetation within four metres of your boundary
- › adjacent to any national park, state forest or Crown land, you will need to contact DEECA to discuss any removal or modification of vegetation within four metres of your boundary.

### Ecological burning

When used in appropriate cycles, fire is a powerful tool that can be used to promote the health of native vegetation. This is known as ecological burning.

Any private landowner who is considering using fire for ecological burning is advised to get in touch with a Vegetation Management Officer at their CFA District or Regional headquarters.

### Roadside fuel management

You must obtain written consent before undertaking any roadside work other than mowing. A prior history of doing roadside fire prevention works does not constitute consent. For State roads, the relevant road authority to contact is VicRoads; for municipal roads, it is the municipal council. If unsure, ring your local council.

Victorian legislation also requires that roadside works must be conducted in a safe manner. Safety requirements may include high visibility clothing, signage and traffic management.

Please note that most roadside work is not permitted on days of Total Fire Ban. For clarification, contact your CFA District or Regional headquarters.

# Part 3: Using fire on your property

Fire is a day-to-day and year-round part of farming. However, anyone living and working on the land must avoid becoming complacent about fire threat.

By following regulations and some common sense safety measures, fire risk – and the threat to lives and property – can be kept to a minimum.

This section provides a summary of how to use fire on your property together with practical how-to guidelines.

## Smoke management

If there is a chance that your use of fire might impact visibility on a nearby road, you have a responsibility to contact the relevant road authority – either your council or VicRoads.

Outside the Fire Danger Period (see next column), the best time to burn is when the fuel is dry and when wind will not blow smoke towards neighbours, crops, towns or other communities.

## The Fire Danger Period

The Fire Danger Period (FDP) is declared by CFA for an area of country Victoria when that area has reached a condition of high bushfire danger. The FDP typically stays in place until 30 April, but this can vary depending on the year and the area.

During the FDP, certain activities are restricted. Check with CFA for a comprehensive list of fire restrictions and to request permits, should they apply. Be aware that some local councils also place their own restrictions on lighting fires. For detail on who to contact to burn off during a FDP, see [page 20](#).

## Offences and penalties

Be aware that it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly cause a fire and recklessly allow a fire to spread to vegetation on another person's property.

It is up to you to check whether or not your council has local laws in place regarding lighting fires and burning rubbish in their municipality, especially near townships or in built-up areas.

For landowners or managers, failure to comply with a permit condition or restriction may result in a fine. Details on penalty values can be found at [justice.vic.gov.au](http://justice.vic.gov.au).

## Using fire for fuel reduction works

Any burning activities on your property should be carried out with care. Apply the same guidelines as for burning off (see next [page](#)). Always notify Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) before burning by calling 1800 668 511.



# Burning off

Burning off grass, stubble, weeds, undergrowth or other vegetation is generally permitted outside the Fire Danger Period in accordance with legislation covering country Victoria.

## Do I need a permit?

You can check if you need a permit, and apply for one through the Fire Permits Victoria website [www.firepermits.vic.gov.au](http://www.firepermits.vic.gov.au)

If you are unable to apply online, you can obtain an application form from your local council, CFA District Office or FRV Regional Office, depending on the location of the activity.

If you are not sure of your burning off location is within the country area of Victoria or the FRV fire district, please check the CFA & FRV areas on the CFA website <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/about-us/where-we-are/cfa-and-frv-boundaries>

## Local laws

In addition to legislation covering country Victoria, local laws on burn offs can apply year-round. Contact your local council in the first instance.

## Notifying ESTA of a burn off

Every year, unregistered burn offs pose a major problem for volunteer fire brigades. People often cannot tell the difference between a burn off and a fire – this can result in volunteers being called away from families and workplaces to attend false alarms.

You must notify the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) via the Fire Permits Victoria website at [firepermits.vic.gov.au](http://firepermits.vic.gov.au) or by phoning 1800 668 511.

Before burning off you should register your burn-off to ensure it isn't mistaken for a bushfire:

- › Visit [firepermits.vic.gov.au](http://firepermits.vic.gov.au) to complete the burn off notification form, or
- › Call ESTA on 1800 668 511, or
- › Email [burnoffs@esta.vic.gov.au](mailto:burnoffs@esta.vic.gov.au)

## Burn off checklist

- ✓ Check and follow local regulations or laws set down by CFA or your local council
- ✓ Notify neighbours at least two hours before starting the burn
- ✓ Notify ESTA via the Fire Permits Victoria website at [firepermits.vic.gov.au](http://firepermits.vic.gov.au) or by phone on 1800 668 511
- ✓ Check the weather forecast for the day of the burn and a few days afterwards
- ✓ Check the fuel moisture conditions
- ✓ Establish a fire break of no less than three metres cleared of all flammable material
- ✓ Make sure there are enough resources on hand to monitor, contain and extinguish the burn safely and effectively.



Using a cleared area to burn off safely

## Burning off during the Fire Danger Period – Schedule 13 Permits

Burning off grass, stubble, weeds, undergrowth or other vegetation during the FDP is permitted under the following conditions.

1. You have a written *Schedule 13* permit. To apply for a permit visit the Fire Permits Victoria website. Depending on the location of the activity, the assessment of applications and issuing of *Schedule 13* permits may be done by your local council, CFA or FRV.
2. You comply with the conditions of that permit.
3. A person is in attendance at all times while the fire is alight and has the capacity and means to extinguish the fire.
4. The fire is completely extinguished before the person leaves.

Anyone with a permit to burn is still required to contact ESTA.

## Burning off by a brigade – Schedule 12 Permits

During the FDP, if you have arranged for a brigade to conduct a burn off on your behalf (on your property) the brigade must have a *Schedule 12* permit.

Depending on the location of the activity, the assessment of applications and issuing of *Schedule 12* permits may be done by CFA or FRV.

*Schedule 12* permits are not yet issued via the Fire Permits Victoria website.

## Burning for other purposes – Schedule 14 permits

*Schedule 14* permits are issued to persons wishing to light a fire for purposes **not covered** by *Schedule 13* during the FDP. For example, burning deceased stock or operating machinery.

Depending on the location of the activity, the assessment of applications and issuing of *Schedule 14* permits may be done by CFA or FRV.

Visit the Fire Permits Victoria website to submit an application online.

## Incinerators

Before burning rubbish at any time of the year, check that there are no council requirements or restrictions (e.g. bans on smog alert days, certain areas and days of the week). Some local councils do not permit incinerators to be used in their areas at any time.

Where possible, look for alternatives to using incinerators, such as recycling or disposal at a registered landfill.

### During the Fire Danger Period

The use of incinerators without a permit is permitted, provided:

- › you check with council about any local laws
- › the fire is effectively restricted within the incinerator
- › the air movement is 10km/h or less
- › the area three metres around the incinerator is cleared of flammable material
- › a supply of water sufficient to extinguish the fire is available when the fire is burning
- › a person is in attendance at all times while the fire is alight.



# Machinery, vehicles and equipment

Anyone operating machinery, equipment and vehicles has a responsibility to make sure they do not start a fire.

On hot, dry and windy days, exercise extreme caution before harvesting, grinding, welding, slashing or mowing. Avoid driving vehicles and motorbikes through dry grass or crops – the risk from the hot exhaust system is high. Driving vehicles with catalytic converters through dry grass and crops is particularly hazardous.

If you are operating vehicles, machinery and equipment, take regular breaks. Make it part of your routine to check for straw or grass build-up and hot bearings, and to regularly look behind for fire.

Check machinery regularly and ensure that spark arrestors are maintained.

## Harvesters

The most common cause of harvester fires is material collecting on hot engine components such as the manifold, exhaust and turbocharger. Harvesting low-growing crops such as lentils is a common cause of fire. This occurs when stones are struck by front components of the harvester such as the skid plates or the sickle bar.

The key to avoiding harvester fires is diligence in clean-down and inspection. In the highest fire-risk periods, paddock work should be postponed.

## Hay cutting and carting

Consider the fire risk conditions present when cutting hay. If you are carting hay, have a fire-resistant cover on the load or a spark shield behind the exhaust. Another option is to have an exhaust system located under the body of the vehicle so exhaust emissions are away from the hay. However, be conscious of having hot exhaust in contact with long dry grass.

## Harvesting timber

In accordance with the Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production (produced by DEECA), timber harvesting must be based on a Timber Harvesting Plan. This plan may include fire protection restrictions. Work bans should be considered when the Fire Behaviour Index exceeds 35.

## Harvester safety checklist

- ✓ Equip your machine with at least two fire extinguishers
- ✓ Avoid overloading electrical circuits
- ✓ Use the battery isolation switch when the harvester is parked
- ✓ Use vermin deterrents – rodents can chew through electrical insulation



Clearing debris from a harvester

## Other equipment

Equipment incorporating non-vehicle heat engines can be used in **green vegetation** without prescribed conditions.

In vegetation that is not green, this equipment should only be used in the open if fitted with a spark arrestor. One of the two following conditions must also be followed:

- › The area around the heat engine must be clear of flammable material for a radius of at least three metres
- › A person is in attendance at all times the heat engine is operating (unless operating with a special exemption).

In addition:

- › The person in attendance has a working water fire extinguisher or knapsack of at least nine litres capacity.

### Chainsaws, plant or grass trimmers or lawn mowers

can be used in green vegetation without prescribed conditions.

Chainsaws, plant or grass trimmers or lawn mowers used in vegetation that is **not green**, must be:

- › free from faults and mechanical defects that could cause an outbreak of fire
- › fitted with an efficient spark arrestor
- › have an area of at least three metres around the machine cleared of flammable material.

The operator of the machine must carry the following fire suppression equipment:

- › A knapsack spray pump, in working order, fully charged with water, with a capacity of not less than nine litres
- › A water fire extinguisher, in working order, fully charged with water, with a capacity of not less than nine litres.



Water fire extinguisher with nine litres capacity



# Fire danger period: Farm restrictions on machinery, vehicles and equipment

Some farming activities are restricted by law during the Fire Danger Period.

## Vehicles and motorbikes

propelled with an internal combustion engine must not contact any type of vegetation unless they are fitted with a system that takes all of the exhaust from the engine through a silencing device.

## Machinery incorporating a heat engine

in contact with, or within nine metres of crop, grass, stubble, weeds, undergrowth or other vegetation must:

- › be free from faults and mechanical defects that could cause an outbreak of fire
- › be fitted with an approved spark
- › carry fire suppression equipment. This can be a knapsack spray pump or water fire extinguisher. It must be in working order, fully charged with water and have a minimum capacity of nine litres.

Tractors fitted with a turbocharger or an exhaust-aspirated air cleaner do not require a spark.

## Cutting, welding and grinding equipment

must be operated with:

- › a fire-resistant shield or guard in place to stop sparks and hot material
- › an area of at least 1.5 metres clear of flammable material or sufficiently wet down
- › a water supply or an effective water knapsack of at least nine litres capacity available
- › cut-offs and electrode stubs placed directly in a fireproof container.

On a Total Fire Ban day, **the use of fire** (or equipment that produces a naked flame) **is banned**.

Comprehensive Total Fire Ban restrictions can be found on the CFA website. A summary of restrictions appears on [page 25](#).



# Powerlines and electric fencing

## Powerlines

In accordance with legislation, landowners and managers must ensure that private powerlines are maintained in sound condition and that they are clear of vegetation. Detailed information on these requirements can be found by contacting Energy Safe Victoria or visiting its website and following the links to electricity safety.

## Electric fencing

When sparks jump from one wire to another in the presence of dry vegetation, electric fences can cause fire.

Check electric fences to make sure they are free of wire, grass, weeds and other vegetation, and operate them according to manufacturer's advice. It is a common practice to switch off electric fences at times of extreme fire danger.

In addition to water required under legislation, farmers are encouraged to carry a dry chemical fire extinguisher on machinery. The extinguisher should be suitable for Class A fires (normal combustible materials), Class B fires (fuels and other flammable liquids) and electrical fires.

### Did you know?

Particular care is needed when using electric fences in times of extreme fire danger.



# Total Fire Bans

Total Fire Ban restrictions are additional to restrictions already in place over the declared Fire Danger Period.

Total Fire Bans can be declared either statewide or in individual districts. Victoria has nine Total Fire Ban districts that align with the nine Victorian Bureau of Meteorology weather districts. Fire Danger Ratings also apply to these nine districts.

Welding or grinding equipment (or any other machinery that generates sparks or uses a naked flame) is not permitted in the open air.

In accordance with legislation, on days of Total Fire Ban it is an offence to:

- › use welding or grinding equipment
- › light a fire in the open air
- › allow a fire in the open air to remain alight
- › use or leave in operation any producer-gas equipment on or in connection with any vehicle.

## Permits – Total Fire Ban days

Permits issued for the general Fire Danger Period by local council, CFA or FRV are **automatically suspended** on Total Fire Ban days.

If businesses need to undertake **essential works** on a Total Fire Ban day, they must apply for a *Section 40* permit from CFA. *Section 40* permits can be applied for online through the Fire Permits Victoria website. If you are unable to apply online, a form can be downloaded from the CFA website or obtained

from your local FRV or DEECA Regional Office, depending on the location of the activity.

*Section 40* permits do not apply to individuals, and permits are only issued after the application has been investigated.

Restrictions and exemptions to these requirements – as well as some general recommendations – are summarised below.

**Fires in the open air for burning off grass, scrub, stubble or rubbish** are **banned**. Any permits issued by local council, CFA or FRV are suspended for the duration of any Total Fire Ban.

**Cutting, welding, grinding charring and soldering equipment** that produces fire and heat **cannot** be used on days of Total Fire Ban in the open air without a *Section 40* permit.

**Extracting honey when using a smoker** is banned unless you have a *Section 40* permit.

**Angle grinders, soldering irons or welders** can be used in an enclosed workshop if there are four walls and an enclosed roof.

**Petrol-driven generators and non-vehicle heat engines** It is strongly recommended that their use be **postponed**.

**Electric fences** It is strongly recommended that these be **shut off**, particularly where significant amounts of fine fuels may be in contact or covering terminal areas or wire runs.

## Existing ignited burn offs

If a Total Fire Ban is declared for the following day while a burn off is already in progress, the burn needs to be **extinguished** before midnight.

## Fire protected areas

Special restrictions also apply to some areas of private land within 1.5 km of forests and national parks. These areas, in addition to parks and forests managed by DEECA, are called 'Fire Protected Areas.' Historically they have also been known as the 'marginal mile'.

Fire Protected Areas are subject to restrictions under DEECA's declared Prohibited Period. In accordance with legislation, a permit is needed from DEECA during the Prohibited Period or on Total Fire Ban days to light a fire.

You can apply for a permit through the Fire Permits Victoria website or obtain an application form from your local DEECA Regional Office.



# Managing hay and flammable material

## Hay and fire safety

### How haystack fires start

Spontaneous ignition is the leading cause of haystack fires in Victoria, and just one damp bale is enough to ignite an entire haystack.

Green or damp hay encourages elements like bacteria and fungi to grow and decompose. In these conditions, a series of complex biological and chemical reactions can cause a build up that allows hay to heat. This, in turn, can produce flammable gases that may ignite.

Haystack fires are also caused by sparks from machinery and equipment, and embers from burn offs or bushfires and grassfires.

### Minimising haystack fire risk

- › Ensure hay is fully cured before baling
- › Know the history of the hay you purchase
- › Ensure haystacks are limited in size
- › Store hay in separate stacks
- › Store hay in a number of locations away from key assets
- › Store hay away from possible sources of ignition (roadsides, powerlines, workshops and vegetation). Never store vehicles, machinery and equipment in your hayshed – there is increased risk of losing both hay and machinery

- › Consider using temporary fencing to allow stock to graze close to hay and silage stores to reduce fuel loads near these assets
- › Do not stack hay right to the top of a hay shed. Allow some air to circulate at the top – this helps to carry away moisture
- › Protect hay from rain, leaking roofs and spouts
- › Store hay in areas that are not likely to flood and in sheds that are in good repair to minimise the moisture content
- › Monitor hay with a correctly calibrated moisture meter. Moisture content should be no more than 20 percent (12-18 percent is recommended as a precaution).

### When a haystack becomes hot

Hay needs to be spread out to allow the stack to cool down. However, be aware that hay can ignite when oxygen reaches the parts that are still hot. Do not walk on top of hay that is heating as it may collapse or ignite. CFA recommends that you have your local fire brigade in attendance when pulling apart a hot haystack.

It is not recommended that you feed heat-affected hay to animals. The heating process reduces the nutrient quality of the hay.

## Compost and manure

Landowners and managers are encouraged to manage and monitor compost and manure heaps that may spontaneously ignite if they are large enough. Large lumps of dried manure can smoulder for several days. Consider harrowing manure across paddocks or removing manure prior to the Fire Danger Period.

## Dangerous goods

Fuel and chemicals should be stored away from vegetation and key assets (including water) or inside containers that are in good condition. Chemicals intended for use, or being held prior to disposal, must be stored in a secure, well ventilated and dry area that is out of direct sunlight.

As a rule, minimise the quantity of dangerous goods stored on your property to reduce fire risk.



# Who's who at your local council

## **Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO)**

Every council must have an MFPO. Depending on the size of the council, there may also be one or more Assistant Municipal Fire Prevention Officers.

MFPOs may issue permits to burn in the Fire Danger Period. They also deal with concerns and complaints about fire hazards in the community.

For example, if you are concerned about the levels of fuel present on a neighbouring property, the MFPO may be able to issue a Fire Prevention Notice that obligates the receiver to undertake fire prevention activities.

Objections to Fire Prevention Notices must be lodged in writing within seven days.

## **Council Planning Department**

If you want to build or develop, and think you may be in a bushfire risk area, contact the council's Land Use Planning Department and enquire whether any planning controls are in place regarding bushfire.

## **Municipal Building Surveyor**

Contact the Municipal Building Surveyor to report buildings that look unsafe or that you consider to be a fire hazard.

## **Recovery Officer**

After a fire event or any other major emergency, the local council will typically appoint a recovery team to assist in the community recovery process.

# Part 4: Response, Suppression and Recovery

## When fire breaks out

### Reporting and extinguishing fire: responsibilities under legislation

During the Fire Danger Period, owners, occupiers or managers of land must take all possible steps to extinguish fire on land under their management and call Triple Zero (000) to report the fire if they are unable to extinguish it.

Anyone finding a fire burning during the Fire Danger Period must report it as soon as possible.

### Private firefighting equipment

Landowners operating vehicles, machinery and equipment are required to possess suitable firefighting equipment.

Landowners and managers are also encouraged to have access to additional private firefighting equipment to stop the spread of fire. This can range from simple, everyday equipment – rakes, shovels and fire extinguishers – to farm firefighting units, slip-ons, or even tankers depending on the nature of the fire risk.

Make sure that **everyone** on your property knows how to operate equipment as a contingency if you are not home when a fire breaks out.

### Operating private equipment

CFA values the role of private equipment – provided it is operated safely and effectively. Early intervention by operators has brought many fires under control before the arrival of the brigade itself. Private equipment also significantly assists in backing out and patrol after fire. However, CFA personnel may ask private equipment operators to leave a fire ground if they are impeding operations or working unsafely.

CFA's *Guidelines for Operating Private Equipment at Fires* booklet contains comprehensive guidelines on the use of private equipment at fires. The booklet is available from CFA District or Regional headquarters, or can be accessed on the CFA website.





### **Forest Industry Brigades**

In accordance with legislation, plantation owners who have an aggregate of more than 500 ha of plantation within a radius area of 25 km are required to form a Forest Industry Brigade or create a partnership with other plantation owners to form such a brigade.

## **Preparedness and response for plantation owners and managers**

Plantation owners and managers are encouraged to have access to heavy equipment such as bulldozers, graders and excavators for firefighting purposes. Document access arrangements so that equipment can be quickly pressed into action, and the range of equipment available can be scaled up or down as needed.

Include DEECA in the development of a fire response plan if the plantation is near a Fire Protected Area.

Consider using early fire detection systems such as lookouts and aerial and ground patrols. Seek advice for helidam requirements when planning to use helicopters for fire suppression.



# Access for fire trucks and vehicles

## Building and property access

To ensure fire truck access to buildings and key assets, maintain a turning circle with a minimum radius of 10 metres or a T or Y turning area with each leg of the turning area at least eight metres long, as measured from the centre of the T or Y.

To assist emergency services, make sure that your property is identifiable at the property entrance – for instance, the number or name is clearly visible.

Where practical, ensure that fire trucks can access each part of a property. This may not be practical in some terrain or with some blocks of native vegetation.

## Access tracks

Allow for – or manage – the growth of trees and branches when planning access tracks. Reducing adjacent fuel loads can increase the benefits and safety of access tracks. Consider using tracks not only for access but also to double as fuel breaks.

As a rule, access tracks should:

- › be free of overhanging trees and shrubs to a height of four metres
- › be at least seven metres wide to allow two tankers to pass, or be four metres wide and have passing bays every 200 metres. Bays should be six metres wide and 20 metres long
- › have an average slope of no more than one in seven (8.1 degrees) with a maximum grade of no more than one in five (11.3 degrees) for no more than 50 metres
- › have dips with no more than one in eight (7.1 degrees) entry and exit angles
- › be capable of bearing a load limit of at least 15 tonnes

- › be aligned to provide straight-through access at junctions
- › be sign-posted if visibility is poor due to terrain or vegetation
- › avoid dead-ends where practical. All dead-ends should be sign-posted and a turn-around point provided.

## Gates

Gates need to be at least 3 metres wide for tankers to fit through. Consider marking gates with a pole to aid visibility. Gates providing access to fenced-off areas of vegetation for firefighting and general management are particularly useful.

## Woodlots, windbreaks (shelterbelts) and farm forestry

Access around and within planted timber areas is especially important for fire protection as well as for general management and harvesting activities. Consider having access breaks at least four metres wide and free of overhanging trees within long blocks of farm forestry, windbreaks or woodlots.

## Crossings

All bridges, culverts and creek crossings need to have a load-bearing capacity of at least 15 tonnes where fire truck suppression services are required.

## Raised beds

It can be difficult for firefighting tankers to travel safely across raised beds. Landowners and managers with raised bed crops are encouraged to have a perimeter access track or non-raised bed section (headland) around the perimeter of raised bed paddocks. This should generally be at least seven metres wide and free of overhanging trees for fire truck access.

## Plantations

Each point within the plantation should be no more than 300 metres from an access track, perimeter break or open paddock. Wherever possible, plantation estates should be divided into blocks no larger than 400 hectares. Using access tracks that are similar to perimeter breaks is an effective way of dividing up blocks.



A graded break with access for emergency vehicles



# Access to water supplies for emergency services

## Within the boundary of your property

Farmers and landowners are strongly encouraged to have water supplies available for and accessible to emergency services.

For contingency planning, it is essential that you know the whereabouts of the nearest water supply **not located on your own property**. Speak with your neighbours about water access **well ahead of the fire season** and set down an agreement in writing if necessary.

As a general rule, water supplies should:

- › be obvious or known to CFA or other agencies (i.e. through signs or property plans)
- › be located in an open, flat area with a hardstanding area that allows a fire suppression pump to be within four metres of the water supply
- › be available even when water levels are low during summer months
- › have a turning circle loop or turn-around point.

Where tanks are used, have couplings or adaptors that enable the filling of farm firefighting equipment and CFA tankers (shown here). Bores and standpipes may also be suitable if flow rates are sufficient.

Your property water supply and water distribution system should be **independent of mains power supply**. Water supplies could be from a dam, tank, helicopter, or private water tanker.

## Water supply for the defence of buildings

If you plan to stay and defend farm buildings as part of your fire survival plan, you should have a water supply of at least 10,000 litres available. This supply is **in addition** to water available for fire suppression on remote parts of your property.

This additional supply should be independent of the reticulated water supply and mains power supply – for instance, a dam, tank or pool.

Water supply pipes should be flame-resistant and heat-resistant, and couplings or adaptors on tanks should match specifications for the filling of CFA trucks (see below). Regularly maintain and check pumps and sprinklers as part of your annual routine ahead of the fire season.

For more detailed information on defending your property, visit the CFA website or contact the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226 (NRS 1800 555 677).

## CFA fittings for tanks

CFA trucks use a special fitting to connect to tanks. There needs to be at least one 64 mm, 3 thread/25 mm x 50 British Standard Pipe round male coupling (CFA Male End, Pt. No. SE.03.074). Consider using a 'tee' to allow the CFA fitting on one side of the branch and personal firefighting fittings on the other side of the pipe, as shown below.

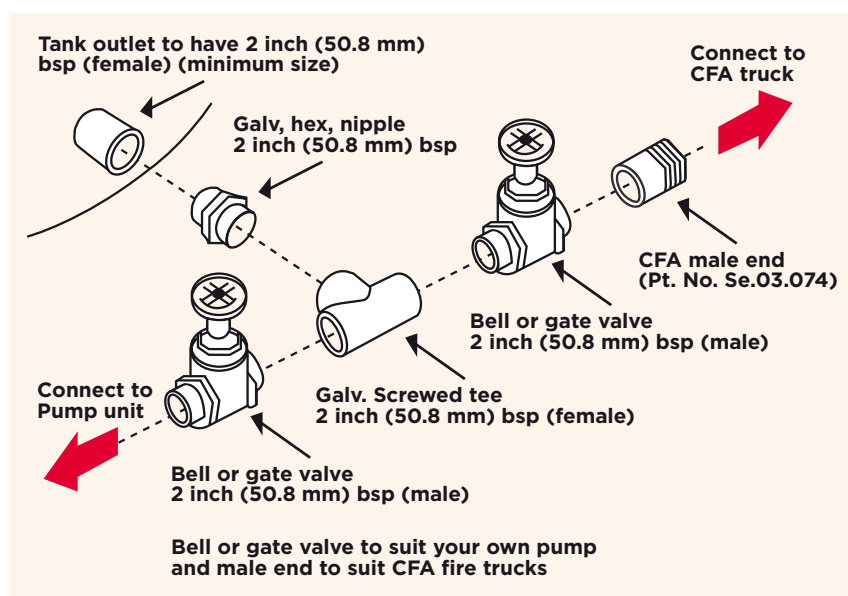


Figure 7: Tank fittings to connect to CFA fire trucks

# Recovery planning

Planning for recovery is an important part of dealing with the impact of fire. While the period following a fire can be difficult, many farmers have found that it has provided an opportunity to review the layout and logistics of their property.

Issues to consider in recovery plans include:

- › the welfare of people
- › weed management, erosion control and environmental issues
- › water quality and stock access to water
- › stock management – for example, having a containment area where stock can be fed after a fire
- › insurance needs (both personal and business)
- › possible changes to fencing, sheds and property layout.

A number of organisations provide assistance after a fire:

- › Local councils coordinate initial measures to assist communities. They are often the first point of contact after a fire
- › DHHS assists with the welfare needs of people
- › DPI provides technical agricultural advice
- › DEECA and catchment management authorities provide advice on rehabilitating the environment.

General information about grants, recovery assistance and other advice can be found on the DHHS website. Follow the links to ‘emergency’.

DPI’s *Recovery after Fire: Practical Steps for Landholders* booklet is a valuable resource for farmers and primary producers. This is available from [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au) or by calling the VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226.

## Grants and compensation\*

### Private fences (internal and boundary)

Through recovery agencies, the Victorian Government will pay 100 per cent of the restoration costs of fences damaged on private land as a result of fire emergency vehicles obtaining access to control bushfires.

### Rehabilitation of fire control lines constructed by fire agencies during fire events

State government assistance is available to private landholders. This encompasses measures taken to address soil erosion and water quality (e.g. pushing back top soil). Re-seeding can also be used to help prevent soil movement.

Support available to help rehabilitate control lines does not include replanting trees or re-establishing pasture or any other agricultural crop.

### Replacement of essential water supplies taken for firefighting

CFA and DEECA (FFMVic) firefighters have the legislative powers to take water from any waterway or water source for firefighting purposes.

However, the water owner can request replacement (quantity taken) of essential water under the Essential Water Replacement Scheme.

If taken for firefighting purpose, a reasonable and sufficient volume of essential water will be provided to sustain the:

- › health of affected residences and pets
- › health and productivity of stock

Where essential water has been completely exhausted, it will be replaced within 48 hours of the need being established where possible.

To lodge a request for essential water replacement, download and complete the Essential Water Replacement form available from <https://www.ffm.vic.gov.au/recovery-after-an-emergency/public-land-recovery> and email to [emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:emergency.recovery@deeca.vic.gov.au).

Your local council, DEECA or CFA Office can assist you with lodgement if required.



# Part 5: Resources

## 20 Essential Steps: Before the Fire Season

This checklist is relevant to everybody – whether you’ve got a dairy, broad acre, stud farm, a plantation or an orchard.

Use this list as a reminder or to help you find the relevant information within this document.

- |  |      |   |      |
|--|------|---|------|
| ✓ 1. Have a routine in place for fire risk days (moving stock and limiting or postponing machinery use, switching off electric fences). Make sure everyone on your property is aware of it.                            | p.7  | ✓ 11. Have water fire extinguishers or knapsack spray pumps (minimum 9 litres) available that can be carried by any person using farm equipment or machinery.                 | p.22 |
| ✓ 2. Know your trigger to leave early on fire risk days and the trigger to leave for family members, employees or contractors. Plan for contingencies such as children at school.                                      | p.7  | ✓ 12. Have a safety strategy in place for storing and monitoring hay – purchase a moisture meter if necessary.  | p.26 |
| ✓ 3. Reduce fuel loads around assets (house blocks, sheds and fences) and create strategic fuel breaks.  | p.12 | ✓ 13. Make sure hay is fully cured before bailing.  | p.26 |
| ✓ 4. Create a heavily grazed area where stock can be moved during a fire.  | p.15 | ✓ 14. If you have private firefighting equipment, conduct a ‘refresher’ session with family and employees to make sure everyone can use it.                                   | p.28 |
| ✓ 5. Apply to the relevant authority if you need to remove native vegetation or manage fuel on roadsides.  | p.16 | ✓ 15. Make sure your property name or number is clearly visible so emergency services can identify it when approaching the entrance.  | p.30 |
| ✓ 6. Make sure that there are no gaps between the cladding and the ground or slab of your sheds to prevent embers getting inside.  | p.12 | ✓ 16. Check access tracks around your property. Consider if access for fire trucks can be improved by clearing vegetation, signposting dead ends or creating turning circles. | p.30 |
| ✓ 7. Make a list of legal restrictions (including Fire Danger Period and Total Fire Ban) relevant to your property. Display it or keep it handy so everyone on your property can refer to it often and easily.         | p.18 | ✓ 17. Make sure water supplies around your property are clearly marked in case emergency services need to access them.  | p.31 |
| ✓ 8. Check with your council if local laws are in place for lighting fires, burning off or using incinerators.   | p.20 | ✓ 18. If you plan to stay and defend a building during a bushfire, take steps to establish a water supply of at least 10,000 litres (independent of the mains supply).        | p.31 |
| ✓ 9. Apply for a <i>Schedule 13</i> permit from your local council if you intend to burn off weeds, stubble or vegetation during the FDP, or a <i>Schedule 14</i> permit if you intend to use fire for other purposes. | p.20 | ✓ 19. Have details for your local council as a first point of contact for recovery assistance after a fire.   | p.27 |
| ✓ 10. Double check that spark arrestors on machinery are working and efficient. Make sure chainsaws are free from faults.  | p.21 | ✓ 20. Know which government grants or compensation you may be eligible for to help recover from the impact of fire.   | p.32 |

## CFA programs and services

### CFA Assessment tools and services

Tools are available on the CFA website to help you assess your level of bushfire risk and calculate the amount of space around assets that should be clear of significant vegetation. You need to enter data such as vegetation type, degree of slope and distance to property boundary.

CFA can also provide a free service of a property visit to assist you in assessing bushfire risk. This service offers advice on managing vegetation and protecting buildings against fire threat. It also covers bushfire planning, emergency vehicle access and water supply. Information is confidential between CFA and the property owner.

### Meetings and Planning Workshops

By attending CFA meetings, you can become better informed about the fire risk in your area and how to turn this awareness into action.

### CFA website - Local Information

The CFA website provides local information specific to a location you enter and select (at the top left of the home page) and then click on the 'view local information' linked label. The

local information page includes FDR forecast; restrictions that may be in place; bushfire risk; and mapped information showing locations of local brigades, neighbourhood safer places, and events and meetings planned for your selected area.

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/home/local-information>

### Neighbourhood Safer Places

These are **places of last resort** when all other plans have failed. They may provide shelter for people from the immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire. They do not guarantee safety.

It is important to note that many neighbourhood safer places are simply a clearing that provides separation distance from the bushfire hazard (e.g. forest).

### CFA Vegetation Management Officers

Contact the Vegetation Management Officer at your nearest CFA District headquarters for advice about undertaking a burn on your property. They can also advise you about local plans for managing roadside fuel loads in your area.

## Essential Resources

**These publications and resources are available on the CFA website, through the Victorian Bushfire Information Line or from the relevant agency**

*A Guide to Retrofit your Home for Better Protection from a Bushfire*

*Your Guide to Farm Fire Safety*

*Livestock and Fires*

*Preventing Harvest Fires*

*Preventing Haystack Fires*

*FireReady Kit*

*Grassfires*

*Pets and Bushfires*

*Horses and Bushfires*

*Guidelines for Operating Private Equipment at Fires*

*Roadside Fire Management Guidelines*

*Grassland Curing Guide*

*Class A Foam, Wetting Agent and Your Property*

*Guidelines for the Management of Forest Industry Brigade Operations*

*Aide Memoir for Preparing a Plantation Fire Management Plan – proforma*

Various technical notes on hay production (Australian Fodder Industry Association) – available at [www.afia.org.au](http://www.afia.org.au)

## Organisations: Fire and Emergency Roles and Responsibilities

<b>Country Fire Authority</b>	<a href="http://cfa.vic.gov.au">cfa.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>(03) 9262 8444</b> <b>(CFA Headquarters)</b>
-------------------------------	--	--

CFA provides response to fire and other emergencies across Victoria. CFA also plays a major role in the delivery of advice, information and warnings to the community.

<b>Fire Rescue Victoria</b>	<a href="http://frv.vic.gov.au">frv.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>1300 367 617</b>
-----------------------------	--	---------------------

FRV provides response to fire and other emergencies in the inner city of Melbourne, outer urban areas and larger regional centres across Victoria. It also plays a role in the delivery of advice, information and warnings to the community.

<b>DEECA and FFMVic</b>	<a href="http://deeca.vic.gov.au">deeca.vic.gov.au</a> <a href="http://ffm.vic.gov.au">ffm.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>136 186</b>
-------------------------	--	----------------

As part of the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Forest Fire Management Vic (FFMVIC) carries out suppression of fire on public land.

DEECA leads recovery on public land following bushfires and also carries out planned burning and fuel reduction activities to protect people and our environment from bushfires.

<b>Department of Primary Industries</b>	<a href="http://dpi.vic.gov.au">dpi.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>136 186</b>
---	--	----------------

DPI offers programs and assistance to aid farmers and rural communities in the aftermath of an emergency. The DPI website is an excellent source of information for creating a farm and livestock bushfire plan.

<b>Department of Families, Fairness and Housing</b>	<a href="http://services.dffh.vic.gov.au">services.dffh.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>1300 650 172</b>
---	--	---------------------

DFFH is responsible for the support and recovery of people after a fire.

<b>Energy Safe Victoria (ESV)</b>	<a href="http://esv.vic.gov.au">esv.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>(03) 9203 9700</b>
-----------------------------------	--	-----------------------

Energy Safe Victoria provides rules and guidelines for people working near powerlines. The ESV website also has up-to-date information on the Powerline Bushfire Safety Taskforce.

<b>Parks Victoria</b>	<a href="http://parks.vic.gov.au">parks.vic.gov.au</a>	<b>131 963</b>
-----------------------	--	----------------

Parks Victoria manages a network of national parks, state parks and regional and reservoir reserves. Parks Victoria works in close partnership with DEECA and CFA to ensure coordinated management of fires and planned burning.

<b>Landcare</b>	<a href="http://landcarevic.org.au">landcarevic.org.au</a>
-----------------	--

Many farmers find Landcare groups beneficial for improving productivity on their land, looking after soil health or tackling weeds – particularly those who have just moved to a new area or are new to farming.

<b>Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF)</b>	<a href="http://vff.org.au">vff.org.au</a>	<b>1300 882 833</b>
---	--	---------------------

VFF represents over 10,000 farmers, acting as a lobby group to all levels of government. In the event of a fire or other emergency, VFF may assist with the coordination of emergency fodder and fencing.

## Contacts

### Triple Zero (000)

Call 000 to report a fire or emergency

### VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226 (NRS 1800 555 677)

Up-to-date information on fire restrictions, Total Fire Bans, planned burns in progress and bushfire preparation. The hotline also provides information during and after significant incidents

### ESTA – including burn off notification line 1800 668 511

Contact ESTA to register a burn off. Alternatively, fax **1300 674 428** or email [burnoffs@esta.vic.gov.au](mailto:burnoffs@esta.vic.gov.au)

### VicRoads Traffic Management Centre 131 170

Check the latest traffic information and road closures before you drive

### Energy Safe Victoria – In case of serious gas and electricity emergency immediate threat to life, call 000.

For other gas emergencies (including gas leaks) **132 771**  
For other electrical emergencies **1800 000 922**

## Legal References

	Relates to	Page Reference
<i>CFA Act 1958, s50</i>	Operating vehicles, motorbikes and machinery in the Fire Danger Period (FDP)	<b>p.23</b>
<i>CFA Act 1958, s38A(c)</i>	Use of cutting, welding and grinding equipment in the FDP	<b>p.23</b>
<i>CFA Act 1958, s40</i>	Use of fire or cutting, welding or grinding equipment on days of Total Fire Ban	<b>p.25</b>
<i>CFA Act 1958, s37, 38, 39</i>	Permits for individuals to burn (and procedures for burning off) during the FDP	<b>p.20</b>
<i>CFA Act 1958, s38A(b), 39</i>	Burning rubbish during the FDP	<b>p.20</b>
<i>CFA Act 1958, s41</i>	Fire prevention notices	<b>p.27</b>
<i>CFA Act 1958 s34 and s39</i>	Reporting and extinguishing fires during the FDP	<b>p.6</b>
<i>CFA Regulations 2014, Part 5</i>	Forest Industry Brigades	<b>p.29</b>
<i>CFA Regulations 2014 r.113</i>	Operating equipment incorporating heat engines during the FDP	<b>p.23</b>
<i>Summary Offences Act 1966, s11</i>	Lighting a fire outside the FDP	<b>p.19</b>
<i>Crimes Act 1958 s201A</i>	Intentional or reckless cause of fire and neglect of fire spread	<b>p.18</b>
<i>Electricity Safety (Electrical Line Clearance) Regulations 2020</i>	Powerlines	<b>p.24</b>

## Codes of Practice

<i>Code of Forest Practices for Timber Production (DEECA 2014)</i>	Harvesting timber	<b>p.21</b>
<i>Code of Practice for Fire Management of Public Land</i>	Planned burning	<b>p.19</b>
<b>Agriculture Victoria - Spraying agricultural chemicals</b>	Herbicide use	<b>p.12</b>

### Acknowledgement

CFA acknowledges Dr. Graeme Quick and the research commissioned by the Grains Research and Development Corporation in the preparation of the *Harvester Safety Checklist* that appears in Part 3 of this document.



[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)

Version 3 • March 2023