



On the Land

Agricultural Fire Management Guidelines



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Foreword



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Chief Executive Officer

Fire management on agricultural land is important to protect the safety and well-being of people and communities and to protect agricultural industries that are vital to Victoria.

'On the Land' provides practical fire management advice for people living and working on cropping, grazing, plantation timber and rural lifestyle properties, particularly those who are undertaking property planning or are new to farming.

CFA appreciates the time and effort that a range of individuals and organisations have given to this project to help ensure that these guidelines are effective.

CFA also appreciates the support of the State Government, as a result of the Victorian Bushfire Inquiry, in developing these guidelines.

This document will be a useful reference for anyone involved in planning or promoting fire management on agricultural land in Victoria.

Using This Document

All public and private landowners and managers in Victoria have legislated responsibilities regarding fire management and fire extinguishment. 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.

This document integrates the legal responsibilities arising from relevant fire management legislation with advice to help landowners and managers form an overall picture of what is needed to achieve fire safety on rural properties.

It is designed to be used for a number of purposes, such as planning fire management, as a tool in information or training courses and improving general community knowledge about fire management.

Section 1 provides a general framework for fire management on private land. This has been used as the structure for more detailed advice in Section 3. Section 2 sets out some key concepts that help to explain fire management and fire management planning.

In this document:

- ‘have a responsibility’, ‘in accordance with legislation’, ‘are required to’ or ‘must’ means the information being provided is a legislated responsibility;
- ‘advised to’ and ‘encouraged to’ means the advice being provided is good practice but not a legal requirement;
- ‘wildfire’ means both bushfires and grassfires;
- ‘taking reasonable steps’ includes consideration of fire safety, legal requirements, environmental issues, safety responsibilities and the long-term sustainability of the property; and
- ‘◆’ indicates other documents that may provide more information.

This document provides general advice that may not be relevant in all circumstances. Landowners and managers are always encouraged to seek additional expert advice about fire management on their property where required.

Section 1

Agricultural Fire Management Guidelines

People can minimise the risk of wildfire to achieve improved personal and community safety, protect assets including the environment, and meet legal requirements by addressing the following objectives and guidelines:

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

- a. All individuals have a responsibility for their own personal fire safety. Landowners and managers have an additional responsibility for the safety of all people living or working on or visiting their property.
- b. When planning and undertaking fire management, landowners and managers are advised to:
 - consider safety, practical, environmental and legal issues and the long-term sustainability of the property, with safety as a priority;
 - take into account that it may not be possible to protect all assets from fire or have fire suppression services available in all circumstances;
 - consult and work with adjacent public and private landowners, managers and users, where practical, to achieve fire safety benefits for all properties; and
 - locate fire management works for the property within the property boundary unless the works are part of a cooperative approach to fire management.
- c. Landowners and managers are advised to develop and implement a fire management plan that identifies and removes or reduces fire risks on their property and addresses recovery from a fire.

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

- a. All individuals and authorities have a responsibility to minimise the risk that they may start an unplanned fire, particularly when they are operating machinery, vehicles and equipment or using fire.
- b. 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. Consider avoiding these activities at times of extreme fire danger.
- c. Landowner and managers have a responsibility to ensure that private powerlines will not start a fire.

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

- a. During the Fire Danger Period, landowners and managers have a responsibility to extinguish unplanned fire on their property and to report the fire if it appears that they will be unable to extinguish it.
- b. Anyone finding a fire burning in the Fire Danger Period must report it as soon as possible.
- c. Landowners and managers are encouraged to have strategic fuel breaks for their property. They are required to implement fire prevention works set out in planning permits or fire prevention notices.
- d. Anyone operating machinery and equipment in rural areas is advised to have access to appropriate firefighting equipment in addition to that required under legislation.

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

- a. Landowners and managers are advised to provide access to property, assets and water for firefighting. They must provide this access if it is a requirement of a permit.

Objective 5: Participate in community-based groups to minimise the impact of fire

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