

HOTSPOTS FIRE PROJECT

Fact Sheet: The Burning Approval Process



Bush fire hazard reduction burn © S. Heemstra, NSW Rural Fire Service.

If you want to conduct a burn on your property there may be some types of approvals you need. This fact sheet provides you with an explanation of what you might need to think about and do before you conduct a burn. You can refer to the NSW RFS publication: *Before You Light That Fire* for more detailed information.

What is the reason for your burn?

If you are concerned about bush fire hazards or the amount of fuel on your property, or the property adjacent to you, then you may be looking at conducting a **bush fire hazard reduction** burn. It is recommended that you obtain environmental approval to carry out a hazard reduction burn. This not only minimises the risk of damage to the environment but also protects you from possible fines or legal action. The easiest way to obtain an environmental approval is to apply for a free **Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate** from the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS). It may contain conditions to reduce the impact on the environment or heritage sites. In the majority of cases a Certificate will be issued for essential hazard reduction works, providing the potential environmental impact is not too great. If the works are beyond the scope of the Certificate process, the RFS will provide advice on alternate environmental approvals.

Routine agricultural practices such as stubble burning, harvesting, and burning of diseased crops generally do not require environmental approval. If you are unsure as to whether your proposed works are classified as 'routine agriculture' please refer to the Farmers Association website and contact your local CMA office.

There may be times when fire is needed to maintain or improve the variety of plant and animal species on your

property; this means you are looking at conducting a burn for **biodiversity** reasons. If this burn is also likely to produce useful bush fire hazard reduction outcomes, then you might be able to obtain environmental approval with a **Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate** (see opposite). If not, then other environmental approvals may be required. There are a range of environmental approvals that may be required under different NSW legislation depending on the nature of the work. The Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (DECCW) or Council will be able to assist you in working out which approvals may be required.

What is the difference between a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate and a Fire Permit?

A **Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate** is an environmental approval with conditions about environmental impacts of your works. A **Fire Permit** is a fire **safety** approval. You will need a **Fire Permit** if you want to burn during the bush fire danger period and/or when the burn may endanger a building and/or when planning a burn in NSW Fire Brigades districts. There may be conditions to ensure safe burning practices.

For example, if you want to burn during a bush fire danger period you may need to apply for both a **Fire Permit** and a **Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate**. The NSW Bush Fire Danger Period is generally from 1 October to 31 March. This may change from year to year depending on the weather conditions. Please note that you are not allowed to burn on Total Fire Ban or No Burn days, and that permits are required all year round in some council areas. Check with your local RFS Fire Control Centre if you are unsure as to whether or not you need a permit.

Who do I need to notify?

Regardless of whether you require a **Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate** or **Fire Permit**, you must always notify your local Fire Control Centre before you carry out a burn. They will advise who else you need to notify, for example your neighbours.

What happens if I conduct a burn without the necessary approvals and it causes damage?

If you do not obtain an approval, and your burn causes damage to the environment or property, you may face considerable penalties. If you are unsure about whether you have obtained the right approvals, please contact your local RFS Fire Control Centre and they will be able to guide you through the burning approval process.

For further information on the Burning Approval Process, please contact your local RFS Fire Control Centre or visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

