



PLANNED BURNING
FOR FARMERS AND LANDHOLDERS
Edition 2 - April 2021

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1. USING THIS GUIDE AND OTHER RESOURCES

The aim of this manual is to provide you, as a private landholder, with useful information, tools and checklists that will assist when undertaking planned burning on your property.

The manual

For fuller explanations, we strongly recommended you use the Red Hot Tips *Planned Burning Manual* available at www.sfmcc.tas.gov.au (Document Library). The manual is especially useful when planning fire management strategies for your property.

Planning assistance

Landholders who would like assistance planning burns on their properties should go to the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) website, which provides useful information including burn plan templates. Alternatively contact TFS on 1800 000 699 or call your Regional Office and ask to speak with your District Staff.

Additional help on the day?

Landholders are responsible for organising people and equipment when conducting planned burning. TFS may be able to provide assistance for larger scale burns if resourcing permits.

2. WHAT HAPPENS IF YOUR FIRE GETS OUT OF CONTROL?

Contact Tasmania Fire Service by dialling triple zero (000).

IF a TTY user, call 106.

This is the quickest way to get local assistance to bring your fire under control.

3. WHY DO A PLANNED BURN?

Fire has shaped the character of the Australian landscape for millions of years.

Fire is a land management tool that can be used to:

- reduce fuel load
- regenerate vegetation
- manage weeds.

Many types of vegetation in Australia require periodic fire to survive long term, and many plant and animal species have evolved strategies to cope with fire.

4. WHEN TO DO A PLANNED BURN

4.1 Fire behaviour

'Fire behaviour' is the manner in which fuel ignites, flame develops and fire spreads.

The following factors will influence fire behaviour and your planned burn:

- fuel load
- the intensity at which you light fires
- types of fires – head, flank and back fires
- weather
- topography.

You will need to understand these factors to ensure your planned burn is safe and successful. Refer to the *Planned Burning Manual* at www.sfmc.tas.gov.au (Document Library) when planning a burn.

4.2 Suitability of conditions

To assess when conditions are suitable for undertaking a safe planned burn, you will need to take into account the:

- Fire Danger Rating
- weather
- fuel load
- fuel moisture.

See the next pages of this guide for more information on conditions.

Red Hot Tip

The success of your planned burn will require numerous factors to be in balance.

Red Hot Tip

Make sure that conditions are right to manage your planned burn effectively and keep it under control.

4.3 The Fire Danger Rating

The main aim of the Fire Danger Rating is to describe how difficult it is to suppress a fire under different conditions. It combines the influences of fuel, site factors and weather to predict fire behaviour.

First developed in 1953 and amended since, it consists of a numerical value and a rating class, as shown in the table below.

Rating Class	Value	Description
Low	0 – 5	fire control relatively easy
Moderate	6 – 11	direct attack on fires possible if well resourced
High	12 – 24	fire control difficult and frequently fails
Very high	25 – 49	fire control very difficult
Severe	50 – 74	fire control unlikely to be feasible or safe
Extreme	75 – 99	fire control not feasible or safe
Catastrophic	100+	very high level threats to life and property

It is recommended that private landholders only conduct planned burns when the Fire Danger Rating is low. Check Fire Danger Rating forecasts at fire.tas.gov.au

4.4 Weather

Understanding weather is important to the success and safety of your planned burn.

The major weather factors directly influencing fire behaviour are:

- wind speed and direction
- humidity
- rainfall
- atmospheric stability.

These factors influence fuel moisture, which in turn affects fire behaviour.

Wind speed

Wind speed is difficult to measure. Use the Beaufort wind scale in the table on page 18 to help measure it effectively.

Wind direction

Red Hot Tip

Daily changes in wind direction can be used during planned burning. Many of these wind direction changes are predictable, especially under stable atmospheric conditions.

For example, the time and strength of sea breezes and katabatic/anabatic winds can be used during planned burning to burn off firelines during the day and then have the fire burn back onto recently burnt areas in the evening and overnight.

However, if these wind direction changes are not planned for, they can cause major problems.

Humidity

The moisture content (humidity) of the atmosphere is normally described using relative humidity (RH) and the dewpoint temperature.

RH drives fuel moisture, particularly when RH falls below about 30%. At low humidity, embers tend to stay alight for long periods, making spot fires more likely.

Humidity also directly influences fire behaviour. When the air temperature falls to the dewpoint temperature and forms dew, fuel moisture content rapidly increases, so the level of fire behaviour falls.

4.5 Fuel moisture

The main influences on fuel moisture are relative humidity (RH); Drought Factor (DF); Soil Dryness Index (SDI); wind speed, cloud type and cover, and temperature.

The amount of moisture in dead fuel has a major influence on fire behaviour. The effect of fuel moisture varies by vegetation type.

See information on Time of Day to light your planned burn on page 14.

Red Hot Tip

Soil Dryness Index (SDI) indicates the amount of rainfall (in mm) required to saturate the soil. When the SDI is 50 or greater, fires will generally burn overnight.

Check the SDI and other Fire Danger Rating forecasts at fire.tas.gov.au

Single leaf test

Test fuel moistures the simple way using the single leaf test. Select a single piece of fuel, say a dead leaf or piece of bark, and see at what angle it will keep burning.

If it keeps burning when pointing straight up, the fuels will probably be too dry for planned burning.

If it only keeps burning when pointing straight down, then the fuels are probably too wet to get an adequate burn.

4.6 Fuel load

Fuel is any vegetation that will burn – and the more fuel, the bigger the fire.

The most hazardous fuels are fine fuels. Fine fuels include dead or dry leaf litter, grass, tussocks, heath, shrubs, twigs (less than 6mm in diameter) and bark that gathers on the ground or is suspended in the shrub layer of bushland area.

Fine fuels dry out quickly and burn fast, and they fuel the fire front. Heavy wood, like downed limbs and trees, burn later and slower.

Single leaf test



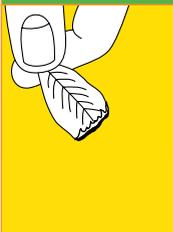
Leaf will not burn, even if pointed straight down

- fuel too wet to burn block
- if from boundary, then boundary is too wet to carry fire



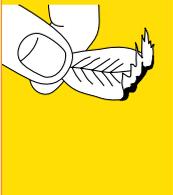
Leaf burns only if pointed straight down

- if from top of fuel array, fuel too wet, do not burn



Leaf burns if angled down at 45° but not if level

- if from bottom of fuel array, fuel moisture may be ok
- if from top of fuel array, fire will burn at low intensity
- will require wind and/or slope to carry fire



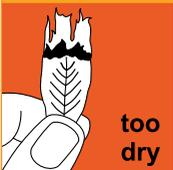
Leaf burns if level but not if angled upwards at 45°

- if from bottom of fuel array, fuel moisture ok
- if from top of fuel array, fire will burn at moderate intensity



Leaf burns if angled upwards at 45° but not if vertical

- if from bottom of fuel array, too dry to perform burn
- if from top of fuel array, fire will burn at high intensity
- wind speed and/or slope needs to be minimised



Leaf burns if angled vertically upwards

- fuel too dry, do not burn

5. WHAT CAN I BURN?

Different vegetation types burn with varying intensity. A change in fuel type as the fire travels will almost certainly mean a change in fire behaviour.

Different fuel types have different flammability due to the oils they contain. Pine needles, for example, will continue to burn at higher fuel moisture levels than eucalypt leaves. Gorse is highly flammable.

The vegetation types listed below and on page 21 are suitable for planned burning, but refer to the Red Hot Tips *Planned Burning Manual* at www.sfmc.tas.gov.au (Document Library) for how each type will burn in different conditions.

- Dry eucalyptus forest
- Heathlands, dry scrub and wet scrub
- Buttongrass moorlands
- Native grasslands
- Woody weeds, (e.g. gorse, broom, Spanish heath and blackberry)

6. HOW TO DO A PLANNED BURN

6.1 Understand safety – LACES

The acronym LACES explains what you need to do to stay safe during the burn.

Use LACES when preparing the burn plan, completing the risk assessment, giving the pre-burn briefing, and throughout the burn.

L	Lookouts	Everyone looks out for everybody else. If possible, post a person at a safe vantage point to observe and report fire behaviour changes
A	Awareness	Watch the weather and terrain for triggers for fire behaviour changes
C	Communication	Stay in contact with each other
E	Escape Routes	Have pre-planned escape routes that everyone is aware of
S	Safety Zones	Create safe areas where survival can be assured

There is lots more information on conducting a planned burn in the Red Hot Tips *Planned Burning Manual* available at www.sfmc.tas.gov.au (Document Library).

6.2 Planned burning checklist

In the lead-up to the burn

- Develop your burn plan – draw the lighting plan on a map and complete the burn plan (whether it is fire permit season or not).
- Inform your neighbours, and take into account any potential negative impacts for neighbours, local events or road users, especially smoke (be prepared to adjust your plan).
- If you know you have any threatened plants, animals or vegetation communities on areas to be burnt, ensure you have the required permit from Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment (DPIPWE).
- Ensure you have the appropriate permission from Private Land Conservation Program (DPIPWE) if the area or block you plan to burn has an existing covenant.
- Make sure you check with your local council about planning scheme requirements or by-laws that may apply.
- Undertake any necessary heavy boundary preparations (e.g. slashing, ploughing).
- Consider the resourcing required for your burn – if extra help is needed contact your TFS District Officer well in advance.
- Watch the weather forecast for a period of stable high pressure systems and conditions that match the prescription for your burn (e.g. wind direction and speed, humidity, temperature, etc.).
- Do some single leaf tests to monitor fuel moistures in the lead-up to your proposed burn date.
- If you are receiving help from others, keep them informed of the weather outlook and the likely date.
- Check any equipment (pumps, tanks etc.) to ensure they are working properly.
- If burning during the fire permit period, obtain a fire permit from TFS.
- Make sure you have a current Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Check to see if there is a local Community Protection Plan for your area: go to fire.tas.gov.au for further information.

Red Hot Tip

If a Fire Permit is issued, it is the responsibility of the landholder to comply with all conditions of the Fire Permit.

Please remember that your fire is your responsibility! It is the legal responsibility of all landholders to ensure that any fire on their property is kept within their boundaries.



On the day of the burn

- **Register the burn with TFS, ring 1800 000 699 and select option 4.**
- Do some single leaf tests and/or a test burn to determine actual fuel moisture.
- If the conditions are not as forecast, make a decision on whether it is safe to proceed with the burn or whether it should be called off.
- Do a risk assessment (see page 13 and 19).
- Conduct a briefing with all helpers (i.e. assign tasks, explain burn plan, highlight any potential risks/hazards and safety zones/escape routes ensuring access is clear and any gates are open).
- Dial triple zero (000) immediately if your planned burn escapes control lines and you lose control of the burn.

Red Hot Tip

Contact 1800 000 699 to register a burn.

You will need to provide your name, grid reference/property address and phone number.

After the burn

- Check the burn the morning after lighting, the afternoon for 2 days after the burn and on the next high fire danger day after the burn.
- Turn log heaps and heavy fuels so that they burn completely and do not smoulder.
- Monitor to see if the burn has achieved what you aimed for (e.g. fuel reduction, regeneration etc).

6.3 Risk management

The major risks posed by planned burns are:

- escaping fire
- smoke nuisance.

It is important to perform a risk assessment on the burn before starting. The aims are to:

- assess the relative risk levels of various aspects of the burn
- have contingency plans in place before the burn is lit.

Risk assessment

The Australian and New Zealand risk management standard (AS/NZS 2009) can be used to guide assessments of risk levels. This system defines risk as the likelihood that an event will occur multiplied by its consequence.

See page 19 for the risk assessment matrix.

6.4 Fire facts to remember

Lighting the fire

How and where you light the burn will have a major effect on the rate of fire spread, fire intensity, likelihood of spotting, fire control options and burnout time.

When planning to light the fire, consider:

- spacing between ignition points
- length of fireline lit
- orientation of ignition compared to site slope
- orientation of ignition compared to wind direction
- fuel type and fuel moisture variations in the burn area.

Red Hot Tip

Smoke taint in wine grapes – there is a low risk of smoke taint occurring from fruitset (December), which increases to high risk after veraison (February) through to the end of harvest (usually May, but varies by each season and location).

It is important to consult with local vineyards well in advance of planning your burn, to better estimate the risks to fruit.

You can access a map of local vineyards at:
<http://winetasmania.com.au/tasvine>

Fuel type and moisture

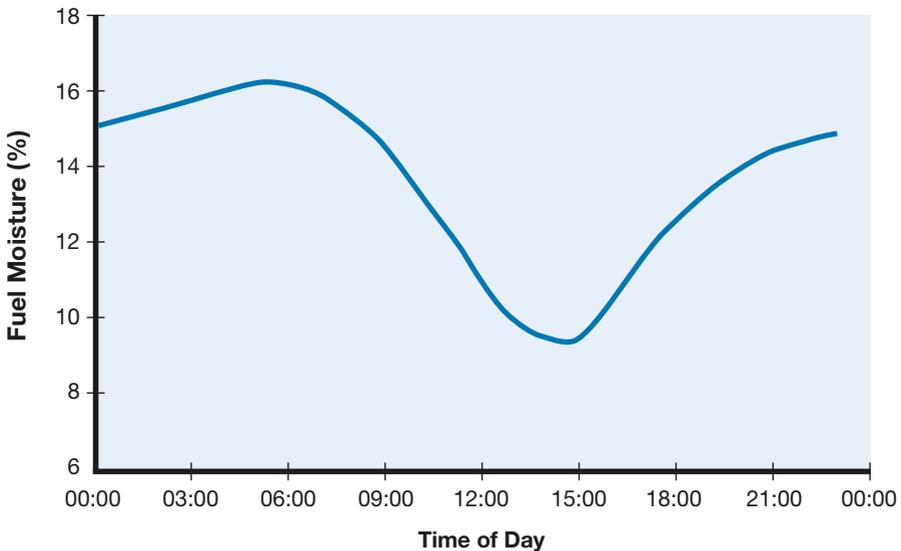
Use fuel type, fuel moisture and the time of day you light the fire to influence fire behaviour and the location of control lines.

Site orientation	Burn intensity	Reason
Ridgelines and N-NW facing slopes	Higher	Lower fuel moisture
Gullies and S-SE facing slopes	Lower	Higher fuel moisture

Time of day

A good rule of thumb is to light the fire in the early to mid-afternoon, so that the fire is burning during the time when fuel moistures are rising, not falling.

During the day, fuel moisture typically peaks at about dawn and is lowest in the mid-afternoon. If fires are lit too early in the day, by mid-afternoon the fire may be too intense.

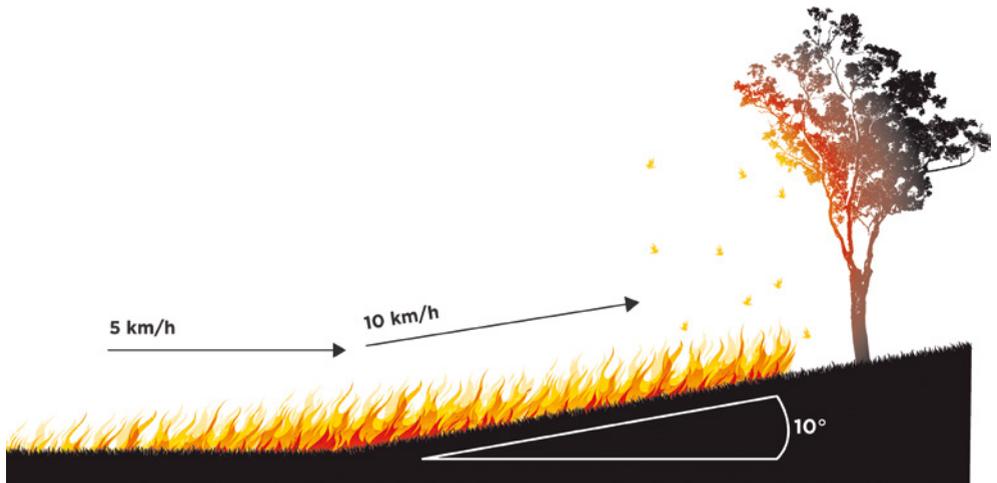


Length of fireline

Keep the fireline short to keep the level of fire behaviour low. The length of active fireline has a major influence on the rate of fire spread, intensity and spotting. Fires burning with a fireline of less than 50m will tend to have lower rates of spread and intensity.

Effect of slope

A fire will burn faster uphill. This is because the flames can easily reach more unburnt fuel in front of the fire. Radiant heat pre-heats the fuel in front of the fire, making the fuel even more flammable.



Credit: CFA Fire Ready Kit

For every 10° slope, the fire will double its speed. For example, if a fire is travelling at 5 km/h along flat ground and it hits a 10° slope, it will double in speed to 10 km/h up the hill.

By increasing in speed the fire also increases in intensity, becoming even hotter.

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

Effect of wind direction

The orientation of the fireline to the prevailing wind direction will determine whether the fire burns as a head, flank or back fire. A good rule of thumb is that flank and back fires typically burn with about 40% and 10% respectively of the head fire rate of spread.

Ignition method

Generally, hand light the planned burn using driptorches. Be very careful to balance the length of fireline lit and/or the number of ignition points against the required level of fire behaviour.

Expect a time-lag between when fires are lit and the fire reaching its average level of fire behaviour. Do not over light during this build-up period.

If fires are lit too intensively or too close together, they are likely to form junction zones, which can cause strong local winds and increases in the rate of fire spread, intensity and potential for spot fires.

If you light spot fires, the rate of fire spread and intensity will slowly increase as the fire gets larger. If you light lines of fire, then the fire will burn at its potential rate of spread and intensity from the time at which it is lit.

Ignition patterns

There are five common patterns of lighting fires:

- back fire ignition
- flank fire ignition
- head fire ignition
- spot fire ignition
- perimeter fire ignition.

See the ignition pattern table on page 20, which describes when to use each one, and why.

7. WHAT EQUIPMENT WILL I NEED?

Equipment (essential)

- Driptorches, fuelled by 1 part petrol and 3 parts diesel.
- 400-1200L tanker mounted on a trailer or on a ute/tractor. Before burning, fill all water tanks ready to go and test pumps.
- Mobile phones (and phone numbers) to communicate with other members of the team (in some areas UHF radio may be more reliable).
- Access to current weather information via internet/phone.
- Beaters/hessian bags.
- Knapsacks (e.g. collapsible knapsacks).
- Hand tools such as rakes, hoes, chainsaws.

Equipment (recommended)

- Tractor with slasher/discs/loaders – valuable for preparing firebreaks beforehand.

Personal clothing and equipment (essential)

- Cotton, wool and/or specialist fire clothing e.g. fire retardant overalls, no clothing made out of synthetic materials.
- Leather boots.
- Food and drinking water.

Personal clothing and equipment (recommended)

- Leather gloves.
- Goggles – without air breather holes so that smoke is kept out (available from retailers of safety clothing).
- Dust masks e.g. masks suitable for welding are best.
- Hard hats – essential if you are burning areas with trees.

8. USEFUL TABLES

8.1 Beaufort wind scale

Category		Speed (km/h)	Description
0	calm	<1	smoke rises vertically
1	light air	1 – 5	smoke drifts slowly, slight leaf movements
2	light breeze	6 – 10	wind felt on face, leaves rustle
3	light wind	11 – 20	leaves and small twigs move
4	moderate wind	21 – 30	dust raised, small branches moved
5	fresh wind	31 – 40	small trees sway
6	strong wind	41 – 50	large branches moved, wires whistle
7	near gale	51 – 60	large trees sway
8	gale	61 – 75	twigs and small branches broken off
9	full gale	75 – 90	large branches broken off
10	storm	91 – 115	trees uprooted, severe building structural damage

8.2 Risk assessment matrix

Consequences	Likelihood					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Practically impossible	Conceivable	Remotely possible	Unusual but possible	Quite possible	Almost certain
1. Moderate	Noticeable	Low	Low	Low	Moderate	Significant
2. Important	Low	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Significant	High
3. Serious	Low	Moderate	Significant	High	High	High
4. Very Serious	Moderate	Significant	High	High	Extreme	Extreme
5. Disaster	Significant	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme
6. Catastrophic	High	High	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme	Extreme

Derived from Australian and New Zealand risk management standard AS/NZS 2009

Example 1

If a burn is next to a school, the likelihood of smoke impacting on students is quite possible and the consequence to the school could be serious, especially if there are asthmatic students, resulting in a high risk rating. This impact can be reduced by burning after school hours, on a weekend or during school holidays, when the students are not present, reducing the likelihood to practically impossible, consequence to moderate and the risk rating to noticeable.

Example 2

If a burn is adjacent to a road that is up-wind of the planned burn, there is still a chance that the wind could change direction and reduce visibility for traffic on the road. In this example, the likelihood of a change of wind direction is remotely possible but the consequences would be serious, resulting in a significant risk rating. These impacts can be reduced by monitoring for any changes in wind direction and, if this occurred, by placing warning signs and advising traffic to slow down.

8.3 Fire ignition patterns

Name	Characteristics	Use to...	Use when
Back fire ignition	Direction of travel is into the prevailing wind and/or down slope	Keep the rate of fire spread and intensity to a minimum Burn fire breaks	Fuels are dry Weather conditions would make head or flank fires burn with excessive rates of fire spread, intensity, scorch or spotting
Flank fire ignition	Fires are lit in lines parallel to the direction of fire spread and/or straight up-down slopes	Produce intermediate rates of fire spread and intensity	
Head fire ignition	Fires are lit in lines with the wind behind and/or straight across slopes	Maximises rate of fire spread and intensity	When fuels are moist and/or weather mild
Spot fire ignition	Independent spot fires. The aim is for the spots to join up in the cool of the evening and/or burn into less flammable fuels (e.g. gullies or S-SE slopes), where they self-extinguish	To minimise fire junction zones and excessive levels of fire behaviour OR To intensively light up areas with the fire junction zones increasing the level of fire behaviour, to reduce the burnout time	When fuels are moist and weather mild
Perimeter fire ignition	The block is lit normally as strips from pre-existing fire breaks (e.g. roads, tracks and/or rivers)	Burn into a block	

8.4 Planned burning characteristics of different vegetation types suitable for planned burning

Vegetation type	Typical burning objectives	Critical burning factors to consider
Dry eucalyptus forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuel hazard reduction Ecological management 	Surface, near-surface, elevated and bark fuel hazard ratings must be reduced to low to moderate, requiring fires to be conducted with flame heights of two to four metres.
Heathlands, dry scrub and wet scrub	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuel hazard reduction Ecological management 	The tight threshold between sustaining and non-sustaining fires can result in minor increases in wind speed and/or slope, along with decreases in fuel moisture rapidly transforming low intensity fires that required intensive lighting, into high intensity fires.
Buttongrass moorlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fuel hazard reduction Ecological management 	Moorlands are highly flammable and will burn when other vegetation types are too wet to sustain burning. However, this also means that when conditions are dry and/or windy, buttongrass moorlands will burn with high rates of spread and intensity. When surrounding vegetation is too wet to burn, buttongrass moorlands may be burnt with moderate wind speeds resulting in high intensity fast moving fires. However, when the surrounding vegetation is dry enough to burn, fires must be performed under more restrictive conditions and utilise mineral earth fire breaks.
Native grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green pick Ecological management (to maintain species and structural diversity) 	The critical factors controlling fire behaviour are fuel moisture, fuel load and continuity, curing (i.e. percentage of dead fuel) and wind speed.
Woody weeds (e.g. gorse, broom, Spanish heath & blackberry)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control of weeds through integrated pre and post-fire treatments 	These guidelines are mainly intended for gorse fire management - other weed species are less flammable than gorse. Fire is a major issue in areas dominated by gorse due to its ability to sustain burning over a wide range of conditions, and its rapid post-fire regeneration. Therefore, integrated pre and post-fire treatments are essential. Treatment effectiveness can be enhanced by pre-burning herbicide spraying, scrub rolling and/or slashing to maximise burn intensity, and biomass consumption (to kill shallowly buried seeds and/or enhance seedling germination of deeper buried seeds) and improve post-fire access for follow-up treatments. Pre-burn treatment can also be used to broaden the burning window by increasing the weed's flammability and allowing the fire to be performed under higher fuel moisture conditions, reducing the risk of fires spreading to other vegetation types.

8.5 Useful phone numbers and websites



In an emergency dial **triple zero 000**
or if a **TTY user call 106**

Planned Burning

For free, practical support on planned burning	Web: sfmc.tas.gov.au/RedHotTips Phone: 0448 297 224 Email: RedHotTips@fire.tas.gov.au
To obtain or register a Fire Permit	TFS 1800 000 699 (select option 4)
Your local Fire Permit Officer	
Register a Non-Permit Burn outside the Fire Permit Period	TFS 1800 000 699 (select option 4)
A list of fires currently burning or proposed	fire.tas.gov.au Search 'What's burning now'

Additional Assistance and Resources

District Staff South	TFS 6166 5500
District Staff North	TFS 6777 3666
District Staff North West	TFS 6477 7250
Your local Volunteer Brigade	

Threatened species on your land

Information about threatened species or vegetation	www.naturalvaluesatlas.tas.gov.au
Further information about threatened species	1300 368 550 www.threatenedspecieslink.tas.gov.au
To obtain permission to burn on conservation covenants	Private Land Conservation Program 1300 368 550 www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au

Weather	
Fire Danger Rating	TFS fire.tas.gov.au Search 'Fire Danger Rating'
Up-to-date weather information	Bureau of Meteorology 6221 2000 www.bom.gov.au/tas
Other rural weather sites	www.farmonlineweather.com.au www.eldersweather.com.au
Spatial information including topography, natural resources, roads, fire history	The List (Land Information System) www.thelist.tas.gov.au
Further information, resources and tools	
State Fire Management Council	Web: www.sfmc.tas.gov.au Email: sfmc@fire.tas.gov.au
Fuel Reduction Program	Web: fire.tas.gov.au Email: bru@fire.tas.gov.au
Wine Tasmania	Phone: 6223 3770 Web: www.winetasmania.com.au Email: mail@winetasmania.net.au
5 minute bushfire plan	Web: bushfire.tas.gov.au
Your neighbours and local vineyards	

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The guide was developed by the State Fire Management Council (SFMC) using material from the Red Hot Tips *Planned Burning Manual*, available online at www.sfmc.tas.gov.au.

We would like to acknowledge the contributions of the following in the initial development of the manual: Jon Marsden-Smedley, Macquarie Franklin, and the Red Hot Tips Project Technical Group.

Feedback and extra copies

For feedback and suggestions, to request a printed copy of the *Planned Burning Manual*, additional copies of this Pocket Guide, or further information on the Red Hot Tips program, please contact the State Fire Management Council on sfmc@fire.tas.gov.au or by phoning 6166 5618.

Disclaimer

This publication is intended to be of assistance to private landholders intending to undertake planned burning on their properties. However, it is not a comprehensive reference source and it is highly recommended that people who wish to undertake planned burning use other sources of information as well as experience. In particular, those who are inexperienced with fire should take additional steps to up-skill (for example joining their local TFS brigade as a volunteer).

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