

EXT 024: BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT

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Objective

1. Fire incident management and the imposing and reviewing harvesting, machinery and vehicle movement bans within the district of the Shire of Esperance.
2. To ensure that Bushfire Control Officers have the necessary experience and training to hold these positions.
3. Management of applications from landowners to vary or to be exempt from standard firebreak requirements.
4. Conditions under which Declared or Proclaimed Plants or refuse of those plants may be burnt during the prohibited burning season.
5. To ensure consultation between the Chief Bushfire Control Officer and the CEO of the Shire of Esperance in relation to the issuing of these permits.
6. To ensure that a mobile firefighting unit is in place when track chaining is in progress.
7. To ensure that a mobile firefighting unit is in place when post-harvest stubble slashing is in progress.

Policy

Division and Management of District for Harvest Bans and Burning Permits

That for the purposes of fire incident management and imposing and reviewing Harvesting, Machinery and Vehicle Movement Bans and the district of the Shire of Esperance be divided into six zones – West Coast Zone, West Zone, North Zone, East Zone, East Coast Zone and Urban Rural Zone and include the following sub-zones:

- West and West Coast Zones be divided into two sub-zones down the Lort River, which provides a natural boundary.
- East and East Coast Zones to be divided into two sub-zones from Mt Ridley, along Bronzewing Road, Kau Rocks Road, Kettles Road and Daniels Road.
- North Zone be divided into two by the Brigade boundaries of Southern Mallee and Salmon Gums.
- Naming of the sub-zones be by numbering 1 and 2 within each existing Zone, using Esperance town as a “hub” and numbering away from town.

Each zone is to have a 'senior' control officer referred to as a Senior Bushfire Control Officer. These officers and the Chief Bushfire Control Officer shall also be appointed Fire Weather

Officers. It is accepted that the Chief Bushfire Control Officer may also be appointed a Senior in control of a zone.

The Chief Bushfire Control Officer shall have ultimate authority for fire control and imposition and review of Harvesting, Machinery and Vehicle Movement Bans although in relation to harvest bans he must make every effort to liaise and consult with the Senior Control Officers in each zone. Senior Control Officers should make every effort to be available to assist the Chief Bushfire Control Officer with the imposition and review of harvest bans.

Qualifications of Bushfire Control Officers

That a person being nominated and elected to the position of Bushfire Control Officer is required to have practical firefighting experience and to have successfully completed the Fire and Emergency Service Authority Fire Control Officers (FCO) Course within twelve (12) months of being appointed and to undergo subsequent refresher training every 5 years.

Exemption/Variation of Firebreaks

That the Chief Executive Officer be authorised to issue approval for applications from landowners to vary or be exempt from the standard firebreak requirements. Any variation to be considered must reflect the intent of the *Bush Fire Act 1954* with a view to preventing the outbreak, spread or extension of a bushfire.

Burning of Declared and Proclaimed Plants During the Prohibited Burning Season

That Declared or Proclaimed Plant or the refuse of those plants may be burnt during the PROHIBITED BURNING PERIOD so long as the burning is carried out subject to conditions below:

Permit to burn proclaimed plants and refuse thereof

- Subject to sections 24-36 inclusive of the *Bush Fire Regulations 1954 (Bush Fires Act 1954 as amended)*

Permit to burn a declared plant and refuse thereof

- Subject to sections 24 and 36A of the *Bush Fire Regulations 1954 (Bush Fires Act 1954 as amended)*

and the following MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:

- The area to be burnt does not exceed 40ha and is surrounded by a fire break to a width of not less than 10 metres.
- Provide at least one fire unit minimum 800 litres capacity and 3 people to be constantly in attendance at the burning operations from the time the fire is lit until it is completely extinguished and to assist in keeping the fire under control and prevent it from spreading beyond the land on which the burning operations are conducted.
- The fire shall not be lit except between the hours of four o'clock in the afternoon and ten o'clock in the evening and extinguished by midnight of the same day.
- The fire shall not be lit unless and until notice of intention to do so has been given at least four days before commencing the burn to:
 - every occupier of land adjoining the property on which the burn is to take place.
 - the Bush Fire Control Officer for the district.

- the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).
- an officer or employee of each notifiable authority.
- the area to be burnt to be inspected by a Fire Control Officer for that area before any permit is issued by the Chief Executive Officer .
- the Chief Executive Officer after consultation with the inspecting Fire Control Office may impose any other condition as sees fit to prevent the escape of fire

Authority to Issue Clover Burning Permits During Prohibited Burning Period

That the Chief Bushfire Control Officer in consultation with the Chief Executive Officer be the person responsible within the Shire of Esperance for the issuing of clover burning permits during the Prohibited Burning Period.

Track Chaining

That a mobile firefighting unit of not less than 800 litre capacity be situated in the paddock when track chaining is in progress during the Restricted and Prohibited Burning period.

Post-Harvest Stubble Slashing

That post-harvest stubble slashing can only be undertaken during the Restricted and Prohibited Burning Periods under the following conditions:

- A mobile firefighting unit of not less than 800 litres capacity be situated in the paddock whilst stubble slashing is in progress.
- A minimum of 2 x 9 litre fire extinguishers must be carried on all slashers.
- A 2-way radio communications unit must be installed on all vehicles.

There is to be a total ban on stubble slashing between 23 December and 2 January.

Guidelines for Vehicle and Machinery Movement Bans

A Harvesting, Machinery and Vehicle Movement Ban will be put in place when the Fire Danger Index (FDI) reached 32 on the Grass land Fire Danger Meter – McArthur Mark 4.

The Senior Fire Control Officers will use WHATSAPP as the primary communication method to discuss fire weather condition. On days a Very High fire danger or above is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology, a radio sched may take place, to discuss weather conditions and a plan for the day will be established by the Senior Fire Control officers across the Shire.

A Harvesting, Machinery and Vehicle Movement Ban will be implemented when the 32FDI is reached. A Ban can be in place across the whole Shire or individual Zones. Lifting the Ban, when weather conditions ease and the FDI falls below 32, can be lifted the same way.

When a Ban is implemented, it will be communicated by text message, updates on the Harvest Ban Hotline, Social Media, the Shire Website and ABC Radio.

There will be an automatic Harvesting, Machinery and Vehicle Movement Ban is place on Christmas Day and New Year's Day annually.

The following definitions shall apply to the guidelines on the ban if vehicle and machinery movement under Regulation 38A of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

Laneway: A laneway is defined as having a constructed, trafficable surface, a minimum of three (3) metres wide, free of all inflammable material. Overhanging vegetation has to be pruned back so as not to come into contact with parts of a vehicle.

Mobile Firefighting Unit: A mobile firefighting unit is defined as a vehicle fitted with a 400 litre tank, an operational firefighting pump and radio communications.

Harvest Ban: A ban on the operation of all grain harvesting vehicles and machines within a Shire or part of a Shire and during a time, as specified in a notice or broadcast (Reg 38A).

Total Vehicle and Machinery Movement Ban: A ban on the movement of all vehicles and machinery within a Shire or part of a Shire and during a time as specified in a notice of broadcast (Reg 38A) with the exception of the movement of vehicles and machinery on made gazetted roads, laneways and yards. The following activities are permitted provided these comply with specified conditions.

Specified Conditions

1. Loading and offloading of grain, fertiliser and feed is only permitted on sites which are approved and registered by Council on an annual basis and which are clear of all inflammable material save live standing trees to a radius of at least 25 metres. A mobile firefighting unit shall be in attendance at all times and accompany the grain carting vehicle when travelling on a laneway between the registered site and a made gazetted road.

(Please note that an owner or occupier of a site may appeal to the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer in cases where approval was not granted or granted subject to additional conditions).

2. Water carting for stock and domestic purposes provided it is accompanied by a mobile firefighting unit, or alternatively, the water carting vehicle acts as the mobile firefighting unit and meets minimum specifications (this also requires the retention of 400 litre of water at all times).
3. All necessary travel within piggeries, sheep or cattle feed lots, provided this is undertaken in a mobile firefighting unit.
4. All necessary carting of livestock provided that such a vehicle is accompanied by a mobile firefighting unit.
5. Activities which received specific exemptions from Council or a Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.
6. All other activities or operations may only be undertaken during Total Vehicle and Machinery Movement Bans after approval has been granted by Council. Approval has to be sought on an individual basis. Approval may be subject to specified conditions. It should be noted that approval may not be granted.

..... Policy Ends