

News and Fire Safety Information from the West Gidge Brigade Oct 2008

Nice to see some rain, but how long will it continue.

The Brigade has been busy conducting hazard reduction burns and generally preparing for the fire season. Rosters will commence the first weekend in Oct.

Fire behaviour as observed at hazard reduction burns during Aug and the early part of Sept was unusually lively. Soil dryness index in early Sept reached levels normally expected mid Nov. Recent rain has been of benefit but it as we are well into spring it takes just a few days of dry sunny weather to get back to very active fire behaviour.

Predictions for Summer are that this year fire risk will be generally above average. While pasture growth has been less than normal, curing or drying will come earlier. Bush fuel loads are expected to be significantly above normal, and bushfire intensity increased. Bushfire incidence is likely to be higher with a likely increase in thunderstorms and associated lightning strikes. Not to mention fires started by accident, carelessness or malice. Overall a worrying outlook.

Preparing your property – if this is not already well underway you may be leaving your run a bit late. Many residents have been proactive with this, but so many have done little or nothing, and may suffer the consequences of this tardiness. Don't be like the landholder threatened by the Parkerville-Stoneville fire in January this year who was seen to be unwrapping fire fighting gear from its packaging on the day, far too late to be of any use. Remember there are only 8 fire fighting units between the 2 Gidgegannup brigades, covering some 2000 properties and over 300 sq km, so you should take some responsibility for defence of your property. You have little hope of being effective if you do not have established defensive infrastructure, hazards removed or reduced, and a robust plan prepared well in advance. Well set up properties make it far easier for the brigades to defend them.

Restricted Burning Season commences 1st Oct and finishes 30th Nov. It may be shortened if the season remains unusually dry. Permits are required for ALL burning in the open before 6pm on any day. Most fires between 6pm and midnight require a permit except for single small fires under very specific conditions. The onus is on you to obtain a permit, or to establish if your proposed burning activity might be exempt. Claiming you didn't know is not a defence against prosecution for breaches. Contact your local FCO or City of Swan Community Safety for advice.

Obtaining Permits and advice – Contact one of the FCOs for your area. East Gidge area is east of Reserve and Stoneville rd, West Gidge west of these roads. Contact details are on the last page of the Gidgegram.

The FCO is under no obligation to issue you a permit, and don't expect to get one at short notice, there are minimum notification periods to neighbours and in some cases to DEC, also burns should be well planned. You must comply with ALL conditions on the permit, otherwise it is invalid. Having a permit and complying with all conditions does not absolve you from liability for any consequences resulting from your burn. A permit will be suspended or cancelled if your burning activities are deemed unsafe, or if you breach permit conditions. Prosecution may result.

Very High or Extreme Fire Danger days. Permits are automatically cancelled, and no burning whatsoever is allowed. The onus is on you to check the rating that day for your area.