

# News and Fire Advice From West Gidge Brigade Oct 2009

## Restricted Burning Season from 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2009 – Permits required

Good to see lots of rain, dams filling etc. The downside will be that good growth this year will produce high fuel loads with elevated fire risk when the weather does dry off. The window of opportunity for hazard reduction burning this spring may be very narrow, as also happened this last autumn. This could be an “Interesting” season!

This Fire Season will see changes to the Bushfires Act 1954 some of which are listed below.

### Recent Recruitment

Congratulations to Duke Cole from East Gidge and Phil Croot from West Gidge who completed their initial formal training as Bush Fire Fighters recently.

Overall recruitment for the past couple of years across Gidgegannup has been poor, and probably not keeping pace with retirements. Brigades can always use new members

### Prepare, Act, Survive

This is the message being promoted by FESA as part of the Bushfire Readiness Programme.

Preparing your Bushfire Action Plan well in advance of the fire season is the key. When flames are licking your “proverbial” it is too late to think about this.

See the separate article on Bushfire Readiness Groups in this edition of the Gidgegram. In spite of the community interest shown at the Gidge BRG meeting after the Victorian tragedy, only a couple of groups have had preliminary BRG meetings so far – disappointing!.

### Permits

- East Gidge issue permits at the Fireshed at 0830 – 1000 Sat mornings
- West Gidge issue permits by appointment – contacts on back of Gidgegram
- Don't expect a permit at short notice, usually you have to give 4 days notice to all neighbours
- The permit issuing officer may refuse a permit on reasonable grounds, you then commit an offence if you approach another permit issuing officer for a similar permit
- You must comply with ALL permit conditions
- Permits are automatically suspended on days of Very High or Extreme Fire Danger

### Changes to the Bushfires Act

These are currently before WA Parliament and have been introduced following several Enquiries and Coroners Investigations.

Some are listed below

### New Bushfire Danger Ratings

Expect to see these during this coming Fire Season. New categories in bold type.

Proposed ratings will be

Low – Moderate – High – Very high – **Severe** – Extreme – **Catastrophic**

### **Compulsory Evacuations**

These will apply where it is deemed that people cannot safely stay. This is not intended to be applied to those who are adequately prepared to stay and defend.

### **Total Fire Bans**

Able to be applied if extreme weather is forecast or if firefighting resources are very stretched due to fires already burning. Bans will cover hot work in the open (eg cutting, welding, grinding), open air cooking, certain vehicle and equipment movement and operation, and other activities likely to start fires. Certain exemptions apply but these have to be arranged before the fire season, very good reason will need to be shown for these. Bans can be applied on a regional or local basis. Local Govt will still be able to impose certain bans as in the past.

### **Road Closures and People/animal/vehicle movements**

The Incident Controller will be able to direct people, animal and vehicle movements near a fire, and to close roads and access routes. The IC will be able to authorise vehicles and machinery to be moved without permits where these would be normally required.

### **FESA to be able to take overall charge of major fires**

- Most fires will still be run by Local Govt (Bushfire Brigades), FESA (through FRS) or DEC depending where the fire is.
- DEC and Local Govt will be able to hand over control between them. This cannot be legally done at present outside their own current response areas.
- When FESA take over, Local Govt or DEC will still very likely be running operations, with FESA coordinating all support services

### **Redefining “Property”**

This closes a loophole which has resulted in some arson prosecutions being unsuccessful or downgraded.