

Fire Safety Update – November 2011

Please be reminded that the PROHIBITED BURNING SEASON for the City of Swan commences 00:00 hrs 1st Dec 2011. Permits to Burn will not be available from this time until the opening of the Autumn Restricted Burning Season, likely to be April 2012.

COMMON SENSE SHOULD PREVAIL AT ANY TIME

- Avoid activities which could start a fire
- Time activities which are riskier for milder conditions or times of day
- Ignorance of restrictions is NOT a legal defence

A TOTAL FIRE BAN may be issued by FESA

- if dangerous fire weather expected
- if firefighting resources are stretched.
- TFBs allow certain agricultural activities to continue provided reasonable precautions are taken unless Local Govt issues a Vehicle Movement and Harvest Ban.
- The legal onus is squarely on YOU to check what may be allowed and what may not under a ban.
- There is info under "Total Fire Bans" on the FESA website <http://fesa.wa.gov.au/> or by calling 1300 257 609
- As a general principle ANY activity likely to cause a bushfire is prohibited during a Total Fire Ban
- TFBs will be announced through the media and on the FESA website
- Be aware that the legal loophole which allowed a recent high profile prosecution to fail has been closed
- TFB violations can attract a \$25,000/12months jail penalty

VEHICLE MOVEMENT AND HARVEST BANS may be issued by City of Swan on any day when conditions warrant. They are likely to be issued far more frequently than Total Fire Bans and can be expected if the Fire Danger Rating is very high or above (the trigger is about halfway through the scale of "Very High" Fire Danger Index)

- They may be issued at short notice.
- These are announced on ABC regional radio (720 in this area) at 10:05, 13:05, 14:05.
- They are usually NOT announced in ANY other media
- The legal onus is squarely on YOU to check
- They MAY be posted on the City of Swan website. DO NOT rely on email/internet notification of this.
- They are NOT posted on the FESA website
- During a Vehicle Movement and Harvest Ban the following are generally prohibited
- Movement of vehicles or any machinery except on gazetted roads, and driveways and parking areas which are clear of flammable material. The only exception is where the IMMEDIATE welfare of people or stock requires this and if suitable precautions are taken
- "Hot Work"
- Any other activity likely to cause a bushfire
- Penalties for violation
 - o Up to \$5,000 if a Total Fire Ban is not in force
 - o Up to \$25,000/12 months jail if a TFB is in force at the same time

AT ANY TIME during the Prohibited and Restricted Burning Seasons

- For any “hot work” in the open air (gas cutting, grinding welding) you MUST have
 - o 5 metres clear of flammable material in all directions
 - o A water fire extinguisher (min 7.5 lts) or fire unit on site
- For tractors, loaders, dozers, graders etc
 - o An efficient vertical exhaust with a spark arrestor
 - o It is wise to carry a water fire extinguisher as well (compulsory on bulldozers and graders)
 - o Keep clean/free of oil/dust/debris accumulation
- Motor vehicles driven in pasture or bush MUST
 - o have a sound exhaust system
 - o be free from leaks of any flammable oil, fuel etc
 - o Wise to carry a water extinguisher
 - o BEWARE of catalytic converters on modern cars, these are hotter than older exhaust systems and are very good at starting grass fires
- Smaller engines such as ride on mowers, chainsaws etc should have
 - o Spark arresting exhaust
 - o Keep exhaust clear of grass and other flammable material
 - o Preferably used in only the coolest part of the day

Please be safe this fire season. We have already seen how active and uncontrollable fires can be, conditions will get much worse before next winter. If you are in any doubt about the fire safety of anything you do, DON'T DO IT.

John Mangini

Captain - West Gidgegannup Volunteer Bushfire Brigade
Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer - City of Swan
West Gidgegannup Bushfire Ready Facilitator