



# **P – SOP #1 PRESCRIBED BURNING ACTIVITIES GENERAL**

## **1. Scope**

This SOP covers the general procedures to be followed, when conducting Prescribed Burning.

## **2. Procedure**

All prescribed burning activities where RFS members are in attendance must be approved by the Fire Control Officer (FCO/District Manager) or, in his or her absence, a Deputy Fire Control Officer (DFCO), for the relevant rural fire district. Prescribed burning activities may include agricultural and pile burns.

A basic burn checklist or a burn plan must be completed for all prescribed burns, except for pile burns that are in accordance with the RFS Standards for Pile Burning (SOP 2).

A prescribed burn plan must be approved by the FCO or delegate and the Burn Incident Controller (BIC), before the burn is conducted. The FCO or delegate must not sign the plan more than 12 months prior to the burn being conducted.

An Operational Map is required for all Level One (Simple) and Level Two (Complex) prescribed burns. The operational map must be made available to all personnel on the fireground.

A burn plan must take into account the safety of members of the public and personnel participating in the burn activity, the protection of property, the protection of environmental values and associated legislative requirements.

In preparing a burn plan, a planner should consider whether consultation with specialist is necessary. For example Environment Services, Aviation- Incendiary Operations Supervisor (IOS), Predictive Services (Fire Behaviour Analysis, Smoke Modelling, Weather Advice).

An effective system of command/control and communications in accordance with Incident Control System (ICS) principles is to be applied.

The prescribed burn shall be under the overall co-ordination of an Burn Incident Controller (BIC)

Procedures applied during the burn activity shall be equivalent to the safety standards specified in the Fireground SOPs.

The LACES safety checklist system (Lookouts – Awareness – Communications – Escape routes – Safety refuges) is to be applied to all prescribed burning activities.

The FCO must ensure that all hazard reduction prescribed burning proposals and completed activities including completed burn plan documentation is entered into the current RFS system.

### 3. Definitions

#### ***Prescribed Burning***

The controlled application of fire under specified environmental conditions to a predetermined area and at a time, intensity, and rate of spread required to attain planned resource-management objectives.

#### ***Basic Burn Checklist***

Very low risk burns as determined by the FCO.

#### ***Burn Plan***

An approved plan that incorporates the specifications and conditions under which the operation is to be conducted.

- **Level One Simple prescribed burn** — a prescribed burn characterised by low risk, low intensity, small area, low potential impact on assets, completion in one shift and minimal variation of fuel and terrain. ( As determined by the FCO)
- **Level Two Complex prescribed burn** — a prescribed burn characterised by moderate to high risk, a range of fire intensities, medium to large areas, significant potential impacts on assets and may involve a variety of fuels and terrain. The burn operation may involve a large number of resources requiring the establishment of a formal management and support structure. It may require several separate ignitions (ground and/or aerial), possibly over several days. It may have a number of high value assets requiring complex protection actions. ( As determined by the FCO)

#### ***Incident Control System (ICS)***

An operational management system adopted by the RFS for integrating personnel, procedures, facilities, equipment and communications into a common organisational structure.

#### ***Burn Incident Controller (BIC)***

The person who has overall control of the burn and is responsible for the implementation of the burn plan in the field. The BIC is responsible to a senior officer, such as the FCO who is remote from the burn site.

# P – SOP #2

## PLANNING FOR A PRESCRIBED BURN

### 1. Scope

This SOP covers the procedures relating to the planning aspects of a specific prescribed burn.

### 2. Procedure

#### **Basic Burn Checklist (*Pile Burns, Windrow Burns and Very Low Risk Burns only*)**

A Basic Burn Checklist records information about the activity being undertaken. It must be completed when a brigade is assisting a landowner/occupier in conducting a burn that is inconsistent with the RFS Standards for Pile Burning (for example a windrow), or a very low risk burn, for example a routine agricultural burn. The landowner/occupier is responsible for obtaining all relevant environmental approvals, obtaining a fire permit if required (Refer to Part 4 Division 5 of the Rural Fires Act 1997), making notifications and establishing control lines. The Basic Burn Checklist can be completed by the Officer in Charge on the day of the burn. The activity requires FCO approval.

#### **Prescribed Burn Plans**

Prescribed burn plans describe the desired outcomes of the activity and suggest the operational tactics to be implemented. The plans also allow for the recording of information during and after the activity. A prescribed burn plan must be prepared when the RFS is proposing and conducting a simple/complex prescribed burn. The contents of the burn plan may vary depending on the size, nature of the hazard and safety issues associated with the proposed activity. The FCO, or DFCO, is to consider the complexity of the burn and select the most appropriate level of plan.

There are two prescribed burn plan options available:

- Level One SIMPLE prescribed burn plan; or
- Level Two COMPLEX prescribed burn plan.

#### **Level One SIMPLE Prescribed Burn Plan**

**Simple prescribed burn** — a prescribed burn characterised by low risk, low intensity, small area, low potential impact on assets, completion in one shift and minimal variation of fuel and terrain. The plan must conform to that in **Attachment 2**

The Prescribed Burn Operational Map should conform to that in **Attachment 5**

An Operational Map must be made available to all personnel on the fireground.

RFS District/Team/Zone staff are responsible for ensuring the completion of the burn plan and Operational Map however, Volunteer Members may assist with the preparation.

### **Level Two COMPLEX Prescribed Burn Plan**

**Complex prescribed burn** — a prescribed burn characterised by moderate to high risk, a range of fire intensities or ignition methods, medium to large areas, significant potential impacts on assets and may involve a variety of fuels and terrain. The plan must conform to that in **Attachment 3**

The Prescribed Burn Operational Map should conform to that in **Attachment 5**

An Operational Map must be made available to all personnel on the fireground.

The minimum information provided to all personnel on the fireground is a completed A3 NSW Interagency Prescribed Burn Field Operations Attachment.

RFS District/Team/Zone staff are responsible for ensuring the completion of the burn plan and Operational Map however, Volunteer Members may assist with the preparation.

### **3. Consents for RFS to conduct Prescribed Burn Activities**

The RFS requires consent from land owners or occupiers to enter their land for the purpose of planning, preparing and undertaking a prescribed burn (hazard reduction).

A request to enter land to assess bush fire risk must be used when the RFS is assess an area for a proposed Hazard Reduction Burn. **Attachment 6**

A Landowner Consent Letter must be used when the RFS is initiating the proposal to undertake a prescribed burn. **Attachment 7**. In this case, the RFS would be responsible for obtaining all relevant environmental approvals, making notifications and establishing control lines.

A Hazard Reduction Notification Letter should be used to notify adjoining landowners/occupiers of the prescribed burn activity. **Attachment 8**.

A Certificate of Currency is NOT required unless specifically requested. Refer to

ONE NSW RFS for an application.

### **4. Requests for RFS Assistance in undertaking Prescribed Burn Activities**

A formal request letter is required from the land owner/s or occupier/s when a request is made for RFS assistance in undertaking a prescribed burn. The land owner/occupier must use the letter template provided in **Attachment 9**.

In this case, the landowner would be responsible for obtaining all relevant environmental approvals, a fire permit \* Note (Refer to Part 4 Division 5 of the Rural Fires Act 1997), making notifications and establishing control lines.

*\*Note under Part 4 Division 5 of the Rural Fires Act 1997, Section 95 Fire Permits are not required for fires lit by public authorities.*

### **3. Attachments**

[Attachment 1:Basic Burn Checklist Template](#)

[Attachment 2:Burn Plan Template Level One SIMPLE](#)

[Attachment 3:Burn Plan Template Level One COMPLEX](#)

[Attachment 4:NSW Interagency Prescribed Burn Field Operations Attachment](#)

[Attachment 5:Prescribed Burn Operational Map Guidelines](#)

[Attachment 5a:Prescribed Burn Operational Map Example](#)

[Attachment 6:Request to Enter Land to Assess Bush Fire Risk.](#)

[Attachment 7:RFS Hazard Reduction Consent Letter](#)

[Attachment 8:RFS Hazard Reduction Notification Letter](#)

[Attachment 9:Land Owner/Occupier Request for Assistance Letter](#)

# P – SOP #3

## PREPARING FOR A PRESCRIBED BURN

### 1. Scope

This SOP covers the procedures relating to the preparation for a specific prescribed burn.

### 2. Procedure

In preparing a prescribed burn confirmation should be sought on the following:

- That an appropriate burn plan has been prepared and approved within 12 months of the burn being conducted.
- That all information is adequately addressed in the burn plan.
- That conditions in the area of the burn are still as described in the burn plan. Such conditions may include land status and tenure, occupancy, fuel type, fuel moisture content, fuel load, and topography.
- That control lines are completed and the burn is fully prepared.
- The A3 NSW Interagency Prescribed Burn Field Operations attachment with an Operational Map printed on the back is completed as the minimum information required for field personnel.
- That weather forecasts for prescribed burning activities have been provided from official sources (Bureau of Meteorology). An Incident Weather forecast is recommended for Level Two Complex burns.
- That all notifications have been completed and the burn activity is recorded in the current RFS Systems.
- The burn can be implemented to safely achieve the objectives of the burn plan under the current/forecasted weather and fuel moisture conditions/readings within the planned operation period.
- Assess appropriate timing for implementation of prescribed Burning, including on site conditions and weather forecast.
- Resources required to safely implement the burn are available.
- Contingency arrangements have been established.
- That smoke impact has been considered and if required smoke modelling and analysis has been requested. All requests are to be emailed to [FBA@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:FBA@rfs.nsw.gov.au)
  - Smoke modelling is required for prescribed burns with a planned area of over;
    - 10ha in proximity to high density or high risk population centres
    - 50ha for low density or low risk population centres.

Confirmation is also required that the personnel involved in the burn are currently competent. In particular that:

- For Basic Burns, the BIC should be competent to RFS Crew Leader level (CLW or CLG or equivalent)
- For all prescribed burns undertaken using the Level One SIMPLE prescribed burn plan, the BIC should be accredited in this competency Conduct Simple prescribed burn or is authorised in writing by the FCO to undertake the burn in accordance with these SOPs.

- For all prescribed burns undertaken using the Level Two COMPLEX prescribed burn plan, the BIC should be accredited in this competency Conduct Complex Prescribed Burn or is authorised in writing by the FCO to conduct the burn in accordance with these SOPs.

### **3. Definitions**

- Nil



# P – SOP #4

## CONDUCTING A PRESCRIBED BURN

### 1. Scope

This SOP covers the procedures in conducting a prescribed burn.

### 2. Procedure

The safe and effective conduct of a prescribed burn requires careful and thorough planning to ensure that the objectives can be safely achieved.

If the FBI exceeds the optimum FBI range (typically up to 11 for a low intensity burn) specified in the burn plan, then the 'FBI exceeded checklist' must be completed and the decision of whether to proceed or not must be made by the BIC and final approval to proceed given by the FCO or delegate.

Prior to ignition, the BIC shall complete the Burn Incident Controller Checklist located in the burn plan (**Appendix 1**) to ensure that all necessary precautions and planning details have been considered and are in place.

Prior to ignition, the BIC shall notify the FCO (or delegate) of the imminent intention to implement the burn plan.

Procedures used during a prescribed burn are to be of the same safety standard as those specified for equivalent activities in Fireground SOPs.

A burning operations log must be completed by the BIC.

A Safety Officer reporting directly to the BIC is to be appointed for all prescribed burns. At Simple Level One burns and Basic Burns, the function of the Safety Officer may be retained as part of the role of the BIC. Where this occurs the role must be carried out as an integral function.

Prior to ignition, all personnel are to be briefed using the SMEACS format and provided access to an A3 Operational Map for Level One and level Two Burns. The A3 NSW Interagency Prescribed Burn Field Operations attachment is the minimum information required for all level Two Complex burns.

Ignition of the burn is to be under the overall coordination of the BIC

The prescribed burn should be planned around suitable containment lines and with suitable refuge areas and escape routes in place. Ignition patterns/lighting sequence must not place personnel at risk whilst undertaking operations.

It is the responsibility of the BIC to monitor and record burn site weather readings at the start of the burn, hourly during the burn and at the completion of the burn. Additional readings may be required during the burn if unpredicted weather changes occur.

Once the burn is contained, the burn area is to be secured and patrolled until the BIC is confident that the burn is completely extinguished. Ensure adequate resources are established during the patrol period, including night patrol where required.

The BIC is responsible for the burn until the burn is declared out or is handed over. If the BIC is unable to monitor the burn site, the Fire Control Officer/ District Duty Officer may assume responsibility. Monitoring forecast weather and regular or systematic patrol of the burn perimeter must continue until the burn is declared out.

Pile burns or windrows that have the potential to continue smouldering undetected must have a mineral earth break established around the perimeter of the burnt area. Where the fire has been left in the care of the property owner, and if a permit is required, the permit must have a condition for the maintenance and patrol of this break.

### **3. Definitions**

➤ Nil

# P – SOP #5

## EVALUATING A PRESCRIBED BURN

### 1. Scope

This SOP covers the procedures relating to evaluating a specific prescribed burn.

### 2. Procedure

It is important that burn outcomes are evaluated and recorded in as much detail as appropriate. This information is useful for future planning and should form part of the documentation of the burn report.

All personnel involved in a prescribed burn should participate in an After Action Review (AAR) at the appropriate level as deemed by the BIC.

The AAR should follow the standard format of:

- What did we set out to achieve
- What actually happened
- What can we do better next time

For Level One SIMPLE and Level Two COMPLEX prescribed burns, the BIC shall complete

**Appendix 4** After Action Review, in the burn plan.

The BIC should provide the District Office/ FCO with the following documents as soon as practical after the completion of the burn.

- A copy of the completed burn plan including operations log and any additional documents.

A post burn assessment, in accordance with the relevant burn plan template, must be conducted by the Prescribed Burn Planner and the BIC (where possible). Where any remedial action is required consult with FCO.

Where a prescribed burn resulted in an accident, near miss or significant escape of fire, or damage to any assets, the FCO shall initiate an investigation of the burn, under relevant SOPs.

### 3. Definitions

- Nil