



## **EQUIPMENT & MACHINERY USE IN BUSHFIRE PRONE AREAS**

If you use equipment and machinery, or if you supervise these operations for industry, you must observe fire regulations and safety precautions. As well, you must make yourself aware of the declaration of Total Fire Bans and stop work prohibited by Total Fire Bans as soon as they are announced.

### **On days of Total Fire Ban**

Welding, grinding, soldering (with flame) and gas cutting in the open air are prohibited by the the Rural Fires Act in most cases. Certain exemptions may be granted for:

“fires lit, maintained or used by or under the authority of any person or body of persons corporate or unincorporate, for, or in connection with the repair or maintenance of services or equipment essential for continuance or restoration of the supply or provision of heat, light, power, water, sewage , transport or communication subject to observance of the special conditions that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent the escape of fire, sparks, or incandescent or burning material therefrom.”

The use of machinery such as tractors, slashers or even chainsaws should be postponed if possible, as the risk of starting fires is extremely high. If the work is essential, follow the general rules outlined for the Bush Fire Danger Season and use extreme care.

### **Bush Fire Danger Season Obligations**

When carrying out welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting in the open air you should:

- Place a shield or guard of fire resistant material in such a way as to prevent emission of sparks and hot pieces of metal from the area where you are working.
- Keep an area of 3 metres around the work completely cleared of flammable material or wet down sufficiently to prevent the spread of fire. This is particularly important where waste wood, sawdust, bark, or dry grass is in the vicinity.
- Have close at hand a reticulated water supply or an effective water spray pump, such as a knapsack, fully charged with 16 litres of water.
- Have a fire extinguisher (liquid type) of 9 litre minimum capacity.
- Have a fireproof receptacle for cut-offs and electrode stubs.

For more information on bushfire safety and general fire safety, visit the Rural Fire Service website at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) or call the RFS Education Line on 1 800 654 443 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm).



When using machinery such as tractors or slashers you must comply with certain requirements:

- The machinery must be fitted with an Australian Standards Association approved spark arrestor and be clean and free from mechanical defects which could start a fire.
- Spark arrestors must comply with Australian Standard AS: 1019 1985.
- Additionally, any “motorised machine” driven or used in any grass, crop or stubble must be fitted with safety guards so constructed as to prevent any heated areas from coming into contact with combustible matter.
- The machine must also carry a knapsack spray filled with water (minimum 16 litres) or a fire extinguisher maintained in a serviceable condition (liquid type) of 9 litre minimum capacity.

**Use all necessary caution:**

Read Regulation 21 & 22 of the *Rural Fires Regulation, 1997*.

Compliance with all regulations does not relieve a person of responsibility for damage caused by fire starting from the use of equipment and machinery. Therefore, it is essential to use all necessary caution to prevent fires.

- Avoid work when fire weather is hazardous, especially on days of high wind.
- If possible, it is far safer to bring the project into a safe, clean working area - on bare ground, concrete or within the confinement of an enclosed working area, rather than working in the field.
- If welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting must be carried out in the field, there should be an observer on the job to guard against the accidental escape of fire.
- Ensure that any vehicles used in field work do not have exhaust leakage. Avoid driving vehicles into long dry grass.
- Take care when disposing of matches and cigarette butts.

Caution with equipment and machinery near combustible substances is a matter of observation. If a fire is likely to be caused, or if there is the slightest possibility of fire or explosion, take action.

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Correct the position of the work; adjust shields and safeguards; ensure that no flammable vapours or fuels could be ignited; check that emergency water supplies are ready and that the area is cleared or wetted down.

Stop the project until you are satisfied that it is safe.

Remember: It is an offence for any person who permits a fire to escape from land so as to cause injury or damage to any person or property Produced in New South Wales by the NSW Rural Fire Service in co-operation with the Country Fire Authority, Victoria.