



RFS

OFFICIAL

Media release

Rain delays hazard reduction efforts during the peak burning window

14 May 2024

Recent and forecast rain across NSW has fire agencies and landholders facing delays in conducting crucial planned hazard reduction burns at the peak time of year for this activity.

Commissioner of the Rural Fire Service (RFS), Rob Rogers, said parts of the state have experienced rainfall totals well over 100mm during the last two weeks, with similar levels last weekend.

"While favourable conditions in some areas during April allowed for a number of significant burns to be completed, the return of wet weather has saturated the landscape making it too wet for effective burning," Commissioner Rogers said.

"As of early May, almost 100,000ha have been treated since July 2023, offering protection to more than 87,000 properties.

"However, the recent rain has not only delayed scheduled burns but will also fuel increased vegetation growth, posing a risk for next fire season."

"Consequently, thousands of hectares of hazard reduction burns scheduled for autumn have been postponed. Traditionally, this period accounts for nearly 60 percent of hazard reduction activities annually."

"April rainfall totals were also above average, setting us further behind and it is now unlikely that proposed hazard reduction burn targets for this financial year will be met."

Hazard reduction burns require stable weather conditions and, since 2021, agencies have faced prolonged wet weather and severe flooding. This has contributed to hazard reduction targets not being met due to the conditions.

NSW Government agencies including the National Parks and Wildlife Service and NSW Forestry Corporation, along with other landholders, had made progress towards targets across Greater Sydney, the Hunter, North Eastern NSW and Western NSW, before wet weather affected planned activities.

Minister for Emergency Services Jihad Dib said hazard reduction burning plays a vital role in mitigating bush fire intensity and safeguarding lives and properties.

"Our fire services and land management agencies have faced significant challenges in meeting their hazard reduction targets over the past three years, including prolonged bouts of wet weather and severe flooding across large areas of NSW," Mr Dib said.

"Early progress had been made in many areas including the Blue Mountains and the Hawkesbury, before wet weather set in. While weather conditions have been detrimental, we have continued to support mitigation operations allowing this important work to be carried out as soon as possible, where and when conditions allow."

Information on preparing property, as well as a list and map of proposed hazard reduction burns, can be found on the RFS website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

For more information contact the State Duty Media Officer on 9898 1855
For current incidents or major fire updates visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

