

LIGHTING A FIRE – QUICK FACTS

A quick guide to your responsibilities when lighting a fire or undertaking activities that may result in a fire

There are significant penalties if you light an illegal fire, or if your fire escapes and causes damage to property or the environment.

It is therefore essential that you are aware of the legal and safety requirements before you conduct a burn or use equipment that is likely to ignite a fire.

When lighting any fire you should ensure that you are wearing appropriate clothing,

have a water supply available on site and that you have a cleared area around the perimeter of the fire. You must also use all practical means to prevent or minimise air pollution.

The following table provides a general guide to what you need to consider before lighting a fire. If you require any further information, please contact the NSW Rural Fire Service or Fire and Rescue NSW.

The Clean Air Regulations prohibit the burning of certain items (including toxic items), along with general obligations to prevent or minimise air pollution. Contact the EPA for more information.

	General Requirements	Total Fire Ban Days
Can I light a camp fire in a NSW State Forest, National Park or Regional Park? (for cooking or recreational purposes)	Only in some situations – Forests and National Parks may place restrictions on the lighting of fires in parks and reserves. – Check with your local National Park or Forestry office to determine their requirements.	No – All campfires are banned on Total Fire Ban days.
Can I light a camp fire on my property? (for cooking or recreational purposes)	Yes , as long as: – You are burning dry, seasoned wood; and – You have cleared an area of at least 2 metres around the perimeter of the fire.	No – No fire is to be lit in the open on Total Fire Ban days.
Can I light my own portable gas or electric BBQ in a NSW State Forest, National Park or Regional Park?	Only in some situations – Forests and National Parks may place restrictions on the lighting of BBQs in parks and reserves. – Check with your local National Park or Forestry office to determine their requirements.	No – Portable gas/electric BBQs are banned in NSW State Forests, National Parks or Regional Parks on Total Fire Ban days. Note: In some cases you may be able to use gas or electric BBQs constructed by the NSW National Park
Can I light a gas or electric BBQ on my property?	Yes	Yes , as long as: – It is under the direct control of a responsible adult; and – The ground within 2 metres of the barbecue is cleared of all materials which could burn. As well as the following additional requirements for gas BBQs: – It is on a residential property within 20 metres of the house or dwelling; and – You have an immediate and continuous supply of water available.
Can I carry out hot works such as welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting in the open? (or any other work that is likely to generate sparks)	Yes , as long as: – You have adequate firefighting equipment in working order available on site. As a minimum you must have: – 16L knapsack spray pump filled with water; or – 9L liquid fire extinguisher; or – 0.9kg dry powder fire extinguisher.	No – General purpose welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting works cannot be carried out in the open on Total Fire Ban days. – There is a TOBAN Exemption process, notably for Welding
Can I carry out harvesting operations? This includes driving or using machinery in any grass,crop or stubble land.	Yes , as long as: – Any heated area of the machinery does not come in contact with combustible matter; – The machinery is in a good and serviceable condition; – The machinery is fitted with a spark arrestor (steam powered machines); and – You have the following prescribed fire safety equipment on site: – 16L knapsack spray pump filled with water; or – 9L liquid fire extinguisher; or – 0.9kg dry powder fire extinguisher. – Refer to the Grain Harvesting Guide, Harvesting fact sheet and the Cease Harvest Alerts issued locally.	Yes , as long as: – You follow the same general requirements (left). Note: you should also check with your insurance company to understand your policy and ‘duty of care’ should your machinery cause a fire on a Total Fire Ban day.
Can I light a fire in the open for burning an area of grass, stubble, weeds, shrubs or other vegetation?	Only in some situations – You must have a current Permit to burn, issued by the relevant firefighting authority: – In RFS areas, anytime during the Bush Fire Danger Period, and anytime of the year when your fire is likely to endanger a building. – In Fire and Rescue NSW areas, at any time of the year. – Before burning you must notify your relevant firefighting authority at least 24 hours before you burn (unless otherwise specified in your Permit): – your local RFS Fire Control Centre (or use Burn Notifications on www.rfs.nsw.gov.au), OR – your local Fire and Rescue NSW station. – You must also notify any adjoining neighbours at least 24 hours in advance. – You may need an environmental approval for the burn. For guidance, please refer to the RFS publication ‘Before You Light That Fire’ (see link below). – Open burning may be prohibited in your local government area or you may need an approval for open burning (air pollution). The EPA is responsible for approving the smoke generated from burning of living vegetation, but your local Council can advise you on whether an approval is required in your area. – For more information, please refer to the RFS publication ‘Before You Light That Fire’ available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au	No – No fire is to be lit in the open on Total Fire Ban days.
Can I light a fire to burn a pile of leaves or other garden refuse?	Only in some situations – The same conditions apply as above in the question ‘Can I light a fire in the open for burning...’ – For more information, please refer to the RFS publication ‘Before You Light That Fire’ available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.	No – No fire is to be lit in the open on Total Fire Ban days.
Can I burn domestic waste?	Only in some situations (check with your local council) – Contact your local Council (or EPA) to determine whether such a burning is prohibited, or allowed with authorisation, or whether an approval is required in your area. – All fires lit, must be in accordance with Council authorisations and, (a) in an incinerator designed to prevent the escape of sparks and burning material, or (b) in accordance with the conditions set out in a fire permit issued by the appropriate authority, or (c) at a site surrounded by ground that is clear of all combustible matter for a distance of at least 5 metres. – You must notify your relevant firefighting authority at least 24 hours before you light your fire (unless otherwise specified in your Permit): – your local RFS Fire Control Centre (or use Burn Notifications on www.rfs.nsw.gov.au), OR – your local Fire and Rescue NSW station. – You must also notify any adjoining neighbours at least 24 hours in advance	No – No fire is to be lit in the open on Total Fire Ban days.