

MEDIA RELEASE



NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

Homes at risk due to carelessness

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Out of control private hazard reduction burns have caused more than thirty fires across NSW over the weekend, prompting the NSW Rural Fire Service and the NSW Farmers' Association to plead with landowners to be careful.

NSW RFS Commissioner Shane Fitzsimmons said some of these fires caused many thousands of dollars damage to property including sheds, equipment, vehicles and fences but firefighters have prevented the loss of any homes.

"We encourage landowners to reduce hazards on their property, but they must use their common sense. For example, no one should even attempt a hazard reduction in strong winds, yet some landholders did exactly that recently.

"It is the responsibility of landowners to take weather conditions into consideration before burning. The failure to do so could be tragic," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

A Bingara farmer nearly lost his home when his hazard reduction got out of control.

"He and his son-in-law thought they had taken the necessary precautions and put the fire out. They stopped for lunch, but suddenly realised the house was surrounded by smoke and had to call Triple Zero (000) for help.

"The NSW RFS was able to save the house, but this clearly demonstrates how hazard reductions can turn dangerous," Commissioner Fitzsimmons said.

Fiona Simson, President of the NSW Farmers' Association, said that it was important that farmers were preparing for the fire season sensibly, safely and legally.

"We don't want to see any single farmer lose property or livestock because of a fire that could have been prevented.

"The first priority should always be safety, so never conduct a burn if conditions are not suitable. There are alternatives to burning including hand clearing, mowing, or slashing areas around key assets on the property.

"It is important that farmers protect their land, and conduct hazard reductions as appropriate, but we urge them to follow all precautions," Ms Simson said.

Commissioner Fitzsimmons said landholders must check whether permits are required in their area, take precautions such as having firefighting equipment on standby and can seek advice from the NSW RFS on conducting safe hazard reduction burns.

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