



MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

2019-20 Fire Season Starts Early; Fire Permit Suspended

The first day of September marks the month-early start of the 2019-2020 Bush Fire Danger Period in the Mid-Western Regional Council area with fire permits suspended until further notice because of extreme drought conditions and a forecast of hot, dry weather ahead.

The statutory Bush Fire Danger Period normally starts on 1 October and continues through the following 31 March.

“Our volunteers have already fought a number of grass fires in recent weeks, including a good many where bone dry vegetation and gusty winds contributed to the escape of landholder burns,” said Superintendent Troy Porter of the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) Cudgegong District, which covers most of the Mid-Western Regional Council area.

“Paddocks across our region are so dry that the blustery winds send clouds of dust billowing across the landscape. As the days get hotter and the dry weather continues, we will see an increased bush fire risk.”

Looking at the potential weather outlook from now to November, the Bureau of Meteorology said our region could have a 65 per cent chance being drier than average and an 80 per cent chance of being hotter than average. It said a similar pattern of warmer and drier Spring weather than usual was likely across most of the nation.

Normally anyone wishing to light a fire during the Bush Fire Danger Period can get a free fire permit issued by the NSW RFS. On Tuesday 20 August, however, the district’s Senior Management Team took the unusual step of suspending virtually all issuance of fire permits until further notice once the Danger Period starts due to the impact of the ongoing dry conditions.

“We are suspending permits straight off the bat from the first of September,” Superintendent Porter said. “The reasons for doing this are the ongoing dry conditions and the declining availability of water.

“We don’t make this decision like this lightly, but in consultation with National Parks and Forestry Corporation of New South Wales it was agreed that this was best for the community as we move into another long, hot season.”

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Fire Season starting early
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An exception to the suspension of permits will be the issuance of a Special Fire Permit developed by the NSW RFS to help farmers forced to destroy stock or deal with deceased livestock due to the ongoing drought. In many cases, burning deceased livestock may be the most appropriate method of prompt disposal to ensure the ongoing safety of remaining stock and alleviate public health risks.

The early start to this year’s Bush Fire Danger Period continues a pattern that saw last year’s danger period start a month early and end a month later than normal. At least 20 other districts in NSW have already commenced their danger period this year, and weather scientists have predicted that longer fire seasons could become more common in the years ahead.

The Bureau of Meteorology reported that Australia’s rainfall in July 2019 was 64 per cent below average with many sites recording their lowest July total rainfall on record or for at least 20 years. Coupled with that, it was the fourth warmest July on record for the nation as a whole.

Superintendent Porter urged residents across the Mid-Western Regional Council area to review and update their bush fire survival plans now, and to create a plan for their family’s survival if they have not already done so. He called on them to remove flammable materials from their yards, to clean out their gutters and to make sure they have hoses that can reach around the house.

“Residents should also check daily for the district’s Fire Danger Rating, and especially to take precautions when the day’s rating is Severe or above,” he said. Fire Danger Ratings are shown on roadside signs across the district, can be found on the NSW RFS web site at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au and are carried on local radio broadcasts and in on-line weather forecasts.

For more information contact the Cudgegong Fire Control Centre on (02) 6372 4434



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
