

## Frequently asked questions:

# Fire Prevention Notices

When is the Fire Danger Period?

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) introduces Fire Restrictions (Fire Danger Period) for all private land in Victoria over the summer period each year. The Fire Danger Period start and end dates change yearly, however normally operate from approximately November to April. Declaration dates can be found on the CFA website: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au).

Why did I receive a Fire Prevention Notice?

Council's Municipal Fire Prevention Officers have recently assessed your property for fire hazards and determined that you need to reduce fuel loads on your property to reduce the potential fire risk.

What do I have to do?

You are required to clean up and reduce fine fuels such as bark, leaves, twigs and long grass either as a fire break or the entire property as directed by a Municipal Fire Prevention Officer on the Notice. Reducing the fine fuels assists to reduce the intensity of a fire if it occurred, as fine fuels are responsible for the major increase in fire intensity and spread. The required works must be carried out by the completion date and you must then maintain your property in this state for the duration of the Fire Danger Period.

Can I remove trees and shrubs?

The Notice does not authorise you to remove shrubs and trees. If you wish to remove trees and shrubs, contact Council's Planning Department for advice.

But I've just cut my grass!

There is a small delay between a Municipal Fire Prevention Officer inspecting your property for fire hazards and the issuing of Fire Prevention Notice. If you have already carried out what is required on the Notice, then you don't need to worry. Just ensure you maintain your property in this state for the duration of the Fire Danger Period.

Why does Council issue Fire Prevention Notices?

Under the Country Fire Authority Act 1958, Council has a legal obligation to reduce the risk of fire for the community. Municipal Fire Prevention Officers have the power to inspect and to issue Fire Prevention Notices within the municipality.

However, there are no guarantees of personal or property safety when it comes to bushfire. The works detailed on the Fire Prevention Notice are designed to reduce radiant heat, fire intensity and ember attack and minimise direct flame impact on you or your neighbour's assets. They are consistent with CFA guidelines for protecting your home.

I disagree with the assessment!

Contact the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer in writing within seven days of the service of the notice stating the grounds of objection as per the Country Fire Authority Act 1958 Part 3 Section 41B (1).

I am having difficulty getting the work completed by the deadline, can I have an extension?

Give the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer a call to discuss your particular situation. In most cases an additional week may be considered but we must hear from you before the completion date on your notice.

I'm planning to cut my paddock for hay or putting stock on that paddock

If it is your intent to cut your paddock for hay, carry out other works, or put stock on your paddock, call the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer and inform us of your intentions before the completion date on your Notice. You may still be required to cut a firebreak or complete other works as directed by the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer.



What will happen if I don't comply with the Notice?

Municipal Fire Prevention Officers conduct follow up inspections on properties that have received a Fire Prevention Notice to ensure the works have been completed and maintained throughout the fire danger period.

If the works required have not been carried out to the satisfaction of the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer by the due date, you may receive an on the spot infringement notice of 10 penalty units (\$1652). The maximum penalty for failing to comply with the notice is 120 penalty units or imprisonment for 12 months or both. A contractor may then be engaged to carry out the required works and the costs will be passed on to you with additional administration fees. Council may not contact you prior to undertaking works once the Fire Prevention Notice has been issued.

Burn Off Permits

During the Fire Danger Period, residents are required to obtain a permit to burn in the open air. Burn Off permit conditions are set by the CFA. For more information please contact either the CFA or Council.

My roadside is a fire hazard. What can I do?

Council's fire hazard inspection program focuses on protecting your house and outbuildings by providing a fuel reduced area around these assets as per CFA guidelines. You must have permission from Council before removing native vegetation from a roadside.

I am concerned about my neighbour's fire hazard

Please contact Council if there is a property of concern to you. Municipal Fire Prevention Officers may inspect the property and provide the owner with a Fire Prevention Notice if required. Council's fire hazard inspection program is focused on reducing fuel loads immediately around assets such as houses and outbuildings. If the fire hazard you are concerned about on a neighbouring property falls outside this area, it is unlikely a Fire Prevention Notice will be issued.

What about snakes living in the long grass!

Snakes in the country are a fact of life. They are a protected species and cannot be harmed. To protect you and your family, ensure you maintain a safe area around your house and outbuildings as snakes are attracted to areas that provide shelter and food such as frogs and mice. Try to remove possible attractions for snakes and mice such as wood piles, stock feed or hay and maintain open areas where children play, well away from long grass. If a snake enters your home, please contact a licenced snake handler for advice.

Why should I encourage native grasses to grow on my property instead of introduced species?

Native grasses generate about 10 per cent of the fuel load of introduced pasture grasses such as Phalaris and Wild Oats. If you encourage the retention and regeneration of native grasses, it reduces the introduced grasses to grow which create a much greater fire risk. This can only be achieved if you allow the native grass time to re-seed.

What about the Crown Land/Parks land behind my property?

Council is not empowered to issue Fire Prevention Notices to statutory bodies such as State Government agencies. It is suggested you contact the agency that manages the land and inform them of your concerns.



#### **I need more information about preparing my property for fire.**

The Country Fire Authority has some excellent resources available to assist residents in preparing their homes for fire.

Check out its website - [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) - or contact the CFA Community Education Coordinator at your local CFA Regional Office.

**If you require any further information, contact Southern Grampians Shire Council on 5573 0444**