



Newsletter

KALAMUNDA BUSHFIRE READY GROUPS



Hi Everybody,

Firstly, we hope that you like our new format for the newsletter. For 77 issues it has been pretty ordinary but now with the help of the City of Kalamunda they have made it more up market and interesting, so thanks to all those people at the City of Kalamunda that have made this possible. Your comments would be most welcome.

Warning this newsletter is a bit lengthy as we are endeavoring to promote the new concept of Winter Burning which has the appropriate name of 'Burn SMART', so please bear with us.

As we slowly slip into Winter and the 1st of June has passed, we are now in the unrestricted burning season, as you can see with all the smoke around people are already burning off their accumulation of flammable materials.

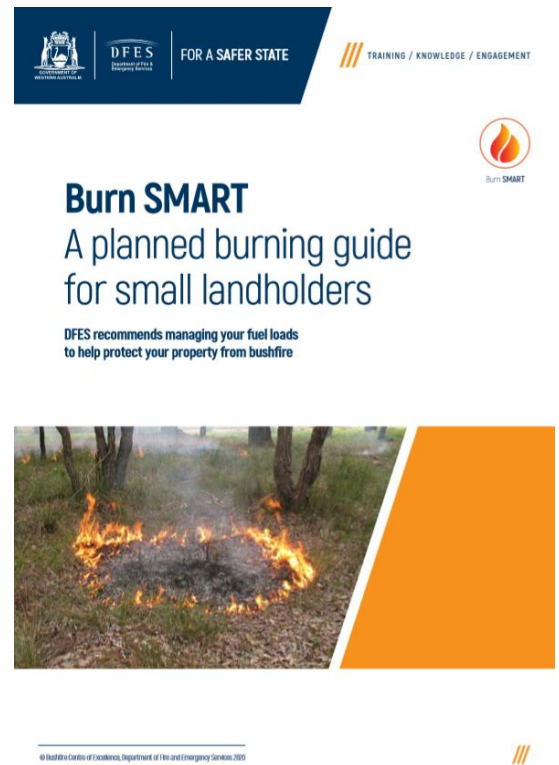
Prior to this while the restricted season was in place our brigade was called out to many unauthorised burns some of which had got away, these can attract a large fine especially those which occurred during the two days when there was a Total Fire Ban in force, which emphasises the need to make sure that you check out Emergency WA, watch the weather on the TV, access the City's website and check out the electronic sign boards around the city to make sure you are not going to burn on a Total Fire Ban day. Those well-established groups from 5 or 6 years ago will remember our attempts to establish at least one winter burn demonstration a season to help not just BFR group members, but the Kalamunda residents in general as to what needs to be undertaken in order to conduct a safe burn. It was not a resounding success.

Fortunately, there was one Winter burn in collaboration between the then Shire of Kalamunda and FESA now DFES, a good number of people turned up and watched the demonstration.

Although there is not a problem with residents burning on their own property, it's just knowing how to prepare and control the fire with the concern being it getting out of control and becoming a bush fire necessitating the Brigade turning out to extinguish it, as a result of these concerns DFES has this month launched "Burn Smart", which consists of a large amount of Burn Smart resources that you can draw upon to help you have a successful, safe burn.

There is a link to all this information which includes a video, this takes you through the preparation and step by step start to your burn, this video is based on a coastal plain type burn which has a smaller number of trees and the bush is more coastal heath which normally in clumps with spacing, where we in the hills have a forest situation with many trees and in most cases a large amount of leaf litter, branches, logs and stumps so we hopefully will be able to add a few extra hints in preparation to fit in with our situation here in the hills.

So, you need to access these resources by clicking on the link below and it will take you into the DFES "Burn Smart" resources.



Control Click on the link below:
dfes.wa.gov.au/plannedburning

It is recommended that you click on the above to get into the resources site and download the various resources that are there especially the Burn Smart Guide which looks like this and replaces the old Winter Burn Guide.

Something to think about before you plan:

It is important to note that you are responsible for any fire you light and, if it escapes, you may be **liable for the damage it causes**. The following information is designed to help you BURN SMART.



BURN SMART

DFES have launched the 'Burn Smart' campaign with resources to assist in a successful, safe burn.

Please read through this and it will give you step by step advice such as below.

Planning and conducting your burn
 Stage 1: Develop a fuel management strategy

Stage 2: Prepare your burn patch

Stage 3: Before the burn

Stage 4: Day of the burn

Stage 5: During the burn

Stage 6: After the burn

Burn SMART checklist

Recommended burn intervals.

Take the time to read through the Guide it will make it a lot easier for you and put you more at ease in safely conducting your own burn. There is a checklist and various other one-page burning guides including the Leaf Moisture Method to help you determine if it's ideal to burn.

Below are just some of the excerpts from Burn Smart as we know some of the BFR group members prefer to have this type of advice with not being familiar with entering Web Sites etc.

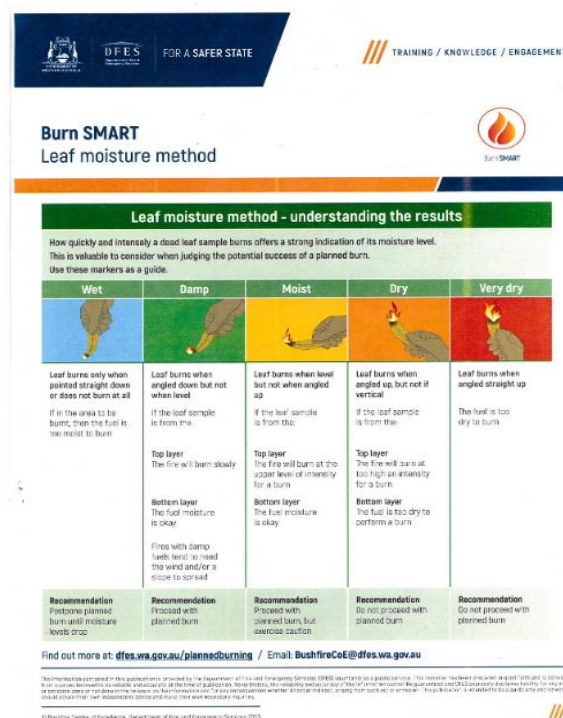
We will also include some tips which are more relevant to burning in the hills, especially if you have a block with an abundance of trees and a heavy fuel load on the ground.

Who does it apply to?
 The SMART BURN resources are designed to help those owners that have smaller areas of land so in this case 2 hectares or less in size, anything over this requires a lot more planning and external advice is recommended especially from the City of Kalamunda. Most of the items and advice in these resources we have covered in our Newsletters sent out around this time each year.

When does planned burning take place?

When you burn depends on where you live in Western Australia. Generally, planned burns should be undertaken when:

- The unrestricted burning period commences on the 1st of June (You will require a permit before this date)
- The weather is cool.
- The wind is light to gentle (less than 20 kilometres per hour).
- There is enough moisture in the vegetation (it is ideal to burn after two days, but not more than 10 days, since five millimetres of rain or greater has fallen).



It is very important to look at the weather forecast for the next several days to ensure that the mild conditions continue after the day of the burn. Bear in mind after we have had rain that areas such as under trees where sunlight, may not have effectively dried out your leaf litter enough where there is too much moisture to have an effective burn.

Consequences

It is best to follow the advice in the attached resources and we put some dot points of tips that may make your task a little easier.



Wet, Damp, Moist



Dry/Very Dry

TIPS

Preparation:

- If you have been looking after your fire breaks throughout the year then life may be easier, as a firebreak covered in leaves is totally ineffective in stopping a fire or slowing it down, firebreaks need to be clear of all debris down to bare earth.
- If you have let this build up happen then it would be best to clear the breaks surrounding the area you are going to burn first.
- If you have many trees on your property and wish to keep them as pristine as they are at present or a favourite tree that you don't want blackened with scorch marks then you need to rake all the ground litter away down to bare/mineral earth for a minimum distance of 1-1.5 metres around these trees especially the larger girth ones and start with the trees that are on the edge or 2 or 3 metres from the fire break, if flames climb up via the bark, they can send a shower of embers across your firebreak and into unburnt bush possible a neighbours.

You can't afford flames climbing a tree especially if it has sections with dead branches if these catch on fire then you have what we call a **"stag"** and a garden hose will not put one of these out. Embers can travel a long way even from the centre of your burn.

- If you have logs or fallen trees/stumps on the ground rake around these as well, that will save you a lot of time and water putting them out at the end of the burn.
- Grass trees when they burn, they give off a lot of heat with a large flame height, the trees closest to the firebreaks are the ones that have the potential to spread the fire across to unburnt ground, either pre trim the larger grass trees skirts so that they do not burn at high intensity, or if it's a wet day then burn your Grass Trees only, you will get a cooler burn and the bonus is the heat around the tree will dry and burn the litter on the ground around each tree reducing your overall ground burn considerably. Remember that these trees give off a toxic smoke which you need to avoid inhaling.
- Grass trees when fully alight can pour a continuous stream of embers out so with your hose on spray these can be subdued without putting the fire out. If you do burn your Grass Trees first, then you need to check on them for a couple of days afterwards to ensure there are no flare-ups.



Now, are you appropriately dressed for the job ahead?

Long cotton pants/overalls and long-sleeved shirt as well as boots or sturdy covered footwear, a good pair of gloves, a hat and something to cover your mouth if there is a lot of smoke.

Make sure you keep up the water to yourself even in cooler weather the heat from the fire can make you become dehydrated.



At all costs you want to avoid this mode of dress.

The Burn:

By this time, you should have already downloaded the Burn SMART Checklist this is to be used in conjunction with the Burn SMART Guide as the checklist refers to the guide throughout, it has two pages

- Reference will be made to conducting a test burn and if you are on a steep sloping block it would best be to find a level position at the top of the slope where you intend to start burning, the picture you see in the guidelines shows very little wind with low flame and pointing straight up as well as an even expansion out in a circle from the ignition point, best to keep this going for 10 or so minutes to get a better idea of rate of spread and intensity. If the fire takes off and you can see it is moving too fast extinguish it immediately and wait until the wind dies down or try another day.
- If all is well then this can be used as your start point for your burn, so heed the advice regarding too many ignition points as you want to avoid these joining together and a flare up which to a novice can be a bit concerning.
- As the burn progresses down the slope ensure you have someone following it down the flank on both sides with a hose to counteract any hop overs or flare ups from Grass Trees, embers etc.
- At all times watch the wind and especially early to mid-afternoon as the wind could change dramatically as a sea breeze comes in, bear in mind also that winds will follow contours of the land and trees will also affect wind direction and strength so don't hesitate to use your phone and access the weather bureau web site for an update.

Burn SMART Checklist

Stages 1 and 2: Planning the burn

Planning should be undertaken weeks or even months in advance of your planned burn.

	✓ COMPLETE
Develop a fuel management strategy for your property. Sketch how you will divide your property into manageable burn patches. Refer to full instructions on pages 12-14 of the Burn SMART guide.	
Contact your local government for information on burning restrictions in your area. A permit to burn will be required during restricted burning season.	
Prepare your burn patch. Refer to and complete the list of preparations on page 14 of the Burn SMART guide.	

Stage 3: Before the burn

	✓ COMPLETE
Confirm it has been two days but no more than 10 days since it last rained (5 mm or greater). You can check at www.burn.gov.au/climate/data .	
Check for mild weather conditions for the next several days at www.burn.gov.au/places/au . Do not burn if strong winds and dry conditions are forecast.	
Ensure all equipment is available and in good working order. Include a metal rake, shovel, hose or another source of water.	
Confirm that the people helping you with the burn are still available.	
Notify all neighbours no less than four days prior to burning. This includes neighbours separated by a road, lane or waterway.	

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After the Burn:

- So once your selected area has been burnt out then you need to make sure that it is correctly blacked out, if you have heeded the Guide and split the area up into smaller plots then your job won't be too hard, those special trees should still be intact.
 - So you may need a good supply of water and go right through and thoroughly black out the area, we say black out because normally the ground has a light grey ash covering and once you apply water you have the black burnt ground beneath, if you have a large plume of smoke rise when water is applied then it is what we term a hot spot and this needs to have a lot of water applied to completely cool the area down, just be careful because if it is really hot you can get a small explosion of ash and steam so protective glasses will keep your eyes clear of this.
 - If it is obvious that some trees have scorch marks up the trunks, make sure you apply water up the trunk in case there is any burning spots amongst the bark.
 - Always keep looking up especially with larger trees, it is not unknown for a tree to stress out and drop a limb.
 - Now that you have blacked out the area, it is a matter of checking it on a regular basis especially if the wind changes, the smaller spark may then flare up and cause you problems. Check after dark before you head for bed to make sure everything is still extinguished.
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Apologies for the length of this Newsletter but we felt that certain items needed to be addressed to cover our environment in the hills and additional information to promote the "Burn SMART" program, it's a lot to absorb but designed so that you can undertake a burn of your own with confidence and safety in mind.

Preserving our wildlife:

We are all aware of KANYANA Animal Rehabilitation Centre in Gilcrest Road Lesmurdie, we work in closely with them promoting Bush Fire Readiness and at this time of year they have an influx of various animals suffering from various degrees of burns.

In order to help them reduce the numbers down if you are quite happy burning your small piles of leaves and twigs it has been suggested that you rake through gently to make sure that small animals like the Goanna and Bandicoots are not caught up in your burn, Goannas especially, as you know hibernate and are slow moving.

If it is a bigger pile suggest you drag some off and burn that then feed the fire as you go it might take a fraction longer but give the fauna a chance to move away, If you intend burning small piles try covering them with a small tarp until it is time to burn, that way you will have dry material to burn and less smoke. This will also get the job done more quickly.

So, until July stay safe and remember we are here to assist if you have any queries and will probably start making ourselves available for property walk throughs in September.

Once again the link into Burn SMART resources: www.dfes.wa.gov.au/plannedburning

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