

# Burning Controls and Guidelines



## Why burn off?

Burning off is one way residents can dispose of vegetation such as dried leaves, branches and weeds that have been removed as part of their annual fire preparedness activities. Open air burning can be a dangerous activity and there are strict rules and guidelines about when and what can be legally burned.

## When can I burn off?

Open air burns on private property are only permitted outside the Fire Danger Period (FDP). The Country Fire Authority declares the FDP based on local environmental conditions. The FDP is announced on the CFA website and is also published at [www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au). The FDP usually runs from Nov/Dec until Apr/May.

During the FDP burning off is totally prohibited without a written permit from the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer. In the Surf Coast Shire generally, a Permit to Burn will only be issued under exceptional circumstances for agricultural purposes.

## Where can I burn off?

In township areas of the Surf Coast Shire, burning off is restricted to WEDNESDAY and SATURDAY between 10am and 3pm outside the FDP only. Call Surf Coast Shire Council on 5261 0600 for details of township boundaries, maps are also available at [www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au), search the term 'Township burn off boundary maps'.

## How much can I burn?

Burning off dead and dry vegetation associated with normal property maintenance is permitted – branches, leaves and twigs. The volume of vegetation must not exceed one cubic metre in township areas.

Materials NOT to be burnt include plastic, rubber, chemicals, petroleum-based products, painted/treated timber, strippers, resins, batteries, glues and aerosol cans, green or wet vegetation.

**Please Note:** Burning of toxic materials is strictly prohibited and is a fineable offence. Please consider your health and the health and wellbeing of your neighbours when burning off. For information on chemical management and correct disposal, contact Sustainability Victoria on toll free **1800 353 233** or visit the website [www.sustainability.vic.gov.au](http://www.sustainability.vic.gov.au).

## How do I burn off?

There are conditions you MUST follow:

### BEFORE

- Check the CFA and Bureau of Meteorology for current conditions and observe Total Fire Ban notifications. For more information about Total Fire Bans, go to the [www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/can/](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/can/)
- Notify neighbours at least 2 hours before commencement of burning.
- Register your burn with VICFIRE 20 minutes before ignition. Phone **1800 668 511**.
- Establish a three metre break around the site of the burn, this includes both ground and air space. This area should be clear of all flammable material.
- Check weather conditions – do not burn if wind exceeds 10 kph (light breeze and rustles leaves on trees) or temperature exceeds 32°C.

### DURING

- Have one burn site only, with adult supervision for the entire duration. The supervisor must be able to monitor, contain and extinguish the fire at all times. **Never leave a burn unattended.**
- Have on hand an adequate supply of water or a hose connected to water supply that is able to reach all parts of the fire.
- Burn only dry materials. Do not burn green or wet vegetation, it produces excessive smoke.
- Volume of material to be burnt must not exceed one cubic metre in township areas.
- If you are not able to extinguish the fire at any time, the fire is not under control and you are not burning safely. Burn less material and/or postpone burn until conditions are more suitable (cooler, less windy, etc).
- Smoke impact must be minimised and you should avoid burning close to neighbouring residents.

### AFTER

- It is your responsibility to ensure your burn is fully extinguished (with water, not dirt) by 6pm on the day of the burn. Embers blown from a smouldering fire can ignite nearby grass and trees causing a fire to spread very quickly. Some materials (eg tree stumps/roots) can smoulder for days if not fully extinguished creating embers which may ignite nearby vegetation.

## Remember

Even when carefully planned and carried out, burning off still carries risk. Following these guidelines does not release you from liability if your fire becomes out of control. Following these guidelines may help to minimise the risk to you, your property and your neighbours. If in doubt, don't light up. There's always another day and another option.

## Fire Brigades and the Community

Fire brigade members are volunteers. They are community members who give up their time with family and work to help protect the wider community. Proper planning and preparation for your burn off can prevent unnecessary response by brigades.

## Penalties and fines

**PLEASE BE AWARE:** Under the CFA Act severe penalties can be applied if you do not burn off safely.

Burning off without a written Permit during the Fire Danger Period is prohibited under the CFA Act and fines of greater than \$17,000 and/or 12 months in prison may apply.

On the spot fines for breaches of Council's local laws can be applied for burning off outside the Fire Danger Period.

## Alternatives to burning off

### Mulching and composting

Mulching and composting are ideal ways of reducing green waste. Mulching and composting at home reduces fire hazards, conserves water and protects the environment.

### Green Waste bin

In townships, Council provides a green waste collection service every fortnight. Over a year, this is equivalent to around 12 trailer loads. Larger/additional bins are available for a small administration fee – an extra 360L green waste bin (equivalent to 18 trailer loads) costs just \$65/year.

### Green Waste Tip Voucher

All Surf Coast Shire ratepayers receive a Green Waste Tipping Voucher annually. This entitles you or your tenant to dispose of one trailer load of green waste at any Surf Coast Shire Transfer station, free of charge. Only clean green waste will be accepted (e.g. long grass, garden or tree refuse).

### Contractors

Part of the cost of owning a property is maintenance. Often there are things we cannot do ourselves (plumbing, electrical, etc) so at times we need to engage a professional. There are plenty of businesses providing services in the Surf Coast Shire, search the Yellow Pages under grass slashing, vegetation removal or tree lopping.



## Further information on burning off

- Contact Council's Community Fire Safety and Environment Officers on **5261 0600** or go to
- **[www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au)** and search Burning off and the Fire Danger Period
- **[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)** and search Burning Off
- Victorian Bushfire Information Line **1800 240 667**.

