

Large piles/windrow burn offs

Council recognises that residents may have need to burn off larger piles (more than 3 metres in any dimension) from time to time in order to manage their bushfire risk.

This document outlines the principles and requirements under Local Law 20 for larger burn offs, including windrows, outside the declared fire danger period. For information on burning off during the fire danger period, please contact the Country Fire Authority or see <https://firepermits.vic.gov.au/>.

A local laws permit will be required.

For all burn offs beyond the provisions of the Local Law, a permit is required to be issued before the burn off takes place. Applications for permits can be made at

<https://www.cardinia.vic.gov.au/burningoff>.

An inspection of the burn pile may be required before the permit is considered.

Only vegetation can be burnt.

- Household rubbish, building and commercial waste must not be burnt.
- Vegetation should be dead and dry. Residents should attempt to minimise the inclusion of soil and earth.
- All material in the pile should be less than 100mm in diameter wherever possible. Larger and heavier fuel will burn longer.

Fuel arrangement

Smaller more manageable piles which will burn for a short time are a preferred option over a large pile which will burn for a long time.

- All vegetation to be burnt should be at least five metres clear of any log, stump or other flammable material, including grass.
- Locate piles in open areas away from trees and overhanging branches.
- Piles should be well clear of power lines or telephone cables. Smoke and ash can cause power lines to arc and the heat will damage the lines.
- Construct long and wide piles rather than excessively high piles. Piles that are too high produce too much heat. If there is a large quantity of vegetation to be burnt construct several small piles rather than one large one.

Windrow considerations

In this context, windrows refer to concentrations of removed vegetation (usually trees) and debris prepared for disposal through use of fire.

The aim of burning heavy fuels pushed up into heaps or windrows is to remove as much fuel as possible, including large logs. The difference from smaller piles is that windrows are always going to be long burning because of fuel size. This means they can be alight for many days, or even weeks and provide a potential source of escape, particularly after a dry winter, or if there is an early start to the fire season.

Before committing to pushing heavy fuels into windrows and then burning them, consider any other viable options to remove the fuel such as harvesting the larger logs for firewood and shredding the residue for garden mulch.

If burning is the only viable option, the following guidelines should be followed:

- When constructing windrows use root rakes or excavators rather than blades to minimise the inclusion of earth
- To encourage complete combustion, leave the windrow aerated as much as possible
- Allow time for the fuels to dry before attempting to burn
- Leave a 20-metre-wide gap every 50 metres along windrows
- Do not construct windrows under or near power lines
- Leave a safe distance between the windrow and standing vegetation
- Plough or blade around windrow to reduce flammable vegetation
- Do not rely on marshy type ground as a barrier

Weather conditions

Burn offs should only take place when the weather conditions are suitable. Residents should use the following prescriptions as a guide:

- Temperature – less than 25°
- Relative humidity – not less than 40%
- Windspeed at ground level – not more than 15 km/h
- Fire Danger Rating – Moderate or lower.

Burning off outside these prescriptions risks increased fire behaviour and potential loss of control.

Burn resourcing

Residents should have suitable firefighting equipment available to ensure the burn off can be controlled. This may include:

- Reticulated water supply with hose that can reach all parts of the fire,
- Water tank mounted on vehicle or trailer of a suitable capacity for the fire (recommended minimum of 1000 litres)
- Water pump – electrical or petrol/diesel.
- Suitable fire fighting tools such as rake hoes
- Suitable numbers of personnel to ensure that the fire is patrolled and maintained as safe.

Residents should not rely on the CFA being available to assist with private burns.

Contingency planning

As part of your planning, it is important to consider any possible contingencies. What will you do if:

- Weather conditions are outside prescription, winds are gusty?
- Fuel moisture content is not suitable?
- Lighting plan is not effective?
- An incident occurs or someone receives an injury?
- The fire escapes or spots over control lines?
- The fire becomes unmanageable with current resources?

Safety must always guide your decision making. You should continually monitor the conditions in the burn area and the fire behaviour.

Register your burn.

All burns must be registered with ESTA on 1800 668 511 or online at

<https://firepermits.vic.gov.au/>