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Forestry Corporation

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Fire management in State forests

Forestry Corporation of NSW has a distinguished and successful history as one of NSW's lead firefighting authorities, having developed capability and strategy to manage fires across its estate and compiled significant natural resource management data and knowledge over many years. Forestry Corporation has been involved in fire management for 100 years and it is still one of the most important roles we continue to play today.

As one of the State's four official firefighting authorities, Forestry Corporation is responsible for managing fires in more than two million hectares of native and planted forest.

Our staff are trained fire fighters and manage fire by hazard reduction burning to reduce fuel in the forest, monitoring forests to detect and respond to fires as quickly as possible, maintaining a network of access trails and roads, and by actively fighting wildfires to protect life and property.

Hazard reduction burning in State forests

The severity of wildfires depends on weather, topography and the amount of fuel, in the form of flammable vegetation and leaf, bark and twig litter, available to burn. Fuel is the only one of these factors we can influence, which is why we complete hazard reduction burning.

Hazard reduction burning, also known as prescribed burning or fuel reduction burning, reduces the volume of leaf litter and flammable vegetation in forests. Reducing the fuel available means wildfires in the area will be less intense and easier and safer to manage. This in turn limits potential damage to the environment and reduces risks to surrounding communities.

Each year, Forestry Corporation completes around 30,000 hectares of hazard reduction burns across the state during the cooler spring and autumn months.

Planning hazard reduction burning can be complex and involves identifying priority areas with high fuel loads and carefully monitoring weather conditions to pinpoint the right time to burn.

We combine data gathered using sophisticated laser imagery, known as LiDAR, with traditional visual field fuel assessments and fire history to identify areas with high fuel loads. We then discuss and consult with local communities and District Bush Fire Management Committees to determine the priorities for each hazard reduction season to limit the potential impact of wildfires on communities and the environment.

Some areas of forest are permanently protected from hazard reduction burns, for example if the area contains an important fire sensitive ecosystem, threatened species, or a plantation, but targeted burns to reduce fuel in strategic areas have a big impact on wildfire control.

Each hazard reduction burn has an operational plan that maps its boundaries, outlines the forest types, wildlife habitat and other environmental factors that have been considered during planning, and predicts fire behaviour

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based on rainfall history, temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction, vegetation characteristics and topography.

We use existing trails, natural barriers or small bulldozers to clear accessible, safe and well drained fire control lines to contain the burns and monitor all hazard reduction burns carefully.

There's a narrow window of opportunity to safely complete hazard reduction burns, when it's not too hot or damp and the wind conditions limit the impact of smoke on neighbours, so once we have a plan in place we often need to move quickly if we get the right conditions to complete the burn before the window closes.

Post-harvest burning in State forests

Fire is very much a natural part of many Australian ecosystems. Aboriginal people used fire as a forest management tool well before European settlement and fire remains an important regeneration tool. After timber harvesting, burning the leaves and smaller branches left on the forest floor creates a rich seed bed that encourages new seedlings to grow. After plantations are harvested, the residual branches and material is burnt in preparation for planting the next crop of trees.

Living near a State forest

Forestry Corporation participates in the State's coordinated fire management effort to limit the impact of fire on communities and the environment.

Protecting urban areas surrounded by bushland requires a mix of effective prevention, and early detection and suppression of wildfires. There is considerable planning and cooperation between firefighting authorities and local communities to plan fire trails, equip and train firefighting crews and prepare to quickly deploy to wildfires.

If you live in a fire prone area, contact your local council or the Rural Fire Service for more information on fire prevention and bush firefighting.

The community can follow the progress of planned hazard reduction burns and other fires using the Rural Fire Service's Fires Near Me website or app.

Further information

For more information about State forests, visit **www.forestrycorporation.com.au**

Hazard reduction burning is carefully planned and closely monitored.

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