

Managing the fire

It is your responsibility to ensure that any fire you light does not adversely impact on other persons, properties, or the environment. If you already have a permit, it means that the Fire Warden is satisfied with how you plan to manage the fire and how you will contain and control it. Make sure you follow the plan and abide by the conditions of the permit. It is important to ensure your fire doesn't smoke out your neighbours or become a nuisance or health issue. Consider where the wind will take the smoke of your fire and who it is going to affect.

If you are concerned that the fire may get out of control or your fire may escape from the planned boundaries, you must:

- take all reasonable steps to extinguish or control the fire
- as soon as is practicable, report the fire by calling ooo (triple zero).

How long do I supervise the fire?

You need to supervise the fire for as long as necessary to ensure that it does not escape. The Permit to Light Fire states: "After burning, the perimeter of the burn **must** be made safe and the fire patrolled until there is no longer any risk of the fire escaping".

You can cease patrolling when the burnt area is cool, with no remaining heat source.

If you are at all concerned about the behaviour of the fire, act early. Remember... Your fire – your responsibility.

Fire Permits and Fire Bans

Bushfires are more likely to spread and cause damage on days when the weather is very hot, dry and windy. These are very high to extreme fire danger days. To reduce the risk of fires damaging or destroying life, property and the environment QFES may declare a local Fire Ban or during extreme fire danger conditions a State of Fire Emergency. While a Local Fire Ban or State of Fire Emergency is active the lighting of fire is prohibited and any permit issued is automatically cancelled.

Any Local Fire Ban or State of Fire Emergency declaration is widely broadcast in local media, QFES Social media and on the RFS website.

Penalties and Fines

Lighting a fire without a permit (where one is required) or not adhering to permit conditions can attract serious penalties, including on the spot fines or prosecution. The gravity of these penalties indicate how serious the Queensland Government is about ensuring that the use of fire is authorised, safe, and does not adversely impact on you, the community or surrounding environment.

Where do I find more information?

Assistance and information can be obtained from a number of sources, as follows:

- your Fire Warden - see the Fire Warden Finder at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au
- your local fire brigade - Urban Fire Station or Rural Fire Brigade
- the nearest Rural Fire Service Area Office - a contact list is included on the last page of this brochure.

Additional References:

- Lighting Fires in Queensland brochure
- Applying to Light Fires in Queensland brochure
- Information for Landholders brochure

Contact Us

Barcaldine	(07) 4651 1190
Bundaberg	(07) 4153 3244
Burnett	(07) 4162 3163
Caboolture (Brisbane)	(07) 5420 3733
Cairns	(07) 4232 5468
Caloundra	(07) 5420 7517
Charters Towers	(07) 4761 5130
Darling Downs	(07) 4616 1945
Emerald	(07) 4983 7580
Gladstone	(07) 4899 2200
Innisfail	(07) 4061 0650
Mackay	(07) 4965 6641
Maryborough	(07) 4190 4839
Rockhampton	(07) 4938 4736
Roma	(07) 4622 2074
South Coast (Gold Coast)	(07) 5587 4101
Townsville	(07) 4796 9082
West Moreton (Ipswich)	(07) 3294 4944

Obligations and Responsibilities of Permit Holders

Information for applicants and holders of a
Queensland Fire and Emergency Services
Permit to Light Fire

www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au

Permits to Light Fire

This brochure provides information on the obligations and responsibilities associated with the use of a Queensland Fire and Emergency Services (QFES) Permit to Light Fire (permit). Under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1990 (the Act)*, it is illegal to light a fire that is not exempt by legislation without an authorised permit. Lighting a fire without a permit (where one is required) or not adhering to permit conditions can attract serious penalties, including on the spot fines or prosecution.

Having a permit helps to ensure that fire is used safely, responsibly and under conditions aimed to minimise the impact on people and the environment. A permit sets out the rules around how a fire is lit and maintained and lets the fire service know when you are using fire on your property.

As a permit holder it is expected that you understand and meet your obligations on using fire in a safe and responsible manner.

Protection from liability - For fires that require a permit a person does not incur any liability under *the Act* or common law for any loss, injury or damage caused by the fire providing a person complies with the conditions and directions of the permit or it can be shown that the person acted recklessly or maliciously.

Applications for a Permit to Light Fire can be obtained from your local Fire Warden, the Rural Fire Service (RFS) Area Office or downloaded from the RFS website at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au.



What Do I Need to Know?

A permit is a **legal document** that can only be issued by a Chief Fire Warden or a Fire Warden in their area of responsibility.

The permit authorises a person to light, maintain and use a fire during a set period of time **on the land described** and **in accordance with the permit conditions**. Please note that a permit can be amended, cancelled or suspended at any time depending on weather conditions.

A permit is only issued for burning vegetation on your property. This includes large area burns for hazard reduction, managing grazing lands, timber production management, weed control and burning accumulated vegetation. You cannot burn any materials that are toxic or hazardous such as rubber tyres, plastics and paint. In addition, the fire must not cause air pollution by producing excessive amounts of smoke.

You also need to be aware of other laws and requirements in your local government area that could potentially restrict or prohibit the lighting of a fire or clearing of native vegetation.

To issue a permit the Fire Warden needs to be satisfied that the property owner/occupier :

- has sufficient knowledge, experience and equipment to manage the fire/s described on the permit application
- has put measures in place to safely conduct the permitted burn without adverse effect on life, property or the environment
- has confirmed that there are no local laws or other restrictions which prohibit the lighting of a fire on the subject land
- has made a reasonable attempt to notify neighbours of the intent to apply for a permit.

Permit holders:

- must have the permit in their possession before lighting the fire and may need to produce a copy if requested
- must ensure that a person with the capacity and means to extinguish the fire is in attendance at all times while the fire is alight
- must comply with all conditions on the permit
- cannot alter anything on a permit without the consent of the Fire Warden.



Who do I need to notify?

As a permit holder you would have already contacted your neighbours before submitting your application to the Fire Warden. However, it is also considered good practice to let your immediate neighbours know before you light the fire so they can make arrangements to avoid the smoke, move stock or undertake other preparations they deem necessary.

For any permit burn you also need to contact:

- **The local QFES Fire Communications Centre (Firecom):** just before you light the fire (the Free call 1800 number will be written on the permit). Firecom is responsible for taking reports of fires, e.g. 000 (triple zero) calls and allocating QFES resources accordingly. They need to know of any planned fires in an area to avoid unnecessary responses.
- **The local fire brigade:** as they are likely to be the first response unit that becomes aware of the fire.
- The Fire Warden may include a condition that requires you to notify certain parties of your intent to burn, if this is the case, you are obligated to do so.



When to light

Under *the Act*, lighting a fire means to light, maintain and use a fire. This means that permit holders need to conform with the conditions of the permit not only when lighting the fire, but throughout the period while they are maintaining the fire. Any conditions detailed by the Fire Warden must be followed throughout the entire burn.

If there are no time restrictions detailed, you can choose the most suitable time for the planned outcome of your burn. To ensure that you maintain control throughout the burn, you need to be aware of the weather conditions for the duration of the planned fire, **not just at the time of lighting**.

Wind, temperature, humidity and rainfall are weather elements that affect the behaviour of bushfires. These variables are used by Fire Agencies to determine a Fire Danger Rating (FDR) which relates to the difficulty of controlling and putting out any fires which may occur. If fire conditions are likely to be dangerous, the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) issues Fire Weather Warnings to alert the public. This can lead to the Fire Service declaring a Fire Ban across a defined area. A four day outlook FDR can be found at www.ruralfire.qld.gov.au/Pages/FDR.aspx to assist in fire planning across Queensland.

Checking the weather forecast prior to lighting is essential to ensure that the current and forecast conditions will not be outside those detailed by the Fire Warden on the permit. Obviously, you cannot control the weather, but by checking the conditions prior to lighting a fire, you have the best chance of ensuring that you follow the requirements of the permit for the entire time that the fire is alight.

There are a number of useful weather sites on the internet, some of which provide daily forecasts (up to four days ahead) showing the temperature, relative humidity, wind strength and direction. A good site to obtain a general weather forecast in your area is the BOM website at www.bom.gov.au.