

# FIRE PREVENTION NOTICE FAQs

## It is important to prepare your property for fire

### Why did I receive a Fire Prevention Notice?

Council's Municipal Fire Prevention Officers have recently assessed your property for fire hazards in the lead up to the summer Fire Danger Period and determined that you need to reduce fuel loads on your property to reduce the fire risk.

### What do I have to do?

You are required to clean up fine fuels such as **leaves, twigs and long grass** to reduce the risk to your property from fire as per the Notice. The works must be carried out by the completion date. You must maintain your property in this state for the duration of the Fire Danger Period.

You are required to do the works detailed on the Notice. The Notice does not authorise you to remove shrubs and trees. If you wish to remove trees and shrubs, please contact Council's Planning Department for advice.

### But I've just cut my grass!

There is a small delay between the fire hazard inspection program and the issuing of Fire Prevention Notices. If you have already carried out what is required on the Notice, then you don't need to worry. Just ensure you maintain your property in this state for the duration of the Fire Danger Period.

### Why does Council issue Fire Prevention Notices?

Under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*, Council has a legal obligation to ensure the community's risk associated with wildfire is reduced. Municipal Fire Prevention Officers have the powers of inspection and to issue Fire Prevention Notices. Council also has the legal right to do anything to remove a fire hazard on private land and recoup the costs.

### What will happen if I don't comply with the Notice?

Follow-up inspections are carried out on properties that have received a Fire Prevention Notice. If the works required have not been carried out to the satisfaction of the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer by the due date, a contractor will be engaged to carry out the works and the costs will be passed back to you with additional administration fees. You may also

receive a fine of over \$1,400. Council will not contact you prior to undertaking works once the Fire Prevention Notice has been issued.

### When is the Fire Danger Period?

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) introduces Fire Restrictions (Fire Danger Period) for all private land in Golden Plains Shire over the summer period each year. During this period residents are required to obtain a permit to burn in the open air. Start and end dates vary from year to year and once declared can be found on these websites: CFA ([www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)) and Council ([www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au](http://www.goldenplains.vic.gov.au)).

## DID YOU KNOW?

**Trees are not the main factor in increasing fire intensity and spread.** Fine fuels include grass, leaves, bark and twigs smaller than the diameter of your little finger are responsible for the majority of fire intensity and spread.

**Under the 10/30 rule, landowners can remove native trees** within 10 metres of a dwelling and all fine fuels within 30 metres of a dwelling without the need for a Planning Permit.



### I disagree with the assessment!

If this is the case, please ensure you contact the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer to discuss your situation **before the completion date** on your Notice.

### Will this Fire Prevention Notice save my home and life?

There are no guarantees of personal or property safety when it comes to wildfire. The works detailed on the Fire Prevention Notice are designed to reduce radiant heat, fire intensity and ember attack and minimise direct flame impact on you or your

neighbour's assets. They are consistent with CFA guidelines for protecting your home.

### **My roadside is a fire hazard. What can I do?**

Council's fire hazard inspection program focuses on protecting your house and outbuildings by providing a fuel reduced area around these assets as per CFA guidelines. You must have permission from Council before removing native vegetation from a roadside.

Within townships, Council cuts roadsides in the lead up to the fire season. In rural areas, sealed roads get cut to the white posts with the aim of reducing fire ignitions from vehicles parked on the side of the road or carelessly discarded cigarette butts. Gravel roads are not cut.

The Country Fire Authority conducts roadside fuel reduction burning in strategic areas to create fuel reduced zones to help control wildfires.

The message from fire authorities is clear. **Roads are not last minute escape routes.** The safest refuge for residents caught unexpectedly by fire is in their well-prepared home, not on the road in their car or even worse, trying to escape on foot.

### **I'm planning to cut my paddock for hay.**

If it is your intent to cut your paddock for hay, just give the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer a call and inform us of your intentions before the completion date on your Notice.

### **I'm going to put stock on that paddock.**

If it is your intent to put stock on your paddock, just give the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer a call and inform us of your intentions before the completion date on your Notice

### **I want to complain about my neighbour's fire hazard.**

Please let us know if there is a property of concern to you – we will inspect the property and provide the owner with a Fire Prevention Notice if required.

Council's fire hazard inspection program is focused on reducing fuel loads immediately around your assets (house and outbuildings). If the fire hazard you are concerned about on a neighbouring property falls outside this area, it is unlikely a Fire Prevention Notice will be issued.

### **There is long grass next door, there are snakes and I have kids!**

Snakes in the country are a fact of life so please ensure you maintain a safe area around your house

and outbuildings. Snakes are attracted to the places we live as they provide shelter and food such as frogs and mice that are also attracted to our homes. Try to remove attractions for snakes from your property such as wood piles, stock feed and hay and maintain open areas where children play free of long grass.

There is nothing we can do about the snakes as they are protected species. However, we will inspect the property and if the long grass poses a fire hazard, we will issue the owner with a Fire Prevention Notice directing them to cut the grass as appropriate.

### **I am having difficulty getting the work completed by the deadline, can I have an extension?**

Give the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer a call to discuss your particular situation. In most cases an additional week may be considered but we must hear from you **before the completion date** on your Notice.

### **Why don't you make the person with all the native grasses cut their block?**

Native grasses generate only about 10% of the fuel load of introduced pasture grasses such as Phalaris and Wild Oats – this is why we encourage the retention and regeneration of native grasses. This can only be achieved if we allow them time to re-seed, and not doing so encourages introduced grasses which create a much greater fire risk.

### **What about the Crown Land/Parks land behind my property?**

Council is not empowered to issue Fire Prevention Notices to State Government agencies. It is suggested you contact the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning on 136 186 to inform them of your concerns.

### **I need more information about preparing my property for fire.**

The Country Fire Authority has some excellent resources available to assist residents in preparing their homes for fire. Check out their website ([www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)) or contact the CFA Community Education Coordinator at your local CFA Regional Office.

### **Contacting Council**

If you require any further information, contact the Golden Plains Shire Municipal Fire Prevention Officer on the details below.

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