



Total Fire Bans

Total Fire Bans affect everyone, whether you live near bush or in a built up area. They are a prevention measure to warn you of a day of predicted adverse fire weather. On these days you should be particularly careful not to engage in activities which may cause a fire to start.

WHAT DOES A TOTAL FIRE BAN MEAN?

It means a person must not:

- light, maintain or use a fire in the open air
- carry out an activity in the open air that causes or is likely to cause a fire.

The ban includes:

- hot works (welding, grinding, soldering, gas cutting)
- all solid fuel fires for the purpose of cooking or camping
- use of incinerators and other activities (as described in the 'What Can't I do on a Total Fire Ban day?' section).

WHEN WILL A TOTAL FIRE BAN BE DECLARED?

They are declared on days when fires will be difficult to control, are most likely to threaten lives and property, or when widespread fires are impacting the availability of firefighting resources.

The decision to put a ban in place is based on the weather forecast. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) consults with the Bureau of Meteorology to determine when dangerous fire weather conditions are likely.

The need for the ban to remain is assessed throughout the day and the ban may be revoked if weather conditions ease.

A ban is usually declared the evening before it is to take effect. You should check the **Emergency WA website after 6pm to see if a ban has been declared for the next day.**

HOW LONG IS A TOTAL FIRE BAN IN PLACE FOR?

The ban will usually be in place for the whole day.

HOW IS A TOTAL FIRE BAN DECLARED?

They are declared by DFES based on weather conditions and firefighting capability.





HOW WILL I KNOW WHEN ONE HAS BEEN DECLARED?

You can check if your local government has a ban:

- on the Emergency WA website at www.emergency.wa.gov.au
- by calling **13 DFES (133 337)**
- by listening to **ABC local radio** and other media outlets
- by following DFES on Twitter www.twitter.com/dfes_wa
- by following DFES on Facebook facebook.com/dfeswa

WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES FOR IGNORING A TOTAL FIRE BAN?

You could be fined up to \$25,000 and/or jailed for 12 months, if you ignore a ban.

WHAT CAN'T I DO ON A TOTAL FIRE BAN DAY?

BBQs

Can I use my BBQ?

This depends on what type of BBQ or cooker you have, and where it is located.

During a Total Fire Ban you cannot light or use a fire in the open air.

Undercover areas such as patios, pergolas and huts that are open or partially open to the weather are deemed to be in the open air.

Solid fuel

No. You cannot use any BBQ or cooker that requires solid fuel such as wood or charcoal. This includes wood fired ovens or stoves, and Weber-like BBQs.

Gas

Yes. You can use a gas BBQ for cooking if it has an enclosed flame and:

- all flammable material is cleared five metres away from around your BBQ.
- you are using the BBQ at your home or in a public signposted BBQ area.

BBQs with exposed flames cannot be used.

Electric

Yes. You can use an electric BBQ where there is no flame.

Tips for safely operating a gas BBQ

When operating a gas BBQ during a Total Fire Ban, in addition to a five metre cleared radius, DFES recommends you:

- ensure no burning or hot material escapes this area.
- be in reach of a garden hose.

Short green grass less than five centimetres in height, paving stones, bricks and reticulated gardens are not considered to be flammable.

Can I have a BBQ in my local park?

Yes. But only if:

- you are in a public space or park in an area sign posted as a BBQ area
- you use an electric or gas appliance that has an enclosed flame
- all flammable material is cleared five metres around the appliance (short green grass less than five centimetres in height, paving stones, bricks and reticulated gardens are not considered to be flammable)

You cannot use solid fuel such as wood or charcoal in the open air.

Can I use my wood fired pizza oven?

No. You cannot use solid fuel such as wood or charcoal in the open air. This includes outdoor wood fired pizza ovens.

Undercover areas such as patios, pergolas and huts that are open or partially open to the weather are deemed to be in the open air.

Tools and Equipment

Can I use a chainsaw, plant or grass trimmer, or lawn mower?

Yes. These activities can be undertaken but not in areas:

- where there is bush; or
- which is under crop; or
- pasture; or
- stubble.

If you do use a chainsaw, plant or grass trimmer, or lawn mower it is your responsibility to ensure it does not start a fire.

Can I use a generator?

Yes. This can be undertaken but not in areas:

- where there is bush; or
- which is under crop; or
- pasture; or
- stubble.

If possible postpone this work as the risk of starting a fire is extremely high.

If you do use a generator in a built-up area, it is your responsibility to ensure you do not start a fire.



Can I use equipment and machinery (e.g. bobcats, excavators, bulldozers etc.)?

These activities can be undertaken but not in areas:

- where there is bush; or
- which is under crop; or
- pasture; or
- stubble.

If possible postpone this work as the risk of starting a fire is extremely high.

Can I do grinding, welding or other forms of “hot works”?

No. These types of activities are not allowed in the open air at all unless you have an exemption.

Can I use an angle grinder, power tools or welder inside my shed?

This depends on the type of shed you are working from.

You cannot use any of these if your shed has one or more open sides that are exposed to the weather. This is because of the risk of wind blowing through and causing sparks to land on flammable material starting a bushfire. You can use these tools inside your shed if it is fully enclosed on all sides, and has a door and roof to prevent sparks blowing outside. Please be aware of general safety risks when working inside enclosed spaces, including the risk of fumes.

Can I burn leaves, garden waste and grass cuttings, or use an incinerator?

No. During a Total Fire Ban it is illegal to light, maintain or use a fire in the open air.

Camping and Recreation

Can I light a camp fire?

No. During a Total Fire Ban it is illegal to light, maintain or use a fire in the open air.

You could be fined up to \$25,000 and/or jailed for 12 months, if you ignore a ban.

Can I cook while camping outdoors?

This depends on the type of cooking appliance you are using.

You cannot:

- light a camp fire or maintain a fire in the open air
- use any solid fuel such as wood or charcoal for cooking in the open air.

You can use an electric or gas appliance that has an enclosed flame:

- if you are in a public space or park. You must only cook in an area sign posted
- all flammable material is cleared five metres around the appliance.

Can I drive on to my bushland block and go camping?

No. During a Total Fire Ban you cannot use a vehicle in the bush or in a paddock, unless:

- it is for agricultural purposes, and
- your local government hasn't declared a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban.

You cannot light a camp fire (see ‘Can I cook while camping outdoors?’ for details).

Can I ride my motorbike/ motocross bike or quad bike in bush or on a paddock or track?

No. During a Total Fire Ban you cannot use a vehicle in the bush or in a paddock, unless:

- it is for agricultural purposes, and
- the local government hasn't declared a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban.

You can only use a vehicle on a road, track or in an area that has been sufficiently cleared of flammable material.

Can I use a dune buggy?

No. See above.

Farming and Industry

Can I harvest my crop?

Yes. But only if a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban has not been declared by your local government.

Additionally, check with your local government regarding any fire suppression equipment that may be required to be onsite while harvesting.

Can I feed or water my stock in a paddock?

Yes. But only if a Vehicle Movement Ban has not been declared by your local government.

If one has been declared, the immediate welfare of animals, such as urgent watering and feeding of stock has an automatic exemption.

However:

- you must ensure your vehicle is mechanically sound
- the exhaust system is in good condition, free of gas leaks and/ or has a spark arrester that is well maintained, and
- you must ensure all reasonable precautions have been taken to prevent a bushfire starting.

Can I operate or move an aeroplane or helicopter in a paddock?

Yes. But only if a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban has not been declared by your local government.

Note however that the following conditions need to be met:

- you must ensure your aeroplane or helicopter is mechanically sound
- you must take all reasonable precautions to prevent a bushfire starting
- there must be a firebreak around the area of the landing ground
- there must be at least 150 litres of water in a suitable container and a fire extinguisher at the landing site



- check with your local government whether any additional fire suppression equipment that may be required on site.

What if both a Total Fire Ban and a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban are in place?

If both bans are in place for your local government you cannot work or use a vehicle, equipment or machinery powered by an internal combustion engine on land covered by bush, crop, pasture or stubble as there is a chance it will start a fire.

However the immediate welfare of animals, such as urgent watering and feeding of stock has an automatic exemption.

Can I work on a professional construction site near bushland, crops or pastures during a Total Fire Ban?

No. You cannot use power tools, including grinders and welders, or carry out any activity that causes or is likely to cause a fire in the open air, unless you have applied for and received an exemption from DFES.

Other

Can I use fireworks?

No. You cannot use fireworks unless you have applied for and received an exemption from the DFES.

Licensed pyrotechnics should seek further advice from DFES or their local government.

Can I use a hot air balloon?

No. You cannot operate a hot air balloon burner or use any other fire in the open air, unless you have applied for and received an exemption from DFES.

Any activity that causes or is likely to cause a fire in the open air is banned.

Can I use blasting equipment or explosives?

There are many variations with regard to this activity. If it is necessary to carry out this activity you should contact your local Chief Bushfire Control Officer at your local government or nearest DFES office for advice.

Does the ban apply to cigarettes, cigars, tobacco and matches?

Throwing a burning cigarette, cigar, tobacco or match away in a situation that causes or is likely to cause a fire, including from a vehicle, is banned.

Can I get an exemption to carry out work during a Total Fire Ban?

Some industries and activities may be given an exemption depending on the nature of their activity.

How can I get an Exemption?

An exemption may be granted if you can show you are taking proper steps to prevent any fire spreading, and that you can control and put out any fire that may start.

Exemptions can cover specific times and locations, and can be changed or cancelled at any time.

You need to apply for an exemption in writing by completing an exemption application form, available at www.dfes.wa.gov.au.



For more information or advice call the TFB Information Line on 1800 709 355.