

Fire Prevention Notices

Frequently Asked Questions

Why would I receive a Fire Prevention Notice?

During the lead up to the summer Fire Danger Period, Council's Municipal Fire Prevention Officers (MFPO) conduct inspections of properties to ensure the fire hazards on private property are minimised. A Fire Prevention Notice is a notice issued as deemed necessary to protect life and property from the threat of fire. The notice may be served to an owner or occupier of a property. If you receive a Fire Prevention Notice it is because a Council MFPO has assessed your property for fire hazards and determined that you need to reduce fuel loads on your property to reduce the fire risk.

When is the Fire Danger Period?

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) introduces Fire Restrictions (Fire Danger Period) for all private land in Towong Shire leading into the summer months. This can be anytime between Spring to Autumn. 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 the CFA website: www.cfa.vic.gov.au

For fire permits visit: www.firepermits.vic.gov.au

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 bushfire is reduced. MFPOs 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 do I have to do if I receive a Fire Prevention Notice?

If you receive a Fire Prevention Notice you are required to comply with the instructions in the notice. The works must be carried out by the due date. The notice does not authorise you to remove any shrubs and trees unless marked. If you wish to remove trees and shrubs, please contact Council's Planning Department for advice.

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

Follow up inspections are carried out on properties that have been issued a Fire Prevention Notice. If the prescribed works have not been completed to the satisfaction of the MFPO by the due date:

- Council can appoint a contractor to enter upon your land to carry out the works specified in the Fire Prevention Notice, and;
- The owner or occupier will have to pay all associated costs in carrying out the works specified in the notice plus an administration fee.
- Failure to take action may result in fines or costs being charged to you for the removal of any fire hazards to ensure the property is safe.

What if I can't carry out these works?

If you are unable to carry these works on your property, you may wish to employ a contractor to assist. There are a number of businesses providing these services listed in the area.

If you engage a contractor to undertake the prescribed works, it is your responsibility to liaise with the contractor to ensure they complete the works by the due date.

What if I disagree with the assessment?

If this is the case, please ensure you contact the MFPO via letter or email to discuss your situation before the completion date on your Notice. Please include your name, phone number, fire prevention notice number and reason for your objection.

I am having difficulty getting the work completed by the deadline. Can I have an extension?

Write to or email the MFPO to inform them of your particular situation. In most cases an additional week may be considered but we must be made aware before the completion date on your notice.

My roadside is a potential fire hazard. What do 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.

What about the Crown land/Parks land behind my property?

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) carries out a program of slashing and fuel reduction burning on Crown land every year to reduce bushfire risk. The community can contact DEECA at any time on 136 186 to discuss concerns about bushfire risk on public land.

What if I'm worried about my neighbour's possible fire hazard?

If there is a property of concern to you, please let one of our Customer Service Officers know (in person, via email or on the phone). We will send a Fire Prevention Officer to inspect the property and, if required, will issue the owner with a Fire Prevention Notice.

Will a Fire Prevention Notice save my property and my life?

There are no guarantees of personal or property safety when it comes to bushfire. 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.

What height should my grass be kept at?

As a property owner, it is your responsibility to maintain your property and ensure that grass is kept to the required heights at all times (10 cm and under).

What if I've just cut my grass?

There can be a small delay between the fire hazard inspection and the time you receive the Fire Prevention Notice. If you have carried out the work that has been requested in the notice since the date of inspection, please disregard the Notice and ensure you maintain your property for the remainder of the Fire Danger Period.

What if I'm planning to cut my paddock for hay or put stock in my paddock?

If it is your intent to cut your paddock for hay or put stock in your paddock, contact the MFPO before the completion date on your notice.

What if 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) or contact the CFA Community Education Coordinator at your local CFA or Regional Office.

Have more questions?

Contact Council's MFPO on 1300 365 222 or info@towong.vic.gov.au.