

Fire News and Advice - Oct 2016

How quickly the year has gone, it seems like just yesterday we were chasing fires all over the SW of WA, including locally. Brigades are busy doing pre-season refresher training and readying equipment. Residents should be well into their fire season preparations, don't leave it until too late! You should also decide on your Bush Fire Action Plan and make sure your family is familiar with all aspects of it.

Important dates - City of Swan including Gidgegannup

- 1st Oct to 30th Nov - Restricted Burning Season - Permits required
- 8th Oct 10:00 am - City of Swan fire info session - Gidge Fire station
- 2nd Nov to 30th April - Firebreaks must be in place and kept clear
- 1st Dec to 31st March - Prohibited Burning Season (unless extended)
- for further details - www.swan.wa.gov.au/Services-support/Emergency-management/Fire

Important dates - Shire of Toodyay including Morangup

- 1st to 31st Oct - Restricted Burning Season - Permits required
- 1st Nov to 30th April - Firebreaks must be in place and kept clear
- 1st Nov to 8th March - Prohibited Burning Season (unless extended)
- for further details - www.toodyay.wa.gov.au/fire-and-emergency-services.aspx

Restricted Burning Season - see dates above

Other than cooking fires, all burning before 6:00pm, and most burning after 6:00 pm on any day requires a permit from a Bush Fire Control Officer. There is an exemption for a SINGLE heap of garden refuse (not rubbish) not exceeding 1 sq metre after 6:00pm and FULLY extinguished by midnight, surrounded by a 5 metre firebreak, having an effective means of extinguishment, and someone remaining in attendance.

How to get a burning permit

Gidgegannup landholders - Gidge Fire Shed 08:30 to 10:00 am Saturdays
Morangup landholders - by email to permits@toodyay.wa.gov.au

Reporting smoke or fire - avoiding false alarms

Lots of legal and safe burning takes place at this time of year by Parks and Wildlife, Brigades and private landholders. Well intentioned people initiate quite a number of unnecessary callouts by brigades each year. Common sense should apply in the decision as to whether to report a fire and maybe a few minutes checking will alleviate your concerns. However if you see a fire which you believe is illegal or out of control, the FIRST call you should make is to 000, not to brigades etc. Try and give accurate details as to location, preferably street (not lot) number. Nothing more frustrating for brigades than trying to find a fire "somewhere in Toodyay rd".

City of Swan public information session - 10:00 am Sat 8th Oct - Gidge fire shed

City officers will be in attendance to answer questions and give advice to landholders on the expectations and requirements of landholders in fulfilling their obligations under the Bush Fires Act, and to give general advice on bush fire related matters.

Private fire units

Any landholder is recommended to have at least some form of unit suitable to the terrain on their property. These may be "slipon" or trailer. Being on hand to quickly deal with a fire outbreak on or near your property before it spreads far can make all the difference. However your personal safety needs to be the highest priority. Don't take unnecessary risks for a fire which you have no realistic chance of stopping.

As a bare minimum you should have a tank with 400 lts water, a petrol or diesel powered fire fighter pump, 15 metres of 19mm ID hose and a variable jet spray nozzle. The unit should be mounted securely on a vehicle or trailer that is rated to carry that load. A common recipe for disaster that we have seen in the past is to mount one of those cheap 1000 ltr cubes (they weigh just over a tonne when full) on a standard small single axle trailer. Aside from the fact that it would almost certainly be illegal on the road, you run the risk of the trailer collapsing/falling apart if towed at anything other than a snail's pace across bumpy ground. Your brigade should be able to provide some advice as to what type of

unit may be suitable for your area, and the retailers of these units have a range of options available. Nothing wrong with a "home built" one if it is fit for purpose.

You should also have adequate protective clothing ie cotton or wool (not synthetic) long sleeve shirts and trousers with a high vis vest, or high vis cotton overalls, leather boots and gloves, safety helmet and glasses, smoke mask. It is also a good idea to have an amber beacon for the roof, UHF CB radio, first aid kit and a woollen blanket in the vehicle for each person likely to be in the vehicle when tackling a fire.

Registration scheme for Private Units in Swan

There is a voluntary registration scheme for higher spec private fire units. Those that are accepted for the scheme are eligible for a annual windscreen vehicle identifier sticker. This will allow (subject to Incident Controller approval) these units to pass a Vehicle Control Point or roadblock established because of the fire, and to supplement brigade response when resources are stretched.

Access to the scheme is limited to Gidgegannup landholders with licensed and roadworthy 4WD vehicles fitted with a fire fighting unit on the vehicle. They must meet guidelines for equipment and safety gear and agree to City of Swan response protocols for private units. The equipment on these fire units needs to be checked and approved by the Chief or Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer. Owners/operators who are not currently active brigade members will need to attend a pre-season briefing.

Note that even if accepted into the scheme you will NOT be allowed to display red and/or blue beacons or to travel in "emergency" mode on the road like the brigades do.

For those who are interested in participating please contact your local brigade, they will be able to give you advice and a copy of the guidelines and requirements, and arrange a time for a briefing, and for the vehicle to be inspected by a DCBFCO.