



MEDIA RELEASE

Fire Weather the Worst in Recent Memory

Bushfires NT senior fire control officer Andrew Turner has described recent fire weather as the worst he's experienced during the past five years.

"Tomorrow will be the 31st fire ban day this year and we normally experience between 12 and 16, so we have already had twice the average," Mr Turner said.

"When you consider our first fire ban day was declared in early August, we've basically had a month's worth of fire ban days in the past 10 weeks or so.

"During fire ban days we urge people to not only refrain from lighting fires, but exercise caution when conducting activities such as welding or mowing as they could spark fires.

"Anyone caught deliberately lighting fires will be prosecuted under the Bushfires Act, of which the maximum penalty is \$25,000 fine or five years jail."

Mr Turner said weather forecasts were favourable for the weekend although strong winds and dry conditions were likely to return from the start of next week, meaning more fire bans could be declared.

He praised fellow colleagues, Bushfires NT volunteers and landholders who have spent much of the past month battling fires at several Top End locations.

"Since the large Adelaide River region fires a month ago we have been busy battling fires at several locations in the Katherine, Mataranka and Douglas-Daly regions including one during the past few days in the Newcastle Waters area," Mr Turner said.

"Thousands of hectares of land have been affected by wildfire during the past few weeks and there is no telling how many more hectares of land will be affected before year's end.

"Everyone involved in working against the fires has done a tremendous job although they all know their work is not done and there is plenty more to do."

Mr Turner said the 2005-06 wet season compounded the challenges facing landholders as well as Bushfires NT staff and volunteers.

"The wet season's late and heavy rains meant numerous landholders were unable to implement land management measures as early as they would have liked or to the level of quality they would have liked," Mr Turner said.

"So had the wet season been more favourable, landholders would probably be better prepared to protect themselves from the conditions experienced recently, that are likely to continue for the next few days, possibly weeks.

"But when you combine the lateness of the wet season and the extreme conditions of the dry season, people can appreciate how trying firefighting conditions have been."

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Andrew Turner on 0428 103 239

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