



MEDIA RELEASE

Bushfires NT Urges Territorians to Take Action

Bushfires NT Director Steve Sutton is urging Territorians to take action to protect lives, property and the environment as the bushfires season progresses.

Mr Sutton said the strong rainfall during the recent wet season had contributed to large fuel loads across the Top End.

“The fact that it rained so much means fuel loads are again significantly high this year,” Mr Sutton said.

“Fire is part of living in the Top End and the better prepared you are for a wildfire the easier it will be to protect your assets.

“The action you take now could prevent your family and neighbours from the heartache that devastating wildfires can cause.”

Bushfires NT enforcement officers have already begun their inspections of rural land properties.

Mr Sutton said measures taken to reduce bushfire risk included the implementation of fire breaks and fire access trails that can be used for back burning operations or access for fire fighting vehicles.

He said fire trails also help in the protection of fire fighters as it gives them a clear area to contain a wildfire.

“It is an offence not to have fire breaks or access trails and there have been several prosecutions resulting in hefty fines and criminal records imposed on landowners who failed to meet the minimum standard,” Mr Sutton said.

“Where landholders fail to comply they may be fined and have a fire break installed by Bushfires NT at the landholder’s cost.

“But the major consideration in all of this is that running the risk of being fined means you are also running the risk of your property being damaged by fire, and surely no one wants that.”

Mr Sutton said the minimum standard for fire trails is four metres wide slashed with the slash removed, bare earth or graded, chemically treated or grazed. If every landholder fulfils their responsibility, there should be a strip 8 metres wide at property boundaries from which to suppress wildfires.

He said landholders should also have a clear or green area around their home for the assets they want to protect in case of wildfire.

“Most people do the right thing and maintain fire trails every year but there are still a few people who think fire won’t affect them - but one day it will,” Mr Sutton said.

“Sadly, one person’s failure to maintain a fire break may also place their neighbour’s property and the lives of volunteer firefighters at risk.

“Every year we hear stories of wildfires in southern states that destroy lives, homes and devastate the environment. Last year we lost nine homes to fire and we don’t want a repeat of that this year.”

Mr Sutton said important tips included the clearance of dried vegetation from people’s property and the placement of sprinklers across their land, to keep the walls and roof or one’s home wet as well as the ground.

He said it was also important to keep all firefighting equipment in a convenient and easily located position as well as ensuring a portable diesel or petrol pump drawing water from tanks or a dam was also crucial by excluding landholders from pressure loss in mains water or power failure.

Ends

Media Note – For more information contact Steve Sutton on 8922 0832

Issued: 11.00am Wednesday 13 June 2007