



**Joint Media Release:**

**17.05.11**

## **2011 Bushfire Season Launched**

Territorians are being urged to take action to protect lives, property and the environment as Bushfires NT and the Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service (NTFRS) joined forces to launch the bushfire season at Hidden Valley today, Tuesday 17 May 2011.

NTFRS Assistant Director of Operations, A/Chief Fire Officer David Ellis said a strong community awareness is important to ensure this year fire season is a safe one.

"A record wet season has seen an increase in fuel loads across the Territory and it is anticipated to be a long and hot fire season," Mr Ellis said.

"Fires are serious business and can cause damage to property and loss of life, now is the time to get prepared and ensure your property is free from combustibles around buildings, you have a fire management plan and your fire breaks are in place.

"During the bush fire season it is important to have a well informed community, the NTFRS in conjunction with ABC radio, 104.1 and Radio Larrakeyah provide Watch and Act and Bush Fire Emergency Warning messages when necessary via the radio.

"These broadcasts may include bushfire information, public safety advice and hazardous fuel reduction requirements depending on the reason for the broadcast.

"Official fire bans and restrictions are in place for the safety of the community. Being aware of the fire danger on any day is also important, think before commencing work in the open and if a fire is burning in your area stay listening to the radio to maintain awareness of the fires progress and location.

"Permits to burn are no longer being issued and the NTFRS and BFNT have commenced fuel reduction programs to minimise the impact of fire and provide relief breaks for attending fire services crews.

"Any illegal fires or malicious fires lit will not be tolerated by the NTFRS, these fires will be investigated and prosecution may occur."

Bushfires NT Acting Director Andrew Turner said the whole of the Territory had experienced extremely strong rainfall this season which means there is a significant amount of grasses and other fuel that needs to be reduced.

"The action you take now could prevent your family and neighbours from the heartache that devastating wildfire can cause," Mr Turner said.

"Landholders can reduce the fire season risk by ensuring that they have fire access trials that can be used for back burning operations or access for fighting vehicles. All landholders should also work to reduce fuel loads in their property.

"The Top End experienced a remarkably high rainfall this year and increased fuel loads are likely to lead to increased fire danger and a higher number of fire bans.

“Central Australia also had exceptionally high rainfall in 2010 and into 2011 and is now facing potentially the worst fire season in decades.

“Historically, periods of exceptional rainfall are followed by intense wildfire seasons. The last of these was between 2001 and 2003.”

For more information contact Bushfires NT on 8976 0098 or go to [www.nt.gov.au/bushfires](http://www.nt.gov.au/bushfires) or NTFRS on 8988 0298 or go to [www.nt.gov.au/pfes/](http://www.nt.gov.au/pfes/).

**Media Note – Bushfires NT Acting Director Andrew Turner and NTFRS Assistant Director of Operations, A/Chief Fire Officer David Ellis are available for interviews**

**Image – Bushfires NT conduct a controlled burn**

*NRETAS Media Contact – Aimee Cadan 8999 4726*

*NTFRS Media Contact – Sarah Trinne 8985 8837*

Issued: 3.30pm Tuesday, 17 May 2011