



POLICY NUMBER - 4.2

POLICY SUBJECT - Bush Fire Control Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans

~~To provide clear guidelines for bushfire control and to comply with the Bush Fire Act 1954~~

Harvesting

~~Harvesting to be permitted to be carried out on every day of the year except Christmas Day and on any day where a harvest ban has been enforced.~~

Harvest Bans

~~The Chief Bush Fire Control Officer in consultation with the Fire Weather Officers is authorised to impose a ban on harvesting and the movement of machinery in paddocks (except for stock watering purposes).~~

Brigade Members

~~Each brigade be encouraged to maintain an up to date list of brigade members and ensure all eligible persons in the brigade complete a membership form.~~

1. POLICY PURPOSE

To ensure processes are in place and followed for the issuing and advertising of Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans.

2. POLICY SCOPE

The policy applies to the Shire of Merredin and its elected members, employees, Fire Control Officers and residents.

3. LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Bush Fires Act 1954

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 Establishing the need for a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban

4.1.1 Issuing a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban under r.24C of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*

A Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban must be imposed under r.24C of the Bush Fires Act 1954 when a Total Fire Ban has been declared and the Fire Behaviour Index is or exceeds 40.

4.2.1 Issuing a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban under r.38A of the *Bush Fires Act 1954*

A Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban will be imposed during the Restricted and Prohibited Burning times and where no Total Fire Ban has been declared when the Fire Behaviour Index has reached or is expected to reach or exceed 40 using the Aurora Fire Behaviour Calculator.

Where the Fire Danger Rating issued by the Bureau of Meteorology is “High” or higher, Fire Weather Officers shall periodically conduct weather readings according to SOP.15 Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans as outlined in the Shire of Merredin Bushfire Operating Procedures. When any two out of the seven Fire Weather Officers report Fire Behaviour Index readings of 40 or higher, the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer shall implement a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban.

The Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer or the Shire of Merredin CEO are all authorised to unilaterally implement a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban if they are of the opinion that regulation of the use of engines, vehicles, plant or machinery is necessary due to a risk that their use may cause a bushfire or be conducive to the spread of a bushfire. Circumstances which may precipitate this decision may include:

- Verification of weather readings cannot be received from or taken by Fire Weather Officers, or if a significant number of Fire Weather Officers are unavailable or out of the district;
- Significant firefighting resources are deployed to fires either within or outside of the Shire;
- There is significant fire activity in the Shire of Merredin, or in neighbouring Shires which may pose a threat to any part of the Shire of Merredin; or
- Conditions or circumstances otherwise deem it necessary in the opinion of the aforementioned officers.

4.2 Implementing a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban

Once the decision has been made to implement a Harvest and/or Vehicle Movement Ban, the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer or Shire of Merredin CEO is to advise the appointed Shire officer of the ban and whether or what time the ban will be lifted or reviewed. The appointed Shire officer will then disseminate the information through a number of public channels according to the Shire of Merredin Harvest Ban Communications procedure.

4.3 Shire of Merredin plant and equipment operators

Upon notice of a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban, all Shire of Merredin employees are to stop all operation of plant while a harvest ban is imposed. Work areas should be made safe and the plant left in a condition ready for firefighting if required.

4.4 Lifting a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban

A Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban will remain in force until the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, the Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, or the Shire of Merredin CEO declares the ban lifted.

In the event of inclement weather conditions or fire activity prevailing, a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban may be extended beyond the original time indicated.

4.5 Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans on public holidays

Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans will be in force annually on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day, irrespective of the weather conditions.

5. KEY POLICY DEFINITIONS

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer: That person appointed by the Shire of Merredin to perform that role, or the person acting in that position as authorised.

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer: That person appointed by the Shire of Merredin to perform that role, or the person acting in that position as authorised.

Fire Behaviour Index: A scale of potential fire behaviour represented by a number from zero to 100-plus which is used to inform decisions (including whether a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is to be imposed) about the fire danger rating for a district.

Fire Control Officer: A person appointed by the Shire of Merredin to perform that role, or a person acting in that position as authorised.

Fire Danger Rating: A rating system used to indicate how difficult it will be to control or suppress a fire. It is based on weather and environmental conditions including temperature, humidity, wind and fuel conditions. There are four ratings, plus "no rating" when there is low risk:

<u>Fire Danger Rating</u>	<u>Fire Behaviour Index</u>
<u>No rating</u>	<u>0 to 11</u>
<u>Moderate</u>	<u>12 to 23</u>
<u>High</u>	<u>24 to 49</u>
<u>Extreme</u>	<u>50 to 99</u>
<u>Catastrophic</u>	<u>100-plus</u>

Fire Season: The high fire risk period roughly bounded by the beginning of the spring Restricted Burning Period (approximately 16th September) and the end of the autumn Restricted Burning Period (approximately 16th March).

Fire Weather Officer: A person appointed by the Shire of Merredin to perform that role, or a person acting in that position as authorised.

As provided for under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*, Council can appoint Fire Control Officers to the position of Fire Weather Officer. For the purposes of this Policy, the role of the Fire Weather Officer is to obtain readings from suitable monitoring equipment to determine the "Fire Behaviour Index". The officers are charged with the responsibility of liaising with each other and with the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer in determining a need for a ban.

Council will appoint 7 Fire Weather Officers at the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Annual General Meeting.

Harvest Ban: A ban imposed on the harvest of processing of a crop by agricultural machinery during the Restricted or Prohibited Burning Period due to dangerous fire weather conditions.

Incident Controller: A person responsible and accountable for the management of all functions across an incident.

Officer in Charge: The officer for the time being in command of a firefighting crew for a given incident.

Prohibited Burning Period: The time of year during which it is declared by the Minister for Emergency Services under section 17 of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* to be unlawful to set fire to the bush and:

- Includes any extension of those times made, or any further times imposed, under that section in respect of the whole of that district or part of that district, in which that land is situated; but
- Does not include any period by which those times are reduced, or for which those times are suspended, under that section in respect of the whole of the district or part of the district, in which that land is situated or in respect of that land in particular.

Restricted Burning Period: A period where burning is restricted by the issuing of a burning permit.

Vehicle Movement Ban: A ban placed on the movement of any self propelled vehicles, plant or equipment on a property, except for access to a home or shed and the emergency watering/feeding of stock using a vehicle during the Restricted or Prohibited Burning Period.

Volunteer Firefighter: Any person not employed as a firefighter who is contributing to firefighting operations on an active fireground, irrespective of whether they are formally registered as a volunteer firefighter with DFES.

6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Fire Weather Officers are responsible for making themselves aware of forecasted weather conditions during the fire season, and for periodically taking weather readings on days forecast to have a Fire Danger Rating of “High” or higher.

Chief Bush Fire Control Officer is responsible for determining whether a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban is to be called, and for alerting the appropriate personnel at the Shire of Merredin. The Chief Bush Fire Control Officer, in conjunction with the Emergency Services Officer, is also responsible for ensuring the appointment of Fire Weather Officers annually at the Shire of Merredin Bush Fire Advisory Council.

Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer is responsible for deputising for the Chief Bush Fire Control Officer in their absence.

7. MONITOR AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Shire’s Executive Manager Strategy and Community and Emergency Services Officer every two years.

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Reviewer:	Emergency Services Officer		
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