



MEDIA RELEASE

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Illegal fires continue amidst suspension on fire permits

With our area hit by a rash of illegal fires since the first of the month, and with elevated dangers seen this week including a Severe fire weather warning and total fire ban on Friday, the New South Wales Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS) is concerned that some residents of the Mid-Western Regional Council continue to light fires on their property even though fire permits across the region have been suspended indefinitely.

“The permit suspension went into effect on 1 September when the Bush Fire Danger Period started one month early across the entire council area until further notice,” said Inspector Troy Gersback of the Cudgegong NSW RFS District, which covers the Mid-Western Regional Council.

“Failure to adhere to this can attract a fine or imprisonment or both. More importantly failure to heed it under the hot, dry conditions across our area could start a bush fire with a potentially devastating impact on life and property.”

The NSW RFS issued a warning on Thursday to expect an increased risk of bush fires across Thursday and Friday before a change brings cooler temperatures over the weekend.

“Strengthening west to north westerly winds will drive up fire danger, particularly in north eastern NSW tomorrow,” the warning said.

“Severe to extreme fire danger is likely. Stay up to date, review your fire plan and if threatened by fire know when you will leave, what you will take and where you will go.” That warning was soon followed with another placing the Cudgegong District under a total fire ban with a Severe fire danger rating.

Inspector Gersback said weather conditions such as this make compliance with the suspension of fire permits especially important.

“We have spread the word of this permit suspension as widely as possible, using social media as well as the traditional broadcast and print news media, and we thank the media for their help,” he said.

“Despite this our volunteers were called to five fires across the district during the first four days of September – four the result of illegally burning rubbish or piles of sticks and logs, and one caused by an unattended campfire.

(OVER)



**Illegal fires continue
xxx unattended campfire.**

“It would seem although all fire permits are suspended across the Mid-Western Regional Council area some landholders are willing to take a risk. With the increased fire danger forecast till the end of this week, our volunteer firefighters will be kept busy enough without needing to attend careless fires such as we have seen since 1 September.”

Under these conditions anyone spotting smoke, other than chimney smoke, should call triple-zero (000) immediately because there is virtually no chance the smoke would be coming from a legal fire.

“It is essential for our firefighters to get to the scene of a fire as quickly as possible,” Inspector Gersback said. “The longer a fire burns unchecked, the more likely it is to pose a major risk to life and property.”

Fire permits are normally issued for burning off that can be conducted safely during the Bush Fire Danger Period. Inspector Gersback said under the current suspension none of these permits will be issued until significant rain reduces the bush fire risk across the Council area.

“The only exception to this ban on permits will be for very special permits allowing the burning of dead animals who have to be put down or who perish due to the drought. These permits carry strict conditions including a three-day limit on using them,” he said.

The NSW RFS urges you to make sure your fire plan is up to date and your family is familiar with it. The agency also urges you to keep yourself aware of each day’s fire danger rating, which you can find on roadside signs across the area, on the fire service web site at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au or through local news media.

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**For more information contact the Cudgegong District Fire Control Centre on 02 6372 4434
For current incidents or major fire updates visit www.rfs.nsw.gov.au**
