

BUSH FIRE HAZARD REDUCTION CERTIFICATE APPLICATION FORM INSTRUCTIONS



Since 1 July 2003, private landowners have been able to obtain Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates, which are a streamlined form of environmental approval for bush fire hazard reduction work. More information regarding these changes can be obtained from the NSW Rural Fire Service website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au.

In order to be issued with a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate, an application form needs to be submitted to Blue Mountains City Council, who will then assess the application and make a determination regarding whether a Certificate can be issued. To ensure that applications are assessed as quickly and efficiently as possible, quality information needs to be provided on the application form. These instructions should help you to provide Blue Mountains City Council with all the information necessary to process your application.

Question 1. Applicant information

This question asks for the name and contact details of the property owner or occupier responsible for property management. Please provide a daytime contact telephone number. An e-mail address is not essential but is useful if you are not always contactable by phone.

Question 2. Address of property or properties where hazard reduction work is proposed

Please provide the street address of the property where the work is to be carried out. If the address of the property is the same as the applicant's address, writing "as above" will be sufficient. As one hazard reduction certificate can cover work on more than one property, the address(es) of all properties involved is required.

Question 3. Does the proposed work encompass land on neighbouring properties?

A single bush fire hazard reduction certificate can cover work undertaken over multiple properties at the one time. If the bush fire hazard reduction work proposed will include land on more than one property, please tick the box for 'yes' and provide written consent from the owners of each property to be involved in the work. Written consent only needs to be simple and written in plain English, but must give specific approval for the work proposed and must be signed by the property owner or person legally responsible for the management of the property.

Question 4. Please provide a start date for the proposed work

Council requests that you provide dates for the commencement and expected completion of the specified bush fire hazard reduction work. It is important Council

knows when clearing work is being undertaken so that resident or community concerns can be related to a specific Hazard Reduction Certificate approval, and so Council can keep track of the progress of hazard reduction works.

Question 5. What types of assets will be protected as a result of the proposed work?

Anything on a property that is valued by someone can be considered to be an asset. However, hazard reduction work needs to be focussed on protecting particular assets rather than reducing general fuel loads on a property.

A Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate can only be issued for certain types of work within certain distances from specific asset types. These are residential buildings, facilities requiring special fire protection (such as schools, hospitals and other health care services), and major buildings such as farm sheds, industrial and commercial buildings.

It is recommended that where bush fire hazard reduction work is to be carried out, that such work is consistent with the NSW Rural Fire Service document "Standards for Asset Protection Zones". This document can be obtained from the Rural Fire Service's Blue Mountains district office or from the RFS website ([click here](#) to be directed there).

Question 6. What vegetation types are present on the site?

Vegetation type can vary significantly between sites in the Blue Mountains, and can even vary significantly on the one site. Knowing what sort of vegetation is present on your site is important as it helps council to determine whether your proposed work strategy is adequate, and helps in the identification of safeguards that you will need to implement to protect against environmental degradation. Some simple descriptions have been provided to help you decide what type of vegetation is present on your site.

- **Forest** – tree canopy dense to slightly separated, trees generally taller than 10m in height.
- **Woodland** – tree canopy clearly separated to very sparse, trees generally less than 10m in height.
- **Heath** – trees and shrubs less than 2m in height, generally occurring near escarpments or exposed places in the mid to upper Blue Mountains.
- **Hanging swamp** – characterised by dense sedges (grass like plants) and ferns less than 2m in height, mostly located on hillsides in the upper Blue Mountains, trees are usually absent.
- **Grassland** – few or no trees, dominated by grasses, not common in the Blue Mountains area.
- **Predominantly exotic** – native vegetation has been cleared or been subject to significant weed invasion, mostly found where well-established urban development meets bushland.

Please give a general idea about what vegetation types are present on your site. You can tick more than one box if more than one vegetation type occurs in the area proposed for hazard reduction.

Question 7. Has the area been hazard reduced previously (if known) and how was this done?

If you are aware that the area proposed for hazard reduction work has been treated previously, please show the method employed to undertake this work. If you are unsure if the area has been hazard reduced before tick 'unknown'.

Question 8. If the site has been previously been mechanically hazard reduced, give the time since last treatment

Please give some indication of how long it has been since the site was last hazard reduced using mechanical means such as slashing, brushcutting or hand removal of vegetation. This information is important as it helps to determine if re-treatment is actually necessary, and what environmental effects could be expected from re-treatment at a given frequency. If you do not know how long it has been since the last treatment tick 'unknown'.

Question 9. If burning is proposed for this site give the time since last fire

Please give some indication of the time elapsed since the last fire on the site if you are applying to burn for bush fire hazard reduction. This information is important because it helps determine whether the area needs to be hazard reduced and what sort of environmental effects could be expected as a result of burning again at a given interval. If you do not know how long it has been since the last fire in the area tick 'unknown'.

Question 10. What is the slope of the area to be hazard reduced?

Please provide an indication of the slope of the land surrounding the assets that you wish to protect. Assets that have bush fire hazards located downhill from them will require greater protection than assets where the hazard is located uphill. Giving the direction of the slope from the asset you are protecting will aid in determining whether the strategy for fire hazard reduction work will provide adequate protection. This information is also important in determining what sort of controls will be necessary to ensure that environmental degradation does not occur as a result of the proposed work.

Question 11. Are there any known threatened species on the site?

If you know of any threatened species that occur, or are likely to occur on your site please indicate what they are and where they occur. Information on threatened species can be obtained from the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change website ([click here](#) to be directed there).

Question 12. Are there any known aboriginal relics or sites within the area to be hazard reduced?

If you know of any aboriginal sites or relics that exist within the area proposed for bush fire hazard reduction works, please indicate what they are and where they are located.

Question 13. Are there any known sites of European heritage within the area to be hazard reduced?

If you know of any historic European relics, or other heritage issues that exist within the area proposed for bush fire hazard reduction works, please indicate what they are and where they are located.

Question 14. How will the work be conducted?

This question asks about the methods proposed to be used in order to achieve bush fire hazard reduction on this site. There are a number of methods available to landowners to reduce fuel loads around vulnerable assets, including tractor based slashing, hand removal of vegetation and burning. These methods are the most appropriate ways of reducing fuel loads with respect to the Blue Mountains environment, however for rural and residential properties mechanical fuel reduction (slashing and hand removal) are preferred by Blue Mountains City Council. See Council guidelines for further information.

Question 15. Do any of the agreements listed apply to the site?

If any of the agreements listed apply to the site you are proposing for bush fire hazard reduction work you will be aware of them. If any agreement applies to the land to be treated please attach a separate sheet containing the details of this agreement and submit it with your application.

Question 16. Describe the work strategy

This question asks for details of how and why the work is to be conducted.

- *Where will the work be conducted?* – You will need to specify where you intend to focus your hazard reduction work. Hazard reduction work should aim to provide protection to specific assets, so the location of the asset and the distance to which fuel reduction work will extend should be described.
- *How will the work be conducted?* – This question asks about your chosen method of reducing bush fire hazards on your site. You will have already identified a preferred method of hazard reduction at question 14 in the application form, so you should elaborate on how you choose to use this method. You should provide information like “an asset protection zone will be created by slashing within a radius of 20 metres from the house”, or “a fuel reduced area will be created around the house by hand removing understorey vegetation”. Please try to be reasonably specific, as this information will assist Council officers in determining whether your proposed strategy will be effective. The NSW Rural Fire Service document “Standards for Asset Protection Zones” will give you a good idea about what sort of strategies will be appropriate for your situation.
- *How much land will be treated?* – Try to give an indication of the number of square metres of land that you intend to clear for hazard reduction purposes. This will help Council officers determine whether your work strategy will offer adequate protection from bushfire, and help prevent excess clearing.

- *Why is the work necessary?* – Bush fire hazard reduction work will only be necessary if a fire hazard actually exists. Please explain why you believe you need to do hazard reduction work on your property.
- *What is the expected outcome of the work?* – This question asks what you hope to achieve by conducting bush fire hazard reduction work on your property. Please include information such as your long-term plans for the area that will be hazard reduced, whether the cleared area will be maintained etc. This will help Council officers decide whether there is long term merit to your proposed work.

Question 17. Please include a map or drawing showing the areas to be hazard reduced

The provision of a diagram or neat drawing will help our Council officers to make a determination about whether the hazard reduction strategy being proposed is appropriate for your site. Photocopies of 1:25,000 scale topographic maps, or print outs from Council's Internet based interactive maps ([click here](#) to be directed there) will be acceptable for larger areas so long as the area to be treated is highlighted. Maps for your area can also be obtained over the counter at BMCC offices.

Please be sure to include the location of any assets to be protected by the work, and give some indication of the dimensions of the area to be treated. Also include any natural features such as watercourses, rock outcrops or anything else you feel might complement or limit the proposed work.

Question 18. Authorisation

The person specified at question 1 must sign and date the application form here.

Submitting your completed application form

When you are satisfied that the application form is complete, please forward it to:

The Fire Protection Officer
Blue Mountains City Council
Locked Bag 1005
Katoomba NSW 2780

Applications will also be accepted over the counter at Council offices.

The information contained in your application will be verified by Council staff, including information on threatened species and cultural heritage. Providing misleading information hinders the assessment process and may affect your chances of being issued with a hazard reduction certificate.

A site inspection may also be necessary to accurately assess your application.

Blue Mountains City Council will endeavour to process all applications for Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificates within 7 days of receipt. If the processing of the

application is expected to exceed this time you will be notified by telephone or e-mail if an address is provided, and an extended time frame will be negotiated.

You will be notified by mail of the approval or refusal of your application. In the case of approvals, your hazard reduction certificate will stipulate a number of conditions within which your work must be completed. These may include environmental controls and the notification of neighbours.

If your application for a bush fire hazard reduction certificate is refused you will also be notified by mail and given reasons for this decision. There are no grounds for appeal of such decisions under Section 100F(8) of the *Rural Fires Act 1997*. Bush fire hazard reduction work may still be undertaken provided that appropriate approvals are sought under all relevant legislation, including but not limited to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*, the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997*, the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Any further information regarding the completion and submission of your application can be obtained by contacting Blue Mountains City Council on 4780 5000.