



Guidelines for Completing an Application to Light and Maintain an Open Fire

Is this the correct application type for what you want to do?

It is easy to be confused about whether burning off should be thought of as bush fire hazard reduction work or whether it is only about disposing of garden waste. To assist residents in deciding which application type they should pursue, Council and the Rural Fire Service provide the following definitions and guidance:

- **Hazard reduction** relates to the removal or modification of previously undisturbed native vegetation (bush fire hazards) in order to reduce the threat of bushfires to lives and property. This type of clearing work typically requires some form environmental approval, such as a development consent or a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate issued by the Rural Fire Service.
- **Property maintenance** refers to activities like routine pruning of trees and shrubs or the collection of fallen sticks and leaves. Property maintenance may have benefits in terms of bush fire preparedness but is not considered to be hazard reduction and does not require an environmental approval.
- **Open burning** is the act of disposing of dead and dry vegetation by fire, regardless of the purpose for which it was collected.

Where approval is required to clear vegetation for bush fire hazard reduction purposes, an application for a Bush Fire Hazard Reduction Certificate should be lodged with the Rural Fire Service. These certificates are free of charge and will normally be assessed within seven days. Approval to burn debris generated by authorised clearing work might be issued by the RFS in exceptional circumstances, however, alternate methods of disposal (such as chipping and mulching) are preferred and should always be the first option.

As a general rule, where the material you wish to burn has already been collected or is the result of any kind of property maintenance, you should lodge an application to light and maintain an open fire with Council.

It is important to note that the assessment of applications can only consider the disposal of dead vegetation by burning as an air pollution matter. Assessment of the application will take into account the type of material to be burnt and the potential effects of smoke on human health and local air quality. Council cannot give consideration to bush fire safety or bush fire hazard reduction outcomes as part of this assessment process.

Standards for Pile Burning

Before filling in an application to light and maintain an open fire, you are strongly encouraged to read the *Standards for Pile Burning* publication available on both the Council and Rural Fire Service websites. These standards have been developed by the Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW, and all pile burning undertaken in the Blue Mountains must be consistent with them. In particular, note the acceptable pile sizes, suitable locations and fire safety considerations you will need to make before lighting any fire.

Providing Location Details

In most cases the street address of the property on which burning is proposed is usually sufficient. If you know the Lot and DP (deposited plan) numbers for the property, providing them is useful,

especially in rural areas as these details are equivalent to a fingerprint for each block of land. However, these numbers are not essential and can be left out if you are unsure of what they are.

Providing Applicant Details

For the purposes of an application for an open fire, the applicant is the person who will take full responsibility for all aspects of the fire, including ensuring it is fully extinguished. The applicant does not necessarily need to be the property owner, but must be an individual. If you are not the owner of the property you should obtain the owner's consent prior to making an application.

Please note that applications specifying a company or corporation as the applicant cannot be accepted.

Application Details

Site plan:

- As all applications will be inspected, a sketch showing where the material is located on the property will assist the assessing officer during their visit. The site plan only needs to be a basic drawing but should indicate key features of the site and where the fire is proposed to be lit.

Proposed timing:

- Council's standard approval period for open burning to occur is 28 days, which allows for appropriate weather conditions to burn safely whilst generating the least smoke. It is unlikely that approval will be granted for periods longer than 28 days but this can be varied in exceptional circumstances. Please consider this when specifying a proposed time frame for the fire.
- Consideration also needs to be given to the time required for the application to be assessed when specifying these dates. Although Council will endeavour to assess each application at the earliest possible opportunity, allow fifteen working days for assessment and a written response.

Types of material to be burnt:

- Please summarise the type of material present in your pile(s). Approval cannot be given for the burning of green vegetation, structural timbers, building wastes, plastics of any kind, or any other kind of domestic refuse. Approval will not be given for the burning of large logs, stumps or piles that are likely to smoulder for extended periods.
- Only dead and dry vegetation that originated on the property should be proposed for burning.

Other means of disposal:

- Prior to submitting an application to burn, all other methods of removal or recycling should be considered. Please provide an indication of why burning is the only practical option for disposing of your waste.

Further questions and advice

If you are unsure of what information to provide at any stage of the application, or for further information relating to open burning, please do not hesitate to contact Blue Mountains City Council on 4780 5000. Additional information and resources are also available at www.bmcc.nsw.gov.au or www.rfs.nsw.gov.au