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Incredibly dry conditions bring forward the start of the fire season

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) has announced an early start to the bushfire season in Victoria due to record-breaking low rainfall.

According to CFA, current climate outlooks produced by the Bureau of Meteorology indicate warmer and drier conditions, which will worsen the current state of dryness in spring and early summer.

CFA is talking about bringing restrictions in as early as September and is urging the public to start preparing for the bushfire season now.

Regionally, the CFA is predicting the West, South and East Gippsland, East metro and Hume regions as most likely to experience an above average bushfire season.

Strathbogie Shire's Municipal Emergency Manager, Ken Ross is urging residents to start preparing their properties now.

"Grass curing can occur very quickly and even though the grass may be green, there will still be a requirement to keep within the required standards," Mr Ross explained.

"We urge landowners and residents to start preparing to ensure their land is as safe as possible."

Mr Ross said properties within townships or less than 2.6Ha must remove all flammable rubbish from their yards and ensure grass and weeds are kept cut to a height of no more than 100mm.

"Properties greater than 2.6Ha must slash around all buildings to a minimum distance of 20 metres," Mr Ross explained.

"Property boundaries must be slashed to a width of 6 metres. When neighbouring dwellings and assets are nearby this must be increased to at least 20 metres."

Mr Ross said the early bushfire season will bring forward inspections and the provision of Fire Prevention Notices.

"If owners and occupiers fail to keep a fire safe environment, a Fire Prevention Notice will be issued by Council.

It is a requirement for the owner or occupier to follow the requests in the Fire Prevention Notice throughout the entire fire season, not just at the time the notice is received.

This year there will also be an additional fee of \$100.00 attached to the Fire Prevention notice to cover administration costs.

A further failure to maintain the requirements of the Fire Prevention Notice will result in a \$1611.90 fine issued by Council,” Mr Ross explained.

Council has an active role in reducing fire hazards within and abutting urban areas. If you have any questions or concerns relating to your obligations, please feel free to contact Council Offices on 1800 065 993.

Here are some handy tips to help you prepare your property to reduce the likelihood and impact of fires:

- Grass and weeds should be kept under 10cm in height
- Remove flammable material in yards, on decks or near neighbouring fences
- If there is rural land abutting urban housing a minimum twenty metre fire break must be maintained between the land and the neighbouring property
- Keep gutters clear of leaves
- Prune low hanging branches from trees and shrubs
- Do not have large shrubs next to or under windows
- Store woodpiles and flammable liquids away from the house

For more information and advice about fire safety, please visit the Country Fire Authority’s website www.cfa.vic.gov.au.

To receive information about fire events in your region, download the VicEmergency app on your mobile or device, which is also available on the CFA website.

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