

Overview

This standard describes your role in carrying out the prescribed burning of surface vegetation, commonly heather and grass. It relates to the work activities that you undertake in preparing for and completing vegetation burning activities.

This standard is aimed at those who work in game management, environmental conservation, farming or forestry on either a full- or part-time basis, and can be applied to any area of land where heather or other surface vegetation is managed by burning.

To meet this standard you will be able to:

- prepare tools and equipment for use in extinguishing vegetation fires
- prepare an area of vegetation to become safe for prescribed burning
- burn surface vegetation under controlled conditions
- support others with the prescribed burning of surface vegetation
- react appropriately, within organisational procedures, to a fire escape
- incident.

For you to fully understand the content of the standard, and the activities it describes, it is important that you are able to understand the terms used within the standard. See Glossary for some definitions that should help you with this.

Carry out prescribed burning activities as part of vegetation management

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

1. carry out work safely, in line with relevant health and safety requirements
2. assist in the identification of an area of surface vegetation to be burnt in accordance with planned burning requirements
3. identify hazards associated with the planned burn
4. assist in the preparation of firebreaks to contain the planned burn, taking account of fuels, weather, aspect and terrain
5. prepare tools and equipment to a safe working condition, ready for use
6. obtain and check the condition of personal protective equipment
7. load and secure equipment for transportation safely
8. carry out your appointed role on the day, as instructed
9. assist in informing the relevant people of the planned burning
10. assist in igniting the vegetation in a controlled manner, according to the ignition plan
11. carry out the prescribed burning, according to planned burning requirements, using appropriate tools and equipment
12. follow instructions and take immediate action to correct any variation from the planned burning requirements
13. monitor and report any variation in prevailing weather conditions or fire behaviour
14. maintain required communications with others throughout the burning process
15. extinguish fires when the required burn objectives have been achieved using hand tools and water.
16. take appropriate action in the event of an emergency
17. provide information to the appropriate person on the results of the burning activities

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Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

1. the health and safety requirements associated with heather burning
2. why heather and other vegetation is burnt as part of wildlife and habitat management
3. the legal restrictions controlling vegetation burning and guidance within codes of practice
4. the hazards associated with vegetation burning including hazards to yourself, others, the environment and wildlife
5. the purpose, value and construction of firebreaks
6. the personal protective equipment required for use by those involved in prescribed burning and why nylon, elastic or other synthetic clothing materials must not be worn
7. the elements (heat, fuel, oxygen) that are required for fire to exist
8. how weather, fuel and topography, including aspect, affect the spread, intensity and severity of fires
9. how to safely use and maintain the tools and equipment that extinguish fire
10. how the tools and equipment are used to control heather and grass fires and ground (peat) fires.
11. the potential impact of vegetation-burning activities on other aspects of the environment including water, soils, habitats, game and other wildlife
12. the fire plans, maps and other procedures used by the organisation that you work for, which enable you to respond effectively in the event of an emergency
13. your role and that of others in the emergency fire plan procedures for the organisation that you work for
14. why it is important to accurately assess emergencies and what key information should be collected and communicated
15. why it is important to follow instructions through a chain of command
16. the importance of maintaining good communications with team members during emergencies

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Scope/range

Tools and equipment:

- fire beaters and scrapers
- heather burners/drip torches
- spades
- knapsack sprayer
- water pumps

Personal protective equipment:

- fire-resistant clothing (non-synthetic)
- helmet/face shield/mask/goggles
- gloves
- fire-resistant boots

Ignite vegetation when:

- it is damp
- it is dry

Glossary

Aspect – The direction towards which a slope faces.

Burn plan – The plan that is approved for the conduct of prescribed burning. It contains a map identifying the area to be burnt and incorporates the specifications and conditions under which the operation is to be conducted.

Burn severity – The heat pulse and consequent impact on vegetation and soils that travels down below the litter layer of a fire.

Fire behaviour – The manner in which a fire reacts to the variables of fuel, weather and topography.

Fire escape – A burn that exceeds the fire prescription, often a runaway fire or wildfire.

Fire intensity – The pulse or rate of energy release that travels upwards from the fire.

Fire type – Ground fire, surface fire or crown fires, most commonly surface fire.

Fire weather – Predicted climatic conditions covering the period of burn, especially wind, air temperature and relative humidity.

Fuels – The type, quantity, arrangement, distribution and moisture content of the vegetation. This can be ground (peat), surface (heather and litter layer) or aerial (trees).

Prescribed burning – The planned application of fire under pre-determined environmental conditions, within boundaries, to achieve resource management objectives.

Topography – The shape of the land, especially its slope and aspect.

Wildfire – A fire that is not being controlled.

Codes of practice – Documents giving the methods developed to assist

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compliance with acts and regulations in the performance of work e.g.
Muirburn Code (Scotland), Heather and Grass Burning Code (England
and Wales)

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