TOTAL FIRE BANS

Total Fire Bans are declared by FESA when there is potential of adverse fire weather or when widespread fires are seriously stretching resources. They are declared on days when fires are most likely to be difficult to control and should they occur threaten lives and property.

When a Total Fire Ban is declared it prohibits the lighting of any fires in the open air and other activities that may start a fire – including use of welders, grinders, or gas cutting.

You can continue farming activities during a Total Fire Ban as long as your Local Government has not imposed a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban.

HARVEST AND VEHICLE MOVEMENT BANS

Individual local governments are responsible for placing Harvest and Vehicle Movement Bans (which prohibit the use of engines, vehicles, equipment or machinery likely to cause a fire). This will happen when the Grassland Fire Danger Index (GFDI) reaches 35 (or less in some shires) using actual local weather conditions.

It is your responsibility as the harvester operator, to be aware of any bans in place where you are harvesting. Your local ABC radio regularly broadcasts bans during harvesting and bushfire seasons. Some local governments may also have additional processes of advising you of bans, such as recorded messaging services and SMS.

REGULATIONS: FIRE SUPPRESSION EQUIPMENT

Farmers and harvesting contractors are required to comply with the Bush Fires Regulations of 1954 and in particular the key points below relating to harvesting activities:

- Section 38 – A person shall not operate any harvesting machine or header in any crop during the prohibited burning times or the restricted burning times unless a fire extinguisher is carried on the machine
- Section 38A (4) – A person shall, when required by a local government, provide a plough or other specified machine, appliance or firefighting equipment in or in the vicinity of any land or paddock where harvesting operations are being conducted
- 'Fire Extinguisher' means a device which comprises:
  (a) a container filled with at least 7.5 litres of water and
  (b) a pump capable of discharging that water and which is in a sound and efficient condition.

To comply with Bush Fire Regulations, FESA asks that you have the following firefighting equipment serviced and readily available at all times during harvest:

- A mobile farm firefighting unit comprising of a tank with a minimum capacity of 400 litres, a powered pump, reel, hose and nozzle. Keep this unit parked on bare ground, in or near the harvesting area for quick access.

OTHER EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES

- All headers, vehicles and homesteads should be equipped with two-way radio communications channelled for district contact (carry mobile phones if service is available)
- At the homestead, have a list of emergency contact numbers.

Consider fire retardant treatment for protective clothing.

For further fire safety information:
Visit: **www.fesa.wa.gov.au**
Phone: **1300 657 209**
Email: **fesa@fesa.wa.gov.au**
or contact your nearest FESA office.

To report a life threatening emergency call **000**

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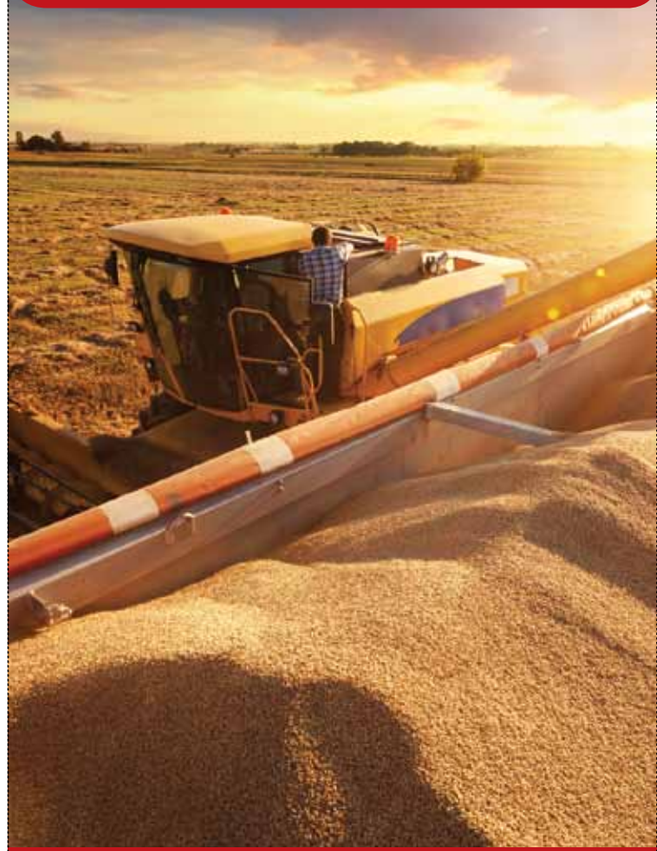
Safe Harvesting Practices

STAY AHEAD OF CROP FIRES



GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FESA
Fire & Emergency Services Authority of Western Australia

STAY AHEAD OF CROP FIRES

GUIDELINES FOR SAFE HARVESTING PRACTICES

Fires are more likely to occur on farms during harvest given the movement of machinery and vehicles through cropped paddocks.

Many of these fires could be prevented by taking some simple fire safety steps, conducting regular maintenance checks and keeping headers clean during harvest.

Modern harvesters have many potential ignition sources including bearings, hot exhausts, turbochargers, electrical circuits and belts which require regular monitoring and servicing. Dry straw, dust, chaff, oil and leaking distillate are the perfect fuels. Keeping headers free of these fuels is important to prevent fires.

Also note that local governments require a firefighting vehicle to be on site during harvesting.

Keeping headers free of dry straw, dust, chaff, oil and leaking distillate is important to prevent fires.

Prior to harvest

- Conduct a thorough check and service of the header.
  - Pay particular attention to chain and belt adjustments, shaft monitoring switches and warning systems
  - Run the machine at speed for at least 20 minutes, then keep it idling and watch, listen and smell for signs of an electrical or mechanical problem
  - Use a laser thermometer to check the temperature of shafts and bearings. High temperatures may be caused by excessive bearing wear, so check and replace worn bearings.
- All stationary engines/motors on augers, field bins and firefighting equipment should be serviced and run before moving into the paddock. Pay particular attention to the working of exhaust systems
- Ensure that all portable fire extinguishers are serviced in accordance with Australian Standards
- Service firefighting knapsacks as required
- Check with your local government for current harvesting requirements.

At the start of each day

- Relocate all firefighting equipment to the area being harvested and check it is ready for use
- Clean any build-up of dust and straw in and around the engine with compressed air, especially after harvesting lupins
- Never leave a header unattended in an unclean state after harvesting lupins
- Complete daily greasing and service requirements
- Check around manifolds, turbo chargers, radiator and electrical components to ensure no combustibles are building up
- Check and clean brake linkages and park brake drums
- Adjust the tension of all belts and chains
- At least twice a day walk around the machine and watch, listen and smell to check everything is in working order
- Refuel on bare areas or on fire breaks and wash off any spilt fuel or oil which may gather dust
- Before refuelling a stationary motor always earth it to reduce the chance of ignition from static electricity.

At the end of each day

- Check that there is no dust or material collected on the header, auger and field bin motors before leaving the header unattended
- Isolate the power if possible
- Park the header on a harvested or clear area.

Precautions

- Extreme caution should be taken when moving and parking vehicles. Always try to drive on tracks and park on a clear area, as crop fires can start from hot exhaust systems and catalytic converters
- Drag a metal chain to reduce static build up and prevent fires
- Fully release park brakes before operating.

Check the tension of all belts and chains at the start of each day.

CANOLA CROPS (RAPESEED) POSE A HIGH FIRE RISK

Burning canola can be very dangerous as it burns at a higher temperature than grass or other crops. FESA recommends in a canola fire, firefighters:

- Carefully assess the situation.
- In the case of high fire intensities or excessive smoke, ensure a flank attack during suppression or use low fuel areas and fi re breaks from which to attack the fire
- Use a spray pattern to suppress the fire, especially during mop-up, as this reduces the chance of the fire flaring up
- Canola windrows should not be hit with a jet of water, as this can spread the fire.

Care should also be taken to make sure the fire does not flare up from behind and trap you. This applies to all fires, but it is highly relevant in canola fires as they are harder to extinguish and mop-up compared to other crop or grass fires.

Avoid driving through canola paddocks, especially with vehicles that have low ground clearance, as canola can readily build up and ignite under the vehicle.