

ASP General Information Network Compliance & Authorisation

Alert Number: **GI12_23**

31 August 2023

Subject: Total Fire Bans and work in Bush Fire Prone Areas

Ausgrid's bush fire safety protocols are designed to minimise the risk of fires during our operations. Please note that, during the bush fire danger period - 1 September 2023 for Upper Hunter, Muswellbrook and Singleton LGAs and 1 October 2023 for other LGAs extending till the 31 March 2024 - Total Fire Bans may be declared, limiting certain activities.

Total Fire Bans

During a Total Fire Ban, activities involving hot work or live work in bush fire prone areas are restricted, unless an exemption has been granted. The Rural Fires Act 1997 specifies these restrictions.

The hot works undertaken by ASPs on Ausgrid's network are completed on behalf of a customer and not the utility (Ausgrid). As such the works are not covered by class 6 of the Gazetted Schedule of Standard Exemptions to Total Fire Bans and a specific exemption must be approved for works to proceed.

ASPs can apply for exemptions to the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) for specific work. If granted, a copy of the exemption must be forwarded to Ausgrid at ASPAuthorisations@Ausgrid.com.au and the relevant Compliance Officer as well as being kept on-site.

Live Work on Bushfire Prone Land & Hot Work

During a Total Fire Ban, fires are likely to escape and be difficult to contain. Live Work on Bushfire Prone Land and Hot Work must **NOT** proceed until the Total Fire Ban is lifted unless in accordance with an approved exemption.

General requirements for all hot work and live work on Bushfire Prone Land

1. **Identify the risk:** Assess and identify fire risks as part of your regular hazard assessments. This includes checking the fire danger rating, type of hot work, site-specific circumstances, other high-risk activities, and potential unintentional ignition sources.
2. **Implement controls:** Apply appropriate controls to mitigate these risks, including complying with any exemptions during a Total Fire Ban, maintaining fires correctly, checking equipment, supervising hot work, etc.
3. **Re-evaluate risk:** Continually assess fire risks throughout the day, adjusting hazard assessments as needed. If there's any doubt about the risk, stop work and contact your manager or supervisor.
4. **Report:** If you witness a fire, call the Fire Brigade immediately, then inform your manager or supervisor.

For more information please refer to NS174c Section 6.4

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