

Cool Hazard Reduction Burning of Grass Trees Within Stirling Reserves

Frequently Asked Questions

What is cool hazard reduction burning?

Cool hazard reduction burning is a type of controlled burn, similar to other prescribed/controlled burns, but it's done at lower intensity. The goal is to reduce flammable materials like dry leaves and grasses while protecting and enhancing the ecosystem. It is typically undertaken during cooler months when vegetation holds more moisture. It's easily controlled and designed to reduce fuel without widespread negative impacts to the native flora and fauna.

What are fuel loads?

Fuel loads refer to the amount of flammable material in an area such as dry grass, leaves, bark and the dead skirts of grass trees. These materials accumulate over time and increase bushfire risk. Fuel loads are measured in tonnes per hectare (t/ha). Reducing fuel loads through hazard reduction burning helps control the intensity and spread of future bushfires and enhances community safety.

Why is the City conducting cool hazard reduction burning?

The City of Stirling is adopting this trial program as part of its coordinated fire management strategy to protect life, property, and the environment. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) has recommended the use of hazard reduction burning in applicable high-risk reserves and bushland areas to reduce bushfire risk. The City of Stirling is implementing this program to:

- Reduce bushfire risk in local bushland areas
- Protect nearby lives, homes, infrastructure and natural environment
- Support ecological health by mimicking natural fire cycles that some native species depend on.

What vegetation will be burnt?

The focus is on burning grass trees (Balgas) and immediate surrounding ground fuels such as leaf litter. This targeted approach is based on site assessments.

Why are grass trees being burned?

Grass trees (Xanthorrhoea species) naturally accumulate dead leaves and organic material, which can become highly flammable. These iconic native plants often develop thick skirts of dry, dead leaves that can become flammable over time.

Burning them helps:

- Reduce bushfire fuel loads by removing built-up flammable material
- Promote healthy regrowth by encouraging flowering and seed production
- Mimic natural fire cycles that many native species rely on.

Who will be carrying out the cool hazard reduction burning?

Burns are conducted by trained bushfire professionals / fire fighters alongside City environmental officers. These are planned by the City and each burn is preceded by a detailed risk assessment and prescription to ensure safety and environmental outcomes.

When will the hazard reduction burns take place?

Burns are typically scheduled for late autumn, winter, or spring when weather conditions are mild and fuel moisture levels are higher. This ensures the fire remains low-intensity and manageable. Specific dates are determined subject to weather conditions.

Which reserves or bushland areas will be included?

The City of Stirling will assess its reserves and bushland areas based on factors such as fuel age, loading and the vulnerability of nearby assets and community. Areas will be prioritised according to bushfire risk, and hazard reduction burns will only proceed where a burn is necessary to reduce potential danger to the community.

Will wildlife be affected?

Burns are planned to leave a mosaic of burnt and unburnt patches, allowing wildlife to escape and return. The City works to minimize ecological impact. Controlled burns are designed to:

- Leave unburnt patches for wildlife refuge
- Avoid damage to soil and surrounding vegetation
- Support biodiversity by maintaining fire-dependent ecosystems.

What precautions are taken during burns?

- Weather conditions are carefully monitored
- Existing firebreaks are pruned and checked for suitability.
- Some internal pathways within the selected reserve will be closed until the works are complete to ensure pedestrian safety
- Community notifications are issued in advance.

What happens after a hazard reduction burn?

Post-burn monitoring and weed control are carried out to support native vegetation recovery and prevent invasive species from establishing in the burnt area.

Will the burn create a lot of smoke?

Some smoke is inevitable, but burns are planned to minimise impact. They are conducted:

- During mild, cool weather
- When soil moisture is high
- Under low wind conditions with favourable wind direction
- Nearby residents will be notified in advance.

What can I do to minimise the impact of smoke?

- Close windows and doors
- Turn off air-conditioners
- Follow medical advice if you have respiratory conditions
- Visit the Department of Health WA for more information.

What if a hazard reduction burn gets out of control?

Burns are undertaken by highly trained and experienced personnel. As part of the planned burn prescription, a detailed risk assessment which covers scenarios, such as the burn escaping, is undertaken.

What else is the City doing to reduce bushfire risk?

The City of Stirling also implements:

- Weed control (mechanical and chemical)
- Firebreak installation and maintenance
- Manual fuel load reduction
- Firebreak inspections on vacant land
- Controlled access to bushland
- Community education.

Who do I contact for further information?

For further information please contact the City's Bushfire Management Officer on (08) 9205 8555 or bushfiremanagement@stirling.wa.gov.au