

Bush Fire Risk Treatment Standards – Frequently Asked Questions

1. What are Bush Fire Risk Treatment Standards?

Bush Fire Risk Treatment Standards are measures issued by the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*. The Standards allow owners or occupiers of land within specific areas of Western Australia to clear vegetation and prune trees on their property to reduce the impact of a bushfire on their home. As long as landowners comply with the guidelines of the Standards, they will not risk breaching other state or local government laws when clearing land to reduce bushfire risks.

2. Where do the Standards apply?

The Standards apply to land in areas of Western Australia that are designated as bushfire prone under the *Fire and Emergency Services Act 1998*, and that are not subject to an exclusion (see below).

3. What are exclusions to the Standards?

Removing trees or vegetation in some areas could have a negative impact on Western Australia's natural environment or heritage. For that reason, the Bush Fire Risk Treatment Standards do not apply to certain areas of the State. These areas are called 'Exclusions to the Standards', and have been excluded to ensure that we strike a balance between improving community safety and preserving our environment. These areas were identified through considerable consultation between DFES and key stakeholders.

4. What is a Risk Treatment Area?

Land that is within 20 metres of a 'relevant building' in areas of Western Australia where the Standards apply.

5. What is a relevant building?

A building classified under the Building Code as one of the following:

- a single dwelling such as a detached house, duplex, villa or townhouse (Class 1a)
- a small boarding house, guest house, hostel or four or more dwellings on one allotment used for short term holiday accommodation (Class 1b)
- dwellings such as apartments and flats in a building containing two or more units (Class 2)



- accommodation for unrelated people such as hotel, motel, residential part of a school, accommodation for the aged, children or people with disabilities (Class 3)
- a building of a public nature such as a health care building (9a), an assembly building such as a school (9b) or an aged care building (9c)
- private bushfire shelters associated with a single dwelling (Class 10c)
- non-habitable building including sheds, carports and private garages (Class 10a) when within six metres of a class 1a, 1b, 2, 3 or 9 building.

AND

- built under development approval obtained prior to 8 December 2015

6. What vegetation management activities are permitted in a Risk Treatment Area?

The owner or occupier of the land is permitted to clear vegetation, including the limited removal and pruning of trees, across two specific zones located within the Risk Treatment Area:

- **Inner Zone:** this zone provides a defensible space (see question 8) through the separation of the building from trees and underlying vegetation. The inner zone includes land that is within 10 metres of a relevant building.
- **Outer Zone:** the purpose of this zone is to decrease bushfire intensity and restrict fire spread in the tree canopy by reducing the underlying vegetation. The outer zone includes land that is between 10 and 20 metres from a relevant building.

7. Why do the Standards not apply to buildings approved from 8 December 2015?

Since the release of *State Planning Policy 3.7 Planning in Bush Fire Prone Areas (SPP3.7)* on 7 December 2015, development within bushfire prone areas of Western Australia should be appropriately sited and designed to reduce the impact of bushfire on property and infrastructure. Therefore, it is unnecessary for these Standards to be applied to these developments.

8. What is a defensible space?

Defensible space is an area surrounding a building that is managed to reduce bushfire risk. Trees and underlying vegetation should be kept at an absolute minimum to reduce the effects of flame contact and radiant heat associated with a bushfire. The area should be free from combustible items and obstructions.



9. Do the Standards override Commonwealth legislation?

No. The Standards do not override Commonwealth legislation such as the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

10. How do I find out if modifying or clearing trees and or underlying vegetation around my property will impact on Commonwealth legislation?

Owners and occupiers of land should contact the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment if they are concerned about impacting on any Commonwealth legislation. Spatial data sets showing Commonwealth protected sensitivities can be viewed at <https://nationalmap.gov.au/>

11. Do I require a permit to burn?

The Standards do not override the requirement for owners and occupiers of land to obtain a permit to burn under the *Bush Fires Act 1954* by the controlled use of fire.

12. I need more information.

For queries or advice, please email RuralFire@dfes.wa.gov.au.

