



*These standards explain how to safely conduct a pile burn and give due consideration to the effects of the pile burn on the environment.*

## CONDUCTING PILE BURNS

Burning of cut and stacked vegetation is referred to as a pile burn.

Pile burns may be carried out to dispose of vegetation resulting from:

- removal of bush fire fuels
- bush regeneration/weed removal
- property maintenance
- agricultural activities.

In order to prepare a pile burn you may need to seek a number of approvals, depending on the type of work and when and where you are planning to do it.

If the work is planned as part of hazard reduction, you should seek advice from the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) to determine whether you need a Hazard Reduction Certificate or other approvals.

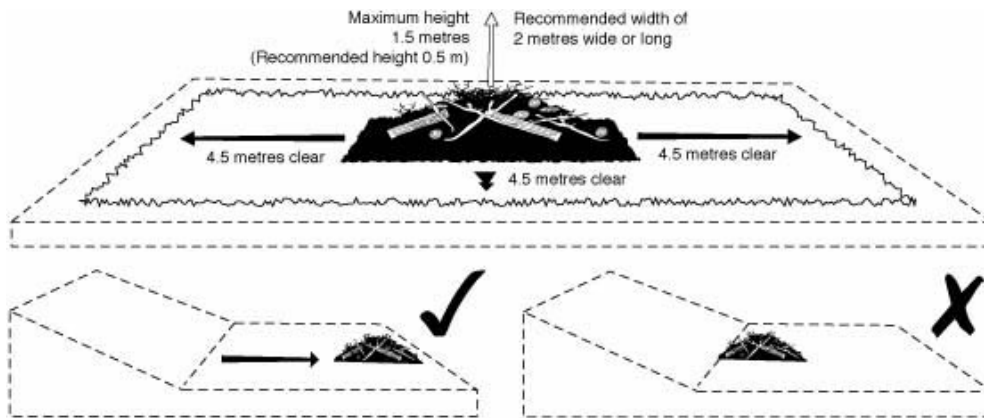
If the pile burn could be of danger to a building (at any time of the year) or the burn is during the Bush Fire Danger Period, you must have a Fire Permit issued by the RFS or NSW Fire Brigades.

See the RFS document *Before You Light That Fire* for further information on the approvals required.

## CONSTRUCTION OF PILES

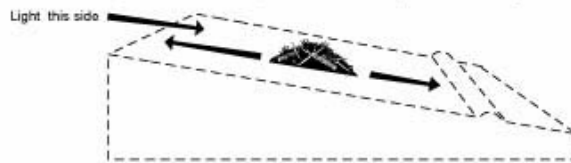
This standard provides a procedure for the construction of vegetation piles in order to allow safe and efficient burning.

- Material that is to be burnt must only be vegetation from the locality, not household or building material such as plastics, wooden pallets or cardboard boxes (please note it is illegal to burn treated timbers or tyres anywhere in NSW).
- Construct long and wide piles rather than excessively high piles. Piles that are too high produce more intense heat and retain heat for longer.
- Piles should not be greater than 2 m in length or width, and must not be greater than 1.5 m high.
- Logs over 150 mm in diameter should not be added to piles – instead they should be laid on the ground to prevent erosion and provide habitat.
- If practical, place vegetation in an area where it will receive direct sunlight to allow the pile to dry out.
- All material must be dead and dry before being burnt.
- No soft green weeds (such as wandering Jew, grasses, chick weed) should be added to a pile burn. These are most effectively disposed of by composting. Woody weeds such as lantana and privet are suitable. All noxious weeds must be treated according to the guidelines in the *Noxious Weeds Act 2003*.



Keep distances from slope. If unable to move material off slope to flat land ensure extra clearance in fire break on uphill side of fire. (Usually 5x recommended distances for level site).

Branches and logs to be stacked up and down the slope, not across, to prevent burning material rolling downhill.



Light pile from a single point on the uphill side of the pile. Fire moves slower downhill. Remember fire travels uphill at up to 4x faster than level ground. Fire-generated up-draughts are increased on slopes. Prevailing winds can also affect fire behaviour.

Scrape a lip on the bottom side of your fire break to stop burning embers from rolling downhill and spreading the fire.

#### General Hints

- Burn downhill (start at top), not uphill.
- Limit the number of ignition points.

## NOTIFICATION

The law requires that you must notify all residents who adjoin the site of the pile burn at least 24 hours prior to the work. Other residents who might be inconvenienced by the pile burn should also be notified.

You must also notify your local RFS Fire Control Centre or your nearest NSW Fire Brigades station at least 24 hours before the fire is lit.

#### Burn safety measures

- Before lighting the pile, ensure that you have suitable tools handy (rakes and shovels) to conduct the burn and control any possible spot fires.
- Accelerants (such as petrol) must never be used in the pile.
- Ensure that there is a sufficient water supply to extinguish the burn and that you have a hose with appropriate water pressure that can reach around the pile.
- Ensure that you wear protective clothing such as heavy cotton pants, a long-sleeved shirt, leather work boots, work gloves and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Disturb piles immediately prior to lighting to scare away animals such as lizards and snakes which may be taking refuge within the pile.
- Supervise the burn constantly after lighting to ensure there are no flare ups in surrounding vegetation.
- Completely extinguish the pile immediately after the burn is finished. The spreading of burnt material after the burn also assists in allowing for smouldering material to be extinguished.

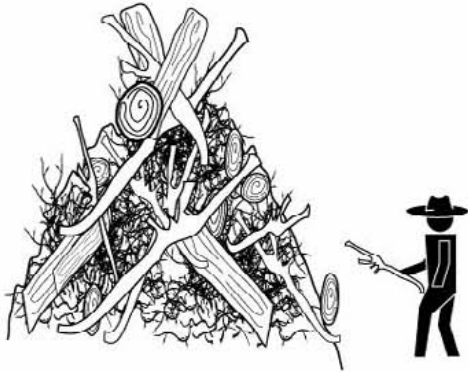
If multiple piles are to be burnt, burn only one pile at a time unless adequate resources and operators are present at each pile. You should also give consideration to the amount of smoke being produced if multiple pile burns are being conducted.

All the Rural Fire Service documents mentioned in this brochure are available from your local RFS Fire Control Centre, or from the RFS website at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

- DO NOT burn on a day declared as a Total Fire Ban by the RFS
- DO NOT burn on a no burn day as declared by the Department of Environment and Conservation
- DO NOT burn unless you have the necessary approval
- DO NOT burn unless you have notified your neighbours and the relevant fire authority

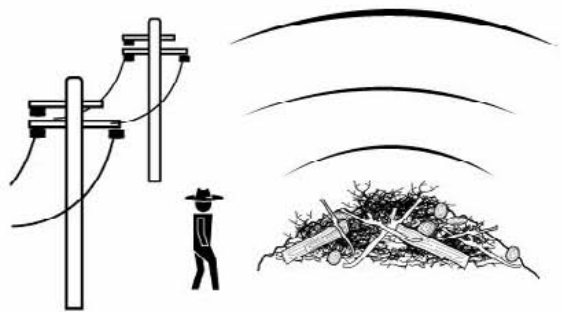
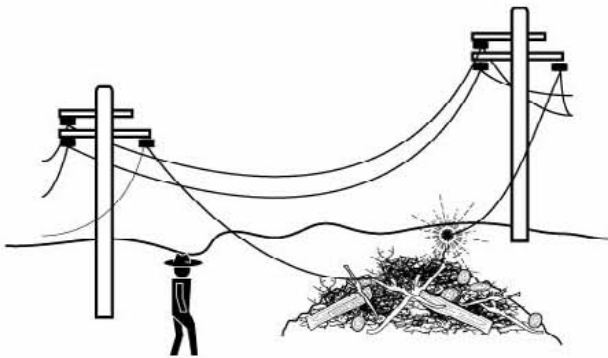
# Wrong

# Right



WRONG: Pile burns are not bonfires, they don't need to be high. This pile will be too hot. Pile Burns must be constructed from natural vegetation only, not household or building rubbish.

Make the pile wide and long rather than high. This will spread the heat and be safer.



WRONG: Never construct piles under or near power lines. Smoke and ash can cause power lines to arc, and the heat will damage the lines.

Give power lines a wide berth. Consider the radiant heat and smoke the burn will generate.



WRONG: Don't pile vegetation around the base of trees or directly under low canopy. Don't plant new trees near piles that are planned for burning.

Try to choose a space with open canopy away from the base of trees. Wait until the piles have been burnt or removed before planting.



WRONG: Avoid piling vegetation close to neighbouring properties.

Stay away from fences and property boundaries. Consider local residents and their needs. Maintain a clear area between piles and any other combustible material.