

FIRE PREVENTION GUIDE

Fire Hazard Complaints

How does Council manage fire hazards on private property?

From November each year, Council officers inspect properties in Wellington Shire to ensure that long grass and other materials that may pose a fire hazard are reduced or removed.

Where it is determined that a property poses a fire hazard, a Fire Prevention Notice will be sent to the landowner(s) directing them to remove the fire hazard from their land.

Our annual inspections cover 17,000+ properties and identify most fire hazards. However sometimes conditions at a property may change and we rely on the community to let us know about these potential fire hazards.

During the declared [Fire Danger Period](#), we inspect every fire hazard reported to us.

Fire Prevention Notices are not used to manage single trees, snakes, vermin or amenity. We are unlikely to issue Notices for small patches of isolated vegetation, hazards more than 30 metres from a house or where reported hazards are in the middle of major towns.

How do I make a Fire Hazard Complaint?

If you are concerned about a fire hazard on a neighbouring property, you can lodge a complaint directly to Council, providing details of the location and extent of the fire hazard:

- in person by visiting a Customer Service Centre at 18 Desailly St, Sale or 156 Grant St, Yarram, or
- by phone on 1300 366 244, or
- by email to enquiries@wellington.vic.gov.au, or
- by mail to PO Box 506, Sale Victoria 3850.

What happens when I make a Fire Hazard Complaint?

If the hazard complaint is about **COUNCIL LAND**:

- We take your details and the location of the hazard and refer them to our Natural Environment & Parks section for action.
- If you request a follow up, you will receive a phone call, letter or email about the outcome.

If the hazard complaint is about **STATE GOVERNMENT LAND**:

- Council cannot investigate potential fire hazards on government land.
- However, we may be able to tell you who owns or manages the land and give you their contact details for you to follow up.

If the hazard complaint is about **PRIVATE LAND**:

- We take your details and the location of the hazard and refer them to our Municipal Fire Prevention Officer for action.
- We aim to inspect the potential hazard within five working days, unless you report it leading up to our annual inspections, in which case it will simply be marked as an annual inspection priority.
- We will not contact you with the outcome.

What happens when a Fire Prevention Officer inspects a property?

A Council Fire Prevention Officer will inspect the site and make an expert decision about whether the concern raised by the complaint poses a threat to life or property as defined by the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958*.

If a fire prevention officer determines that there is a fire hazard, a Fire Prevention Notice will be served on the landowner(s) directing them to reduce or remove the fire hazard.

When we decide to serve a Fire Prevention Notice, we generally give the landowners three weeks to complete works as outlined. This allows fair time to source contractors and dispose of waste materials before we reinspect the property.

If a fire prevention officer determines that conditions do not pose a threat to life and property, no further action will be taken. In fact, over 60% of reported fire hazards are assessed as not being a threat.

Why won't you let me know the outcome of a private property inspection?

Council is committed to acting swiftly on any reported fire hazards posing a threat to our community. At the time of reporting a fire hazard we will explain our hazard complaints inspection process, as outlined on this factsheet.

For privacy reasons, we cannot disclose details of the inspection outcome with you. Any actions taken by a Fire Prevention Officer are a matter between Council and the landowner.

What about snakes, vermin or unsightly properties?

Snakes in the country are a fact of life. They are a protected species and cannot be harmed. Snakes are not naturally aggressive and always prefer to retreat. Most bites occur when people try to kill or capture snakes.

- To deter snakes from your yard, remove sources of food and shelter from around your house - keep grass short, shrubs pruned and move woodpiles, stock/pet feed, compost and chicken coops away from the house, keeping them clean and vermin-free.
- If you encounter a snake in your house or yard, we can put you in touch with a local snake catcher who will move it on safely.

Vermin concerns can be investigated by our Environmental Health Officers.

Unsightly Properties can be investigated by our Local Laws team.

How can a fire hazard be cleaned up quickly?

The quickest way to have a neighbouring property cleaned up is to approach the landowner directly with your concerns. Start the conversation by explaining how the issue affects you and your family. Give your neighbour a chance to respond, understanding that they may not agree with you. Try to work on a solution together – rather than one person telling the other what to do.

Where do I find more information?

- Visit Council's 'Fire' webpage www.wellington.vic.gov.au/fire
- Contact the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer on 1300 366 244 for specific advice.
- Tips for keeping your yard snake-free: www.snakesaway.com.au/useful_tips.html

Sale Service Centre

18 Desailly Street (PO Box 506), Sale Victoria 3850
Telephone 1300 366 244

Yarram Service Centre

156 Grant Street, Yarram Victoria 3971
Telephone 03 5182 5100

Contact Us Online

Web www.wellington.vic.gov.au
Email enquiries@wellington.vic.gov.au

