

Controlled Burning and Bushfire Hazard Reduction

Business Name:		ABN:	
Business Address:			
Contact Person:	Phone:	Email:	

THIS RISK ASSESSMENT IS APPROVED BY THE PCBU ON THIS PROJECT

Under the Work Health and Safety Regulation (WHS Regulation), a person conducting a business or undertaking (PCBU) is required to ensure that a RISK ASSESSMENT is prepared before the proposed work starts.

Full Name:		
Signature:	Title:	Date:

CLIENT OR PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR DETAILS

Client:	SCOPE OF WORKS
Project Name:	
Project Address:	
Project Manager:	
Contact Phone:	
Date Risk Assessment supplied to Project Manager:	



RISK MATRIX									
LIKELIHOOD	INSIGNIFICANT	MINOR	MODERATE	MAJOR	CATASTROPHIC	SCORE	ACTION	HIERARCHY OF CONTROLS	
ALMOST CERTAIN	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE			Elimination Remove the hazard.	
LIKELY	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	4A ACUTE	DO NOT PROCEED	Substitution Replace the hazard.	
POSSIBLE	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	4 ACUTE	3H HIGH	Review before work starts.	Isolation Isolate People from the hazard	
UNLIKELY	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	4 ACUTE	2M MODERATE	Ensure control measures in place.	Engineering Isolate the hazard	
RARE	1 LOW	1 LOW	2 MODERATE	3 HIGH	3 HIGH	1L LOW	Monitor and keep records.	Administrative Change	
								PPE	

Risk Rating & Required Action:	
4A	Stop work. The risk is intolerable. Eliminate the hazard or redesign the activity before proceeding. A Safe Work Method Statement (SWMS) or higher-level authorisation is required.
3H	Review and approve additional controls before task starts. Senior supervisor sign-off needed.
2M	Ensure all nominated controls are in place and effective. Proceed with caution; monitor conditions.
1L	Proceed, following standard operating procedures. Monitor and keep records.

Consequence Scale:			
Consequence	People (injury/illness)	Project / Assets	Compliance / Reputation
Catastrophic	Fatality or permanent total disability	project shutdown	Significant regulator intervention; criminal prosecution
Major	Serious injury/illness (hospital > 5 days)	critical delay	Improvement notice; major media coverage
Moderate	Medical-treatment injury; lost-time > 1 day	moderate delay	Minor breach; adverse client comment
Minor	First-aid only, no lost time	negligible delay	Isolated non-conformance
Insignificant	No injury	no schedule impact	Deviation caught and corrected on site

Notes on Hierarchy of Controls:
Remember to apply controls in the preferred order shown by the coloured pyramid:

1. **Eliminate**
2. **Substitute**
3. **Isolate**
4. **Engineering**
5. **Administrative**
6. **PPE**

Always document **why** a lower-order control is accepted if elimination or substitution is not reasonably practicable.

aligned with Safe Work Australia's Managing the risk of fatigue at work (2023) and ISO 45001:2018 clauses 6–8.

JOB STEP	POTENTIAL HAZARDS	IR	CONTROL MEASURES	RR
SPECIFIC WORK STEPS	HAZARDS THAT MAY ARISE	INITIAL RISK	SPECIFIC MEASURES TO BE PUT IN PLACE TO ELIMINATE OR CONTROL THE RISKS	RESIDUAL RISK
1. Governance, Legal Compliance & Landholder Approvals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a formal WHS management system governing controlled burning and hazard reduction Inadequate understanding of duties under WHS Act 2011 and WHS Regulation for fire-related activities Failure to obtain required permits or written approvals for prescribed burning and burn offs Unclear responsibilities between landholder, principal contractor, fire authority and subcontractors Non-compliance with local bushfire risk management plans, total fire bans and seasonal restrictions Inadequate consultation with neighbouring landowners and stakeholders regarding smoke, access and fire spread Poor documentation and record keeping of decisions, permits, risk assessments and authorisations Inadequate consideration of environmental legislation (e.g. protected flora/fauna, cultural heritage, air quality standards) in planning burns 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a documented Controlled Burning and Bushfire Hazard Reduction Governance Procedure aligned with WHS Act 2011, WHS Regulation and relevant state-based fire legislation and codes of practice Define and document clear roles, responsibilities and delegations (PCBU, officers, workers, fire control officers, burn supervisors) for all prescribed burning operations Implement a legal compliance register capturing all applicable Acts, Regulations, local by-laws, fire danger periods, total fire bans, permit requirements and notification obligations Require written burn plans and permits for burning of brush piles, garden waste, plastics (or formal prohibition thereof) and landscape burning activities, approved by competent fire authorities where required Develop a standardised 'Prescribed Burn Authorisation Form' that must be signed off by a competent person prior to any controlled burn Standardise pre-burn consultation procedures with neighbours, local councils, emergency services and other affected stakeholders, with records kept Integrate environmental and cultural heritage impact checks into the planning process, including buffer zones and no-burn areas around sensitive sites Conduct periodic internal audits and management reviews of compliance with controlled burning governance requirements and rectify identified gaps 	3H
2. Strategic Fire Management Planning & Burn Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a documented bushfire hazard reduction strategy, property or region Poorly defined objectives for fuel reduction, site clearance or landscape burning leading to inappropriate fire intensity or extent Inadequate risk-based prioritisation of burn areas considering asset protection, ecology and community impacts Failure to integrate controlled burning plans with broader emergency management and business continuity plans 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a property or region-wide Bushfire Hazard Reduction Plan, including mapping of fuel loads, assets, fire history and ecological values Implement a formal planning process for each prescribed burn that sets clear, measurable objectives (e.g. fuel load targets, asset protection zones, site clearance requirements) Use recognised fire behaviour modelling tools and local fire authority guidelines to inform burn area selection, timing and intensity Integrate controlled burning strategies into the organisation's Emergency Management, Business Continuity and Climate Resilience Plans Establish review cycles (e.g. every 3–5 years) to evaluate effectiveness of previous burns against objectives and update strategies accordingly Require documented 'worst case' scenario analysis for each burn, including potential escape pathways, impact on critical infrastructure and neighbouring properties 	3H

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Insufficient consideration of cumulative impacts from repeated burns on soil stability, erosion and ecosystem health Lack of scenario planning for worst-case fire behaviour and escape potential 			
3. Weather, Fire Danger & Environmental Monitoring Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate monitoring of weather forecasts, fire danger indices and local microclimate conditions leading to unsafe burn windows Reliance on informal or outdated weather information Failure to account for rapid weather changes (wind shifts, temperature spikes, low humidity) during burns Insufficient consideration of drought conditions, soil moisture and fuel dryness increasing fire intensity and spotting Lack of formal weather and environmental 'go/no-go' criteria in burn planning Inadequate systems for monitoring smoke dispersion and air quality impacts on nearby residential roads and sensitive receptors 	4A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a formal weather and Fire Danger Monitoring Procedure requiring use of Bureau of Meteorology data, local weather stations and fire danger ratings for planning and day-of-burn decisions Specify quantitative 'go/no-go' thresholds for wind speed, direction, temperature, humidity, soil moisture and fuel dryness in burn plans Introduce a pre-burn weather check process with documented sign-off within a set timeframe (e.g. within 2 hours before ignition commences) Equip burn supervisors with access to real-time weather data (e.g. smartphone apps, portable weather meters, local station fees) Introduce continuous monitoring of on-site weather conditions during burns, with authority to pause or extinguish operations when thresholds are exceeded Integrate smoke modelling or dispersion guidance into planning, including identification of sensitive receptors (schools, hospitals, highways) and setting wind direction constraints to minimise smoke impact 	2M
4. Risk Assessment, Burn Planning & Documentation Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a structured risk assessment process for controlled burning, burning off and hazard reduction activities Generic or copy-paste risk assessments that do not reflect local site conditions, fuel types or specific hazards such as plastic materials Inadequate consideration of systemic risks (e.g. coordination failures, command structure, communication breakdowns) in planning documents Failure to plan for interaction between simultaneous activities (e.g. machinery use, traffic management, public access) during burns 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incomplete mapping of risks associated with burning compromised materials such as treated timber, plastics or contaminated garden waste Insufficient version control and retention of burn plans, maps and risk assessments 		[REDACTED]	
5. Organisational Roles, Competency & Training Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate definition of leadership and command roles during controlled burn off activities Burn supervisors lacking formal competency in prescribed burning operations and bushfire behaviour Insufficient training for workers, contractors and volunteers in hazard recognition, communication protocols and emergency response No verification of qualifications, licences or accreditations for personnel operating pumps, tankers or other firefighting equipment Lack of refresher training and skills maintenance for seasonal or intermittent burning programs Inconsistent induction of new personnel into specific tasks and burn plan requirements 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
6. Contractor, Volunteer & Third-Party Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor integration of contractors and volunteers into organisational WHS systems for controlled burning Unclear allocation of WHS responsibilities between PCBU, landholder and contracted fire crews Contractors using uncontrolled work methods inconsistent with approved burn plans Inadequate briefings for third parties such as utility providers, traffic controllers or security personnel operating near burn areas 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of due diligence in selecting contractors competent in prescribed burning and hazard reduction Insufficient processes for reporting and investigating incidents, near misses or non-conformances involving third parties 		[REDACTED]	
7. Community, Public Access & Interface Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unauthorised public entry into controlled burn off areas due to inadequate exclusion and signage systems Insufficient notification to local community about timing, location and potential impacts of smoke and traffic disruptions Burns conducted near public roads, schools, recreational areas or residential housing without risk-based interface planning Inadequate control of public viewing of burn off activities leading to distraction congestion or confrontation Lack of coordinated approach with emergency services and authorities for burns near critical infrastructure Complaints, reputational damage or legal claims arising from smoke nuisance or perceived negligence 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M
8. Plant, Equipment & Infrastructure Management Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate maintenance systems for fire appliances, pumps, hoses and water tankers used in prescribed burns Failure of ignition equipment (drip torches, gas torches, flares) due to poor inspection and servicing regimes Use of unsuitable or non-compliant equipment for burning brush piles, garden waste or for containment lines Unreliable water supply arrangements, including pumps, hoses and hydrant access Lack of asset registers and inspection schedules for fire and communications infrastructure at key sites 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ad hoc storage and handling of fuels, gas cylinders and ignition materials with inadequate separation from combustible materials 			
9. Hazardous Substances, Smoke & Toxic Emissions Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planning systems that allow burning of plastic materials, treated timber or contaminated waste leading to toxic emissions Insufficient assessment of health risks from smoke, particulate matter and gases for workers and nearby communities Lack of organisational policies governing what materials may be burned during garden waste and site clearance operations Inadequate control of exposure for workers with respiratory conditions or other vulnerabilities Failure to consider downwind critical receptors (e.g. hospitals, aged care facilities, major roads) in smoke management planning Poor monitoring and documentation of air quality during large-scale prescribed burning operations 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M
10. Communication, Command & Control Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absence of a documented command structure and incident control system for controlled burns Reliance on informal verbal instructions with no standardised communication protocols Radio or mobile coverage black spots in remote burn areas leading to loss of situational awareness Incompatible communication equipment between agencies, contractors and volunteers Lack of clear triggers for escalating from routine burn operations to emergency response mode 	4A	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor recording of critical decisions, location of crews and changes to burn tactics during operations 			
11. Fatigue, Rostering & Worker Wellbeing Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate rostering systems leading to extended shifts before, during and after burns Poor management of cumulative fatigue during periods of intensive burning or heightened fire danger Insufficient planning for hydration, rest areas and welfare support in remote burn locations Lack of procedures to manage workers with pre-existing health conditions potentially aggravated by heat and smoke No formal debriefing or psychological support following high-stress burn escapes or near misses 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
12. Access, Egress, Traffic & Remote Area Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate planning of safe access and egress routes for crews and vehicles in burn areas Traffic conflicts between fire appliances, site vehicles and public traffic near burn perimeters Poorly maintained tracks and fire trails impeding rapid response to spot fires or burn escapes Insufficient logistics planning for remote area burns, including fuel, food, water and medical support Failure to pre-identify safety zones and temporary refuge areas for crews if fire behaviour escalates 	3H	[REDACTED]	2M
13. Emergency Preparedness, Escape & Fire Escape Contingency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of a documented Emergency Response Plan specific to controlled burning and burn off activities Inadequate planning for burn escape scenarios and loss of containment 	4A	[REDACTED]	2M

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor coordination with local fire services and emergency operations centres for large or high-risk burns Insufficient drills and exercises testing evacuation, crew rescue and communications under emergency conditions Inadequate contingency resources (back-up appliances, additional crews, aerial support arrangements) for high-consequence burns 		[REDACTED]	
14. Monitoring, Patrol, Mop-Up & Post-Burn Security Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inadequate post-burn patrol and mop-up systems allowing re-ignition or escape from residual hot spots or smouldering piles Insufficient criteria for declaring a burn 'out' and handing back control of the site Poor documentation of patrol activities, residual risks and outstanding works following prescribed burns Inadequate security or public exclusion after burns where roots, hollow logs or buried embers may present a risk Failure to monitor weather changes in days following burn that could activate fire in treatment areas 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L
15. Incident Reporting, Investigation & Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Under-reporting of near misses, minor escapes or smoke-related complaints linked to controlled burning activities Lack of structured incident investigation processes focusing on systemic causes rather than individual blame Failure to disseminate lessons learned across crews, sites and seasons Inadequate tracking of corrective actions, leading to recurrence of known failures in burn planning or execution Limited management oversight of WHS performance indicators for prescribed burning and hazard reduction 	3H	[REDACTED]	1L

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16. Documentation, Records Management & Audit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss or degradation of critical records such as permits, burn plans, maps and risk assessments • Inconsistent documentation practices across teams and seasons leading to incomplete evidence of due diligence • Inability to demonstrate compliance during regulatory inspections or coronial investigations • Lack of structured internal audit program for controlled burning WHS systems • Uncontrolled use of outdated plans, procedures or templates 	3H	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	1L

SAMPLE

EMERGENCY RESPONSE – CALL 000 FOR EMERGENCIES

Ensure to have an Emergency Management Plan in place as well as adequate numbers of trained first aid staff with easy access to fully stocked first aid kits, rescue equipment, material safety data sheets, adequate access to emergency communication equipment and fire-fighting equipment suitable for all classes of fire and ignition sources.

LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES

RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND CODES OF PRACTICE. DELETE THE LEGISLATIVE REFERENCES FOR ANY STATE THAT ARE NOT APPLICABLE

Queensland & Australian Capital Territory

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011
 Legislation QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/work-health-and-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice QLD: <https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>
 Legislation ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice ACT: <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Victoria

Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
 Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
 Legislation VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/occupational-health-and-safety-act-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice VIC: <https://www.worksafe.vic.gov.au/compliance-codes-and-codes-practice>

New South Wales

Work Health and Safety Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2025
 Legislation NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/legal-obligations/legislation>
 Codes of Practice NSW: <https://www.safework.nsw.gov.au/resource-library/list-codes-of-practice>

Western Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2020
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2022
 Legislation Western Australia: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/legislation>
 Codes of Practice WA: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/codes-practice>

Northern Territory

Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011
 Work Health and Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Regulation 2011
 Legislation NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/workplace-safety-laws>
 Codes of Practice NT: <https://worksafe.nt.gov.au/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Safe Work Australia Links

Law and Regulation (All States): <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/law-and-regulation>
 Model Codes of Practice: <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/resources-publications/model-codes-of-practice>

South Australia

Work Health and Safety Act 2012 (SA)
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012 (SA)
 Legislation for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/resources/legislation>
 Codes of Practice for SA: <https://www.safework.sa.gov.au/workplaces/codes-of-practice#COPs>

Model Codes of Practice

- Managing noise and preventing hearing loss at work
- Confined spaces
- Labelling of workplace hazardous chemicals
- Managing risks of hazardous chemicals in the workplace
- Welding processes
- First aid in the workplace
- Managing the risk of falls at workplaces
- Hazardous manual tasks
- Managing the risk of falls in housing construction
- Managing electrical risks in the workplace
- Demolition work
- Excavation work
- Work health and safety consultation, cooperation and coordination
- Managing the work environment and facilities
- How to manage work health and safety risks
- Managing risks of plant in the workplace
- Construction work

Tasmania

Work Health and Safety Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional and Consequential Provisions) Act 2012
 Work Health and Safety Regulations 2012
 Work Health and Safety (Transitional) Regulations 2012
 Legislation for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/acts-and-regulations>
 Codes of Practice for TAS: <https://worksafe.tas.gov.au/topics/laws-and-compliance/codes-of-practice>

Details of permits, licenses or access required by regulatory bodies (add or delete as required):

- Permits from local council
- Authorisation to commence work
- Any required documents.