

# Changes to the Plantations Act and Code: Fire standards

January 2011

Recent amendments to the Plantation & Reafforestation (Code) Regulation 2001 have introduced fire standards.

This information sheet outlines the new requirements. Plantation officers can provide more detailed information if required.

## Why are Fire Standards Necessary?

Fire protection is a major community concern.

Industry & Investment NSW and the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) worked together to develop the fire standards.

The fire standards will:

- Provide a safer operating environment for RFS fire fighters;
- Reduce the risk of fires escaping from plantations; and
- Minimise the damage to plantations from wildfire.

## Requirements for fire roads

**The provisions relating to fire roads are in Part 5, Division 2, Subdivision 2A of the Code.**

### Fire roads – [Clauses 41C](#), [41D](#) and [41E](#)

Fire roads will provide trafficable access for heavy fire fighting vehicles, including RFS Category 1 fire tankers.

Fire roads can be:

- Access roads;
- Perimeter tracks; or
- Link roads.

**Access Roads:** There are no set requirements for the number of access roads in a plantation. Plantation owners will be able to determine the location and intensity of access roads on their property.

**Perimeter tracks:** A perimeter track is required for all plantations, to be located as close as possible to the edge of the planted area. However, this requirement does not apply where it is impractical to construct a perimeter track because of topography, slope, soil regolith or rainfall erosivity.

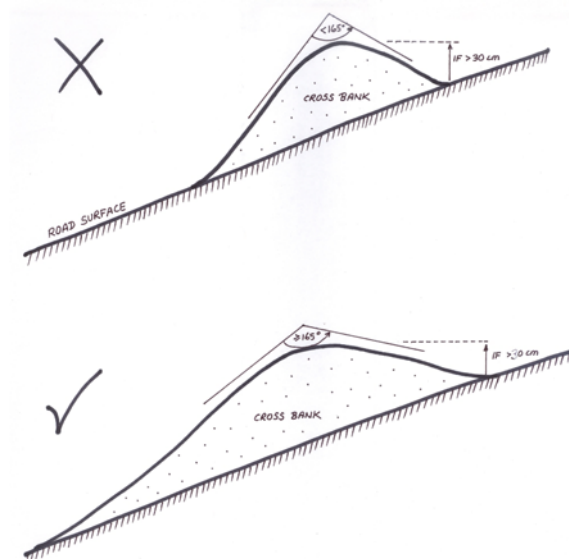
**Link roads:** A link road must be constructed to link discontinuous sections of perimeter track with other sections of perimeter track or access roads, except where this is impractical because of topography, slope, soil regolith or rainfall erosivity.

Plantation owners and managers must indicate any roads or proposed roads, including fire roads, on their plantation plans.

### Fire road construction - [Clause 41F](#)

The standards for fire road construction include:

- Minimum widths and overhead clearances;
- Maximum road grades and other engineering requirements;
- Special requirements for drainage feature crossings; and
- Specific requirements for crossbanks (see diagram).



## Turnarounds and passing opportunities

The provision of turnaround areas along fire roads is critical to minimise danger for fire fighters. Passing opportunities are necessary to reduce long distance reversing.

Turnaround areas are to be provided when a fire road ends in a dead end, and at any point on a fire road where the road conditions beyond that point do not meet the fire road standards (Clause 41G).

A T-junction or road intersection may serve as a turnaround area.

Passing opportunities must be provided on all fire roads at least every 250 metres (Clause 41H), unless topography makes this impossible. A passing opportunity is considered to be a road intersection, or any cleared area of certain dimensions along the side of a road.

## Requirements for Signage - Clause 41I

Signage is required to assist fire fighters navigate safely within plantations.

The requirements include signs to indicate:

- A section of fire road that is accessible by a Category 1 fire tanker;
- Where a fire road ends in a dead end or is otherwise inaccessible by a Category 1 fire tanker;
- A link road;
- The location of any water storage accessible from a fire road;
- Where there are no fire roads on a plantation.

Signs erected after the commencement of the fire standards must comply with the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee's signage design standards. However, existing signs can be retained if they include the necessary information.

## Standards relating to bush fire hazard reduction

*The provisions relating to bush fire hazard reduction are in Part 4, Division 4 of the Code.*

## Setbacks from buildings – Clause 25A

The setback requirements in the Code are consistent with existing State-wide standards designed to protect buildings from the risk of bush fire.

Establishment operations must not be undertaken within specified distances from any existing habitable dwelling or special fire protection

building. However, these requirements will not apply where:

- a habitable dwelling is located within the property boundary of the plantation and that dwelling is not inhabited; or
- an appropriate setback for a habitable dwelling or special fire protection building has been established in accordance with Planning for Bush Fire Protection or an environmental planning instrument.

## Setbacks from powerlines – Clause 25B

Powerline setbacks are required to provide safety for fire fighters during bush fires.

The proposed buffer distances are consistent with those in the Native Vegetation Act 2003.

The provisions require:

- An exclusion zone in which no planting is permitted; and
- A further buffer zone which can be planted provided that the trees do not exceed 3 metres in height.

## Access to water supply – Clause 25C

It is important that fire fighters know whether, and if so where, water is located in a plantation.

Where practicable, any water storage on a plantation must be accessible for fire fighting purposes.

Plantation owners and managers must indicate water storage points on their plantation plans.

## Provision of information - Clause 28A

Where the authorised area of a plantation is 100 hectares or more, the owner or manager must provide the RFS and Industry & Investment NSW with a digital mapping layer showing the location of fire roads and water storages.

This must be provided within 3 months of the completion of planting. Plantation officers can advise on the necessary format for this information.

## Record-keeping – Clause 41F(7)

The owner and manager of a plantation must keep the following records in relation to fire roads, including bridges and culverts on fire roads:

- Evidence of construction; and
- An annual inspection log

## When do the fire standards apply?

### – Clause 41B

#### **Plantations established after the commencement of the fire standards**

These plantations are required to comply with all the fire standards.

#### **Plantations established before the commencement of the fire standards**

##### **Fire roads, Setbacks from Buildings and Powerlines, and Provision of Information**

These requirements will not apply to established plantations until the replanting of 30 hectares, or 30% of the plantation area, whichever is greater.

##### **Signage**

Where there are no fire roads on a plantation, a sign indicating this must be erected within 12 months after the commencement of the fire standards.

All other signage requirements will not apply until the first of the following events occurs:

- The replanting of 30 hectares, or 30% of the plantation area, whichever is greater; or
- Five years after the commencement of the fire standards.

##### *Access to water supply and Record keeping*

These requirements will apply to established plantations immediately.

#### **Further Information**

The amended Act and Code can be found at: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/resources/private-forestry](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/resources/private-forestry)

For further information about the fire standards, please contact the Plantations Assessment Unit. Staff locations and telephone numbers are:

Nick Myer, Albury: 02 6051 7711

John Naimo, Albury: 02 6051 7710

John Ball, Coffs Harbour: 02 6650 3126

Mark Stanton-Cook, Wollongbar: 02 6626 1108

Wayne Garrard, Wollongbar: 02 6626 1207

---

© State of New South Wales through Department of Industry and Investment (Industry & Investment NSW) 2011. You may copy, distribute and otherwise freely deal with this publication for any purpose, provided that you attribute Industry & Investment NSW as the owner.

ISSN 1832-6668

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (January 2011). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of Industry & Investment NSW or the user's independent adviser.

Ref: PUB11/5