

# FIRE MANAGEMENT – RURAL / URBAN FRINGE

## Where towns meet grasslands, dense bush & forests



*“Want of foresight, unwillingness to act when action would be simple and effective, lack of clear thinking, confusion of counsel until the emergency comes, until self-preservation strikes its jarring gong - these are the features which constitute the endless repetition of history” - Winston Churchill*



If you live in a built-up area and on the edge of a town or city – sometimes referred to as the urban-rural fringe – and whether it's neighbouring open grassland, parks, grass camps, dense bush, forests or nature reserves - you could be impacted by unwanted fire during the winter fire season.

### Where towns meet the bush & forests

- You do not have to live in the country to be at risk of bushfire.
- Suburban homes can burn down in bushfire, too.
- Grassfires can start anywhere and spread quickly into neighbouring residential communities.
- Risk is more extreme if you live surrounded by or near forest.

### What can you expect?

- Scrub, forest and grass catching fire can happen quickly and threaten lives and properties within minutes.
- A fire from a grassland, bush or forest area can spread quickly putting timber fences, gardens, garden structures and outbuildings at risk
- There can be a high risk of ember attack if a house or structure is near dense bushland and forest environments.
- Embers falling close to or on your house could result in unwanted structural fires.

### What to expect and what to do when a fire is burning?

- Lots of smoke: Smoke makes it hard to see and can cause breathing difficulties.
- Radiant heat: Radiant heat is the heat created by a fire - it's important to cover up any exposed skin because radiant heat can cause serious injury or death.
- Act early, even if you haven't received a warning. If the fire is life threatening and or threatening your home, rather evacuate the area – safety comes first.
- Embers carried by the wind that may create small fires: In strong winds, embers (burning twigs, leaves and debris) can travel kilometres in front of a fire, causing new fires to start. Ember attack is the most common way houses catch fire during bushfires. So even if you don't live right next to bush, your property could be affected by fire caused by embers.
- It's important to have a plan for what you'll do in the event of a fire.
- Ensure your family, staff and neighbours are aware of your fire plan.
- If you are going away on holiday ensure your neighbours are aware of all alternative contact numbers in the event of a fire.
- Monitor weather conditions: It's up to you to stay informed. Always keep an eye on the conditions outside by looking around and smelling the air for smoke on hot, dry, windy, days.
- If you see smoke or flames, call the local the Fire Protection Association or the Fire Brigade Service.

LIONS RIVER FPA : 082 901 8795 / [admin@lionsriverfpa.co.za](mailto:admin@lionsriverfpa.co.za) OR [fpo@lionsriverfpa.co.za](mailto:fpo@lionsriverfpa.co.za)  
uMgungundlovu Fire Services: 033 – 845 5911

What to do & How to prepare your property (and be prepared) before the winter fire season:

- You need to prepare your property for fire before winter starts.
- Reduce the risk of fire damage to your property
- Mowing your lawn and clearing grass, scrub and other vegetation from around your home and the fence.
- Clear gutters, roofs and down pipes.
- Store anything flammable, such as firewood, rubbish and gas bottles away from your house and fences.
- Ensure adequate water supply for fire suppression - Have one or two taps points with good water pressure and hose lengths long enough to reach over the fence line by approximately 10 metres.
- As a guideline keep the fence line clean of all combustible material and ensure a 2 to 3 metre bare earth fire line is created on the outside of the fence line and 1 metre on the inside of the fence line.
- Talk to the forestry company if you share a joint boundary and plan fire breaks accordingly
- Enter into fire break agreements to ensure there is clarity between neighbours in respect of fire prevention planning
- It is important to note your responsibilities as rural / urban fringe neighbours in a fire prone area and that the National Veld & Forest Fire Act requires all landowners where there is a risk for spread of fire from or over a property to prepare fire breaks.
- Join the local Fire Protection Association (**FPA**) so as to be kept informed on high Fire Danger Rating days.

**ALWAYS PARTNER WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS : FOCUSING ON FIRE PREVENTION**