

FPA OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR: PLANNING, CLEARING AND MAINTAINING FIREBREAKS

A firebreak, around the perimeter of the cadastral lines of a property, is a legal requirement of all property owners and their lessees as per the National Veld and Forest Fire Act 101 of 1998.

Purpose of a perimeter firebreak: To create a reasonable change of limiting spread of fire between properties with potential life safety, economic and environmental consequences. Perimeter firebreaks also assist by creating access routes or strategic lines from which fire can be fought.

Please contact your local FPA Manager to advise you with the following:

- The acceptable width for different sections of your firebreak.
- Whether certain existing physical or man-made features can fulfil a dual role as a firebreak on your property (e.g.: a golf fairway, soccer field, parking lot etc.).
- In some cases it might be practical to move certain firebreaks to a more strategic place (e.g.: the highest road along a mountain, to the one side of a marshy area etc.), if formally agreed upon by both neighbouring property owners and their lessees.
- In some very rare cases an exemption of a firebreak might be advised, which can only be applied for through the FPA.
- Additional asset protection or strategic firebreaks you might want to put in for extra protection.

Consideration on how to clear/maintain your firebreak:

Most common methods of clearing / maintaining a firebreak include: chainsaw, brush-cutter, grass-cutter, hoeing, slashing and herbicide application (burning of firebreaks is not a practice utilised by most of the Western Cape).

Please give consideration to steep areas in which erosion can occur. In these areas either not all of the vegetation should be removed (e.g.: brush-cut) or alternatively plant low growing, fire resistant plants with fleshy or watery leaves such as *Carpobrotus edulis* (Sour Fig).

No spark generating equipment should be used to clear or maintain firebreaks (e.g.: brush-cutters or chainsaws) on Orange or Red Fire Danger Index (FDI) days.

All alien vegetation within the firebreak should be treated with herbicide, which must be immediately applied after cutting / felling alien vegetation (failure to do so will compromise the effectiveness of the herbicide).

You should be finished clearing / maintaining your firebreaks before the start of the fire season. The number of firebreaks and the speed at which you can clear or maintain it will dictate when you start preparing your firebreaks, but to be most effective, aim to only start after the bulk of precipitation, so the vegetation does not grow back before the fire season.