

media release



Dangers of discarded cigarette butts

Friday 19 February 2010

As the weather warms up tomorrow, the State's emergency services have issued a warning about the potential dangers of fire resulting from discarded cigarette butts.

Country Fire Service (CFS) State Coordinator Mal Watts is urging all South Australians to be aware of the potential dangers associated with their actions, including the discarding of cigarette butts, during the Fire Danger Season.

"With the right conditions, a cigarette butt discarded into dry grassland could have the potential to result in a serious fire, without the person responsible even being aware of the damage this seemingly innocuous action could cause," he said.

"During the Fire Danger Season a number of regulations are in place to protect lives and property from fire. These regulations apply to everyone, not just those living in bushfire risk areas, and it is essential that all South Australians are familiar with the regulations and understand what you can and can not do on a day of Total Fire Ban, whether you are at home, on holiday or visiting a national park."

The warning follows a number of fires believed to have been started by discarded cigarette butts, and has prompted a reminder from Operation NOMAD Police Commander, Assistant Commissioner Bryan Fahy that significant penalties apply for offences involving smoking in restricted areas and the discarding of cigarette butts.

"Of the 499 reported fires so far this Fire Danger Season, fire authorities suspect that a number of these may have been caused by discarded cigarette butts," Assistant Commissioner Fahy said.

"Anyone caught smoking cigarettes in country areas within two metres of flammable bush or grass is liable for a \$315 'on the spot fine'.

"People will also be liable for a \$500 'on the spot fine' for throwing a burning cigarette from a vehicle."

MFS Commander of Community Safety David Kemp says a carelessly discarded cigarette butt poses the same grass and bushfire risk in Adelaide and larger country communities.

"There are semi-urban areas of Adelaide and country communities where a discarded cigarette butt has the potential to cause an immediate bushfire threat to homes and lives," he said.

"I urge all South Australians to take the same care when discarding cigarette butts in Adelaide and rural cities, as they would in the bush, their own homes and work places."

REGULATIONS AFFECTING THE USE OF CIGARETTES DURING THE FIRE DANGER SEASON:

- You must not smoke within 2 metres of flammable bush or grass outside of a township (*maximum penalty \$1250*)
- You must not throw a cigarette butt from a vehicle (*maximum penalty \$5000*)
- You must not drop or throw a cigarette butt where it will come into contact with flammable material (*maximum penalty \$5000*)

For more information about what you can or can not do on a Total Fire Ban day visit www.cfs.sa.gov.au, or call the Bushfire Information Hotline 1300 362 361. Deaf and hearing impaired teletype service: TTY 133 677.

For media enquiries telephone the CFS Media Line on (08) 8212 9849 or MFS Media Line (08) 8204 3770



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