



Backburning

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is backburning?

A fire ignited by crews along the inner edge of a control line to burn the fuel (including leaves and tree limbs) on the ground in the path ahead of the fire. Backburning is used in places where it is difficult to access a fire directly or the fire is too intense to attack directly. The difference between backburning and planned burning is while backburning is undertaken to reduce the spread of an active bushfire, planned burning is conducted to reduce fuel loads around communities before the summer fire period

2. Why do you backburn?

We backburn to remove fuel in front of an advancing fire, preventing it from progressing beyond the backburn. It helps us build a solid, stronger edge around the perimeter of the fire, so lessen the chances of the fire spreading. Backburning may also be used to bring the fire edge to an accessible location, such as a road, ridge or vegetation boundary, where firefighters have a greater chance of safely controlling the fire.

Backburning is carefully planned to prevent escapes and be conducted safely. The time and location of the backburn is critical to its success and safety. Only the Incident Controller has the authority to authorise a backburning operation.

3. Does back burning have a detrimental effect on the environment?

Typically, backburns are of lower intensity than the main fire front and do less environmental harm than the wildfire they aim to control.

4. Are backburns planned?

Backburning is like any other strategic response – it is carefully planned by a team of people with input from Biodiversity and Cultural Heritage experts who ensure that sensitive areas are protected. Operational plans are then subject to the scrutiny of the Incident Controllers and Fire Behaviour Analysts to make sure that the objectives of the backburning operation are achievable. If any questions are raised or objections noted it goes back to the planning team for re-adjustment or it simply isn't done. Only the Incident Controller can authorise a backburn after careful consideration of other options.

5. How much do you burn and how long does it usually take?

Backburning can take many days and a burn size will vary. In some situations it may only be several hundred metres or even less. The terrain will often dictate the size of a back burn and that will then inform to how long it can take. In steep, hard to get to country, the containment lines may be as far as several kilometres from the fire. This is due to how

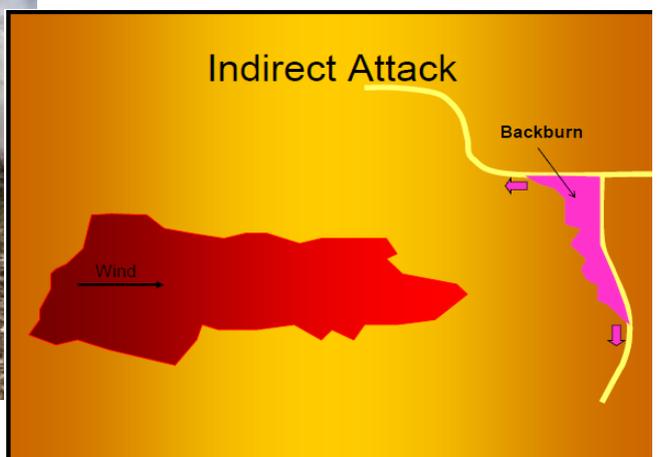
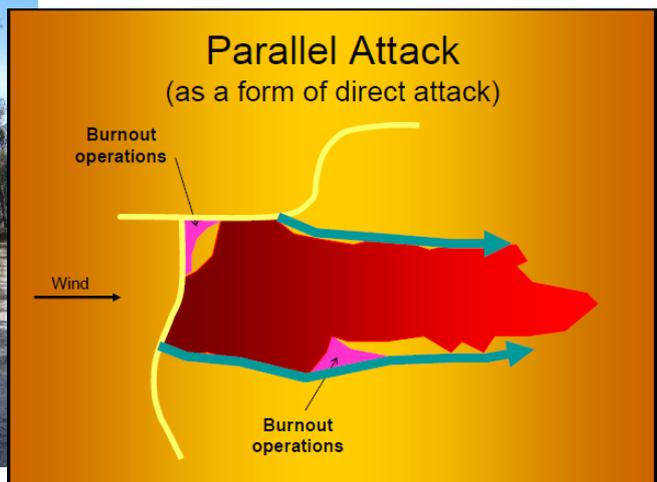
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Forest Fire Management Victoria consists of specialist staff drawn from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VicForests. These staff work alongside CFA, other emergency services and communities across Victoria to protect people, property and the environment.

accessible the country is for heavy machinery and ground crews. Safety is always at the forefront of any planning therefore initiating a backburn from a safer platform is always the best option. To minimise the environmental impact, planners will always try to use existing tracks/roads as the containment lines. Often they just need to be 'brushed' up to make them safer and maybe a little wider. Sometimes these roads are just not in the right place which means either a larger back burn is put in place or a new containment line is built. These containment lines are always 'fixed' at the end of the fire fight when rehabilitation occurs across the entire fire ground. Crews will always try to repair the damage machines have caused by reinstating the tracks. Where relevant, they will also block them off making them impassable for vehicles so they have time to rehabilitate themselves.

6. What's the difference between backburning and burning out?

Backburning is an indirect fire control strategy whereas burning-out can be either a direct or indirect strategy. Burning out is a fire control action, where fire is ignited to consume unburnt fuel inside a fire control line to prevent further ignition or to minimise the potential of fire crossing the fire control line.



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