

# Fire glossary

**Back burning** – Using fire along the inner edge of containment lines to consume fuel in the path of a bushfire during fire suppression. Prescribed burning is NOT the same as back burning.

**Containment line** – A natural or constructed barrier that limits the spread of fire during fire suppression or prescribed burning.

**Controlled** - When the complete perimeter of a bushfire is secured and no breakaway fire is expected.

**Crown fire** – A fire that advances from top to top of trees or shrubs.

**Fire front** – The front of the fire mass. It is generally the most intense part of the fire driven by wind speed and direction and the leading edge of the fire perimeter. Commonly referred to as the 'head fire'

**Fire frequency** – A general term referring to the recurrence of fire in a given area over time.

**Fire intensity** – The rate of heat energy released per metre of fire front usually expressed in kilowatts per metre (Kw/m). Intensity depends on the amount of fuel available and how fast the fire travels.

**Fire interval** – The average number of years between fires at one location

**Fire regime** – The history of fire and proposed future use of fire in a particular vegetation type or area including the frequency, intensity and season of burning.

**Flank fire** – The fire edge, positioned on the sides of the fire shape. Generally flames are not as intense as the head fire.

**Fire suppression** – Activities connected with restricting the spread of a fire following its detection and before making it safe.

**Fuel** – Any combustible material such as wood, grass, leaf litter and vegetation.

**Fuel load** – The oven dry weight of fuel per unit area. Commonly expressed as tonnes per hectare.

**Head fire** – The part of a fire where the rate of spread, flame height and intensity are greatest, usually when burning downwind or upslope. Also referred to as the 'fire front' (*see fire front reference*).

**Mosaic** - The spatial arrangement of burnt and unburnt fuels at either a local or a landscape scale.

**Prescribed burning** - The controlled application of fire under specified environmental conditions to a predetermined area at the time, intensity, and rate of spread required to attain planned resource management objectives. It is undertaken in specified environmental conditions. Sometimes called planned or controlled burning.

**Scale** – A combination of the area burnt and the intensity of the burn.

**Season of fire** – Simply refers to which season a prescribed burn should occur depending on the requirements of that particular burn area.

**Siviculture** – The growing, care and cultivation of forests.

**Spot fires** – Isolated fires started ahead of the main fire by sparks, embers or other ignited material, sometimes at a distance of several kilometres.

**Spotting** – Behaviour of a fire producing sparks or embers that are carried by the wind to start new fires (*see spot fires*) beyond the main fire.

The glossary contains terms in common use by DPaW and is not exhaustive. Some definitions have been adapted from the more extensive Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council's Bushfire Glossary [AFAC Bushfire Glossary 2012](#).