

The forest industry's regeneration burning and re-seeding program

The forest industry's annual regeneration burning and re-seeding program is due to commence in March.

The program is an integral part of our sustainable management of production forests, as planned burns and re-seeding of harvested areas are essential to ensure that all areas harvested for wood products are regrown.

The timing of the program is dictated by the prevailing weather conditions: it cannot commence if conditions are either too dry or too wet. Autumn is the safest and most effective time to burn, and the program usually commences on or about 15 March. While the program is a necessary measure that ensures harvested forests are regrown, we also understand that regeneration burns cause concern for many people in the community. The information below provides answers to some frequently asked questions about the program.

For more information, please visit:
www.forestrytas.com.au
www.plannedburnstas.com.au

Regeneration burns will still be necessary to ensure successful regrowth of harvested forests after the biomass plant has been developed; however, less fuel in the forest will mean that persistent smoke pollution in populated areas will be a thing of the past. Biomass energy stations are widely accepted in Europe and North America, where they are seen as being preferable to power stations fueled by non-renewable fossil fuels.

2010 will be the second consecutive year for the trial of the Coordinated Smoke Management Strategy (CSMS). The CSMS is an initiative of the Forest Practices Authority with a two-year development trial, which commenced in Autumn 2009. It can be expected that the development process will continue beyond 2011 as the forest industry strives for continuous improvement in the management of smoke.

The CSMS is based on the assumed capacity of the atmosphere to be able to absorb a certain amount of smoke before it exceeds prescribed limits. The CSMS prescribes limits for the amount of fuel that can be burnt under different atmospheric and dispersal parameters. The CSMS provides a means of equitably distributing the capacity for smoke production



What measures is the industry taking to reduce smoke from regeneration burns?

Forestry Tasmania is seeking investors to develop a biomass energy station at the Huon Wood Centre (Southwood) near Geeveston. Once established, the biomass plant will generate electricity from wood that is currently left on the forest floor to be burnt. The plant will limit the amount of smoke released in regeneration burns, as the wood will be burnt in a boiler with electrostatic precipitators that remove smoke particles.

between the users of fire on a daily basis, according to atmospheric conditions.

Forestry Tasmania also has agreements in place with the tourism industry and the wine industry to ensure that smoke does not adversely affect major events and grape harvesting during the re-seeding program.

Why does the forest industry have to conduct regeneration burns?

The regeneration burning and re-seeding season is the peak time for the forest industry to ensure that all areas harvested for wood products are regrown. Harvested areas are re-sown with locally collected seed within a few days of a regeneration burn.

The forest industry uses fire in a planned and controlled way to re-establish healthy fast growing trees after harvesting.

Fire is an important part of the life cycle of eucalypts. In nature, most eucalypt species require the disturbance provided by fire to regenerate.

Eucalypt seeds and seedlings need a mineral soil seedbed, abundant sunlight and reduced competition from other plants to establish and grow. In nature, this situation is provided by a major wildfire.

What happens if the forest industry doesn't conduct regeneration burns?

In wet eucalypt forests, regeneration of harvested areas will not be successful. Harvested areas will be invaded and colonised by weeds and wet forest species and the eucalypt seedlings will not survive.

In drier eucalypt forests burning is undertaken to remove the residues remaining after harvesting so as to reduce the fuel load and fire hazard.

Why do regeneration burns take place in Autumn?

The forest industry conducts planned burns in Autumn because it is the safest time of year to do so.

Planned burning is undertaken throughout Tasmania on private land and state forest each Autumn. Under the CSMS, burning is dispersed and only a limited number of operations occur on any one day.

Achievement of the planned burning program depends upon suitable weather conditions. These occur following the first autumn rains. The fuel remaining on harvested areas dries in the sun and wind, while the surrounding forests remain damp, allowing the burning to be done safely.

Each Autumn, the forest industry plans to prepare about 30,000 hectares of land for planting or sowing in patches scattered across Tasmania. The average size of these areas is about 45 hectares, although many will be much smaller and a few larger.

What impact do planned burns have on Tasmania's carbon emissions?

Carbon emissions from planned burns represent around one-third of the six million tonnes of carbon that are taken from the atmosphere each year and stored on state forest. In other words, state forests are a carbon sink.

The amount of carbon stored on state forest will grow by 17 per cent over the next 50 years, even taking into account the carbon released during the burns.

What is considered in planning and performing a burn?

Forestry Tasmania conducts complex planning before any burn takes place. Our planners consider such matters as:

- public and employee safety;
- the required weather conditions;
- moisture levels in the fuel and surrounding forest (important for fire intensity, safety and minimising smoke production);
- atmospheric stability (important for smoke dispersal); and
- towns and events downwind of the proposed burn.

All of these matters are covered in the burning plan prepared for each burn. A planned burn can and will be deferred if the conditions set out in the burning plan cannot be met.

How can I get information about the location of planned burns?

For information about planned burning locations, visit the Tasmanian forest industry planned burns website at: www.plannedburnstas.com.au

During the burning season this site is updated daily at 10am. Some of the burns shown may not take place due to weather conditions.