

IMPORTANT NOTE: *This document was correct at the time of preparation. It is currently subject to review due to legislative changes made during 2021.*



South Australian Country Fire Service

Code of Practice

APIARY FIRE SAFETY



**Government
of South Australia**

DRAFT FOR COMMENT

This document has not been approved for issue

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Foreword:

The practice of “Bee Keeping” has been undertaken for centuries and is the most effective way to cultivate and collect honey for consumption. Honeybees produce honey; moreover they are critical in the balance of nature, especially the pollination of agricultural and horticultural crops and the house garden. Pollination is a key component in the viability of many pastoral enterprises, market gardens, orchards and seed industries. Foods such as apples, avocados, stone fruits, melons and citrus fruits are either highly dependent on, or greatly benefit from, honeybee pollination. It has been estimated that honeybees add \$1.6 billion to the Australian agricultural and horticultural industries.

Apiarists keep bee hives on land which on occasions is not their own. The intent of this Code of Practice is to identify the responsibilities for the Bee Keeper regarding fire safety during Fire Danger Season within South Australia as fire is used as a tool in bee management.

All Apiarists should be familiar with their responsibilities regarding the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Act (2005) and the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Regulations (2005)

An Apiary is a place in which a colony or colonies of bees are kept, as a stand or shed for beehives or a bee house containing a number of beehives.

This Code of Practice has been developed in consultation with the South Australian Apiarists’ Association.

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Legislation

See appendix

Code History

Version 1 being developed – 2015

1 General

1.1 Scope:

This code applies to all persons undertaking the activity known as Apiary and it covers this activity for all vegetation types and classes.

1.2 Terminology:

In this code standard terminology has been used to reduce any confusion.

Abbreviations:

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FES Act 2005 – Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005

1.3 Definitions

A portable water spray in good working order – Is a portable water spray device that is designed to be used for firefighting operations and maintained to the appropriate Australian Standard. This may also include a Farm Fire Unit or suitable trailer mounted water tank, hose and pump.

At Hand – objects would be considered at hand if a person was to take less than 5 steps to reach the object

A person who is able to control – A person who is not under the effect of any alcohol or drugs and of an age and physical ability that they can take reasonable steps to control the prescribed equipment or any fire that may result from the prescribed equipment being used.

Flammable materials – Is all vegetation, bush or grasses that may be ignited by sparks and embers.

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1.4 References:

AS 1841.2-1997 – *Portable Fire Extinguishers – Specific requirements for Water Type Extinguishers*
AS 1851.1-1995 – *Maintenance of Fire Protection Equipment – Portable Fire Equipment – portable fire extinguishers and Fire Blankets.*
Fire and Emergency Service Act 2005
Fire and Emergency Services Regulations 2005

1.5 General:

1.5.1 Day outside of the declared Fire Danger Season. (not Total Fire Ban Days)

Current legislation allows for the practice of Apiary without any restrictions.

1.5.2 Normal days during the Fire Danger Season: (not Total Fire Ban Days)

Current legislation does not restrict the practice of Apiary, however if the activity uses an internal combustion engine to drive any part of the machinery or the use of a device that carries fire for the purpose of smoking bees then there is a requirement to have a 4 metre break around the area being worked, a portable water spray and a rake or shovel at hand while the internal combustion engine is being operated or a device that carries fire for the purpose of smoking bees. The internal combustion engine must also have an exhaust system that is deemed to comply with the legislation.

1.5.3 Total Fire Ban Days:

Total Fire Bans are declared on days of predicted Severe, Extreme and Catastrophic fire days. Total Fire Ban Days can be declared at anytime of the year. The legislation does not differentiate between during the fire danger season and on total fire ban days therefore a person can use an internal combustion engine to drive any part of the machinery or the use of a device that carries fire for the purpose of smoking bees on a total fire ban day provided they comply with the legislation by having a 4 metre break around the area being used, a portable water spray and a rake or shovel at hand, and the exhaust system is deemed to comply with legislation.

2 Code of Practice:

2.1 General:

- 2.1.1 It is recommended that apiaries be mown and cleaned of debris such as branches, twigs and dead grass with a firebreak at least 4 metres wide around the apiary to minimise risk of bushfire to the apiary. All clearing of vegetation must take into account possible restrictions made under the Native Vegetation Act and seek permission from the owner before clearing an apiary site.

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- 2.1.2 Grass and bush fires can destroy apiaries quickly as the components are highly combustible. The fire risk should be considered carefully when choosing prospective sites. Easy access to the apiary in a severe bush fire season is also an important factor.
- 2.1.3 Apiarists should consult with the Country Fire Service to find out whether fire bans are in place and the lighting of smokers prohibited.
- 2.1.4 A bee smoker is one of an apiarist's basic tools of the trade and its use is essential for the correct manipulation of hives. A smoker is fuelled using dried grass, wood shavings, bark or hessian and is used to calm the bees.
- 2.1.5 In times of fire risk, it is advisable that the bee smoker be kept in a fireproof container such as a modified 20 litre drum. Sparks escaping from the air intake at the base of the smoker are a possible source of fire.

2.2 During the Fire Danger season

- A Portable water spray and a rake or shovel is at hand at all times during the activity.
- Regular maintenance and cleaning of the equipment will prevent and build-up of flammable materials.
- Ensure that the operator has quick access to a phone or other method to alert the fire brigade in a timely manner.

2.3 Days Declared as Total Fire Ban Days

These days are declared due to the increased risk of fire. On these days consideration should be given to postponing the activity until a more suitable day.

If the operation cannot be postponed then the operator should maintain awareness of the weather and should not undertake this activity when the wind is over 20Kph.

3 Review

This COP will be reviewed 2 years from the implementation date and then on an as needs basis.

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Appendix

Legislation

The Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005,

89—Restriction on use of certain appliances etc

A person must not, during the fire danger season, operate an engine, vehicle or appliance of a prescribed kind in the open air, or use any flammable or explosive material of a prescribed kind, or carry out any prescribed activity, except in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Maximum penalty:

- (a) for a first offence—\$5 000;
- (b) for a second or subsequent offence—\$10 000.

The Fire and Emergency Services Regulations 2005,

38—Internal combustion engines

- (1) Pursuant to section 89 of the Act, an internal combustion engine is prescribed.
- (2) A person must not, during the fire danger season, operate an internal combustion engine in connection with—
 - (a) harvesting a flammable crop; or
 - (b) moving a flammable crop on the land holding where it has been harvested; or
 - (c) spreading lime or fertiliser,unless—
 - (d) a shovel or rake, and a portable water spray in good working order, are at hand; and
 - (e) the engine is fitted with an exhaust system that complies with this Division.
- (3) A person must not, during the fire danger season, operate an internal combustion engine, other than in connection with an activity referred to in subregulation (2), in circumstances where the internal combustion engine comes into contact with, or is operated in the vicinity of, any flammable bush, grass, pasture or stubble, unless—
 - (a) in a case where a person is not present at all times while the internal combustion engine is in operation—
 - (i) the land immediately around the place where the relevant activity is to be undertaken is cleared of all flammable material to a distance of at least 4 metres; and
 - (ii) the engine is fitted with an exhaust system that complies with this Division; or
 - (b) in a case where a person is present at all times while the internal combustion engine is in operation—
 - (i) —
 - (A) the land immediately around the place where the relevant activity is cleared of all flammable material to a distance of at least 4 metres; or
 - (B) a shovel or rake, and a portable water spray in good working order, are at hand; and
 - (ii) the engine is fitted with an exhaust system that complies with this Division.

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(2) For the purposes of this Division, an engine or vehicle exhaust system complies with this Division if—

(a) all engine exhaust emitted by the engine or vehicle exits through the system;

And

(b) the system, or a device or devices forming part of the system, is designed to prevent the escape of burning material from the system; and

(c) the system, or a device or devices forming part of the system, is designed to prevent heated parts of the system from coming into contact with flammable material; and

(d) the system is in good working order.

(3) For the purposes of sub-regulation (2)(a), engine exhaust emitted by a turbocharged engine, or a vehicle fitted with a turbocharged engine, by means of a device of a kind commonly known as a waste gate will be taken to exit through the exhaust system of the engine or vehicle.

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