

THE RULES OF THE LETABA FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION

Updated February 2024



All Fire Protection Associations are governed by the **National Veld and Forest Fire Act** *[No. 101 of 1998]*.

The Letaba Fire Protection Association therefore needs rules in place binding on Members within the registered area at the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and Environment (DFFE). An FPA may make rules different to what is in the Act if the Minister approves them. The new rules will apply to all members of the FPA.

The FPA can always object to the burning of firebreaks by anyone within its area, whether the person is a member or not. In that way, the FPA enforces its own rules on members and non-members.

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1 Prevention

Chapter 4 of “The Act” places a duty on owners to prepare and maintain firebreaks.

1.1 Firebreaks and Firebreak Widths

Members of the Letaba Fire Protection Association are to maintain the following firebreaks on all property boundaries. Boundaries may be graded, ploughed, disked, hoed or burnt.

NB. Slashed or mown boundaries will only constitute a firebreak if cleared sufficiently of all burnable material to comply with “The Act”.

BOUNDRIES	MIN. WIDTH
Plantation to Plantation	5 meters
Plantation to Grassland	10meter
Plantation to Orchard	5 meters
Orchard to Orchard	3 meters
Grassland to Grassland	10 meters
Any boundary to Indigenous Forest	0 meter
Orchard to Grassland	5 meters
Plantation to Bush	5 meters
Orchard to Bush	5 meters
Road Reserve	2 meters
Road Reserve – Private landowner side	2 meters

(NB: These widths may not be able to control fires in extreme fire behaviour)

1.2 Time of firebreak preparation

All fire breaks must be in place and completed by 31st July of every year or if stipulated otherwise through the official communication channels of the Letaba Fire Protection Association.

1.2.1 Procedure for burning external firebreaks with regards to neighbours.

1.

If an owner will be absent for longer than 14 days during the period in which firebreaks are usually burnt, s/he must give neighbours or LFPA operations room an address and phone number where s/he can be contacted.

1.2.2 Discuss with neighbours and reach agreement:

- Determine mutually acceptable date.
- Inform the LFPA of the planned dates.
- Burn firebreaks on the same day OR be present or have an agent present when neighbour is burning.
- Have enough people present to prevent the fire from spreading.
- If the neighbour is not present on the agreed day, you can burn in his/her absence.

In case burning cannot go ahead on the agreed day:

- Inform neighbours and the LFPA that burning cannot be done.
- Inform neighbours and the LFPA of additional day/s you intend to burn.
- You do not have to give 14 days' notice of these additional days.

1.2.3 Discuss with neighbours and do not reach agreement:

- Give 14 days' written notice to neighbours and LFPA, of day/s on which you intend to burn.
- Burn firebreaks on the same day OR be present or have an agent present when neighbour is burning.
- Have enough people present to prevent the fire from spreading.
- If the neighbour is not present on the agreed day, you can burn in his/her absence.

In case burning cannot go ahead on the planned day:

- Inform neighbours and the LFPA that burning cannot be done.
- Inform neighbours and the LFPA of additional day/s you intend to burn.
- You do not have to give 14 days' notice of these additional days.

1.3 Controlled burning, including the burning of fire breaks

The LFPA recognises the need to control fuel loads and to prepare lands for agricultural and forestry purposes through controlled burning. It is however necessary to comply to the rules of the LFPA during the normal burning season as well as out of the normal season burning.

1.3.1 Burning Permits – Normal Burning Period

All land owners, regardless of being a member or non-member intending to do a controlled burn, must obtain a burning permit number from the LFPA Operations Centre for all burns conducted during the period 01 November and 31 July, or as otherwise informed by the LFPA.

The LFPA Operations Centre must be informed about the burning at least one hour before the actual start of the burning operation in order for LFPA to inform the other landowners in the area.

1.3.2 Burning Permits – **No Burning Period**

Controlled Burning Permits During the No-Burning Period

Commercial agriculture farms and sawmills may be granted special permits to conduct controlled burns during the No-Burning Period, which runs from **1 August to 30 October** each year, or as otherwise advised by the LFPA.

These permits must be applied for **at least one week** before the planned burn. A permit will only be issued after a site inspection by the LFPA's Fire Manager to ensure the burn area is safe and poses no risk to neighbouring properties.

Approval of the permit will also depend heavily on the weather conditions in the week leading up to the burn and the week following it. If any change occurs that affects the safety of the burn, the LFPA reserves the right to cancel the permit, and no burning will be allowed on the scheduled date.

Non-LFPA members may also apply for a special burning permit; however, they will be required to pay a fee as determined by the LFPA.

The LFPA Operations Centre must be notified **at least one hour** before the start of the burn, so that nearby landowners can be informed.

1.3.3 Burning of Pine Slash/Pine Compartments

Burning of Pine slash or any area which was previously planted to Pine trees may only be burned up to 31 May, regardless of the Normal Burning Period stretching to 31 July.

Areas previously planted to Pine, which are cleared for commercial agricultural purposes may apply for a special burning permit if the burning is to take place after the 31st of May. The conditions for special burning permits as stipulated in point 1.4.3 of this document will still apply.

The LFPA Operations Centre must be informed about the burning at least one hour before the actual start of the burning operation in order for LFPA to inform the other landowners in the area.

1.4 General rules for the use of fire (other than controlled burning)

1.4.1 Picnic and camp fires

May only be lit only in a permanently constructed fireplace surrounded by ground that is clear of all combustible matter for a distance of at least 2 metres, or at a site surrounded by ground that is clear of all combustible matter for a distance of at least 2 metres; may not be left unattended until entirely extinguished.

1.4.2 Smoking and other

No person may drop or throw down any lighted cigarette, match or anything burning. No person may light or carry a lighted cigarette or match within 15 metres of any of stacks of grain, hay, or straw or any standing crops, dry grass or crop residue and plantation slash.

1.5 Fire Prevention And Preparedness During Periods Of High Fire Danger

1.5.1 High Fire Danger - Total Fire Ban:

When a forecast of a high fire danger rating is broadcast by the SA Weather Services and the forecast is published in the public media according to the requirements of the Act, a total fire ban applies from midnight at the start of the day of high danger, until further notice. During a Total Fire Ban, no fire may be lit in the open. Should a burn still be active from the previous days burning, the landowners must take all reasonable steps to extinguish the fire. This includes incinerators, garden refuse fires and picnic or cooking fires that burn solid fuel, e.g. wood or charcoal.

No burning permits will be issued by the LFPA during periods of high FDI or days fore going the predicted high FDI days.

1.5.2 Readiness during high FDI Days

All landowners must ensure that all equipment and personnel is ready to react quickly to a fire should a fire break out on his/her property. (See chapter 5 of “The Act”)

On high FDI Days all land owners must closely follow the main communication channels used by the LFPA to ensure that they stay up to date with any warnings or communications as released by the LFPA.

2 Suppression (Firefighting)

Chapter 5 places a duty on all owners to acquire equipment and have available personnel to fight fires.

2.1 Minimum firefighting equipment requirements.

- See Annexure A.

2.2 Minimum requirements for firefighting personnel

All personnel attending to a fire must be trained and certified by a certified trainer who is registered and certified with FIETA or PAETA.

2.2.1 Minimum Protective Clothing

- One cotton flameproof overall
- A cotton T-shirt as under layer
- One pair of leather gloves
- One pair ankle-length, safety boots
- One flameproof balaclava for nozzleman

2.3 Action to fight fires

- All landowners to familiarize themselves with **Chapter 5, Section 18 and 19 of the National Veld and Forest Fire Act [No.101 of 1998]** with regards to the duty that the act places on all landowners with regards to fighting fires.
- All unintentional fires must be reported to the LFPA Operational Centre as soon as members become aware of it.

2.4 Deployment of Aerial Resources

- Only Member landowners or persons on prescribed form may activate aircraft.
- Payment of account is the responsibility of the person who activates the aircraft.
- The person who activates the aircraft, may at any time instruct the aircraft to return to base.
- Only members who pay the full standing fee may activate LFPA aircraft.
- Spotter may be activated on its own.
- Chopper may only be activated with spotter.
- Activation charges are on a pro-rata basis and are calculated from Engine on (First take off) to Engine off (last landing)
- Once activated Aircraft will be billed on ground time (Engine on start-up) even if stand down is instructed.
- Activation of aircraft, where Landowners have the same option, will be on a "first-come first-served" basis.

3 Enforcement

3.1 Enforcement Officers

Chapter 8 of "The Act" sets out the powers of registered fire protection officers to police the provision of the act effectively which includes the rules of the fire protection association in the area.

Registered fire protection officers as stipulated in the act refers to all of the following:

- Forest Officer
- Police Officer
- Officer appointed in terms of section 5 of the Fire Brigade Services Act, 1987

4 Reporting and complaints

Should a member wish to file a complaint or report any wrong doing with regards to the act and the rules of the LFPA, such complaint or report must be made in writing and send to the LFPA Fire Manager.

Where possible this complaint or report will be treated with confidentiality.

This complaint or report may be used as part of further investigation and litigation.