

Managing waste from bushfires

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EPA 1057/16: The EPA is providing advice on waste management, disposal of animal carcasses, fire-affected asbestos, disposal of contaminated water and other issues that may arise from the current bushfire recovery. We recommend affected farmers and residents contact their insurers prior to disposal of waste, stock or water. This information is also available on our website <www.epa.sa.gov.au>

Bushfire-affected animal carcasses

This information will assist farmers and animal owners in the safe and appropriate disposal of animal carcasses under local conditions, and should be read in conjunction with PIRSA advice.

Dry rendering at an abattoir is the preferred method of carcass disposal, but following a bushfire this may not be possible and burial is the most viable option.

For further information, check out Guidelines on burial pit construction
<www.epa.sa.gov.au/xstd_files/Waste/Information%20sheet/onfarm_disposal.pdf>

Storage, handling and disposal of CCA treated timber

The copper, chromium and arsenic compounds present in the ash from burnt CCA treated timber poses a risk to groundwater and surface water quality, human and animal health, and soil quality. Stock, pets and children should be excluded from areas containing CCA ash to prevent exposure to harmful chemicals.

If CCA treated timber or ash is stored prior to disposal, storage should occur on an impermeable surface and be covered to prevent leaching and further dispersal of ash to the surrounding environment.

Do not dispose of CCA treated timber by burning or burying on site as the contaminants pose a risk to groundwater and surface water quality, human and animal health, and soil quality. Landfills are designed to address these risks and as such are the best place to dispose of CCA treated timber and ash.

For further information, check out *Guidelines on CCA treated timber storage and disposal*
<www.epa.sa.gov.au/xstd_files/Waste/Guideline/guide_cca.pdf>

Storage, handling and disposal of damaged pesticide and chemical containers

The chemicals present in the pesticide or chemical containers pose a risk to groundwater and surface water quality, human and animal health, and soil quality. Stock, pets and children should be excluded from affected areas to prevent ingestion of harmful chemicals.

Small amounts of liquid and spills can be contained and collected using absorbent material such as sand, sawdust or other commercially available absorbent materials designed for spill kits.

If burnt or damaged chemicals and their containers are to be stored prior to disposal, storage should occur in a bin or container which can contain any leakage and prevent dispersal of ash. Alternatively, such items can be stored on an impermeable surface such as a concrete, paving or bitumen and be covered to prevent leaching and further dispersal of ash to the surrounding environment.

Fire-affected asbestos

Asbestos-containing materials were used extensively in Australian buildings and structures, usually found as cement sheeting (either flat or corrugated), vinyl floor tiles, water or flue pipes, and other asbestos-bonded products produced before 1980. Pieces of asbestos material and some fibres remaining in the ash and debris may present a risk if disturbed during clean up after a fire. Advice is available to handle fire-damaged asbestos

<www.asbestos.sa.gov.au/home_weather.html>

The EPA is primarily responsible for the regulation of asbestos transport and disposal. For health and safety reasons, removal of fire affected asbestos-containing material should only be undertaken by a licensed asbestos removalist (refer to Yellow Pages <www.yellowpages.com.au>).

It is recommended that you contact your local transfer station or waste depot for specific advice on disposal requirements.

For further information on the management of asbestos please also refer to the *Guideline for the removal, transport and disposal of wastes containing asbestos* <www.epa.sa.gov.au/xstd_files/Waste/Guideline/guide_asbestos.pdf>

Construction and demolition waste/building rubble

Building rubble from bushfires mainly consists of brick, concrete, masonry and timber and should be disposed of to a resource recovery facility, waste transfer station or licensed landfill. Building rubble can also be disposed on the land-owners property so long as the material does not contain hazardous waste such as asbestos or chemicals.

Disposal must not cause environmental harm or site contamination and must not affect surface or groundwater or create a future fire hazard, unstable geotechnical conditions or vermin infestation. Please contact the EPA for further advice.

Septic tank assessment and wastewater disposal

Damage to standard septic tank and subsurface disposal systems (underground concrete/metal septic tanks and soakage trenches) as a result of bushfire is unlikely to have occurred. Plastic septic tanks and aerobic systems are likely to have been impacted and will require an inspection by the local council.

In the event that a tank requires replacement, a licensed liquid waste contractor will need to be engaged to pump out the tank, prior to it being removed. Wastewater contained in tanks must not be discharged to land or waters and must be collected by a licensed liquid waste contractor for appropriate disposal to a facility licensed to receive that waste.

Disposal of water to watercourse, creek or dam

Water in rainwater tanks may be contaminated with ash and residents may desire to drain and discard the water to a watercourse and clean the tank.

It is important to drain the water at a slow rate to ensure that the hay bale or geotechnical material can effectively filter the ash, and also prevent erosion and the transport of ash to water storages downstream.

The bushfire recovery website <www.sa.gov.au/topics/emergencies-and-safety/south-australian-bushfire-recovery> has more information on managing water resources.

Further information

For any further information or advice please contact the EPA directly on (08) 8204 2004/1800 623 445 (country callers only) or email <epainfo@epa.sa.gov.au>