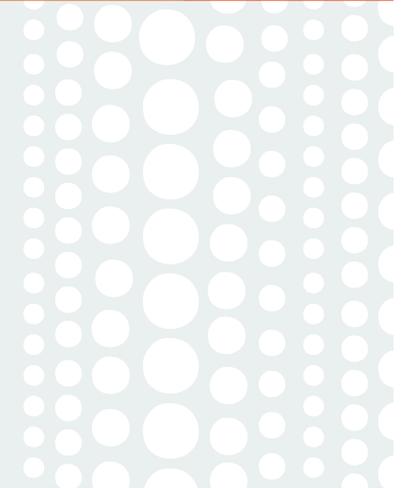




# Seasonal Fire Management in the Australian Deserts

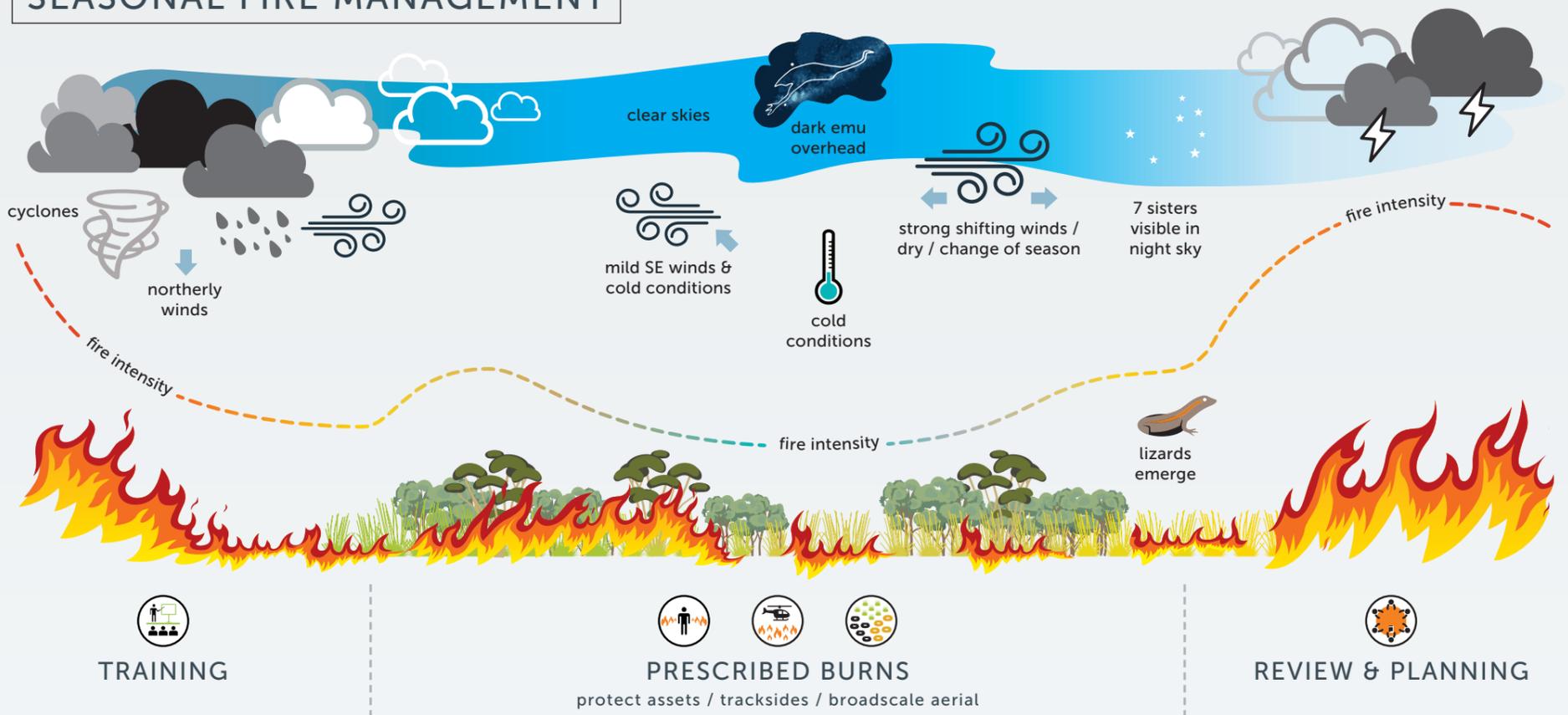




## The 10 Deserts Project seasonal fire calendar is to be used as a guide only – a set of ideas and general indicators of what works.

Your country will be different from the average and it is important to make sure that local conditions and local knowledge are taken into account when undertaking burning. Traditional owners (TOs), ranger teams and other fire managers need to be ready to respond to good conditions and change their approach if conditions are not favourable. Always take care and never be afraid to ask questions.

### SEASONAL FIRE MANAGEMENT



JAN.	FEB.	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT. TO DEC.
------	------	-------	-------	-----	------	------	------	---------------

If there has been no rain, there will often be hot and dry conditions. Fires will have the potential to be very hot. Avoid any burning.

If there has been decent rain, spinifex and other grasses can start to green up, lowering their flammability. Burning could be undertaken with care in wet years.

#### Activities may include:

- refine upcoming burn plans based on seasonal conditions and traditional knowledge
- training such as incendiary machine operator, basic wildfire awareness or prescribed burning units
- equipment checks and ordering of required gear and consumables
- monitoring rainfall and vegetation greenness
- for the northern areas especially, some burning might be done in the few days after rain when there could be a dew in the morning. Fires are potentially mild in these conditions

Generally warm conditions mean that there is care required with fire. For the northern desert areas, this can be a particularly good time to start prescribed burning, if there has been rain.

#### Activities may include:

- conduct small, safe test burns before major work to get an understanding of how things are burning. This should be done on an ongoing basis to ensure optimal burning conditions
- utilizing both cultural and environmental indicators, commence burning if there has been enough rain
- monitor rainfall, overnight temperatures, and grasses starting to dry to help decide when to start burning
- if country is drying quickly it may be best to wait for cooler temperatures to conduct broadscale burning

These months see cooler temperatures, and for many areas much more stable weather conditions than later in winter. There may be frost in some areas and cold, dewy nights in others. Cool to cold conditions mean prescribed burns will often go out overnight.

#### Activities may include:

- prescribed burning – for most areas this will be the lowest intensity period for burning. Many places with low fuel loads may not carry fire due to the cool temperatures and generally low winds
- with generally mild conditions it is the best time to work on fragmenting large areas of older fuel if needed
- continue working with TOs, familiarising people with all aspects of fire use, using both cultural and western fire management techniques

July is often very cold with August becoming warmer and windier. Fires that don't go out at this time of year may be more severe than desired.

#### Activities may include:

- continue burning only in suitable conditions. This is more likely to be possible in the southern deserts or after winter rainfall
- monitor winds; avoid burning on high wind days
- detailed work around communities and cultural sites & infrastructure to reduce risk. This should be done whenever conditions are suitable and can include a mix of slashing, mowing, spraying and manual clearing in addition to careful prescribed burning

These months generally have very hot, dry conditions. Dry lightning storms are also common. This is often when the largest, hottest fires occur. Avoid any burning.

#### Activities may include:

- review previous fire seasons work (what worked well, what didn't)
- make sure TOs and the community are happy with the work completed in the fire season
- make sure fire scars are mapped and recorded
- plan burn locations and methods for next year with relevant TOs, neighbours and stake holders, and check what burning permits may be required with relevant government agencies
- complete some logistics work such as booking aircraft contractors and servicing aerial incendiary machines
- plan training courses and refreshers for ranger teams
- attend and present at conferences

## 10 Deserts Project Regional Fire Strategy

Our regional fire management strategy forms the basis for learning, sharing and exchange across the deserts by targeting regional activities such as training, on-ground fire operations and developing a pool of contract staff for Indigenous land management organisations to access on an as-needs basis.

### The strategy aims to:

- encourage collaboration between all land management agencies working across the deserts
- develop the capacity of Indigenous land management agencies and Indigenous ranger groups to undertake effective 'right way fire' management
- encourage the sharing of knowledge and learnings across the 10DP project area
- build opportunities for women to better engage in fire management activities across the deserts
- provide resources to respond to higher priority needs across the 10DP project area
- undertake work to determine if a carbon methodology is feasible across the 10DP project area

### Our team

Our fire management team can assist Indigenous ranger teams by:

- helping develop annual work plans
- coordinating burning activities
- training Indigenous rangers to operate aerial incendiary machines and conduct on-ground burning

Contact Gareth Catt, regional fire management coordinator, on 0402 615 313 or email [garethcatt@dss.org.au](mailto:garethcatt@dss.org.au)

