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Southwest Center
FOR AGRICULTURAL HEALTH, INJURY PREVENTION, AND EDUCATION

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Fire is typically known to be a dangerous form of energy that can lead to serious injuries. Fire can be used in different techniques within agriculture to bring a benefit to those who are using it.

Prescribed Burning is one way that farmers, forestry workers, and other industries within the agriculture world can use fire in a beneficial way. Prescribed Burning, also known as prescribed fire or controlled burning, is a simple way to manage your land.

What It's For

Prescribed burns are intentionally lit fires applied to vegetation. Usually when prescribed burning is performed, there is an objective. You can either look to restore fire regimes in altered ecosystems or attempt to limit the amount of underbrush in an area at high risk for wildfires. Other reasons to have a prescribed burn can be to limit the number of pest species within an area, or to just clear out some land. Prescribed Burning can be a great way to help recover the ecosystems health in various areas, such as forests, woodlands, shrublands, and grasslands. This helps by reducing the competition, limiting diseases, and helping prevent wildfires.



<https://huntwildpa.com/2015/09/02/prescribed-fire-and-wildlife/>

The overall goal in prescribed burning should be safety and control. Before each burn, a goal and plan should be established. Prescribed burns should not be conducted when either the safety or control is in question. When scheduling a prescribed burn, make sure to allow yourself extra days, just in case the conditions are not right.

- **A great tool to help control prescribed burns are fireguards.** There are many different types of fireguards, such as streams, water impediments, bluffs, thin plant communities, cool season grasses, bare soils, roads, burned areas, and mowed vegetation that is wet. You want the fireguards to allow uninterrupted access around the burn area, just in case there is a need for firefighting equipment. Fire-lanes are another great way to control a prescribed burn. These are created with a bulldozer by barely scraping the top surface off of the ground to expose a bare soil.
- **Before going forward with your prescribed burn, make sure to check the weather the day before and the day of the burn.** Fuels needed to conduct a burn will not burn properly when wet, or when the relative humidity is too high. Also, being able to control a fire becomes more difficult when the relative humidity is too low. Do not conduct a burn whenever the wind is projected to change directions. Burns are adequately performed whenever the wind is 5 to 15 miles per hour in a constant direction. Winds above 20 miles per hour make it difficult to control a fire.
- **Always notify your local fire department the day of the prescribed burn.** Also, anyone surrounding the property, and depending on the location, some state agencies should be notified. In some cases, your burn may have to be approved by a state agency the day before.

All in all, prescribed burning can be beneficial to you and others. Although a prescribed burn comes with a plan and safety precautions, there is still danger involved. Understanding the dangers of performing a prescribed burn, creating a plan, and executing the plan will lead to a positive outcome.



<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/controlled-burning/>

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To learn more about the CASH Internship, visit <https://www.uthct.edu/swagc-noble-foundation-safety-internship>.

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