



What to do if you see a fire

If you see a fire burning between the months of March and July, it may be a planned cool burn.

These fires are managed closely by Indigenous rangers and Traditional Owners to ensure they are controlled at all times and do not impose risk to people, infrastructure or livestock.

There are also other organisations and government departments such as Department of Parks and Wildlife, Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Australian Wildlife Conservancy and Pastoralists that manage fire in the Kimberley by carrying out early dry season prescribed burning.

If you see a fire while travelling through the Kimberley and you have concerns, please phone triple zero (000) or visit www.emergency.wa.gov.au for all of the latest fire advice.

For more information about Indigenous fire management in the Kimberley please visit www.klc.org.au.

Wildfires can still occur.
If you believe you may be in danger, act immediately for your own safety.
In a life threatening emergency call triple zero (000).



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Kimberley Land Council

Fire management in the Kimberley

Prepared by the Kimberley Land Council

Why is Indigenous fire management important?

Aboriginal people in the Kimberley have been undertaking traditional fire management for thousands of years.

However, with the onset of colonisation and the removal of Aboriginal people from traditional lands, traditional burning was largely stopped during the twentieth century.

This led to the emergence of large, uncontrolled wildfires, usually occurring late in the dry season and destroying important ecosystems and habitats. Often these late dry season wildfires impact grazing pasture, infrastructure and other assets.

In the last 25 years, with the introduction of native title and the recognition that western fire prevention methods have not been working effectively, we are now seeing a reinvigoration of traditional fire management in the Kimberley and all across northern Australia.



How does Indigenous fire management work?

Indigenous fire management involves the lighting of 'cool' fires in targeted areas during the early dry season between March and July.

The fires burn slowly, reducing fuel loads and creating fire breaks. Not all the area is burnt, with the end result a mosaic of burnt and unburnt country. This creates a similar landscape to when Kimberley Aboriginal People walked the country and burnt as they went for hunting, ceremony and other cultural purposes.

The method removes fuel for larger fires late in the dry season when the weather is very hot, at the same time as maintaining and protecting habitat for mammals, reptiles, insects and birds.

Highly skilled Indigenous rangers use traditional knowledge and techniques, together with modern science and technology, to fight fire with fire and reduce the likelihood of large uncontrolled wildfires.



When does Indigenous fire management take place?

The fire seasons of northern Australia are different to that of southern Australia. Unlike the south, most parts of the north Australian savanna will burn every two to three years and some parts will burn every year. The most dangerous time for wildfires is the late dry season (August to November) when the weather is hot and dry.

To reduce the impact of late season fires we undertake Indigenous fire management at the start of the Kimberley dry season, between the months of March and July, while the grasses are still a bit green and won't carry fire too far. During these months the weather conditions are more favourable with cool, dewy nights encouraging fires to self-extinguish.

If you are travelling or residing in the Kimberley during these months you may notice fires being lit or recently burnt country.

Travellers and residents can be assured that extensive planning and preparation occurs before each fire season.

We work very closely with shires, pastoralists and other stakeholders. All people involved in traditional burning receive extensive nationally accredited training to conduct these activities.