



Mt Hotham Alpine Resort
Management Board
PO Box 188 Bright 3741
Victoria Australia

Phone 03 5759 3550
Fax 03 5759 3693

Email mhar@mthotham.com.au
Website

www.mthotham.com.au

URGENT - Fire Risk Reduction

Copy of letter sent to all MOUNT HOTHAM LESSEES/STAKEHOLDERS

In early December an invitation to carry out bushfire risk reduction works as part of a Mount Hotham Resort Management Board BBQ weekend was sent out to all stakeholders. At the same time it was suggested that these works should be carried out as soon as possible and prior to the height of summer. A small number of people took advantage of this opportunity and enjoyed a BBQ lunch with members of the Board while reducing their individual property fire risk.

Since then lessees/stakeholders have been urged to carry out risk reduction works without significant response. Now the need for bushfire risk reduction works to ensure that the resort does not face the degree of risk that existed when the 2003 bushfires began is becoming urgent.

The key fire risk factors that the CFA identified for Mount Hotham are:

- fine fuels
- ember attack

Fine fuels, especially bark lodged in shrubs or at the base of trees, can build up to the point where fire can quickly take hold and threaten adjoining buildings. This can happen through ember attack while a fire is still hundreds or even thousands of metres away.

The trees and shrubs themselves are not the key issue but rather the dead and dry materials up to 6mm in diameter which most readily ignite and can then ignite larger and less flammable material such as the exterior of a ski lodge.

The CFA specifies that fine fuels should be removed for at least 1 metre surrounding any buildings but the RMB recommends greater distances and for most this means beyond the nearest trees and shrubs. This does not mean removing live shrubs or trees etc., as they will not readily burn without the fine fuels to kindle fire from any embers that land.

Fine fuel clean up must be undertaken prior to the start of the fire risk period but not months beforehand as more fuel may buildup. This means that for Mount Hotham it will be somewhere from November to January depending on the lateness or severity of summer.

The Mount Hotham Resort Management Board is requesting that all lessees/stakeholders carry out appropriate bushfire risk reduction works urgently so as to safeguard the resort. **For those Lessee's/stakeholders who are unable to undertake the works required by the 25th of January the MHARMB will arrange for the work to be carried out at the lessee's expense.** For further details contact the Fire Prevention Co-ordinator at gregod@mthotham.com.au or on 03 5759 3550 as soon as possible to make arrangements.

Equally as important as cleaning up fine fuels is the maintenance of a closed building envelope with no nooks or crannies in which embers might lodge and eventually set fire to the building structure.

This means:

- roofs should be tightly flashed
- valleys or areas where fine fuels may lodge must be regularly cleared
- eaves must be closed or have fine wire screens in place
- vents must have fine wire screens in place
- windows must be tightly closed, shuttered or have fine wire screens
- no ledges should exist where embers may lodge under flammable materials
- wooden decks must have no flammable material underneath them
- walls/footings should be constructed of non-flammable materials for the first metre
- no opening should exist anywhere below floor level unless it is completely screened
- no building materials or firewood should be stacked against exterior walls or anywhere that they may constitute a fire hazard

The Board urges all stakeholders to ensure that their buildings are well sealed against embers and that while no one is in residence windows remain firmly closed.

The Mount Hotham Resort Management Board looks forward to the co-operation of all lessees/stakeholders in these matters so that Mount Hotham can be kept safe from fire into the future.

Yours sincerely,
Greg O'Donohue, Fire Prevention Co-ordinator