



# RFS

# What is a Fire Trail?



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The Rural Fire Act 1997 (the Act) provides for the establishment, maintenance, protection, certification, and registration of fire trails (whether existing or new). Fire trails are an important part of ensuring firefighters can access fires and safely contain them. They are also used to assist with management of bush fire risk across the landscape.

## Identified Fire Trail

An Identified Fire Trail is a road, trail or other track on public and/or private land used by firefighting agencies to access the landscape to prevent, fight, manage and contain bush fires that is identified as part of an area's fire trail network and recorded in the area's Fire Access and Fire Trail (FAFT) Plan.

These fire trails are the effective network that suit the firefighting operations, in support of community protection, conducted across NSW. Fire trails are also used as fire control lines and for regular management of bush fire risk across the landscape.

In accordance with section 52A of the Act, a draft FAFT Plan is developed by a Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC), to provide schemes for appropriate means of accessing land to prevent, fight, manage or contain bush fires, and in particular may do so by identifying or providing for the identification of suitable existing or proposed fire trails.

While the FAFT plan identifies strategic, tactical and other tracks/trails, the condition of these trails may differ and they may not be trafficable. Only certified trails meet the Fire Trail Standards and should be trafficable at all times.

## Strategic Fire Trail

A fire trail can be categorised as Strategic and may be on any tenure identified by a BFMC during the FAFT planning process, or by the Commissioner, to be of significant value in the suppression or management of fire within the landscape. These may include multi-purpose trails.

A Strategic Fire Trail holds the highest level of priority and value in the suppression and/or management of bush fires in a region.

These trails are vital in accessing bush fires from key staging areas. The RFS Fire Trail Standards (2023) prescribes the standards for the design, construction and maintenance of Strategic Fire Trails.

## Tactical Fire Trail

A fire trail can be categorised as Tactical and may be on any tenure identified by a BFMC during the FAFT planning process, or by the Commissioner, that supports the prevention and suppression of fire.

These may include multi-purpose trails. Tactical Fire Trails support the prevention and suppression of bush fires by allowing access to localised areas.

Tactical Fire Trails do not require certification however landowners are required to maintain the trails to a level of operational confidence, ensuring the trail remains trafficable.



# Other Terminology

## Designated Fire Trails

In accordance with the Act, a fire trail is Designated when it is either:

1. Subject to a Direction by the RFS Commissioner in accordance with s62L of the Act; or
2. Subject to a written (executed) agreement with a private land owner, in accordance with s62M of the Act.

A fire trail ceases to be Designated:

1. once it is registered,
2. once its designation is revoked prior to registration; or
3. where the Commissioner or the Landowner agrees to withdraw from the Private Land Agreement before it is registered.

NOTE: Designation is not affected by a change of ownership or occupation of land, regardless of whether the fire trail is on public or private land.

### Section 62L – Commissioner’s Direction

Section 62L of the Act permits the NSW RFS Commissioner to give a written Direction that a fire trail be established and maintained on public land.

The Direction must provide particulars of the fire trail, including its location and may apply to a new fire trail or an existing fire trail or a combination of both.

Once a Direction is given, the fire trail is established as a Designated Fire Trail.

### Section 62M - Private Land Agreements

Section 62M permits the RFS Commissioner to enter into negotiations and agreements with the owners of private land to establish fire trails on the land (Private Land Agreements).

Once an agreement is made (executed by both parties), the fire trail becomes a Designated Fire Trail.

The fire trail ceases to be designated once it becomes registered or the Commissioner or the Land owner agreed to withdraw from the agreement before it is registered.

When the owner is not the occupier, then the agreement may only be entered into when the occupier has given written consent to enter into the agreement.

## Certified Fire Trails

S62N of the Act permits the Commissioner to certify:

- a. fire trails on public land subject to a Direction;
- b. fire trails on private land subject to an agreement;
- c. existing fire trails on public land that are referred to in a fire access and fire trail plan; or
- d. existing fire trail on private land that are referred to in a fire access and fire trail plan, provided that the fire trail is the subject of an agreement to establish the fire trail that was entered into prior to the commencement of the amendment Act (September 2016).
- e. A fire trail may only be certified if it complies with the NSW Fire Trail Standards.

## Register of Fire Trails

The RFS, in conjunction with other land management agencies, assesses the condition of Fire Trails across NSW against the NSW Fire Trail Standards. Once a Fire Trail is assessed and deemed it meets these Standards, it is certified and is added to “The Commissioners Register of Fire Trails”.

The Commissioner must keep a register of all Certified Fire Trails which is to be published on the NSW RFS Website.

<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/fire-trails/fire-trail-register>

Registration is not affected by a change of ownership or occupation of land, regardless of whether the fire trail is on public or private land.

## Plantation Fire Roads

A fire road, as defined under section 41C of the Plantations and Reafforestation Code Regulation 2001 (the Code) means an access road, a perimeter track or a link road on a plantation that meets the requirements for a fire road under Subdivision 2A of the Code, which outlines prescriptive construction requirements for these roads including trafficable width, overhead clearance distances, grade, drainage etc.

Plantation Fire Roads will only be classified as identified Fire Trails if they are included in a FAFT Plan.

For further information regarding this document, please email the RFS Fire Trails Team team at [fire.trails@rfs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:fire.trails@rfs.nsw.gov.au) or any RFS Area Command Office.

