

## **FACT SHEET 4: Re-fencing properties after bushfire**

As the recovery process begins in bushfire affected areas, there will be a need for people to help with re-fencing work on rural properties.

In some cases they will be volunteers or family members with a background in farm work.

Re-fencing work could expose you, and those around you, to injury from unsafe use of machinery and equipment, as well heavy-lifting and traffic hazards.

**Please take some time to consider the following safety advice.**

### **Planning**

- Ensure work is properly planned and co-ordinated (e.g. provide means for regular communication, ensure sufficient supervision and schedule rest breaks);
- Ensure people not directly involved in work, particularly children, are not exposed to hazards including vehicle movements and operating equipment;
- Ensure machinery and vehicle operators are competent and have experience in using specific plant and equipment for the intended task;
- Planning should include a traffic management plan. This should include clear access to work areas and space to manoeuvre vehicles and to minimise traffic, storage / drop-off locations for the delivery of materials;
- Separate work areas from nearby roads or traffic;
- It is advised that insurance coverage is organised for / by volunteers before work begins.

### **Working safely**

- Ensure plant and equipment are fit for purpose, not fire-damaged and have appropriate guards in place;
- Ensure machinery / vehicle operators are competent and have experience in using specific plant/ equipment for the intended task;
- Clear the work area of any debris or uneven/disturbed terrain that could cause a vehicle rollover;
- Use powered machinery for heavy lifting, reduce the size and weight of materials to be lifted, and limit lifting and carrying of heavy materials over long distances;
- Rotate competent workers through various tasks to avoid straining and repetitive stress injuries;
- Take care with the use of wire-tensioning devices. Where practical, avoid using existing or fire-damaged wire, posts etc.

### **Site safety – things to consider**

- Are there any hazards in the area you are working (e.g. the risk of falling limbs or trees, damaged buildings, disturbed/insecure root base, shale rock);
- Are electrical services overhead or electrical and gas services underground?
- Is the ground stable and clear of debris for the workforce and equipment?
- Is the slope of the ground too steep to safely operate mobile equipment?
- Are there tripping hazards (e.g. exposed tree roots, shale rock, damaged building foundations, holes etc.)
- Is the work area restricted in terms of adequate space to work or manoeuvre?
- Will your activity create other risks (e.g. the collapse of structures, tree falls, equipment roll-over)?
- Separate free-ranging animals (cattle, sheep, horses etc.) from the work area.

### **Welfare of workers**

- Ensure workers have access to clean drinking water and food;
- Schedule regular rest breaks and limit work time to avoid fatigue;
- Provide shelter and ensure workers wear suitable protective clothing (gloves and boots) and have UV protection;
- Ensure personal protective equipment is worn for eyes, ears, hands and head.

***For general advice call WorkSafe's Advisory Service on 1800 136 089.***