

WASTE TYRE GUIDANCE

A GUIDE FOR PRIVATE LANDHOLDERS

Purpose of this guide

This guide has been developed in response to increasing numbers of waste tyre fires causing environmental harm in the Northern Territory. It informs residential, pastoral, and private occupiers and landholders of the significant environmental, health and economic risks waste tyres cause when handled incorrectly, with a focus on:

- the dangers posed by stockpiling waste tyres
- landholders' obligations under Northern Territory (NT) laws
- when the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) may get involved
- work to improve the reuse of waste tyres as part of the National Waste Policy Action Plan and the NT's Circular Economy Strategy.

What is a waste tyre?

Waste tyres (or end-of-life tyres) are tyres that can no longer be used for their original purpose and have been removed from a vehicle. This includes tyre casings, seconds, shredded tyres, and tyre pieces.



Environmental, health and economic risks of waste tyres

Fire hazards and toxic smoke

Tyres are highly flammable and can cause devastating and toxic fires. Even a small stockpile of less than 10 tyres can pose a serious fire risk.

Tyres are about 60% hydrocarbons and burn hotter than other fuel sources such as wood and brown coal. An average size truck tyre is made from 83 litres of oil. The intense heat generated during a tyre fire is difficult to extinguish, causing damage to properties and inhibiting fire-fighting efforts.

The thick black smoke of burning tyres contains toxic chemicals and poses significant health risks to people. Such risks can affect anyone in the vicinity of a fire, including occupants, neighbours, and firefighters.

Toxic chemicals from tyre fires and firewater may render your land permanently contaminated. These toxins can kill microbes in the soil and plants, damaging ecosystems on your property.

Other environmental health hazards

Tyres stockpiled in the open also provide an ideal habitat and breeding site for feral animals, vermin, and mosquitoes. Mosquitoes are attracted to the rainwater that builds up in the wells of the tyres, and to the warm, dark environment. A single tyre can nurture thousands of larvae. Diseases spread by mosquitoes include Japanese encephalitis virus and Ross River virus.



Economic and financial liability risks: Loss of property value and void insurance

Accumulation of waste tyres can decrease your property value. Properties with waste tyres are less appealing to potential buyers due to the associated risks and clean-up costs.

Stockpiling waste tyres can lead to significant clean-up costs, including as ordered by the NT EPA. Disposal costs of waste tyres to a licensed waste facility such as the Shoal Bay Waste Facility in Darwin is \$1,240/tonne for the 2024/25 Financial year (FY). The disposal cost of 1,000 tonnes of waste tyres is \$1.24 million, plus haulage costs. There have been examples in the Territory where the estimated costs of removing tyres exceeded the property value.

Land impacted by waste tyres can result in a pollution abatement notice (PAN) being issued by the NT EPA. A PAN is recorded in the NT EPA's public register and lodged with the Registrar-General to add to your land title. Until rectified, a PAN can affect the financial value of your land and impact on whether a bank will lend money for that land.

In the event of a fire in a waste tyre stockpile, the landholder can face extremely high costs for the assessment, clean-up, and disposal of contaminated soil and wastes. Clean-up costs after a fire are likely to be much higher than legally disposing of tyres to prevent a fire from happening. There is also a risk of the landholder being sued in civil proceedings if a tyre fire on their land impacts the surrounding properties and people.

Accepting and storing waste tyres without a licence issued by the NT EPA may also void your insurance. Stockpiling flammable waste changes the risk profile of a property and should be declared to insurance providers when taking out or updating a policy.

Becoming a target of waste crime or committing an offence

Illegal storage and disposal of waste tyres is not uncommon. Burying or otherwise disposing of waste tyres without an appropriate authorisation from the NT EPA may be unlawful. If you are asked to store or dispose of waste tyres on your land, you might be the target of waste crime.

If you accept waste tyres for money or other gain (e.g. for goods and services in return) without a licence you may also commit an offence under the [Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998 \(NT\)](#) (WMPC Act).

If you are lawfully accepting waste tyres, for example you hold a licence to store them, ensure that the handler providing the waste tyres to you holds the appropriate licences. A register of listed waste handlers is publicly available on the NT EPA website: ntepa.nt.gov.au/your-business/public-registers/licences-and-approvals-register/environment-protection-licences



Your legal responsibilities and requirements for an environment protection licence

Requirement for an environment protection licence

If you deal with tyres on a commercial or fee for service basis (including receiving any financial benefits like goods and services in return) without the appropriate licence, you are committing an offence under section 30 of the WMPC Act. This includes collecting, transporting, storing, recycling, treating, or disposing of tyres.

For general information on environment protection approvals and licences, please refer to the NT EPA's website: ntepa.nt.gov.au/home, call: (08) 8924 4218, or email: waste@nt.gov.au.

Requirements to safely store waste tyres

Storing tyres carries high levels of environmental, health and economic risks. The NT EPA does not recommend keeping private stockpiles.

However, if you decide to keep a tyre stockpile on your land – not for a commercial purpose or fee for service – you must store tyres in accordance with the [Northern Territory Fire and Emergency Regulations 1996](#) (NTFE Regulations) and the [Bushfires Management Act 2016](#) (BM Act).

More details on correct tyre storage under the NTFE Regulations can be found at: pfes.nt.gov.au/sites/default/files/uploads/files/2019/NTFireAndEmergencyRegulations.pdf

For tyres stored within a fire protection zone:

- The property owner or occupier must create a firebreak around the perimeter by burning, grading, scraping, ploughing, mowing, slashing, spraying, or grazing.
- The firebreak must be at least 4m wide, with vegetation below 50mm, cleared of any slashed or dead material.

View firebreak information at nt.gov.au/bushfires and nt.gov.au/emergency/bushfire/prepare-and-plan/firebreaks.

Requirement for transporting waste tyres interstate

The transport of waste tyres interstate is subject to the National Environment Protection (Movement of Controlled Waste between States and Territories) Measure and requires approval from the environmental regulatory authority in the destination state or territory. You should contact the [NT EPA](#) for further information before transporting waste tyres interstate.



Penalties for offences under NT legislation

An individual or body corporate guilty of an environmental offence under the WMPC Act – such as for the illegal disposal of waste tyres – is liable for criminal and civil penalties, and depending on the offence may be subject to significant fines.



For operators storing tyres onsite, it is an offence under the NTFE Regulations for failing to comply with storage requirements and maintaining minimum separation distances. This carries a maximum penalty of \$18,500 (for 2024/25 FY). The NTFE Regulations are administered by NT Fire and Emergency Services.

For owners or occupiers of land within a fire protection zone, it is an offence under the BM Act for failing to implement adequate firebreaks around flammable material, and carries a maximum penalty of \$3,700 as well as \$370 for each day that the offence continues (2024/25 FY). The BM Act is also administered by NT Fire and Emergency Services.



When the NT EPA gets involved

Authorised Officers, on behalf of the NT EPA, may intervene if:

1. You are maintaining a stockpile of waste tyres that pose high levels of risk to the environment and human health; and/or
2. Waste tyre stockpiles have already burnt or otherwise are affecting your land.

This can include requiring you to improve storage and management, remove stockpiles or burnt tyres, or do remediation or rehabilitation activities. This can be the case even if you are not responsible for accepting or stockpiling the tyres.

Our intervention or involvement will always be on a case by case basis, in accordance with our [Compliance and Enforcement Policy](#) and [Enforcement Guideline](#). We apply a risk-based approach, and our governing principles for enforcement. Our actions are proportionate, accountable, consistent, targeted, and transparent.

When determining whether to intervene or get involved, we consider the following factors:



Quantity or volume of the tyre stockpiles

We assess the quantity of tyres with larger stockpiles considered a greater environmental risk.



Location of the stockpile

We assess the proximity of stockpiles to sensitive habitats and areas, such as residential properties, waterways, flood zones, or groundwater bores or recharge points.



Offences being committed

We assess the evidence collected in relation to illegal dumping and any indications of organised waste crime and intentionally operating without a licence.



History of non-compliance

We assess the previous history of the landholder and if they have been directed to clean-up or improve storage of stockpiles and failed to do so.



Attitude to compliance

We consider any voluntary remedial action taken to address the stockpile and prevent a recurrence, the cooperation demonstrated by the person involved, and the person's willingness and ability to comply with regulatory requirements.

Circular economy and waste tyres

A goal of a circular economy is to keep products and materials in use for as long as possible. A number of commitments have been made at the national and Territory level through the [National Waste Policy Action Plan](#) and [NT's Circular Economy Strategy 2022-2027](#) to reduce, reuse and recycle waste into a valuable resource.

Waste tyres are a particular focus. Targets aim to modernise the regulatory framework, encourage investment, infrastructure upgrades and new technologies, as well as better track waste tyre movements through data.

Further information and reporting illegal waste tyre activity

If you have any concerns about activities involving the illegal storage, transporting or dumping of waste tyres, these can be directed to the NT EPA Report Pollution page at: ntepa.nt.gov.au/make-a-report.

If you would like to know more about how to apply for a licence to store and transport waste tyres, refer to our website at: ntepa.nt.gov.au/your-business/licensing-and-approvals/how-to-apply-for-approvals-and-licenses.

Acronyms

NT	Northern Territory
NT EPA	Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority
WMPC Act	<i>Waste Management Pollution Control Act 1998</i>
PAN	Pollution Abatement Notice
NTFE Regs	Northern Territory Fire and Emergency Regulations 1996
BM Act	<i>Bushfires Management Act 2016</i>

Disclaimer

This publication is a guide only and does not necessarily provide adequate information in relation to every situation. It seeks to explain your possible obligations in a helpful and accessible way. However, some details may not be captured. Therefore, it is important you seek information directly from the NT EPA, Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE) or NT Fire and Emergency Services regarding your obligations and, where appropriate, seek your own legal advice.

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