

Severe fire season on horizon



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THE Rural Fire Service is predicting one of the highest risk fire seasons for this summer.

Community Safety Officer for the RFS (Southern Tablelands) Peter Dyce attributes the looming fire season to above average autumn and winter rainfalls.

Although the mid-winter fire risk was low, a new threat rises from the considerable rainfall, creating more vegetation and less access due to sodden conditions.

"It's one extreme to the other," Mr Dyce said.

There has been up to three incidents of trucks getting bogged in the southern region so far this wet season as they race to fight out-of-control burn offs caused by farmers unprepared for the amount of fuel feeding their fires.

"Once they go down they just stay there," Mr Dyce said

It's becoming increasingly difficult as there are farming areas that aren't as heavily stocked as in previous years, leading to more vegetation in paddocks, and more fuel.

A probing issue with the current climate is that after the rainfall we have experienced this winter, the moisture in the ground indicates a good spring season,

leading to a severely dry fire period in the summer, so the rural community must prepare themselves.

Although fire hazard prevention techniques are encouraged, Mr Dyce urges farmers to be extremely mindful of areas where they are burning and to not leave burn-offs unattended, as although the grassy areas may appear moist and green, when the wind picks up the dry grass will ignite.

"Be cautious of your surrounds, don't think that it's safe just because it is wet," he said.

If you believe you are in any danger during the fire season, or you see a fire you wish to report do not hesitate to call 000.

Landholders who are new to the area or do not know who's who in their local brigade should make a point of finding out this information.

They should then make contact with the brigade secretary, captain or one of the deputy captains.

In rural areas the RFS is often the hub of the local community and joining the brigade and participating in training and other activities is a great way to get to know the neighbours.