

**PURPOSE:** Prescribed burning is fire applied in a skillful manner to a tract for a specific purpose, under exacting weather conditions. Prescribed burning is a desirable and economically sound practice of site preparation on most pine sites, either alone or in conjunction with some other mechanical or chemical method of site preparation.



A late summer fire is usually used to rid an area of competing ground cover. This should clear the area of hardwood sprouts and brush, leaving the ground bare enough for planting.

**FIREBREAK INSTALLATION:** Firebreaks should be plowed around the whole area to prevent the fire from escaping onto adjacent land. Follow Alabama’s Best Management Practices for Forestry during construction of firebreaks. Plowing deep lines with a plow should be avoided unless necessary because they often create serious erosion problems. Never install a firebreak that leads directly into a stream. On steep slopes firebreaks should be stabilized using water diversions turnouts and water bars.

### SPACING TABLE FOR WATER BARS

Grade of Firebreak (%)	Distance Between Water Bars (feet)
2	250
5	135
10	80
15	60
20	45
25	40
30	35

Water bars should be 18 inches high and oriented about 33 degrees down-slope rather than exactly on the contour. Fertilizing and seeding with species that have dense deep root systems will further stabilize the firebreaks, and also allow long-term wildfire protection from encroaching fires.

**CONDUCTING THE BURN:** The use of fire is a technical skill where knowledge and experience is extremely important. Prescribed fires can easily escape. They can also cause a smoke problem, especially during site preparation burns. Many fires incidents with resulting lawsuits have occurred at night, when the smoke stays close to the ground and can reduce visibility on highways or smoke up communities. Contact the county Alabama Forestry Commission office for assistance on how to prepare and conduct your site preparation burn, or to obtain a list of vendors who perform this work on a fee basis.

**BURN PERMIT LAW:** Before any burning is done, you must get a burning permit from your regional Alabama Forestry Commission office on the day of the burn. The permit is free, and just alerts fire fighters that your burn is not a wildfire. You obtain this permit by calling a toll-free number, which is usually located in the front of your local telephone directory. Or call 1-800-392-5679. To get a permit, you must know your legal description. The legal description of this property is as follows: Section \_\_\_\_\_, Township\_\_\_\_\_, Range \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ County, Alabama.



Photo Credit: Billy Humphries, Forest Resource Consultants, Inc., [www.forestryimages.org](http://www.forestryimages.org)



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