

POLICE WARN PROTESTORS OF ILLEGAL ACTIVITY DURING LOGGING OPERATIONS IN BERMAGUI STATE FOREST
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Police on the Far South Coast are warning protestors that activities during forestry logging operations which are illegal and dangerous will not be tolerated.

The Far South Coast Command has been advised that NSW Forests are to commence logging compartments of the Bermagui State Forest in late October 2008.

Superintendent Michael Willing, Far South Coast Local Area Commander said "police from the local area command and various sections, including the Public Order Operations Support Group, Highway Patrol, and Rescue Squad will be part of an operation which will be conducted in the area of the logging and will focus on ensuring the protection of persons engaged in lawful activities."

"We have received information which leads us to anticipate that a number of protestors will converge on the area. Our message to them is clear.

"We are committed to maintaining public order, and anyone who engages in unlawful or dangerous activity in or near the logging operation will have action taken against them.

"This action may be the issuing of on-the-spot fines or Court Attendance Notices, but where offences are continuing and are dangerous police will where necessary arrest and charge people," Supt Willing said.

NSW Forests advises that the state forest in which the logging operation is taking place will be closed to unauthorised persons. Entry into those closed areas is an offence.

Likewise, interference with the free movement of equipment or people within, or to and from the logging operation is also an offence. If any such offence is detected, police will be taking action.

Police have also taken the opportunity to remind everyone of some of the offences which attract On-the-spot fines.

- Trespassing into a prohibited forestry area start at \$100.
- Being near harvesting or hauling equipment on-the-spot fines start at \$1000.
- Intimidating Employees by preventing the free movement of equipment or people attract a fine of \$5500 and or 2 years imprisonment.
- Other offences associated with disrupting a workplace also attract fines starting at \$5500.

Police said they will attempt to facilitate protest requests in order to minimise the disruption, but if a hard core minority are intent on disrupting or hijacking genuine protests swift action will be taken and those involved will be removed.

Superintendent Willing said, "anyone who intends on protesting is encouraged to contact police to discuss their intentions so we can facilitate lawful activity,

"Our policing operation at the Bermagui State Forest is not focused at preventing lawful and peaceful protest as we respect people's rights, but rather at unlawful and dangerous activity, Supt Willing said.