



# ‘Bushfire Prevention and Preparedness’



(A guide for residents and landholders)



Disclaimer:

**You must read the following important information before you proceed.**

Bushfire prevention and preparedness is **your responsibility** as the landowner, and as such, these materials have been provided to assist you in making wise choices. They do not contain all of the information available, but should provide a good starting point for you to start thinking and preparing yourselves, your home and your property for bushfires.

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*This information has been developed as a component of the  
Lower Eyre Peninsula Bushfire Re-establishment Program  
And amended as part of the EMA funded  
'Where There's Smoke There's Fire' project*

Prepared October 2006  
Amended June 2007

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# INTRODUCTION

This package has been prepared to provide you with information about how to prepare your home, property and yourself for a bushfire. While it does not contain all information available on the topic, it will be an excellent starting point for thinking about preparing yourself and your property for bushfires.

This package is divided into three sections:

- What you need to know
- What you need to do
- Other useful information.

If you require any further information or assistance please refer to the 'Contact Details' provided.

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# HOME BUSHFIRE PLAN

## Key Points:

**The CFS cannot guarantee the presence of a fire fighting vehicle and crew to protect every home in a major bushfire. It is therefore extremely important to plan for your family's safety and be self-reliant.**

If you are **planning to go early** in the event of a bushfire, then you need to have considered the following:

- When will you leave?
- Where will you go?
- How will you get there?
- What will you take with you?
- What will you do with your pets?
- Who will you inform when you leave?
- What will be your trigger to leave?
- Have you practiced your plan?

**Even if you plan to go early you should still prepare a plan in case you are forced to stay.**

If you are **planning to stay and defend** your home in the event of a bushfire, then you need to have considered the following:

- Where will you and other members of your family/household be?
- What will you do if your children are at school when the fire starts?
- Who will look after the pets?
- What will you do if you have elderly relatives or young children living with you?
- How will you protect your property?
- How will you protect yourself?
- How will you know what is going on during the fire?
- What will you do to protect your property after the fire front has passed through?

# HOME BUSHFIRE PLAN

A plan should include a set of actions to address the risk and will require you to make a series of decisions about what you will do on high fire risk days, or should a fire threaten your home.

## Planning to go early

Your plan needs to include:

- *When will you leave?* – It is recommended that you do so before a fire threatens and road travel becomes hazardous.
- *Where will you go?* – Family and friends, a shopping centre in a built up area or a neighbour's house that is well prepared.
- *Choose a safe route.* – Practice driving along your safe route. With practice a plan becomes familiar and second nature.
- *How will you get there?* – If you don't drive or have access to a car you may need to consider asking a friend or family member to collect you on high fire risk days.
- *What will you take with you?* – Consider legal documents, insurance policy documents, certificates, prescriptions, photos, medication etc.
- *What will you do with your pets?* – Domestic animals can generally be taken with you, you may need a travel cage. For animals that can't be taken with you, you will need to consider what arrangements you can put in place to ensure their safety in a bushfire.
- *Who will you inform when you leave?* – Let family, friends and/or neighbours know if you have left and how you can be contacted.

# HOME BUSHFIRE PLAN

- *What will be your trigger to leave?* – Leaving your home once you can see flames burning nearby can be a potentially life threatening or fatal option. You are putting your life at serious risk. Reduced visibility will make road travel hazardous and you may not know what direction the fire is headed, or there could be a number of spot fires moving ahead of the main fire front. Your trigger to leave may be the declaration of a total fire ban or other days warning of high fire risk, with high temperatures, low humidity and high winds. You may choose to leave when you hear about a fire burning in your district. If so, be very careful. Leave long before the fire impacts on your immediate area or threatens roads you intend to use.

**Leaving your home once you can see flames burning nearby can be a potentially life threatening or fatal option.**

Even if you plan to leave, you should still prepare a plan in case you are forced to stay. On high fire risk days bushfires can start at any time and spread very rapidly. Your first warning of a fire in the area may be the approach of flames. Leaving your home late when you can see the flames burning nearby can be a potentially life threatening or fatal option.

## Planning to stay and defend

Your plan needs to include:

- *Where will you and other members of your family be?* – You can't assume a fire will start when everyone is at home. Your plan needs to include what everyone plans to be doing on high fire risk days. If only one family member is at home are they able to defend the property on their own?
- *What will you do if your children are at school when the fire starts?* – Schools in bushfire areas have plans in place in the event of a bushfire in the area. Check with your school as part of developing your plan to find out what arrangements they have made for a bushfire in the area.
- *Who will look after the pets?* – Pets may become frightened during a fire. Make sure domestic pets are securely contained and have adequate water.

# HOME BUSHFIRE PLAN

- *What will you do if you have elderly relatives or young children living with you?*
  - Not everyone is capable of actively defending a property, but there are other roles people can perform such as making sure everyone is drinking enough water, ensuring all windows and doors are closed, filling baths and containers with water or monitoring the radio for broadcasts.
  - Make sure everyone in the house is wearing protective clothing. You need to have identified a room for the elderly, young or other less able bodied people to shelter in while able bodied people patrol the house for sparks and embers. This room should be away from the likely direction of the fire and have two exits.
- *How will you protect your property?*
  - There are a number of things you can do well before the fire danger period to make sure your home is prepared for a bushfire. This document will provide you with some useful ideas.
- *How will you protect yourself?*
  - Wear long trousers and a long sleeved shirt of natural fibres, wool or cotton socks, sturdy leather boots or shoes, gloves, goggles, a broad brimmed hat and a scarf or face mask to cover your nose and mouth to protect against smoke inhalation.
  - Each person who stays needs his or her own personal protective equipment.
  - Make sure you drink plenty of water to prevent dehydration.
  - Remember to take shelter inside your house during the passage of the fire front.
- *How will you know what is going on during the fire?*
  - Make sure you have a battery-powered radio (and spare batteries) to monitor the news. If you still have electricity you can log on to the CFS website for regular updates.
- *What will you do to protect your property after the fire front has passed through?*
  - You will need to actively patrol your property for several hours after the fire front has passed, and possibly even longer to check for embers.

# HAZARD REDUCTION

## Key Points:

- Consider the vegetation around your home and property and the way it will burn
- Try to use the layout of your property to reduce the spread, speed and heat of a fire – particularly considering low-fuel areas
- Consider the undergrowth on your property
- Reduce fine fuels
- Avoid tree branches hanging over the roof of your home
- Keep dry lawns short
- Remove and control weeds
- Use pebbles, sand or rocks as an alternative to plant-based mulch
- Maintain low flammability plants by watering, removing dead matter and pruning lower branches
- Avoid big clumps of plants that are likely to burn close to your home
- Do not rely on plants being fire retardant – under the right fire conditions all plants will burn
- Use appropriately located and maintained shelterbelts or windbreaks on larger properties to slow winds and deflect embers.

# HAZARD REDUCTION

Whatever the type of **vegetation** that surrounds your home, you need to consider how it will burn and what impact it will have on your ability to defend your home during a bushfire.

**The following are some things to consider when assessing your home garden for fire prevention and preparedness:**

Fire does not spread easily over **low-fuel areas**, so try to use the **layout of your property** to reduce the spread, speed and heat of a fire. Garden design can be used to assist in reducing the impact of bushfire. Low fuel areas such as driveways, pools, cultivated soil, gravelled areas, mown lawns and grazed paddocks can assist. Try and keep dense stands of shrubs away from the house, particularly away from windows. In many bushfires, burning shrubs have cracked windows and allowed embers to enter the house. "Clumping" plants and clearing areas between these clumps makes it more difficult for the fire to move from one area to another.

Locate well-watered fruit trees and vegetable gardens on the side of buildings facing the most likely direction of fire.

Many people think **trees** are the major threat during a bushfire, however it is what is **growing underneath** the trees, such as shrubs and tall grasses, which you really need to consider. The main issue with trees can be their bark. Loose, flaky and ribbon bark can contribute to ember attack. Look at what is growing under the trees and consider how easily fire might be able to spread from the ground up into the trees. Fine fuels (those less than a finger's diameter) that are continuous from ground to crown can assist the spread of fire from the ground up into the treetops. You can reduce this by:

- Pruning shrubs so that their tops are well away from the lower branches of trees
- Reducing accumulated debris such as loose flaky bark, dead twigs, leaves or needles from within the branches of plants. Be careful not to damage the bark.

**Fine fuels** also contribute the most to the heat and speed of a fire. Fine fuels include dry grass, leaves, twigs and loose bark but does not include larger logs and branches.

Mowing, raking, slashing, grazing or burning can reduce fine fuels around the house.

Totally removing leaf litter or grading or ploughing breaks can encourage weeds that may increase fuel loads or cause soil erosion. It is unnecessary to slash all vegetation. Trees and shrubs scattered through your slashed area won't significantly increase fine fuels.

Avoid **tree branches** overhanging the roof of your home.

# HAZARD REDUCTION

Dry **lawns** are a fire risk, but the risk is greatly reduced if they are kept shorter and well maintained.

**Weeds** (particularly dry, tall grass types) often contribute to high fuel loads. Give priority to removing and controlling these.

Fine plant-based **mulch** such as wood chips or pea straw can catch on fire during an ember attack, so use mulch alternatives such as pebbles, sand or rocks. To use plant-based mulch, mulch your garden immediately after the fire danger season to allow it to break down over winter. Decomposed mulch will usually provide good moisture retention during summer, and is less likely to ignite than more recently laid mulch. If plant-based mulch is still dry and aerated at the beginning of fire season, keep it wetted down during the fire season.

The **way a plant burns** is influenced by a number of complex and interacting features of the plant. These features are also influenced by: how old the plant is; the environment it's growing in; how it's looked after (eg if it's well watered); and what else is growing nearby.

Flammability of a plant is based on two factors; how readily it burns and how its form influences the way it burns. Specifically:

- Plants with a higher moisture content are better
- Plants with a higher mineral content are better
- Plants containing significant amounts of volatile oils, like the eucalypt family (which includes gums and tea trees) should be avoided close to dwellings
- Low growing plants and ground covers are better than shrubs
- Plants with dense foliage are better than those with open airy crowns
- Plants that are self pruning (don't retain dead matter) are better than those that hold lots of fuel
- Plants with smooth bark are better than those with stringy or ribbon bark.

# HAZARD REDUCTION

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<b>High Hazard</b>	Some native shrubs	Eg. Acacia, Melaleuca, Callistemon, Grevillea, Hakea, Banksia, tea trees, Eucalypts Eg. Smooth barked varieties are safest
	Introduced conifers	Eg. Pine, fir, cypress, cedar
	Deciduous trees	Eg. Fruit trees, Oaks, Maple, Elm, poplars
	Succulent ground covers	Eg. Pig face, strawberries
	<b>Low Hazard</b>	Salt rich plants

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**If you are going to grow plants with a lower flammability you must make a firm commitment to maintain them, otherwise they also can become a fire hazard. This includes sufficient watering, the removal of dead material and regular pruning of lower branches during the year.**

Avoid having **big clumps** of plants that may burn more easily close to your home. These plants include those that:

- Accumulate and/or create lots of dry, dead debris during the fire season
- Have loose flaky bark
- Have masses of very fine leaves, particularly if they are continuous from the ground to the top
- Have very low moisture content.

Do not rely on plants being **'fire retardant'**. While different plants burn differently, under the right conditions, particularly high intensity fires when you and your home are most at risk, all plants may burn. To determine which plants are best for your area contact your local Greening Australia officer, Australian Plant Society, Nursery or local revegetation private consultants for information on local species.

# HAZARD REDUCTION

On larger properties, appropriately located and maintained **shelterbelts** or **windbreaks** can slow winds down and deflect embers and other burning debris up and over the house. Dense shelterbelts can be used near but not next to buildings. They should not be so close that they could set fire to the house should the windbreak itself ignite.

For the best results when designing windbreaks:

- Plant multiple rows of trees rather than a single row
- Plant on the sides of the property most likely to be impacted by fire, and
- Plant an open windbreak that reduces the wind speed without causing turbulence.

# PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR BUSHFIRES

Most homes that burn down during bushfires do so from ember attack (Refer CFS Fact Sheet 'How Houses Burn'). A minimum area of 20 metres in all directions around your home and other buildings should be cleared of all rubbish and materials that can catch alight – this provides you with a defensible space. Removing the material that can burn easily from around the home means falling embers will have less opportunity to start a fire when they hit the ground, and the embers will be more easily put out. Also, the impact of the approaching fire and flames will be significantly reduced.

Ember proofing your house will make defence easier and increase the chances of house survival if you choose to leave early or are unable to return to your home. Making your home a 'spark proof box' will also ensure that you are provided with a safer refuge during a bushfire.

A **well maintained home** has a much better chance of surviving a bushfire. Activities that can assist in preparing your home for bushfire include:

- Move woodpiles and other flammable items away from the house
- LPG cylinders have a vent pipe that should be faced away from the house. Remove any fine fuels around cylinders
- Clear accumulated leaf litter and other fine fuels from around the house (Hazard Reduction).
- Store fuel supplies and chemicals away from your home
- Clean leaves out of gutters
- Regularly maintain fire-fighting equipment such as pumps and other mechanical devices.

# PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR BUSHFIRES

There are many other ways that you can **modify an existing home** to improve its chances of survival during a bushfire.

These include:

- Protecting underfloor spaces with non-combustible sheeting or metal mesh. This will prevent embers from landing under the house and starting small spot fires
- Covering all external vents with metal mesh to prevent embers from entering your home
- Protecting evaporative coolers with metal mesh screens. You will need to check with your evaporative cooler supplier to ensure installing the mesh does not compromise the performance of the system
- Where external cladding is timber, ensuring it is regularly maintained and all gaps are sealed
- Placing weather stripping around the inside of doors and windows to eliminate any gaps
- Making non-combustible fire screens to cover external skylights
- Fitting a leaf guard to gutters to prevent a build up of leaves
- Installing fencing made from non-combustible materials such as metal or brick
- Treat all exterior wood surfaces with intumescent paint (fire retardant) or other fire rated coating
- Install metal mesh or solid screens that will seal windows, doors, ventilators and skylights
- Pay particular attention to gaps in the roof area, along the ridge cap and fascia.

# PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR BUSHFIRES

## Bushfire protection in the GARDEN

Before the fire season, measures should be taken to reduce the amount of fuel:

- Remove dead branches, leaves and undergrowth from around your home
- Prune tree limbs that are less than two metres above ground
- Prune branches overhanging the home
- Cut long grass within 20 metres of the home
- Remove bark, heavy mulch, woodpiles and any other flammable materials close to the home and sheds.

There are other measures that can be taken to protect your home:

- Install a sprinkler system to wet down the vegetation and reduce the impact of radiant heat (all fittings should be metal as plastic melts) (Refer CFS Fact Sheet 'Sprinkler Systems')
- Provide access to an alternative water supply eg a gravity fed tank, a dam or swimming pool of at least 5000 litres. Do not rely on mains water being available during a fire
- Have a petrol-driven water pump
- Have hoses that are long enough to reach around the home
- Construct a stone wall, earth barrier or fence close to your home as a radiant heat shield
- Space trees and shrubs so there is not a continuous canopy
- Install male South Australian Fire Brigade (SAFB) fittings on tanks for fire crew access.

# PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR BUSHFIRES

## Bushfire protection IN and AROUND the HOME

Some basic measures to improve your home safety are:

- Smooth surface – no nooks or crannies where leaves and debris can gather
- Roofing – well-secured metal roofing is preferable. A tiled roof needs to be well fitted with fire-resistant sarking (eg fibreglass based aluminium foil)
- Walls – non-flammable wall materials such as brick, mud brick and fibre cement. Vinyl weatherboards, rough timber and other claddings can warp or catch fire
- Windows, crevices and vents – spark proof the home with metal flywire screens on windows and doors, or install fire resistant metal shutters. Cover all wall cavities in fine wire mesh
- Skylights – install wire, reinforced glass or a thermo plastic cover on skylights as plastic can melt and glass can break in high heat
- Property access – gateways should be at least three metres wide and there should be clear access with a turnaround point for fire fighting vehicles
- Gutters – regularly clean gutters and remove leaves and bark from any areas where they become trapped
- Sprinkler system – a home bushfire sprinkler system that directs water over the roof, windows, doors and underfloor areas is one of the most effective ways of protecting against radiant heat, direct flame and ember attack. Seek professional advice for design and installation (Refer CFS Fact Sheet 'Sprinkler Systems').

# PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR BUSHFIRES

## Bushfire Protection on your PROPERTY

You can minimise the risk associated with your existing property layout by carrying out fuel reduction programs to create a 'zone of protection' between your property and the surrounding bush and grassland. (Refer CFS Fact Sheet 'Fuel Breaks')

When planning your pre-summer fuel reduction program consider:

- Placing major fuel breaks on the boundaries of the property on the sides most likely to be affected by fire
- Establishing wide lawns, paths, driveways, cleared or mowed areas around your home
- Using roadways, tracks and railway lines to make additional fuel breaks, especially if strips adjoining each side are cut, slashed or burnt
- Making use of natural breaks – creeks, swamps and dams.

# SEASONAL CHECKLIST

## Winter

- Remove dead vegetation from around the home and prune the lower limbs of trees
- Obtain council permit to burn off garden waste or dispose of material through mulching or council dump
- Ember-proof the home (eg check roof space for loose tiles and gaps and repair as necessary)

## Spring

- Slash or mow long grass and remove cut material (or allow enough time for it to rot down before summer)
- Remove weeds around sheds and fences
- Cut back trees overhanging the roof
- Remove fallen branches and other debris
- Check and service all mechanical equipment (eg grass cutters, water pumps, sprinkler systems and fire extinguishers)
- Remove leaves from gutters
- Review and update your Bushfire Action Plan (Refer pages 35 & 44).

## Summer

- Maintain a 20-metre fuel reduction zone around your home (greater if on a slope)
- Clear around trees
- Remove leaves from the gutters
- Slash stubble near sheds/buildings
- Check reserve water supplies
- Rehearse your Bushfire Action Plan with your household
- Prepare your evacuation box (Refer page 38)
- Ensure you have portable battery-powered radio with functional batteries to hear bushfire information messages and warnings
- Monitor fire restrictions.

## Autumn

- Remove undergrowth and dead vegetation
- Seek council permission to conduct burn off operations
- Check for any fire hazards and remove.

# FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

Fire fighting equipment for your home can be as simple as extra buckets and as complicated as sprinkler systems. Whatever you choose it is most important that you understand how it operates and what you need to do with it during a bushfire.

Some options for fire fighting equipment are:

## Personal protective clothing



Each person will need: long trousers or overalls in natural fibre (jeans or cotton overalls), long sleeved shirt or jumper (cotton or wool but not too heavy), broad brimmed hat, sturdy leather boots or shoes, goggles, gloves, face mask or handkerchief to cover the nose and mouth. Special filter masks are recommended for asthmatics. You should also make sure you have a first aid kit. Breathing through a wet handkerchief or towel helps protect you from superheated air.

## Buckets

Buckets are light, easily portable and an effective way to move water.

## Mops



Old-fashioned cotton mops are good as they hold a lot of water. Many people have successfully extinguished embers around their home using mops and buckets.

## Blankets and towels

Wet these down and use them to seal any gaps under doors to prevent embers and smoke from entering the house.

## Radio - battery powered



Tune in to ABC radio or your local community radio station for updates on the fire's progress. The Country Fire Service provides regular media updates to radio stations throughout major bushfires (Refer page 25).

# FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

## Shovels and rakes



Useful for breaking up piles of burning material and for covering burning embers with dirt to extinguish.

## Downpipe or gutter plugs

Commonly available at plumbing suppliers and hardware stores or you can make your own. Check what size downpipes (round or rectangular) you have so that you are sure to purchase the right size. Many people have also made gutter plugs using such things as tennis balls, stockings, sand and PVC pipes.

## Knapsacks

Fire fighting backpacks can be purchased, however many of the weed sprayers sold in hardware stores would also be suitable (make sure they're well cleaned out before using them for fire fighting purposes). Some of the smaller sprayers hold five litres and are therefore not as heavy to carry around. Alternatively you can half fill it for greater portability.

## Ladders



You will need a ladder inside to provide access to the ceiling space via the manhole. It would also be useful to have a ladder outside to provide access to the roof in case you need to extinguish any small fires that start on the roof due to embers landing.

## Torches - battery powered



Leave a torch in the ceiling space to check for embers. Have another one in the house in case the power goes off during the bushfire. Remember to check that the batteries work before each fire season.

## Hoses



Hoses will need to reach to all extremities of your home, so use a string line to work out the required hose lengths. Metal hose fittings for taps are a good idea as they are less likely to melt as temperatures increase. Put a hose fitting connection on to your washing machine tap so that you can use your hose inside if needed.

# FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

## **Fire fighting pump**

A petrol, diesel or electric powered pump will be necessary if you need to draw water from an independent water supply such as a tank or swimming pool. However, remember you can't always rely on mains power in a bushfire and if you have an electric water pump, you will need to have a generator as well.

A 5HP petrol or diesel fire-fighting pump is ideal for most situations. Pumps can be heavy to move, so consider mounting the pump on a trolley that will make it easier to move around your property.

It is important that everyone in the household knows how to start and operate the pump. Pump suppliers will be able to advise you of the size of pump you require for your property.

Smaller fire fighting pumps should be brought inside when the main fire front passes. Larger fixed pumps should be protected with a non-combustible cover or pump housing.

## **Water**

The easiest and most effective way to extinguish a bushfire is to apply water. Therefore if you intend to stay to defend your home you will need access to an adequate water supply.

If you are on a mains water supply, do not rely on this during a bushfire. Everyone in the area, including the fire brigade, will be drawing water from the mains supply, resulting in a significant loss of water pressure.

# FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT

## **INDEPENDENT WATER SUPPLY**

Ideally you would install a tank specifically for fire fighting purposes. Tanks vary in size and are manufactured from a number of materials including galvanised iron, concrete, fibreglass and polyethylene. The Country Fire Service recommends at least 5,000L for fire fighting (using a fire pump with hoses etc) or 22,000L if you have installed a sprinkler system.

Other options for the storage of large volumes of water include a swimming pool or dam.

If this is not possible, think creatively about what you might have around your home that you could use to store water for fighting a bushfire.

Some examples include:

- Filling your kitchen sink, bath and laundry trough when you first become aware of a fire
- 44-gallon drums placed strategically around the home (if you have young children, you will need to cover them)
- Rubbish bins (wheelie bins work well) and stock feed bins
- Your hot water service will always have water, make sure you know how to safely access it
- Wheelbarrows
- Troughs or garden ponds
- If your house is on mains water you can run it through a storage tank making sure it is always full.

# COUNTRY FIRE SERVICE

## BUSHFIRE INFORMATION & WARNINGS SYSTEM

The CFS has replaced the old Phase Warning System with an updated system of warnings. This new system is the 'Bushfire Information and Warning System' and comprises two types of messages:

- A bushfire information message
- A bushfire warning message.

A '**bushfire information message**' is issued to provide information to the community about a bushfire, which is yet to be brought under control; and is threatening or has the potential to threaten public safety.

This message includes information and advice in relation to the effects a bushfire may have on an area, away from where the bushfire is actually occurring. This information may include details on smoke or road closures.

Bushfire Information Messages are tailored to each specific situation and updated as the bushfire situation changes.

A '**bushfire warning message**' is the highest level of warning to all South Australians, and will generally be issued for wide area community impact.

A bushfire warning message will be issued when a major bushfire is burning out of control in very high to extreme fire weather conditions at the fire, and where CFS is primarily undertaking defensive strategies to protect lives and property. In addition, the message will also only be issued when the risk of loss of life or threat to properties is almost certain or has occurred.

This message will be accompanied by the use of the Standard Emergency Warning Signal – an audible siren like sound.

# COUNTRY FIRE SERVICE

The bushfire warning and information messages will be aired on ABC radio. The bushfire warning message will be broadcast every 15 minutes until the threat has reduced as advised by CFS. The bushfire information messages will be aired regularly until CFS advises to cease the broadcast of these messages by issuing a reduced threat message.

You are encouraged to listen to your local radio station for information about bushfires in your area. Ensure you have a battery-powered radio, in case of an electricity failure.

It is the responsibility of each member of the community on days of high fire danger to listen to these stations for information about fires that may be burning in your area.

Information will also be available from the CFS website [www.cfs.org.au](http://www.cfs.org.au) as well as through the CFS Bushfire Hotline on 1300 362 361.

# WHAT TO EXPECT DURING A BUSHFIRE

## Be aware that you will have to cope with:

- Hot weather
- Wind
- A lot of smoke
- Noise
- Loss of power and water
- Loss of phone lines (including mobile phone service)
- Fire trucks and aircraft nearby.

## IN A MAJOR BUSHFIRE YOU MAY NOT SEE FIRE TRUCKS

Large bushfires that cannot be controlled by fire-fighting crews usually burn on days of very high or extreme fire danger.

Such days are dry and hot (typically more than 30° C), with strong gusty winds. If the fire is burning towards you, the air will become increasingly smoky. It will become progressively more difficult to see, and your eyes may become reddened and sore. Breathing in smoke may be uncomfortable.

As the fire gets close, burning leaves and bark will begin to land around you. If you have taken steps to protect yourself, you can stay outside your home using water to put out small spot-fires until it is necessary to go inside to shelter from the fire.

At this stage, you will be able to hear the burning, crackling and roaring of the fire as well as the roaring of the wind. Embers will rain down on your home and collect in corners on flat surfaces. Extinguish as many of these as possible before you take shelter inside. The skin on your ears and hands will alert you when conditions have become too hot to survive outside.

By the time the fire front has passed (usually between 10 and 20 minutes) and it is safe to leave the shelter of your home, the noise will have abated a little. Outside it will be very smoky, and anything still burning will be giving off a lot of radiant heat. Use this time to continually check inside and outside your home for embers that may set your house alight. You may need to do this for many hours.

# WHAT TO EXPECT DURING A BUSHFIRE

## **Where in the house is the best place to take refuge?**

When the fire front arrives, take refuge from its radiant heat and flames inside until the front passes. Choose a place/room that:

- Is located away from the direction the fire is approaching from
- Has a window or vent so you can see what is happening outside – but is not directly under or in front of a window that may shatter with heat and flame
- Has at least 2 exits eg: a window and a door.

Bring fire-fighting equipment inside for protection and so it can be used to put out spot fires caused by ember attack.

Have a fire extinguisher or water supply to douse fires in such areas as the roof cavity.

Periodically check for spot fires inside the house.

Always have a 'Plan B'. For example, is there a neighbour's house that you consider safe for shelter?

## **What to expect if you are caught in your car?**

If you are caught in your car, park in an open area if possible. Conditions in the vehicle will be uncomfortable as the fire front nears. It will get increasingly hotter and the vehicle may be rocked by strong winds. During this time smoke will enter the vehicle, and interior components may begin to give off fumes, as they get hotter. The windows may break due to heat or from flying debris. The tyres and parts of the bodywork may catch alight.

The fuel tank is unlikely to explode in the time needed to shelter in the car, although it may vent (particularly for LPG).