



‘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
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'Where There's Smoke There's Fire' project*

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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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PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

What to do BEFORE, DURING and AFTER a FIRE THREATENS IN YOUR AREA

ON TOTAL FIRE BAN DAYS:

- Discuss the day's action with your family or neighbours
- Check pump. Run for approximately five minutes and refuel
- Listen to the radio or keep a regular look out for telltale smoke
- Water the garden early in the morning
- Wet down any problem areas
- Keep pets in close proximity
- Relocate livestock to a safer paddock
- If you need to leave home during the day, close up your home and take your evacuation box with you (Refer page 38).

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

When a fire is threatening your property

BEFORE:

Inside

- Alert family and neighbours
- Dress in personal protective clothing (Refer page 21) to protect from radiant heat
- Shut all windows and doors to prevent smoke and flames from entering the house
- Move furniture away from windows and remove window dressings to prevent embers from entering the house through a broken window and catching alight the furniture or curtains
- Put a ladder under the manhole and a torch nearby for checking the ceiling space for any embers
- Fill the bath and any buckets with water to provide a water supply in the house for putting out any small fires that may start
- Bring pets inside
- Cover your face with a cotton handkerchief or triangular bandage to protect against smoke inhalation
- Place wet blankets or towels around window and door edges inside the house to stop smoke and embers from entering the house.

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

Outside

- Check water supplies around you home and fill any additional containers
- Remove garden furniture, doormats, hanging plants and other loose items that could trap embers on verandas
- Hose down the side of the house facing the fire, and the garden area close to the house. This is to cool the house down and reduce the impact of radiant heat, which may ignite the building.

Most roofs will not burn, so do not get up on your roof to hose it down, as wet roofs are slippery and can be dangerous.

- Block downpipes and fill gutters with water
- Dampen window ledges allowing water to penetrate any gaps
- Wet down any pre-determined problem areas
- Patrol your property for embers and extinguish them using mops and buckets of water, backpack sprayers, or a fire pump & hose
- Turn on your sprinkler system if you have one installed
- Listen to ABC radio for regular updates on the fire.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT TO PRACTICE THESE ACTIONS SO THAT YOU ARE SURE ABOUT HOW LONG EACH WILL TAKE YOU TO COMPLETE, AND TO ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE ALL THE CORRECT, FUNCTIONING EQUIPMENT.

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

DURING:

Go inside when it becomes too hot to stay outside. The skin on your ears and hands will alert you when conditions have become too hot to survive outside. Your home will protect you from radiant heat while the fire front passes through (usually between 10 and 20 minutes).

Take all fire fighting equipment inside with you, including tap fittings, hoses and portable fire fighting pump as these items may become very hot and even melt as the fire front passes through.

Stay inside your house while the fire front passes around the house and look out for burning embers landing inside the home. Extinguish any spot fires that start.

Do not hide or take shelter in a part of your home where it is not possible to see the progress of the fire. Keep a watch of the situation and return outside as soon as the main fire front has passed to extinguish any small fires that may have started.

A refuge is not meant to serve as a hiding place, but a place of protection from the radiant heat until it is safe to return outside.

If your home catches on fire during the passage of the main fire front and you are unable to extinguish what has now become a house fire go outside onto burnt ground after the fire front has passed. Keep well away from the radiant heat and smoke that is being generated from the structure fire.

DO NOT RETURN INSIDE THE HOUSE FOR ANY REASON.

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

AFTER:

Continue to wear your personal protective clothing. After the main fire front passes go outside again as soon as it is safe. Water down the outside of the house, including the roof, and look out for small fires around your house. Continue to look out for small fires and burning embers for many hours after the fire front has passed.

Check for burning embers:

- Inside the roof
- Under floor boards
- Under house spaces
- In wall vent spaces
- On verandas and wooden decking
- On timber window ledges and door sills
- Roof lines and roof gutters
- Outdoor furniture
- Doormats
- Garden beds and mulch
- Wood heaps
- Sheds and carports.

Let family and neighbours know you're okay.

Continue to drink plenty of water.

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

For practice and familiarisation

	Task	Completed	Time taken
Inside	Dress in Personal Protective Clothing		
	Shut all windows and doors		
	Move furniture away from windows		
	Remove window dressings		
	Put ladder under the manhole & have a torch nearby		
	Fill bath & buckets		
	Bring pets inside		
	Cover face with handkerchief		
	Place wet blankets or towel around window and door edges		
Outside	Check water supplies around home		
	Fill additional containers		
	Remove garden furniture, doormats, hanging plants and loose items from veranda		
	Hose down side of house & garden		
	Block downpipes & fill gutters with water		
	Dampen window ledges		
	Wet down problem areas		
	Turn on sprinkler system (if applicable)		

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

Bushfire Action Plan

This bushfire action plan is for:

What will you do if members of the household are at work or school?

PREPARING YOURSELF & YOUR PROPERTY

List the vegetation management tasks you need to undertake (Refer page 10)

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

List the house modifications you need to make (Refer page 16)

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

List the maintenance activities you need to carry out and when they need to be done (Refer page 20)

Activity

When

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

List the fire fighting equipment you need

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

WHAT TO DO DURING A BUSHFIRE

List personal protective clothing needed for all members of the household

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Where are you going to store your clothing so it's readily available?

List the actions you will take to defend your property before the fire front arrive

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

List the actions you will take during the passage of the main fire front

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

List the actions you will take after the fire front has passed

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

REMEMBER TO PRACTICE YOUR PLAN AND TIME HOW LONG IT WILL TAKE YOU TO COMPLETE ALL THE ACTIONS YOU HAVE IDENTIFIED AS BEING IMPORTANT. (Refer page 34)

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

What to do BEFORE, DURING and AFTER a FIRE THREATENS IN YOUR AREA

If you are planning to evacuate your home when a bushfire threatens, you need to have decided well in advance what your trigger for leaving will be.

**Being on the road during a bushfire is extremely dangerous
– last minute evacuations can be a deadly option.**

BEFORE:

Evacuation Box

If you are planning to go early in the event of a fire (or on any high risk fire day) you should take a pre-prepared evacuation box with you to your chosen refuge. The box needs to be prepared before the start of the fire danger season and stored in an easily accessible place. Some options for the content of the evacuation box are:

- Woollen blanket
- Container of water
- First aid kit
- Photos and videos
- Insurance documents
- Other documents
- Medications (human and animal)
- Pet food
- Dish for water for pets
- Leash/cage
- Vet's phone number.

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

Vehicle preparation

If you are planning to go early you also need to have done some vehicle preparation in case you are caught in the passage of the fire whilst travelling.

Prepare your car by:

- Never travel with a faulty exhaust pipe or muffler
- Have a woollen blanket, container of water and a first aid kit
- Keep special filter masks in your car if there are asthmatics in the family
- Ensure there is adequate fuel, especially on high risk days
- Choose a safe route to travel. Practice travelling along this route – with practice a plan becomes familiar and second nature.

Actions to take if you do need to shelter in your car:

- Drive your car into a clear area away from surrounding trees
- Position your vehicle facing towards the oncoming fire front
- Leave your headlights on, turn your hazard lights on and leave the car running
- Roll up your windows and close all vents, turn your air conditioning off or on recirculation
- Shelter below window level
- Cover your body with woollen blankets to protect you from radiant heat
- Drink water frequently.

It will be a frightening experience (Refer page 27) but it is safest to remain in the car where there is protection from radiant heat.

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

ON TOTAL FIRE BAN DAYS:

- PUT INTO ACTION YOUR BUSHFIRE ACTION PLAN
(Refer pages 35 and 44)
- Discuss the day's action with your family or neighbours
- Listen to the radio or keep a regular look out for telltale smoke
- Water the garden early in the morning
- Wet down any problem areas around your property
- Keep pets in close proximity
- Relocate livestock to a safer paddock
- Depending on your trigger to leave, close up your home and take your evacuation box with you.

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

IF YOU HAD PLANNED TO GO EARLY BUT WERE UNABLE TO

If you had planned to go early and were unable to leave, you should not risk being caught in a bushfire whilst on foot or in a vehicle. The deadliest option is late evacuation. You are safer to stay with your home, as it will provide protection from radiant heat and ember attack.

DURING the passage of the fire front:

Go inside when it becomes too hot to stay outside. The skin on your ears and hands will alert you when conditions have become too hot to survive outside. Your home will protect you from radiant heat while the fire front passes through (usually between 10 and 20 minutes).

Take all fire fighting equipment inside with you, including tap fittings, hoses and your portable fire-fighting pump as these items may become very hot and even melt as the fire front passes through.

Stay inside your house while the fire front passes around the house and look out for burning embers landing inside the home. Extinguish any spot fires that start.

Do not hide or take shelter in a part of your home where it is not possible to see the progress of the fire (Refer page 29). Keep a watch of the situation and return outside as soon as the main fire front has passed to extinguish any small fires that may have started.

A refuge is not meant to serve as a hiding place, but a place of protection from the radiant heat until it is safe to return outside.

If your home catches on fire during the passage of the main fire front and you are unable to extinguish what has now become a house fire, go outside onto burnt ground after the fire front has passed. Keep well away from the radiant heat and smoke that is being generated from the structure fire.

DO NOT RETURN INSIDE THE HOUSE FOR ANY REASON.

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

When returning to your property after the fire front has passed

AFTER:

It may be some time before you are permitted to return to your home, depending upon the fire. Here are some things to consider when returning to your home.

Check with the fire authorities to make sure your residence is safe to enter. Do not cut or walk past coloured tape that was placed over doors or windows to mark damaged areas unless local authorities advise that it is safe to do so.

If you have children, leave them with a relative or friend while you conduct your first inspection of your home after the fire. The site may be unsafe for children, and seeing the damage firsthand may upset them and cause long-term effects, including nightmares.

Check the outside of your home before you enter. Look for loose power lines, broken or damaged gas lines, foundation cracks or other damage. See if verandas and overhangs still have all their supports. If you see damage on the outside, it could indicate that the inside of your home is seriously unsafe. Ask a building inspector or contractor to check the structure before you enter.

You may want to wait to return to buildings during daylight hours, when it is easier to avoid hazards, particularly if the electricity is off and you have no lights.

If there is no significant visible outside damage, then check inside. Carefully open the door. If it is jammed, do not force it open. It may be providing support to the structure of your home. If you force open the door, it may cause parts of your home to collapse or become more damaged. Find another way to enter your home. Those who do enter your damaged home should wear long pants, a long-sleeved shirt, closed-toed rubber-soled shoes or boots and work gloves. Depending on the situation, dust masks, safety glasses (or goggles) and/or a hard hat and other safety equipment may be needed. Many people are injured after disasters during clean up—the last thing that you want to do is add injuries to the list of things to take care of after a disaster.

Leave immediately if you hear shifting or unusual noises that signal that the structure may fall or if you smell gas or suspect a leak.

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

If you smell gas, notify emergency authorities and do not turn on the lights, light matches, smoke, or do anything that could cause a spark. Do not return to the house until you are told it is safe to do so.

If there is no power, check to make sure the main breaker is on. Fires may cause breakers to trip. If the breakers are on and power is still not present, contact the utility company. If power is out, use a flashlight to inspect for damage and for as long as the power remains out. Do not use any open flame, including candles, to inspect for damage or serve as an alternate lighting source.

Inspect the roof immediately and extinguish any sparks or embers. Bushfires may have left burning embers that could reignite. Throughout your first day back, and beyond, check for smoke and embers throughout the home, including the roof space.

Beware of animals, such as rodents, snakes, spiders and insects that may have entered your home.

Throw away food, beverages and medicine exposed to heat, smoke or soot. Food that was in the freezer can be used if it still has ice crystals on it. If not, discard it.

Visually check the stability of the trees. Any tree that has been weakened by fire may be a hazard. Winds are normally responsible for toppling weakened trees. The wind patterns in your area may have changed as a result of the loss of adjacent tree cover.

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

Bushfire Action Plan

This bushfire action plan is for:

Who is planning to leave?

When will you leave? What will be your trigger to leave your home?

Where will you go? Choose a safe route and practice using it.

What arrangements have you made to get there?

What will you take with you? (Refer page 38)

PLANNING TO GO EARLY

What will you do with your pets? Can you take them with you?

(Refer CFS Fact Sheet 'Care of Pets and Livestock' on page 69)

Who have you told about your plan?
