



Bushfires pose a significant threat to all those living in Victoria and Tasmania. Environments at a high risk for fires are:

- Where suburbs meet the bush.
- Close to forest and woodlands.
- Close to grass or paddocks.
- Near coastal scrub.

Planning for fires is crucial to maximise safety.

Preparing your home

A well prepared home is more likely to survive a bushfire or ember attack. It is easier to defend, less likely to put other homes at risk, and will offer more protection if a fire threatens suddenly and you cannot leave. The following preparations must begin before the bushfire season:

- Keep gutters clear of leaf litter.
- Install metal gutter guards.
- Keep woodpiles and flammable liquids away from the house.
- Remove flammable items from decks and verandahs, i.e. boxes, furniture, doormats.
- Keep grass short.

- Use pebbles or rocks in the garden (not flammable mulch).
- Avoid large shrubs next to or under windows.
- Get rid of dry grass, leaves, twigs, weeds and loose bark.
- Prune lower branches of shrubs to separate from surface fuels underneath.
- Prune shrubs away from tree branches.
- Cut back overhanging branches – no branches should be within 10 metres of buildings.
- Make space between plants and trees.
- Seal all gaps around the house and roof and install fine fly wire mesh around larger areas that cannot be sealed.
- Repair damaged or missing roof tiles.
- Those with a pool, tank or dam should place a Static Water Supply (SWS) sign on the property entrance, so firefighters know where they can access water.
- Have hoses long enough to reach around the house.

Being ready

Take care of simple, practical actions before the fire season so you are ready to leave or seek shelter quickly, calmly and safely. A list of actions is provided overleaf.

Becoming fire ready

- Pack and keep close an Emergency Kit with the following items:
 - Overnight bag with a change of clothes, toiletries and sanitary supplies. Include protective clothing (long-sleeved, made from natural material like cotton) for each member of the family and woollen blankets.
 - Passports, photos, will and insurance papers. Scan these onto a memory stick.
 - Medicine and First Aid Kit.
 - Adequate amount of water.
 - Contact information including doctor, council and power company.
 - Mobile phone and charger. Save important contact numbers including family, friends and the Victorian / Tasmanian Bushfire Information Line. Have a spare mobile phone that is fully charged for emergencies.
 - Battery-powered radio, torch and spare batteries.
- Practise packing the car to know how long it will take.
- Mark primary routes, alternative routes and petrol stations on hard copy maps.
- Make firm arrangements with anyone you plan to visit when you leave early.
- Talk to neighbours or nearby friends about how you might help each other.

Pets

Ensure your pet is wearing an identification tag and add the following items to your Emergency Kit:

- Suitable transport carrier or leash.
- Any medications.
- Dietary supplements.
- Food and drinking water.
- A familiar item (toy, bed, treats) to help reduce stress.

Sharing your bushfire plan

Just as every family and household is unique, so are fire plans. Any bushfire plan – written or not – is better than no plan. Once you have prepared your plan, share the details with family, friends and neighbours. If you are frail or elderly, have a physical disability or have problems thinking clearly or acting quickly under stress ask family, friends or neighbours to assist you with your plan.

Travelling

During bushfires roads can be very dangerous due to smoke reducing visibility, fallen trees and power lines, and panicked drivers. There may also be numerous road closures in place across the state. When planning and/or considering travel, be familiar with all current weather and fire warnings and updates.

Staying informed

During the fire season make it habit to:

- Check your district's Fire Danger Rating every day.
- Know if it is a Total Fire Ban day.
- Check for warnings, especially on hot, dry, windy days.

Do not rely on an official warning to leave. Bushfires can start quickly and threaten homes and lives within minutes. If you receive a warning, take it seriously. Failure to take action may result in injury or death.

Sources: CFA, Fire ready kit, http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/fm_files/attachments/plan_and_prepare/frk_2013/Section5_Preparing_your_property.pdf; Bapcare, Occupational Health and Safety Information Sheet

Key sources of information

Stay informed via the following channels:

Twitter

@CFA_Updates; @TasFireService

Facebook

facebook.com/cfavic; facebook.com/Tasmaniafireservice

Websites

cfa.vic.gov.au; depi.vic.gov.au; mfb.vic.gov.au; vicroads.vic.gov.au; fire.tas.gov.au; emergencyalert.gov.au (set up emergency alerts to landline telephones and mobile phones).

Phone

Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 226 226
Tasmanian Bushfire Information Line 1800 000 699

Media outlets

ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations and Sky News TV.

App

Download the VicEmergencyApp to mobile phones.

Disclaimer: This information is not intended to replace medical advice from a health professional. Readers are urged to seek advice from a qualified health care professional for diagnosis and answers to their medical questions. Bapcare is a leading, faith-based, not-for-profit organisation working across Victoria and Tasmania, providing care to the community for more than 70 years.