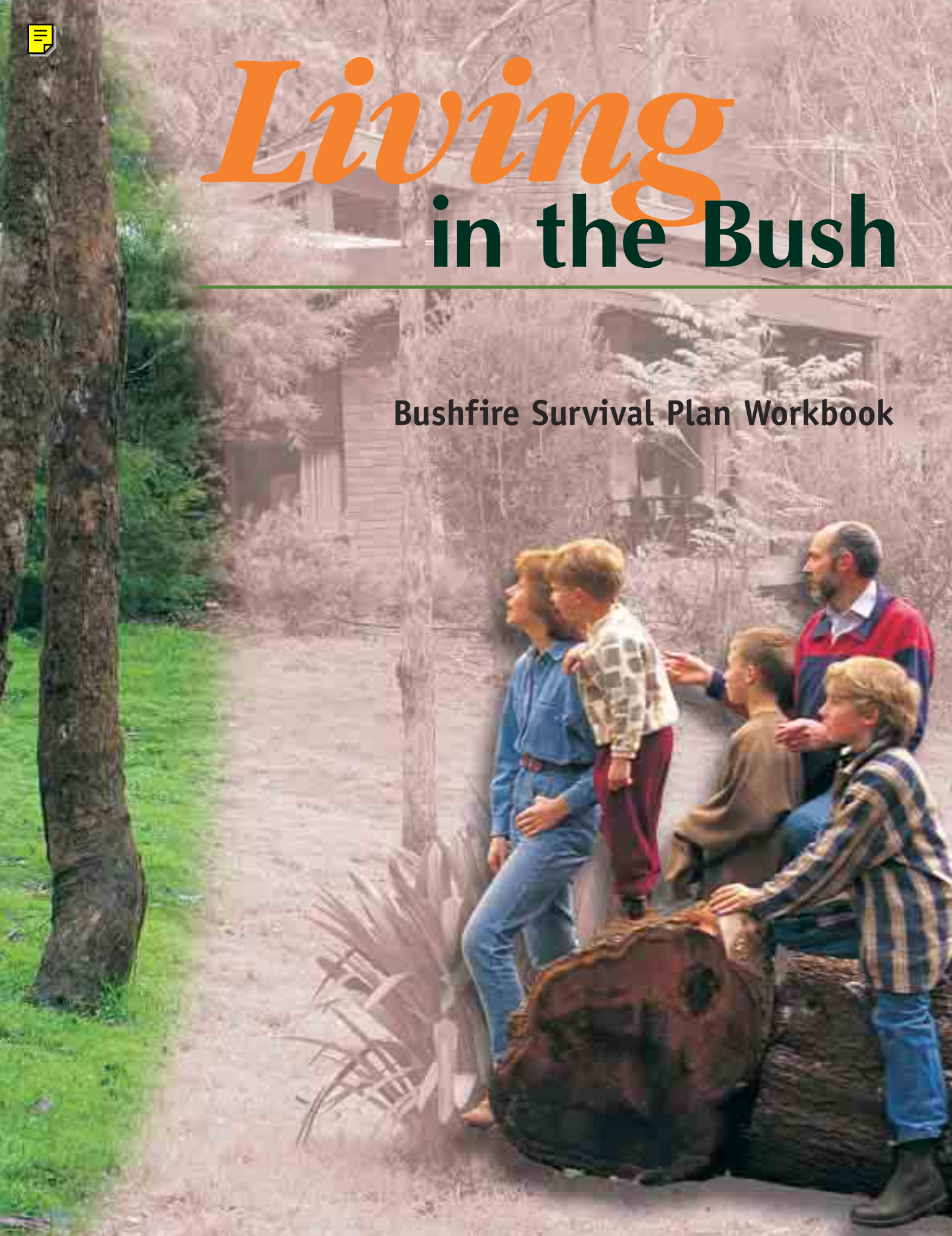




# *Living* in the Bush

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**Bushfire Survival Plan Workbook**





## Living in the bush

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***More and more Victorians are making their homes in the bush.***

They are getting away from the crowd, finding more affordable ***property*** and enjoying the beauties of nature.

What many don't realise is that they are settling in some of the most ***dangerous*** bushfire places on earth.

Our unique combination of climate and native bush means that Victoria will always have ***bushfires***.

If you live in a ***bushland*** setting you may know the risk already but feel unsure of what to do about it.

There is a lot you can do as an individual.

This booklet will help.

It provides vital information on bushfire ***survival*** and ***planning*** options which you can tailor to suit your individual circumstances and maintain your bushland surroundings.

## Make your own plan for bushfire survival

***Bushfires are inevitable, but they are also survivable.***

The key is to be self-reliant and well prepared by drawing up your own individual survival plan.

Your plan must be based on fact and the bushfire experience of CFA and others.

There are various survival options for you to choose from:

- stay in your home
- go to a neighbour's home
- go to a designated refuge area
- evacuate all or some of your family

There is no option that is totally safe - each has a degree of risk.



***You must plan well in advance for whichever option you choose.***

When you are working on your plan, consider that when a bushfire is out of control, CFA firefighters must concentrate their effort on battling the front of the fire. There may be tankers and firefighting crews close by but they may not be able to defend every home.

***Protection of your home and assets is your responsibility.***

***Does everyone in your household know about the plan?***

***Make time to sit down together to discuss it thoroughly.***

## Will you receive warning of the approaching fire?

*List phone numbers you may need during a fire, such as emergency services, neighbours, school.*

*Can you stay home on bad fire days?*

*Which radio stations will you listen to for fire news?*

### *Be aware of Total Fire Ban days*

- Experience has shown you cannot expect that “someone” - say, police or fire brigade - will give you a personal warning.
- Listen to radio for fire weather information and make yourself familiar with local weather patterns.
- Be aware of Total Fire Ban days, high fire danger days and their associated weather conditions - temperature, wind speed and direction and the humidity.

### *Use the weather as your cue to put your bushfire survival plan into action.*

- Be prepared and consider arranging your own local warning system:
  - set up a ‘phone tree’ with your neighbours
    - each person contacted in turn contacts others according to a prepared list
  - see if you can gain access to a CFA Listening Radio Set (perhaps through someone in your street) so you can hear CFA firefighting radio messages
  - have a battery powered radio and spare batteries to monitor news bulletins
  - check if there is a neighbourhood radio station which might broadcast up to date local fire information
- Be aware that your telephone service might fail or mobile network overload.
- Your electricity supply may be cut off.



## What will the bushfire be like in my area? Where will it come from?

Big fires usually come with strong, hot, northerly winds. However, the direction of an approaching fire will depend on many local factors.

A south westerly wind change - although cooler - can increase the danger because it will swing the fire in a different direction. This often catches people unaware and causes the most damage. Such was the case in the Otways fire in February 1983 as illustrated below.



*Check with the local Fire Brigade about the likely directions of fires in your area.*

*Sketch a diagram of your property and neighbourhood. Mark in the most likely fire spread direction.*

## How intense will the fire be?

### ***Vegetation is the fuel for a fire.***

The intensity of a fire refers to the amount of heat being generated. The higher the intensity the harder the fire is to control and the more damage it is likely to cause. It depends on weather, topography and vegetation.

#### **Weather**

High temperatures, high winds and low humidity add up to bushfire weather.

#### **Topography**

- Where is your house situated on your block?
- What is the slope of the ground?
- Which way does it face?
- Fires travel fastest uphill.
- Fires are more intense on northerly and westerly aspects because they are drier.

### ***The most volatile fuel is dry material thinner than an adult's little finger.***



#### **Vegetation**

Vegetation is the fuel for a fire including long dry grass, leaf litter, bracken, scrub, shrubs and loose tree bark.

Is your home in the middle of the forest or are you on the edge? Is the vegetation continuous from the ground up to the tree tops? See how much fire fuel is on your block and how close it is to the house. How much is there on blocks next door?

## Why do houses burn?

*Research has shown that houses burn down mainly because of sparks and embers.*

In a bushfire a house can burn because of:

- burning debris landing on or around the house
- radiant heat ahead of the bushfire
- direct flame contact

Many homes survive the fire front, only to be destroyed some hours later by fires started from burning debris such as leaves or bark from nearby trees. Strong winds can break windows or damage the roof allowing embers to get inside. A small fire started by embers, if unnoticed, may grow and finally destroy the house.



There are many things you can do before the fire season to increase the safety of your home.

The three main elements for survival of your house are:

- reduction of the fire's potential fuel around your home
- house design and construction to keep embers out
- having someone there to put out small fires



*Consider how you can protect your home against:*

- *embers?*
- *radiant heat?*
- *direct flames?*
- *wind damage?*

## Leave or stay? It's your decision

### *Lives are most often lost during unplanned, last minute evacuations.*

Your decision to leave or stay will depend on how well you and your family are prepared to face a bushfire, the location and siting of your home, its design and construction, the amount of vegetation close to your home.

#### Things to consider

- Does your family include young children, elderly people, or people with disabilities?
- If you plan to evacuate, will you go to a designated refuge area, a neighbour's home, or a place well away from the threatened area?
- When will you go?  
The safest time to evacuate is before the fire starts. If you have decided to go, leave the area by 10 am on Total Fire Ban days. Consider doing the weekly shopping, going to the beach or visiting relatives in town.
- How will you know if the roads are safe?
- What will you take with you?
- What will you do if you have planned to evacuate, but the fire is upon you before you can leave safely?  
Is your home able to provide safe shelter and withstand bushfire?
- Does everyone in your household know about the plan?  
Make time to sit down together to discuss it thoroughly.



*If you plan to stay, are you adequately prepared?*

*If you have children, where will they be:*

- *on week days?*
- *over the weekend?*

*Where will you be?*

*Do you regularly have elderly people or people with disabilities visiting your home?*

*Where is the designated refuge area closest to your home?*

*What if the road is blocked? Is there another way?*

*List the items you will take with you if you evacuate.*

## Looking after your pets

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*A tied up animal has no hope of finding its own safe place.*

Think about how to protect your pets and include them in your survival plan.

Animals suffer from heat and smoke just like we do. They need plenty of water after a fire.

If you decide to leave, plan to take your pets if you can.

Organise cat baskets, horse trailers, dog collars and leads etc. before summer.

If you decide to stay at the house and fight the fire, pets should be sheltered from radiant heat with you as the fire front passes.

On days of extreme fire danger larger animals such as horses and goats are best placed in a paddock that has been well grazed.



Identify your pets by putting a phone number and address on a collar tag in case they go missing.

Cold running water should be applied to burns until you seek veterinary help.

## Block location and house siting

### *The siting of your home can make or break its chances of survival during a bushfire.*

When choosing where you will live, ask your local Council about areas of greatest bushfire risk. Decide if this should influence the siting and construction of your new home and consider:

#### Slope

- For every 10 degrees increase in slope, the rate of spread and intensity of the fire will double.

#### Aspect

- Northern and western aspects are most dangerous.

#### Vegetation

- If possible, keep the house clear of existing vegetation.
- Assess potential for reducing the amount of vegetation.
- Take advantage of existing or proposed protective features eg. roads, existing wind breaks, dams, creeks, swimming pool, tennis court or vegetable garden.



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***On the grid, sketch your block, including your house and other surrounding features such as the slope of the land, aspect, dense clumps of vegetation, major highways, minor roads and tracks, overhead power lines, proximity of vegetation on neighbours' blocks.***



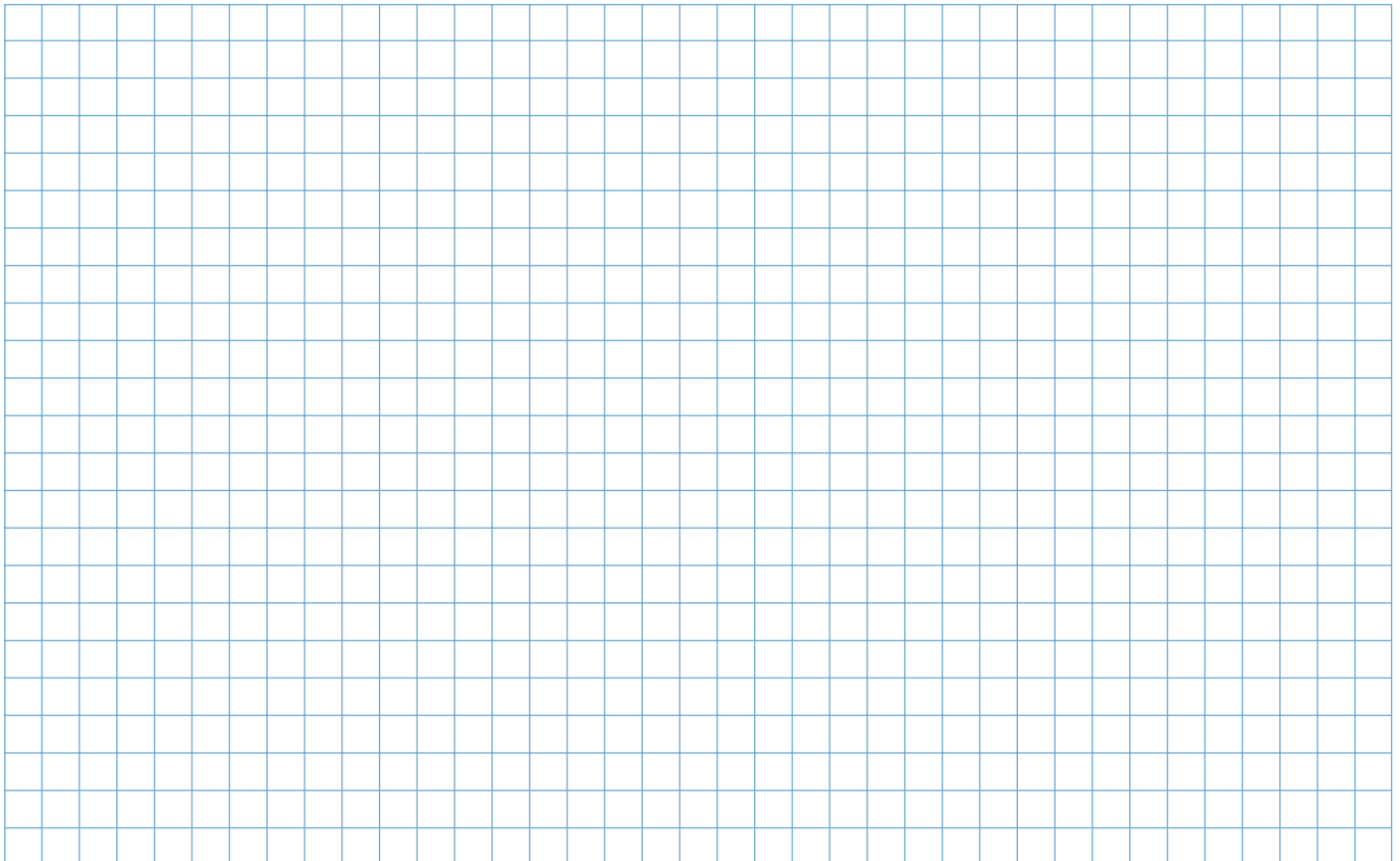
### Access

- Maintain entry/exit points in two directions if possible. Ensure at least one access point is located on the side of the property away from greatest potential hazard.

### Existing fire risks

- A property next to dense bush or on a ridge has increased risks.

Look at your surrounds with 'fire eyes'. Learn more about where you live and what are the potential fire risks.



On the sketch, add or highlight the fire risks you have noted.

*On your property grid, in a different colour, add any landscape features you can incorporate to improve the prospect of your home's survival during a bushfire.*

*Your home and garden can blend with the natural environment and at the same time be landscaped for fire prevention and protection.*

### **With fire protection in mind, landscaping can:**

- reduce the amount of potential fire "fuel".
- act as a barrier to radiant heat.
- prevent fire reaching the house by radiant heat or flame contact.
- reduce spark and ember threat.
- create a fuel-reduced area between the bush and your home.
- slow the wind.

### **Fire-preventative landscaping includes:**

- positioning your driveway to the north or west of the house.
- planting a well designed and maintained windbreak to help reduce the wind speed, filter out flying sparks and debris and slow the spread of the fire around your property.
- building a stone wall, earth mound, hedge or covered fence as a radiant heat shield. This should be fairly close to the building.
- placing your vegetable garden, orchard, swimming pool or tennis court between your home and the expected fire direction.
- locating the woodpile away from the expected direction of the fire - generally on the eastern side.
- thinning out tree foliage into clumps so there are breaks in the tree canopy.
- if possible, remove trees with high flammability or loose, rough or ribbon bark.



- removing ground litter and undergrowth by raking and mulching or burning.
- removing dead trees and dead branches from individual trees.
- pruning lower limbs of trees and bushes to prevent low flames climbing into the tops of the trees.
- removing trees, shrubs or grass which is close to, overhanging or touching the house.
- selecting and planting the least flammable plants, especially close to the house and other buildings.
- locating all garden sheds well away from the house.

Concentrate your efforts on the vulnerable side of your house and property ie. the north and south-west quadrants and the downhill slopes. If the amount of fire protection landscaping you can do is limited, compensate in your choice of house design and construction.



## Plants for your bush garden

*Plants can be selected for their resistance to fire according to their flammability and ability to grow again after a fire.*

When planning your garden and property for fire protection, it's important to consider plants as an integral part of your overall fire protection plan. Yet no plant is completely fire-resistant. Some are more flammable than others but given the right conditions, all plants will burn.

Plant characteristics that provide protection from fire include:

- high salt and moisture content of leaves.
- low volatile oil content of leaves (which reduces its flammability).
- thick bark protecting conductive tissues and dormant buds.
- seeds enclosed in woody capsules.
- dense crown.
- lowest branches out of reach of ground fire.

*The selection, arrangement, location and management of plants will help improve your home's resistance to fire.*

### Arrangement

Plants that retain or accumulate dead leaves and twigs will burn more readily, especially if this material is continuous from the ground to the tree crown. If possible, avoid dense clumps of trees or shrubs. If you need to retain tree clumps, keep them small and ensure they comprise fire-resistant plants.

Trimmed cypress hedges are an extreme fire hazard if planted close to buildings. However, in the right location, they act as an excellent windbreak. Wind breaks can reduce wind speed, filter out flying embers and control the spread of fire.



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## Location

Ensure trees are at a safe distance from buildings and powerlines. Seedlings of large trees should be planted away from building and powerlines, at a distance equivalent to the height of the mature tree or more. Where practical, plant trees and shrubs with high fire-resistance on the north and south-western aspects of your property.

Select smooth barked trees for new plantings. If culling is required, remove those trees with loose, fibrous or stringy bark which can produce embers.



## Management

If possible, water plants during summer to maintain leaf moisture content. The higher the moisture content of leaves, the less likely they are to ignite.

Remove accumulated debris such as garden mulch, flaky loose bark, dead branches, leaves or needles from within the branches. If possible, remove the lower branches of the tree. This material will sustain a fire and keep it burning.

Break the distribution of fuel between the tree top and the ground by pruning. Avoid successive layers of shrubs reaching into the tops of trees because the lower layers can carry fire into the high layers.

Plant succulent ground cover under and around trees. Alternatively, maintain green lawns, cultivated soils or gravelled areas beneath trees.

Thick bark may be hazardous if loose, fibrous, or stringy. These types of barks easily ignite and encourage fire to spread through the crown of the trees. Wind can carry burning bark long distances to start spot fires elsewhere. Depending on the tree and its location, manually remove or burn the bark from these trees.



## Plants for your bush garden

### NOTE:

Given the right conditions ALL vegetation will burn. CFA is currently reviewing its advice with regard to fire “retardance” and vegetation. Please contact us for more information

### Remember, when establishing and maintaining a bush garden

- Use your trees - they can protect you from strong winds, intense heat and flying embers.
- Decrease fuel - remove long dry grass, dead leaves, twigs, and flammable shrubs.
- Pick your plants - some trees and shrubs are more fire-resistant than others.
- Design for safety - locate low fire risk features such as lawns, gravel paths, vegetable gardens, pools, and patios between you and the fire. Build in ‘heat shields’ such as a stone wall to protect your plants and the house.

*During a bushfire, a well-designed garden will provide a green safety zone around your home.*

If possible contact your local landcare or environment group for information on species that are indigenous to your area. They may even supply plants propagated from seeds collected locally.

### Introduced plants that are hard to burn include:

Common Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Norway Maple	<i>Acer plantanoides</i>
Horse Chestnut	<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>
Evergreen Alder	<i>Alnus jorullensis</i>
Cape Chestnut	<i>Caladendron capense</i>
American Chestnut	<i>Castanea dentata</i>
Sweet Chestnut	<i>Castanea sativa</i>
Hackberry	<i>Celtis occidentalis</i>
Carob	<i>Ceratonia siliqua</i>
Judas Tree	<i>Cercis siliquastrum</i>
Camphor Laurel	<i>Cinnamomum camphora</i>
New Zealand Laurel	<i>Corynocarpus laevigatus</i>
Russian Olive	<i>Elaeagnus angustifolia</i>
Common Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
New Zealand Broadleaf	<i>Griselinia littoralis</i>
Laurel	<i>Laurus nobilis</i>
Tulip Tree	<i>Liriodendron tulipifera</i>

Red-leaf Photinia	<i>Photinia glabra</i>
Chinese Hawthorn	<i>Photinia serrulata</i>
Algerian Oak	<i>Quercus canariensis</i>
Turkey Oak	<i>Quercus cerris</i>
Holm Oak	<i>Quercus ilex</i>
English Oak	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Linden	<i>Tilia vulgaris</i>
Elms	<i>Ulmus spp.</i>

**Native trees and shrubs that are hard to burn include:**

West Australian Coastal Wattle	<i>Acacia cyclops</i>
Hairy Pod Wattle	<i>Acacia glandulicarpa</i>
Hairy Wattle	<i>Acacia vestita</i>
Lilly Pilly	<i>Acmena smithii</i>
Juniper Myrtle	<i>Agonis juniperina</i>
Apple Jack	<i>Angophora costata</i>
Kurrajong	<i>Brachychiton populneus</i>
Belah	<i>Casuarina cristata</i>
River She-oak	<i>Casuarina cunninghamiana</i>
Moreton Bay Fig	<i>Ficus macrophylla</i>
Cattlebush	<i>Heterodendrum oleifolium</i>
Pyramid Tree	<i>Lagunaria patersonii</i>
Moonah	<i>Melaleuca lanceolata</i>
White Cedar	<i>Melia azedarach</i>
Boobialla	<i>Myoporum insulare</i>
Brush Box	<i>Tristania conferta</i>

**Ground cover plants that are hard to burn:**

Bugle	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>
Saltbush	<i>Atriplex spp.</i>
Pigface	<i>Carpobrotus spp.</i>
	<i>Coprosma "kirkii"</i>
	<i>Delosperma "alba"</i>
	<i>Drosanthemum floribundum</i>
Sunroses	<i>Helianthemum spp.</i>
Coral Peas	<i>Kennedia spp.</i>
Bluebushes	<i>Kochia spp.</i>
Noonflower	<i>Lampranthus multiradiatus</i>
Creeping Myoporum	<i>Myoporum parvifolium</i>
Jade Plants	<i>Portulacaria spp.</i>
Saltbush	<i>Rhagodia spp.</i>
Rosemary (prostrate form)	<i>Rosmarinus officinalis prostratus</i>
Lavender Cotton	<i>Santolina spp.</i>
	<i>Verbena peruviana</i>



## Building design and construction

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### *Burning embers are the main cause of houses catching alight during bushfires.*

Burning debris is carried by strong winds that accompany bushfires. Depending on where it settles, a small fire (“spot fire”) may start. If this happens to be on your wooden deck, doormat or woodpile next to the house, it may eventually destroy the house.

Showers of burning debris may hit:

- before the fire front reaches the property.
- as the fire front is passing.
- many hours after the fire front has passed.

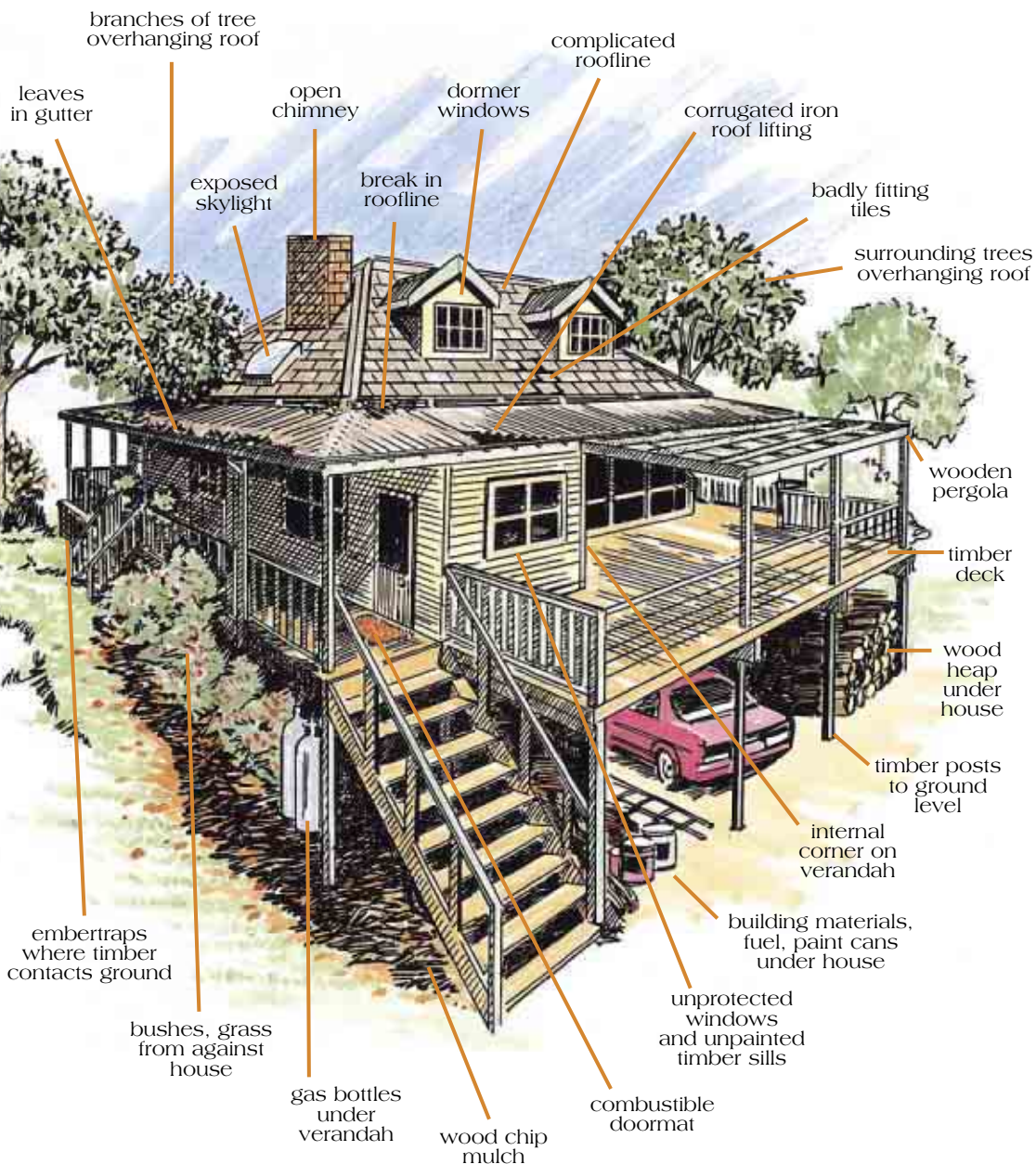
“Spot” fires caused by flying embers break out from 100 metres to two or three kilometres ahead of the main fire. Spot fires have been recorded as far as 30 kilometres from the fire front.

#### **Remember**

- Houses do not have to be specially built to protect you from bushfires.
- Even minor changes and safety features added to conventional houses will improve their chances of survival.
- No one building feature or even a combination of features will guarantee safety.
- Prevention of embers getting inside a house, ceiling cavity or underfloor area is an important fire safety design feature.
- Radiant heat and flame contact can generally be prevented by landscaping before the fire season.
- Note the problem spots around your house and watch them closely during a bushfire - for example if the roofline is complicated, make sure you can get water to all the crevices.

For excellent, detailed information on the design and construction of buildings get a copy of ‘Building in bushfire-prone areas - information and advice’ – Compiled and edited by CSIRO and Standards Australia.

# Walk around your home and identify the potential fire starting spots



**Select 10 potential ignition sources around your home and begin working on ways to better protect your home during a bushfire.**

**Can they be fixed before the fire season?**

**Would they need active defence against embers during a fire?**

## House and garden maintenance

*What will you use to block your downpipes during a fire?*

*What shape and size are your downpipes?*



### *Prune trees and branches that overhang roofs or touch walls.*

- Discuss fire prevention with your neighbours - can you give each other a hand to reduce the risks?
- Check that fire water supply is adequate and easily accessible.
- Make sure your fire fighting equipment is in good working order. Pumps and other mechanical devices need to be tested on a regular basis during the fire season.
- After days of strong northerly winds, you will notice where leaf litter accumulates. Check leaf litter build-up in guttering around your home. If you are unable to keep your gutters free of leaves, consider installing a gutter blocking and flushing system.
- Check that house fire safety measures are maintained eg. ensure wire screens are in good condition, replace missing roof tiles or damaged roofing iron, apply fire-retardant treatments at intervals specified by manufacturer.
- Prune trees and branches that overhang the roof or touch walls.
- If possible, keep lawns, trees, and shrubs near your house well-watered and green.
- Keep your woodpile well away from buildings.





- Assess the safety of your petrol/fuel supplies? All fuel containers should be in a shed located away from the house.
- Reduce ground fuel litter, particularly in areas close to your home.

- Remove any wood boxes, door mats and wooden furniture from verandahs during the Summer months, particularly on days of high fire danger.

For each of the above tasks, note whether any action is needed around your home. If action is required, nominate the months when it will take place.

List any other monthly or annual tasks needing attention.

January \_\_\_\_\_

February \_\_\_\_\_

March \_\_\_\_\_

April \_\_\_\_\_

May \_\_\_\_\_

June \_\_\_\_\_

July \_\_\_\_\_

August \_\_\_\_\_

September \_\_\_\_\_

October \_\_\_\_\_

November \_\_\_\_\_

December \_\_\_\_\_



## Defending your home on the day

*What are your water storage options?*

*The most critical factors in house survival during a bushfire is the active defence of the property by able-bodied people.*

Generally, the easiest and most effective way to extinguish fire is to apply water. Therefore, proximity to adequate water storage and its effective distribution is essential. If you are relying on your own independent water supply to defend your home, consider the following factors:

- If you are on a reticulated water supply, everyone in the area, including the fire brigade will be using the mains water supply. This may cause a severe loss of water pressure.
- If you use an electric pump to obtain water under pressure from tanks or dams, it is likely that the electric power supply will fail.
- In what direction will a fire approach your house? Where is your water stored?
- How exposed is your house to radiant heat, direct flame contact, and spark and ember attack?

### How much water will you need?

This is dependent on how you plan to use the water - there is no single or correct answer. Homes have been saved using only bucketed water from a small gravity fed tank. Other houses equipped with pools and pumps have been destroyed.

### Storage options

- Fill your bath and laundry trough when you first become aware of fire.
- Place 200 litre drums and buckets in strategic locations and fill at the beginning of the fire season.
- Rubbish bins and stock feed bins can be filled on high fire danger days.
- Your hot water service will always have water. Ensure you know how to access it safely.



*Can your water supply reach all parts of your home and other buildings?*



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***Buckets and mops are essential - they don't need fuel, can be relied on to function and will cope with most small fires.***

- Tanks can vary in size from 1000 to 20,000 litres. Materials include galvanised iron, concrete, fibreglass and polyethylene.
- If you are considering purchasing a tank, why not spend a little more on a swimming pool and enjoy its added benefits.
- Tanks need to be located close to the house.
- If your house is on mains water you can run it through a storage tank, making sure the tank is always full.

### **Distribution options**

- Knapsack sprays are fairly heavy but may be half-filled for greater portability.
- Small portable pump (chainsaw motor driven), can be easily carried from one bucket or drum to the next.
- Fire fighter pump - 5hp petrol or diesel, manual or electric start. Ideal for most situations. Gives hitting power when dealing with more established fires, such as on wooden decking.
- Purpose-designed fire plumbing system or strategically placed taps and sprinklers. Metal pipes should be used in any exposed location. Plastic pipes need to be buried 300mm underground.
- Hoses - use large diameter garden hose (18mm) or specialised fire fighting hose. Be aware that a long length of hose filled with water will be difficult to move.

### **Sprinkler systems**

In the event of a bushfire, sprinkler systems alone will not save your home. If installing them, they should be considered as one part of a comprehensive fire prevention plan.

Sprinkler systems rely on large quantities of water and only function if someone is present to start the pump (unless you have an automated system). If a house sprinkler system is not possible, consider an extension of your garden watering system. Or place the system strategically to wet the most vulnerable areas of your house.



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***Where is your pump located?***

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***Does it need a protective housing?***

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***Does everyone know how to use the pump?***

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***Is it maintained on a regular basis during the summer period?***

## Defending your home on the day

**Equipment 'specifically designed to be used for fire fighting and prevention' is Sales Tax exempt (Sales Tax - Exemptions and Classification Act, Schedule 1, Item 173).**

If designed appropriately, sprinklers can provide almost complete protection from radiant heat, direct flame contact and ember attack. The design of your system should take into account the house design and construction, its siting and location, the amount of and proximity to vegetation and the site's potential fire threat.

### **An effective bushfire sprinkler system should:**

- apply water to vulnerable areas such as decks, windows, doors, underfloor areas, roof gutters, exposures and garden beds close to the house. Roofs are not particularly vulnerable and roof sprinklers will seldom give full protection to the house.
- provide continuous fine spray or mist close to the targeted feature. Large impact type sprays are less suitable as they produce large droplets, use large quantities of water and take a relatively long time to cover an area completely.
- be designed with a consideration of hydraulics such as flow rates, friction loss and demand.
- be as maintenance-free as possible. It needs to utilise corrosion-free, heat-resistant materials, fixed head sprinklers with no moving parts and high performance filtering. It should also incorporate a recirculation line back to the water supply, allowing for pump maintenance and system familiarisation. The sprinkler heads should be removable to allow for cleaning.
- function as a stand-alone system. It should have its own water supply and a petrol or diesel driven pump that is simple and easy to operate.

### **Fire fighting equipment and clothing**

Some firefighting equipment is general purpose, and you will already have it at hand.



### Useful items for fire fighting:

- hose - enough to reach all corners of the house. If possible use brass tap fittings.
- pump - petrol or diesel.
- ladder - long enough to allow you to check roof cavity and eaves.
- rake and shovel.
- torch - keep a supply of spare batteries.
- protective woollen blankets - avoid using rubber-backed picnic rugs.
- towels - when wet, they can be placed in vulnerable places to prevent spark and ember attack on doors and window sills.
- buckets and mops for ember attack.
- knapsack spray, or equivalent, to suppress small spot fires.



### Appropriate fire fighting clothing:

- Gloves - sturdy garden variety, not rubber or synthetic.
- Sturdy shoes or boots, with thick leather soles.
- Wide-brimmed hat or hard helmet.
- Long-sleeved overalls or long-sleeved shirt and trousers to prevent skin and body from exposure to radiant heat.
- A moistened mask (large handkerchief) for face protection and to filter smoke.
- Goggles or glasses to protect eyes from smoke and flying embers.
- The heat will be intense. Don't overload yourself with tight-fitting, heavy clothing.
- Protective clothing should be worn by everybody - not just those fighting the fire.
- Organise a fire cupboard or box at the beginning of the fire season. Pack it with fire clothing for all members of the family and ensure all household members know its location.
- Make sure everyone can operate fire fighting equipment.

***Make sure everyone can operate fire fighting equipment.***

***Protective clothing should be worn by everybody - not just those fighting the fire.***

***Organise a fire cupboard or box at the beginning of the fire season. Pack it with fire clothing for all members of the family and ensure all household members know its location.***

## Defending your home on the day

Make a list of the clothing and equipment you need to get together for your 'fire cupboard'.

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

Locate a place to store these items now.

*It is in your interest to make sure that CFA firefighters have room to bring their trucks in safely and have easy access to a water supply.*



### Things to consider:

- A CFA tanker is three metres wide, three metres high and 7.5 metres long - can it get along your driveway?
- Is there room for a tanker to turn around?
- Can a tanker turn easily through the gates?
- Can the bridges and culverts on your land carry a 12-tonne firetruck?
- Firetrucks need to be within six metres of a dam, tank or pool to pick up water.
- Does your below-ground tank have a roof hatch so the fire tanker can draw water?
- For direct connection with the tanker, the outlets on your above-ground water tanks need to be 64 mm diameter and three-threads per 25 mm.

## How can I find out more?

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### **Community Fireguard**

Community Fireguard is a community education program designed to reduce the loss of lives and homes in bushfires. It is a good way of learning more about bushfire. Leading up to summer of 1997 around 200 Community Fireguard groups were active in Victoria.

The basis for the program is that many people have to face a fire without the support of CFA, which cannot provide every person and home with individual protection during a major bushfire.

***Bushfires are survivable as long as communities and individuals take responsibility for their own fire safety.***

Community Fireguard groups may simply be a dozen or so neighbours living in an area where the fire threat is high, or they may be existing groups such as a Landcare or a conservation group which is interested in reducing the fire threat. Either way, with support from CFA and by working together, these people can develop strategies which are simple, inexpensive and effective, and can save lives and homes.

A CFA Community Fireguard facilitator works with the group to help them understand what it is like to experience a major fire.

Learning what to expect from the emergency services and what the fire is going to look, sound and feel like if they are caught in the middle of it is an important first step.

Armed with this understanding, groups can make decisions about protecting themselves in ways that fit their lifestyle, environment, physical capabilities, finances and experience.

In this way, Community Fireguard recognises that people are different and that there are many 'right answers' to fire safety.



## How can I find out more?

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The program is flexible and encourages small groups of people to work together and support each other to develop strategies which ultimately improve their quality of life. The strategies developed may include such things as:

- Making plans to care for the elderly, disabled or the less able bodied people in the street in the event of a fire.
- Identifying the houses in the street which are more likely to survive a fire, for others to shelter in.
- Developing phone trees and other communication systems to improve the chance of receiving adequate warning.
- Organising neighbourhood working bees to reduce the amount of fine fuel.
- Organising street walks so that neighbours become familiar with each other's fire fighting equipment and how to use it.

Contact your nearest CFA regional office for more information about Community Fireguard.

### ***Refer to:***

CSIRO BOOK – *Building in Bushfire prone areas - information and advice*  
Available from Standards Australia (03) 9693 3500 (local sales office)  
ISBN 07262 77010

Joan Webster - *The Complete Australian Bushfire Book*  
Published by Viking O'Neil, Penguin Books Aust Ltd ISBN 0670 90144X

Luke and McArthur - *Bushfires in Australia*  
Published by Australian Government Publishing Services ISBN 0642 023 417

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## ***Contact:***

### **Local CFA Brigade**

#### **CFA Regional Locations**

##### **North Central Area**

45 Chapel Street, Bendigo

Ph: (03) 5443 7444

##### **South West Area**

182 Mt Bainbridge Road, Hamilton

Ph: (03) 5572 3122

##### **Barwon/Corangamite Area**

61 Separation Street, North Geelong

Ph: (03) 5277 1499

##### **Westernport Area**

120-122 Princes Hwy, Dandenong

Ph: (03) 9793 4088

##### **Gippsland Area**

Level 3

Port of Sale Business Centre,

Foster Street, Sale

Ph: (03) 5144 2933

##### **Goulburn-Murray Area**

270 Maude Street, Shepparton

Ph: (03) 5831 4075

##### **Yarra Area**

18-22 Lakeview Drive, Lilydale

Ph: (03) 9735 0511

##### **Outer Metro Norwest Area**

15 Melton Valley Drive, Melton

Ph: (03) 9747 6014

##### **Midlands Area**

1120 Sturt Street, Ballarat

Ph: (03) 5331 7966

##### **Wimmera Area**

19 Mclachlan Street, Horsham

Ph: (03) 5382 6672

##### **North West Area**

120 Curlewis Street, Swan Hill

Ph: (03) 5033 1884

##### **North East Area**

1 Ely Street, Wangaratta

Ph: (03) 5721 4122

#### **Municipal Fire Prevention Officer**

Refer to your local Government listing in your phone book.

## Action Plan

### *Don't get caught out in the heat of the moment.*

**Recognise the risks of living in the bush and be prepared in case of bushfire – have a plan and stick to it.**

What is your plan – will you stay or go on a day of extreme fire danger?

#### **If you plan to go**

When will you go? \_\_\_\_\_

Where will you go? \_\_\_\_\_

What will you take? \_\_\_\_\_

Who will you tell? \_\_\_\_\_

What about your pets? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **If you plan to stay**

	YES	NO
Have you checked fire fighting equipment works?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is your water supply adequate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have flammable materials been removed from around your house – doormat, outdoor furniture, BBQ gas bottle, papers, hanging baskets etc?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do your family and friends know what you plan to do that day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you keeping in touch with what is happening in your area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have adequate clothing and protective equipment ready?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have you looked after your pets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Glossary

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## **Fire fuel**

Fuel means any material that will burn. The most dangerous fuel around a home is dried out branches, sticks, twigs, leaves, bark and grass.

## **Humidity**

Low humidity - dryness of the air - is a bushfire factor.

## **Intensity**

The intensity of a fire is a measure of the heat being generated. The higher the intensity the more damage the fire will cause and the harder it is to control. Intensity builds from weather, the shape of the land and the amount of fine fuel - such as twigs thinner than an adult's finger.

## **Radiant heat**

This is the heat given off ahead of the fire.

## **Refuge**

A designated refuge area may be an open area such as a sports ground or a building in a widely cleared area where people can gather in safety.

## **"Spot" fire**

A small fire started by sparks or embers flying ahead of the main bushfire or which has flared after the fire front has gone past.

## **Total Fire Ban**

Declaration of a 24-hour Total Fire Ban makes it illegal to light a fire in the open. The declaration is made when bushfire danger is extreme because of forecast winds, temperatures, and humidity, the amount of burnable bushland debris and the dryness of the grasslands.

An aerial photograph of a residential area with numerous houses and trees. The houses are scattered throughout the landscape, which is densely populated with trees. The overall tone is somewhat muted, with a mix of greens and browns.

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heat of the moment.***

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in the bush and be prepared  
in case of bushfire  
– have a plan and stick to it.***

Published by:  
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Postal Address –  
PO Box 701, Mt Waverley Victoria 3149 Ph: (03) 9262 8444

ISBN 0-7311-0878-7

*Creating a safer community*