

# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

IT COULD SAVE YOU AND YOUR FAMILY'S LIVES THIS BUSHFIRE SEASON



How can I increase the chance my house will survive a bushfire?

What should I do when a bushfire is coming?

Is it possible to defend my house from a bushfire?

Read this book to find out



# IMPORTANT CONTACTS

📞 EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS	
Police, Fire, Ambulance (for life threatening emergencies):	000
Local GP/Doctors surgery:	
Hospital:	
Out of area family contact:	
Work numbers:	
Local shire / council:	
Neighbour:	
School:	
Insurance company:	
Other:	

## 📍 WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

### Bushfire alerts and warnings from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and Department of Parks and Wildlife

- Website.....[www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)
- Emergency Information Line..... 13 DFES (13 3337)
- Twitter feed .....[www.twitter.com/dfes\\_wa](https://www.twitter.com/dfes_wa)
- Facebook.....[facebook.com/dfeswa](https://facebook.com/dfeswa)
- During major emergencies, tune in to local ABC radio and other media

### Information on prescribed burns

- Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW).....[www.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au)

### Fire Danger Ratings and weather

- Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)..... [www.bom.gov.au/weather/wa](http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/wa)

### Road conditions and closures

- Main Roads.....[www.mainroads.wa.gov.au](http://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au) or 138 138

### Crimestoppers

- If you notice any suspicious activities, call Crimestoppers .....1800 333 000

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# CONTENTS

<b>PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>PREPARE.</b>	<b>4</b>
PREPARE YOUR PLAN	5
HAVE A BACKUP PLAN	6
CATASTROPHIC CONDITIONS	6
PREPARE YOUR HOME AND PROPERTY	7
REDUCING FUEL AROUND YOUR HOME	8
WATER SUPPLY AND PUMPS	9
PREPARE YOUR PETS AND LIVESTOCK	9
PREPARE TO ACTIVELY DEFEND	10
JOIN A BUSHFIRE READY GROUP	11
<b>ACT.</b>	<b>12</b>
KNOW YOUR TRIGGER	12
THE DAY BEFORE	13
KNOW WHAT THE FIRE DANGER RATING MEANS	13
WHAT IS YOUR TRIGGER WHEN PLANNING TO LEAVE?	14
WHAT IS YOUR TRIGGER WHEN PLANNING TO STAY AND ACTIVELY DEFEND?	15
FIRE DANGER RATINGS: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU	16
STAY ALERT WHEN A FIRE STARTS	18
TOTAL FIRE BANS AND FIRE RESTRICTIONS	19
<b>SURVIVE.</b>	<b>20</b>
DURING THE FIRE	20
SHELTERING IN A BUSHFIRE	20
LEAVING FOR A SAFER PLACE	21
WHERE TO GO AS A LAST RESORT	22
ACTIVELY DEFENDING YOUR HOME	23
IF YOUR PLAN FAILS	23
UNDERSTAND BUSHFIRE WARNINGS	24
RELOCATION AND ROAD CLOSURES	24
RELOCATION AND WELFARE CENTRES	25
RETURNING HOME	25
BUSHFIRE WARNINGS: WHAT SHOULD I DO?	26
<b>CHECKLISTS, PLANS AND FACT SHEETS</b>	<b>28</b>
PREPARING YOUR SURVIVAL KIT (CHECKLIST)	29
PREPARING YOUR PROPERTY (CHECKLIST)	30–32
BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN – LEAVING FOR A SAFER PLACE	33–34
LEAVING FOR A SAFER PLACE (CHECKLIST)	35
PREPARE TO ACTIVELY DEFEND (CHECKLIST)	36
BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN – PLANNING TO ACTIVELY DEFEND	37–38
PLANNING TO ACTIVELY DEFEND (CHECKLIST)	39
FIRE BEHAVIOUR (FACT SHEET)	40
TOTAL FIRE BANS (FACT SHEET)	41
BURNS TREATMENT (FACT SHEET)	42
<b>SUMMARY</b>	<b>43</b>





Margaret River Bushfire 2011



Red Hill Station, Shire of Ashburton Bushfire 2012



Forrestdale Bushfire 2007



Perth Hills Bushfire 2011

# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

**Bushfires happen every summer, they can start suddenly and without warning. People have been killed or seriously injured, and homes destroyed during bushfires. If you live in or near bush, fire is a real risk to you and your family.**

Preparing yourself, your family and your home is your responsibility. Serious bushfires can occur in rural and suburban communities. You need to understand the bushfire risk to your family and home so you can make decisions now on what you will do if a bushfire starts.

Firefighters are preparing for the bushfire season and will do everything they can to keep your community safe, however you cannot rely on firefighters to protect you and your property. Many firefighters are volunteers and take time away from their families during bushfires. You need to help them by having a bushfire survival plan and preparing your home to make it as safe as possible.

Whether you choose to leave for a safer place, or to actively defend your home, preparation is the key to your survival.

Information in this guide will help you to prepare and develop a bushfire survival plan. Refer to the Checklists at the back of this guide.

## **REMEMBER:**

Bushland does not just mean trees and forest, it also means areas of scrub and grassland. Bush is found in both suburban and regional areas.

**Before summer starts you need to decide what you will do if a bushfire threatens. If you live or work near bushland you need to:**

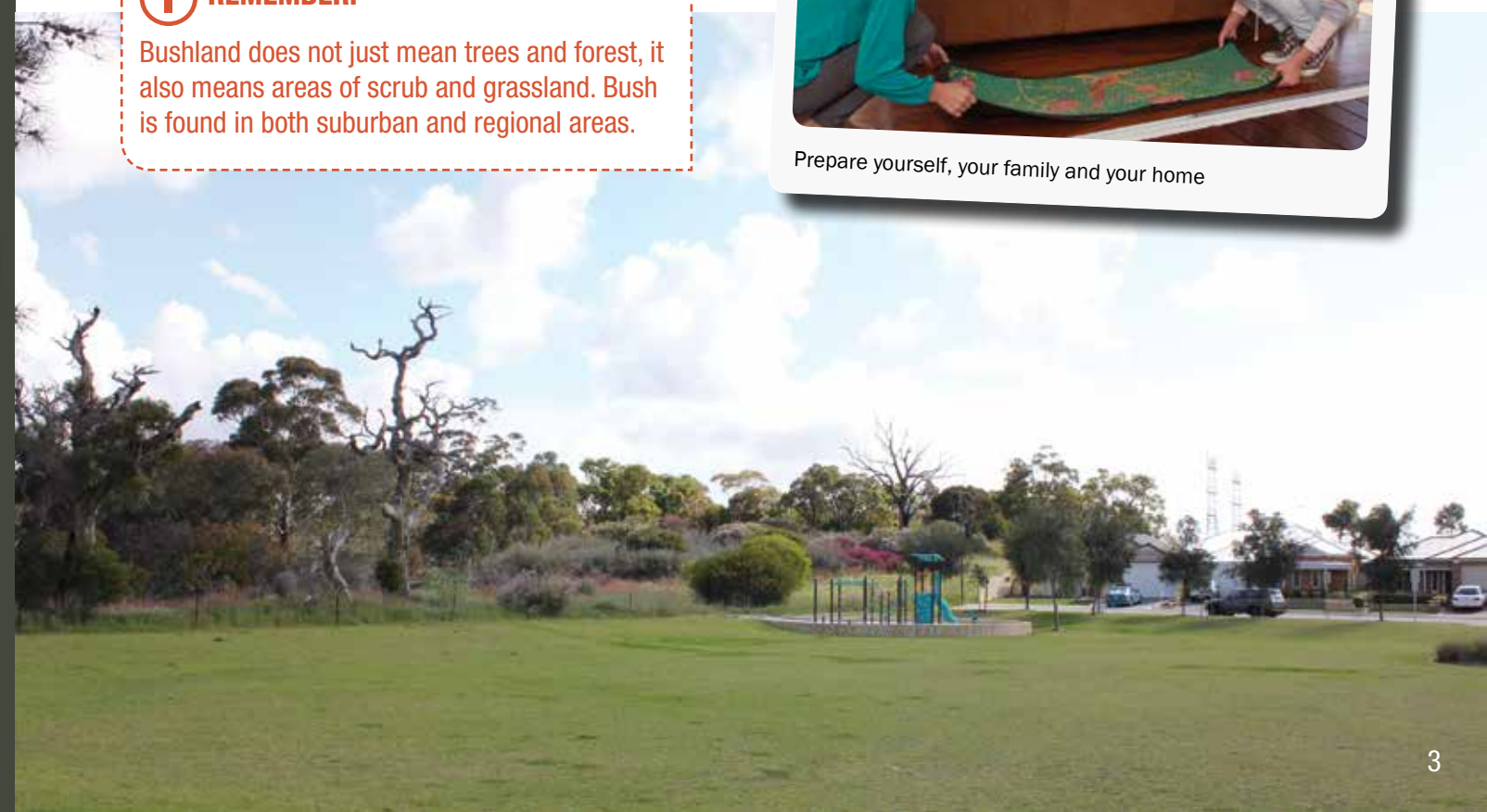
**PREPARE** your family, home or business – know your risk from bushfire and have a bushfire survival plan. Having a plan may be the difference in saving your life.

**ACT** on the Fire Danger Ratings – put your preparations into action, do not wait and see. The Fire Danger Rating is your trigger to ACT.

**SURVIVE** by monitoring conditions if a fire starts – know the bushfire warning alert levels and what you will do if you are caught in a fire.



Prepare yourself, your family and your home





# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

**Preparing yourself, your family and your home is your responsibility. The more you prepare your home the better the chance it will survive a fire, even if you are not there.**

The majority of houses can survive most bushfires with planning and effort. A well prepared home will give you more protection if a fire threatens suddenly and you cannot leave.

During a major bushfire, firefighters will be working to stop the fire. A fire truck and water bombing by aircraft cannot be guaranteed to defend your home during a bushfire.

Bushfires can start suddenly and without time for firefighters to issue a warning.

Make a plan for what you will do if a bushfire occurs and practise it regularly with your family. Having a plan could be the difference in saving you and your loved ones lives.

It is your responsibility to reduce the risks and take actions to protect your home and your family to survive the bushfire.

## What will you and your family do to be safe?

You need to make a commitment to develop a bushfire survival plan that details preparations and actions you will take if a bushfire threatens, and keep it updated.

### Are you and your family at risk?

You need to think about the bushfire risk to your family and home:

- ✓ Do you live in or near bush?
- ✓ Does your local area have a bushfire history?
- ✓ Do you have trees and shrubs within 20 metres of your house?
- ✓ Is your house built on a slope?
- ✓ Is your bushfire survival plan more than one year old?

**If you answered yes to one or more of these questions then bushfire is a real risk to you and your family.**



Aerial view of Perth suburban bushland

## PREPARE YOUR PLAN IT COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE

If you live in or near bush, developing and using a bushfire survival plan is critical. This plan will help you take action and avoid making last minute decisions that could prove deadly during a bushfire. When developing your plan decide if you will leave for a safer place, which may be to relocate to family or friends, or stay to actively defend your home.

Your plan must be prepared and practiced with all members of your family or household before the start of the bushfire season. If you live alone you may like to form a plan with a neighbour. Make sure you write it down, give everybody their own tasks and have a list of actions to take if there is a bushfire.

When the Fire Danger Rating is catastrophic, extreme or severe it may not be possible to actively defend your home. Fires can be so bad on these days that even homes constructed to bushfire protection levels and prepared to the highest level will not survive if actively defended.

On days of catastrophic or extreme fire weather it is safest to leave early, preferably the night before or early in the day.

When the Fire Danger Rating is severe or less you must decide in what conditions, if any, you will stay and when it would be best for you to leave.

Practice your plan regularly and review it every year, keep it in an easy to find place and make sure everyone knows where it is. Everyone's bushfire survival plan will be different depending on individual situations and circumstances.

**CHECKLISTS ARE AT THE BACK OF THIS GUIDE TO HELP YOU DEVELOP YOUR OWN BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**

## When developing your bushfire survival plan, you and your family need to think about:

- ② What are your triggers to leave?
- ② If you plan to leave for a safer place where will you go and how will you get there? Your safer place could be with friends or family, and may not be far away. Know where you will go and never 'wait and see'. Relocating at the last minute can be deadly.
- ② Does your household include elderly relatives, young children, people with disabilities or illness? When, where and how will they be relocated? Who will care for them?
- ② Do you need to consider anyone else in your plan? Think about house mates, neighbours or friends that you will need to help or that you may need to help you.
- ② What will you do with your pets and livestock?
- ② Can your home be defended? Is it in a location that makes it difficult or dangerous to actively defend?
- ② Will your home provide shelter if you have to or decide to stay?
- ② Are you capable of defending your home without the support of firefighters?
- ② Do you have the skills, knowledge, resources and capacity to check for and put out spot fires for up to 10 hours after the fire front has passed?
- ② Do you have the right equipment and resources to actively defend? (eg. sufficient independent water supply of at least 20,000 litres and a petrol, diesel or a generator powered pump capable of pumping 400 litres per minute)
- ② Will you cope with the noise and stress of a bushfire if you decide to actively defend? Being in a bushfire may be the most traumatic experience of your life.





# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

## HAVE A BACKUP PLAN

Conditions can change very quickly in a bushfire, often without warning. Make sure your plan is flexible and covers a range of situations you may face before, during or after the fire. Bushfires can be very unpredictable. You must take into account what you will do if things go wrong. Ask yourself ‘What if?’, ‘What if?’, ‘What if?’.

## CATASTROPHIC CONDITIONS

Homes are not designed or constructed to survive fires when the Fire Danger Rating is catastrophic. If this weather is expected in your area you should leave the night before or early in the day, regardless of your plan as staying could be deadly.

SEE THE FIRE DANGER RATINGS: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU ON PAGE 16

### Think about what could go wrong:

- ❑ If you have no time to leave and a fire threatens you – where will you shelter and how will you survive?
- ❑ What will you do if the building you are sheltering in catches on fire?
- ❑ What will you do if you lose electricity and water supply?
- ❑ If you are going to leave – where will you go, how will you get there, what will you take and when will you go?
- ❑ What if your escape route is blocked or your ability to leave your home safely is reduced?
- ❑ What if you or your family are at work or school?
- ❑ What if the weather changes suddenly and the fire reaches you much sooner than you thought?
- ❑ What if you are having a party or friends are staying? Their survival may depend on you.
- ❑ What if your children or elderly parents are home alone?
- ❑ What if you have let your holiday house to friends or visitors? Have you prepared the property? Will they know what to do? What is your plan for them?

**It is important that you and your family know what to do if things do not go to plan.**

## PREPARE YOUR HOME AND PROPERTY

You should prepare your home to survive a fire, even if your plan is to leave. A well prepared and constructed house is more likely to survive a bushfire than an unprepared one. Firefighters cannot defend every property and are unlikely to defend a poorly prepared property, remember their lives are at risk too.

### WHAT IS EMBER ATTACK?

- ❑ Embers are burning twigs, leaves and pieces of bark and debris that are carried by the wind.
- ❑ Ember attack is the most common way houses catch fire during a bushfire.
- ❑ Ember attack occurs when embers are carried by the wind and land on or around a house, sparking spot fires.
- ❑ Ember attack can spark fires up to 20 kilometres from the fire front.

Walk around your property and imagine a bushfire is coming. Look for items likely to burn or where embers could start a fire. (eg. embers can enter through gaps in roofs, walls, evaporative air conditioners and gutters.) Remember to install a stainless steel open weave mesh cover over your evaporative air conditioner and metal fly screens on your windows and vents to keep sparks and embers out.

Many homes destroyed during bushfires are lost due to ember attack. These burning embers get into gaps within the building, such as into the roof cavity, and ignite the material within the cavity. It can take a number of hours before the burning can be seen and by that time the building may not be able to be saved.

It is recommended that all homes that may be affected by embers be made ember proof. If a bushfire occurs in the general area then the roof cavity and other crevices should be inspected to ensure that no embers have caused a fire. Be aware that there are electricity cables in the roof area and the use of water will be a safety issue.



Develop a bushfire survival plan



Practice your bushfire survival plan



This home caught fire from an ember attack – Perth Hills Bushfire 2011



# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

## REDUCING FUEL AROUND YOUR HOME

Reducing vegetation, rubbish and anything that can burn from around your home will increase its chances of surviving a bushfire.

A building protection zone (BPZ) is an area extending for at least 20 metres around a building on all sides where there is little or nothing to burn.

In suburban areas this may mean that your whole block will be part of your BPZ.

Embers may still enter the home from the air, but taking steps to reduce fuel from around your home will increase its chances of survival.

For at least 20 metres around your home and other buildings:

- Cut long grass and dense scrub. Remove dead material.
- Remove all rubbish and rake up leaf litter, twigs, bark and material that may catch fire.
- Maintain a minimum two metre gap between your house and tree branches. Make sure that no trees overhang the house.
- Prune lower branches (up to two metres off the ground) to stop a fire on the ground spreading to the canopy of the trees.
- Do not clump shrubs, ensure that there is a gap. Shrubs should be planted at a distance of at least three times their height at maturity from buildings.

Other actions you will need to take to reduce fuel loads are:

- Keep your gutters free of leaves and other combustible material.
- Create a mineral earth firebreak, with no vegetation along your boundary.
- Build your paths adjacent to the building and have your driveway placed so that it maximises the protection to the house.
- If possible, plan your garden so that your vegetable garden, lawn, pool or patio is on the side of the house likely to face a fire (where the bush is).
- Store firewood away from the building.
- Ensure that your gas bottles are secured and positioned so that it will vent away from the building if it is subject to flame contact or radiant heat.
- Ensure fences are non-combustible so they can help to shield your home from a bushfire and radiant heat.

✂️ **USE THE PREPARING YOUR PROPERTY CHECKLIST ON PAGES 30 – 32 TO HELP YOU GET READY FOR A BUSHFIRE.**



Correctly secured gas bottles

## DID YOU KNOW

During the February 2011 bushfires in the Perth Hills, 81 homes that were damaged did not have a properly prepared building protection zone<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Final Report on the Investigation of House Losses in the Roleystone Kelmscott Bushfire 6 February 2011, Ralph Smith.

## WATER SUPPLY AND PUMPS

During a bushfire, it is likely you will lose power and water. Mains water pressure may drop or fail and as a result, if you are planning to actively defend, you will need to have an independent water supply. This should be a concrete or steel tank with a 20,000 litre capacity to ensure adequate defence of your home.

Exposed PVC pipes and fittings will melt in the heat of a fire so metal pipe fittings should be used for above ground applications. PVC and polyethylene pipes can be used for below ground applications and should be buried at least 30 centimetres.

If you lose power you will need a generator to pump your water supply for actively defending your home. Your generator will need to have more than 1.5 kVA capacity to drive a home pressure pump, or a petrol or diesel firefighting pump. Pumps and generators should be able to pump 400 litres per minute (lpm) and must be shielded from high temperatures caused by a bushfire.

It is important that everyone likely to stay and defend your property knows how to start and operate the pump and generator, and have practised it.

Hoses from the pump should be long enough to reach all corners of the home and should be fitted with a nozzle able to deliver 30 to 100 lpm. Fire hoses should be durable, flexible, able to withstand high temperatures and have UV protection. Hoses should be kept on a reel for ease of use and storage.



## PREPARE YOUR PETS AND LIVESTOCK

Make sure you plan for all your family this summer, including your pets to keep them safe. During a bushfire your pets will need water, shade and a safe place to stay. If you have livestock that can be moved out of the area, allow yourself plenty of time to relocate them.


If possible, move larger animals to paddocks with little vegetation. At the start of the bushfire season consider slashing a paddock to create a safer area.

Never turn animals out on to the road to run free. This is dangerous for fire trucks and vehicles, and you may be legally responsible if they cause a crash. Animals will panic during a bushfire which may result in injuries if they are not secured.

Pets and livestock are not allowed at public relocation centres, so you need to consider what you will do with them in your bushfire survival plan.

Once you have left your property it is likely to be several days before emergency services give the all clear and you will be allowed to return home. This can be very upsetting, however it is vitally important that you obey road closures and wait for the all clear. Ignoring these instructions could put your life and the lives of emergency services personnel at risk as there may be hazards in the area such as falling trees and branches, downed power lines and damaged or blocked roads.

During a major bushfire, emergency services will establish communication and recovery processes to help community members. This includes access to properties, if it is safe, to attend to livestock and other important matters.

 **FOR TIPS ON DEVELOPING A BUSHFIRE PLAN FOR YOUR HORSE REFER TO HORSES AND BUSHFIRES FACT SHEET AT [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)**

This home survived a bushfire because it had a properly prepared building protection zone.

Lake Clifton Bushfire 2011



# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

## PREPARE TO ACTIVELY DEFEND – PHYSICALLY, MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY

If you choose to stay and defend your house, be prepared for a frightening experience. You must have a plan for how you will actively defend your house and where you will shelter when the fire front passes. Make sure you have all the equipment you need.

If you live through a bushfire you may have physical, mental and emotional pain from the experience. You need to think about how you and the rest of your family or household will cope.

“The fire was roaring like a jet engine. There was so much smoke, it was getting thicker, and there was so much noise from people yelling and screaming. There were explosions all around me.”

“I started fighting the fire on Saturday lunchtime ... I was still putting out fires on the Monday morning with only a few hours sleep, with little contact or support from anyone.”

“So, I tried for a total of about nine hours and I was exhausted after about four hours. I just couldn’t do any more. I was ready to drop on my feet, but to their credit my family stayed on and they carried on hosing out both major and minor fires that were occurring.”

*Stephen Noblett, Kelmscott*



## Picture yourself in the middle of a bushfire:

Fires happen in the hottest weather. Think about how hard it is to be outside doing physical activity in summer, now think about the additional heat of a bushfire.

Imagine if the weather has been hot for days leading up to the fire. You may be exhausted before the fire even starts.

Before the main fire reaches you, your home may be surrounded by showers of sparks and embers. This can happen for several hours. Embers will collect in corners of your house or enter your home through gaps and you will need to put them out.

It is likely there will be strong winds and as the fire gets closer, burning leaves and bark will begin to land around your home.

Thick, heavy smoke will make it dark and you may not be able to see. Breathing may become difficult. Your eyes will water, and may become red and sore.

It will be extremely hot and you will need to wear protective clothing, such as long pants and a long sleeved shirt, and strong leather boots. Clothes should be loose fitting and made from natural fibres. Do not wear synthetics.

You must have supplies of necessary items such as food, drinking water and petrol. If you leave your property during a fire to restock it is likely that you will not be allowed to return home.

The fire will make a very loud roaring noise that you may find scary. The burning, crackling and roaring of the fire will be in addition to howling strong winds and sirens from fire trucks.

It is likely you will lose power, telephone and water services. Do you have the right equipment and resources to actively defend? (eg. sufficient independent water supply of at least 20,000 litres and a petrol, diesel or a generator powered pump capable of pumping 400 litres per minute). Remember, if you lose power during a bushfire, you will not be able to use cordless phones or remote controlled garage doors to access vehicles.

The fire front will normally take five to fifteen minutes to pass your house. This is when radiant heat given off by the fire will be at its highest. At this time you will need to shelter while checking inside your house for spot fires.

## Now, ask yourself:

- ❓ Will I be able to cope during a bushfire?
- ❓ Will my family or household cope during a bushfire?
- ❓ What if family or friends are visiting, how will they cope?

Defending your home during a bushfire will take several hours. This includes the time needed to do all the hard preparation tasks before the fire front reaches your home and continually watching for spot fires.

You will need to be in good physical health, with the ability to maintain a constant watch on your home and surrounding area before, during and after the fire.

Think about any medical conditions that may be an issue because of stress and smoke (eg. heart conditions, asthma and other respiratory conditions). These may affect your ability to defend your home.

If you are planning to actively defend your property you need to make sure you are self sufficient. If you are unprepared, not able to or not sure you can defend your home without the assistance of firefighters, you need to leave early well before the fire reaches you. Firefighting resources, including water bombing aircraft, will be busy trying to put the fire out and will not be there to help you defend your home.

Fires can be very frightening, and may make it hard to think clearly or make good decisions. It is important everyone agrees to your plan to actively defend. This will stop people making different decisions in the heat of the moment.

Make sure you prepare and practice your plan to actively defend before the bushfire season starts. This will give you a clear set of actions to follow before, during and after a bushfire.

 **USE THE PREPARE TO ACTIVELY DEFEND CHECKLIST ON PAGE 36 TO HELP YOU GET READY FOR A BUSHFIRE.**

## JOIN A BUSHFIRE READY GROUP

Bushfire Ready is a community action program that encourages local residents to work together to prepare and protect their families and properties against bushfires.

You and your neighbours can learn how to prepare your family and home so you can act if a bushfire threatens. Contact your local brigade for a Bushfire Ready group near you.



## Radiant heat – the killer in a bushfire

Bushfires produce enormous amounts of radiant heat. Radiant heat is the same warmth you feel from a campfire or the flame from a stovetop gas cooker, but could be up to 50,000 times more intense in a major bushfire.

Without protection, intense radiant heat can kill you very quickly – the human body cannot absorb large amounts of radiant heat.

The best protection from radiant heat is distance.

Radiant heat can be blocked by a solid object, such as a concrete wall or building, which creates a barrier between you and the bushfire.

Wearing protective clothing to cover exposed skin will only protect you from very low levels of radiant heat.

Protective clothing includes a long sleeved shirt and pants made from cotton or other natural fibre, sturdy boots, wide brimmed hat, leather gloves and face mask.



# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

**Bushfires can start suddenly so you need to be prepared to act even if you do not get a warning. Most people wait to be told what to do and expect a firefighter to knock on their door to tell them to leave, this is highly unlikely to happen. Do not wait for a warning before acting. The decision to wait and see can be deadly.**

Not hearing a warning does not mean there is no threat. You should watch for signs of a bushfire, especially smoke and flames. Bushfires can move very quickly and there may not be time for a warning to be issued, you need to put your preparations into action immediately, do not wait and see.

During hot weather you should know the fire danger for your area so you can act to make sure you survive.

The Fire Danger Rating tells you what type of fire weather is forecast and the risk from a fire if one starts. It tells you what the fire conditions will be like and what you should do.

SEE THE **FIRE DANGER RATINGS: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU** ON PAGE 16

“We had a bushfire survival plan prepared before the summer, once the smoke became thicker we knew it was time to put our plan into action.”

## KNOW YOUR TRIGGER

It is important that you use triggers that cause you to act before a fire even starts.

Finding out tomorrow's Fire Danger Rating is the best trigger and should be the first step in activating your bushfire survival plan.

You will also need to consider other triggers to put your bushfire survival plan into action, such as:

- ✓ If you can see or smell smoke
- ✓ If you can see a fire
- ✓ If you can hear sirens or water bombers
- ✓ If you are told by a neighbour or friend there might be a fire near you
- ✓ If you hear or receive a warning.

**Do not wait and see, leaving at the last minute is deadly.**

- Know the Fire Danger Rating at your location
- The Fire Danger Rating is your 'trigger' to act
- The higher the rating, the more dangerous the situation if a fire starts

## THE DAY BEFORE

Act decisively once bad fire weather is forecast. You should put your preparations into action the night before or early on the day when the rating is very high or above.

Your plan should consider if your actions will change at different Fire Danger Rating categories and be based on a series of triggers. Your trigger may be different to your neighbour as it needs to work for you and your family's situation.

If you are planning to stay and actively defend it is a good idea to check water pumps and generators to make sure they work when bad fire weather is forecast, and prepare your protective clothing in case you need it quickly.

You need to be ready to act once a fire starts, and should have your bushfire survival plan and kit ready. Keep up to date with information via radio, television, the internet, information lines, by staying alert to your surroundings and by speaking to your neighbours so you can take action immediately if a fire starts.

## KNOW WHAT THE FIRE DANGER RATING MEANS

Only a house prepared to the highest level and actively defended may offer any safety up to the Fire Danger Rating category of extreme.

This means your home needs to have been constructed to bushfire protection levels, for a start it must have enclosed eaves, an independent water supply, covers over external air conditioners and metal flyscreens.

The higher the rating the less chance your home can protect you. If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving bushfire risk areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option.

If a Fire Danger Rating of catastrophic has been forecast your home is not designed or constructed to survive fires in these conditions. This is why your best chance for survival is to leave.

THE FIRE DANGER RATING IS PUBLICISED BY THE BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY AT [www.bom.gov.au/wa/forecasts](http://www.bom.gov.au/wa/forecasts), ON THE EMERGENCY WA WEBSITE AT [www.emergency.wa.gov.au/firedangerratings](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/firedangerratings) AND THROUGH THE MEDIA.



## Brian's story

Carabooda resident, Brian Bailly has had firsthand experience of how quickly fires can spread and the importance of having a detailed bushfire survival plan.



Brian experienced a bushfire that came within metres of his property. He said the experience had given him a taste of just how important it is to act quickly in a fire and know what you would do.

“The fire was a really difficult experience for me,” Brian said. “I received a call at work from a neighbour telling me there was a bushfire near my home. We hadn't really thought about what we would do if a bushfire threatened and I went into complete panic because my daughter was home. Thankfully, my daughter got out just in time but the experience made me realise my family was at risk and we needed a plan.”

Brian said he wanted others to learn from his experience and develop a detailed plan well before a fire starts.

“That way your judgement won't be clouded and you will be able to think clearly and make better decisions. There's a lot to consider when making a plan, but taking the time to do it, could save your life.”

Brian said it was important to have a trigger so you know what you will do, and when.

On days when catastrophic fire weather is forecast, Brian and his daughter Leah plan to leave their home and stay with relatives.

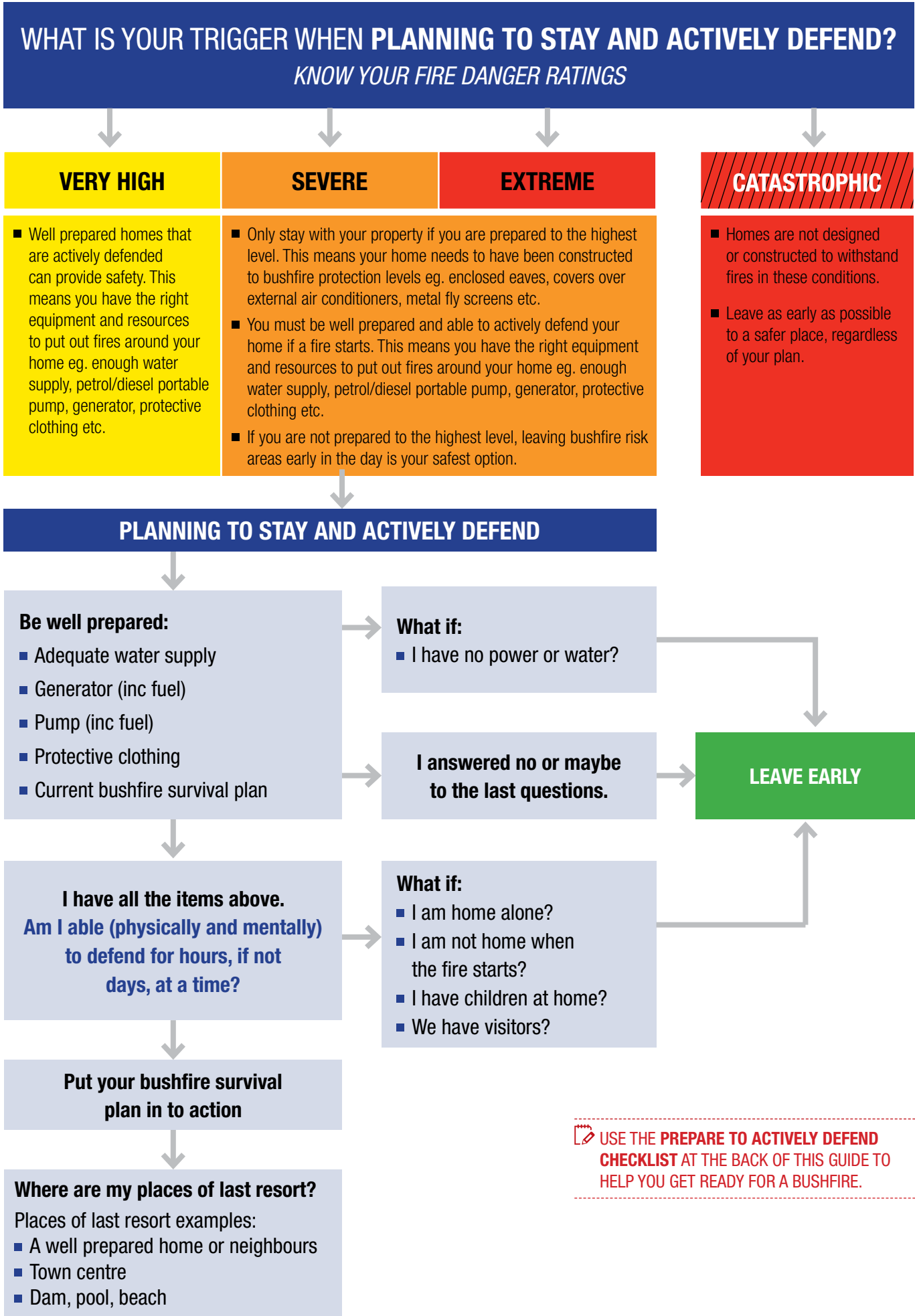
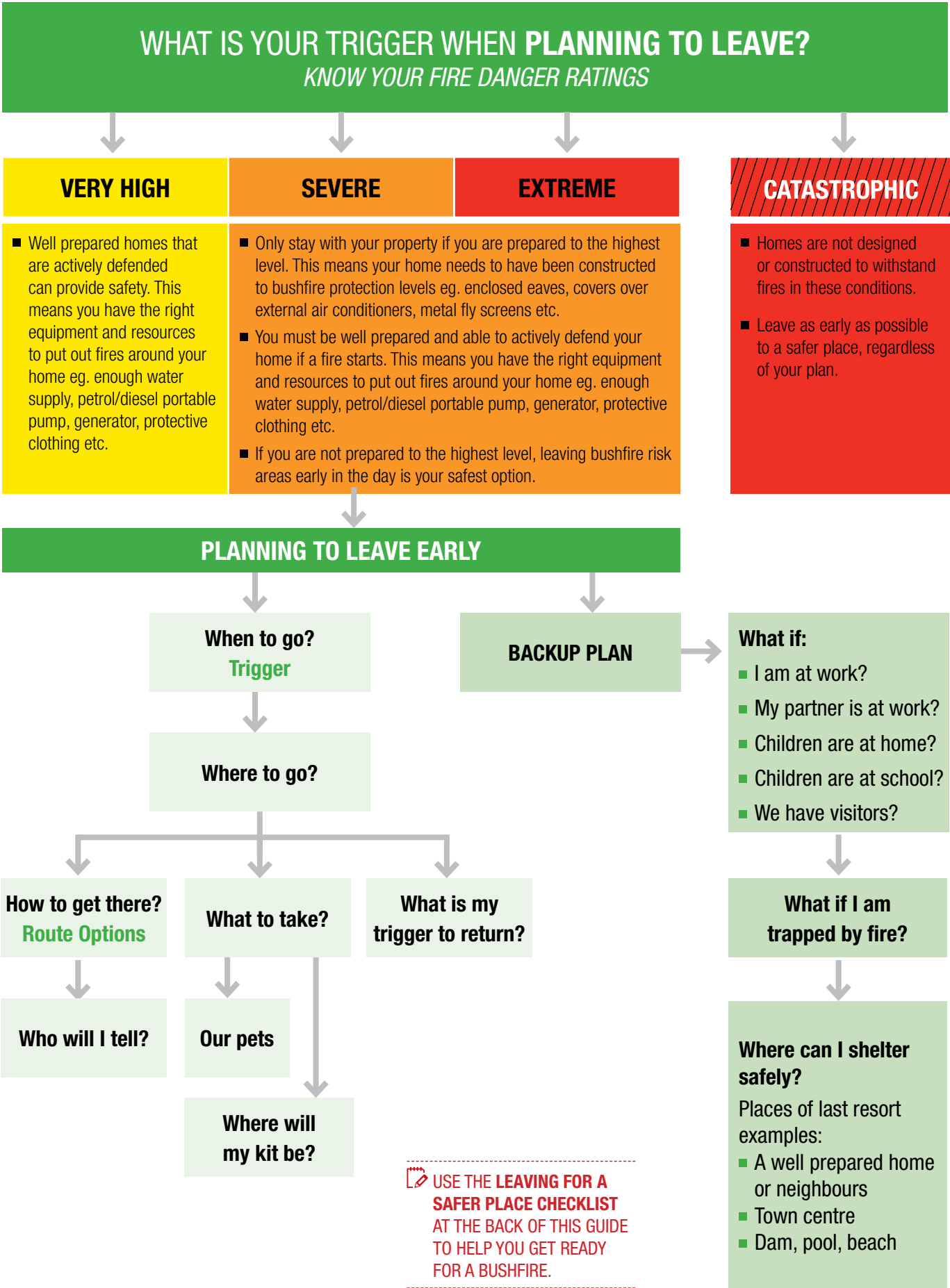
“To us, it isn't worth the risk of staying at home in these sorts of conditions because if a fire starts, we will be putting ourselves in great danger. Homes can always be rebuilt but life is a lot more precious.”

Brian's list of things to do on a catastrophic fire day includes taking the family dog and cat, photos, items of value and clothing with him to a relative's house.

“Even though we live in a beautiful area, it only takes one spark to turn it into a frightening unstoppable inferno that can threaten your property, your family and your life. I have learnt my lesson from the Carramar fire and I now tell people how critical it is to be prepared for what might happen if they are threatened by a bushfire.”

Margaret River Bushfire 2011







**FIRE DANGER RATINGS: WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU.**

FIRE DANGER RATING	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	WHAT SHOULD I DO?
CATASTROPHIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire</li><li>If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be extremely difficult to control and will take significant firefighting resources and cooler conditions to bring it under control</li><li>Spot fires will start well ahead of the main fire and cause rapid spread of the fire</li><li>Embers will come from many directions</li><li>Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions</li><li>The only safe place to be is away from bushfire risk areas</li></ul>	<p><b>YOU NEED TO ACT NOW</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Put your survival first and leave bushfire risk areas the night before or early in the day – this is your best option</li><li>Act immediately – do not wait and see:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>leave now</li><li>avoid forested areas, thick bush or long, dry grass</li><li>take shelter if you cannot leave</li></ul></li></ul>
EXTREME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These are very hot, dry and windy conditions for a bush or grass fire</li><li>If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be unpredictable, move very fast and difficult for firefighters to bring under control</li><li>Spot fires will start and move quickly</li><li>Embers may come from many directions</li></ul>	<p><b>YOU NEED TO GET READY TO ACT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only stay with your property if you are prepared to the highest level. This means your home needs to have been constructed to bushfire protection levels eg. enclosed eaves, covers over external air conditioners, metal flyscreens etc</li><li>You must be well prepared and able to actively defend your home if a fire starts. This means you have the right equipment and resources to put out fires around your home eg. enough water supply, petrol/diesel portable pump, generator, protective clothing etc</li><li>If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving bushfire risk areas early in the day is your safest option</li></ul>
SEVERE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Homes that are prepared to the highest level, have been constructed to bushfire protection levels and are actively defended may provide safety</li><li>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions</li><li>The only safe place to be is away from bushfire risk areas</li></ul>	
VERY HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>These are hot, dry and possibly windy conditions for a bush or grass fire</li><li>If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be hard for firefighters to control</li><li>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety</li><li>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions</li></ul>	<p><b>YOU NEED TO BE AWARE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety. This means you have the right equipment and resources to put out fires around your home eg. enough water supply, petrol/diesel portable pump, generator, protective clothing etc</li></ul>
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>If a fire starts, it is likely to be controlled in these conditions and homes can provide safety</li><li>Be aware of how fires can start and reduce the risk</li><li>Controlled burning may occur in these conditions if it is safe – check to see if permits apply</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Check your bushfire survival plan</li><li>Monitor conditions</li><li>Action may be needed</li><li>Leave if necessary</li></ul>
LOW-MODERATE		



 Fires can threaten suddenly and without warning.

Watch for signs of fire, especially smoke and flames.

Know your Fire Danger Rating and be aware of local conditions.

Have your bushfire survival plan and kit ready.

-  To seek information in the event of a major bushfire:
- Listen to local radio
  - Visit [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)
  - Call the Department of Fire and Emergency Services information line on **13 DFES (13 3337)**
  - Twitter feed [www.twitter.com/dfes\\_wa](https://www.twitter.com/dfes_wa)
  - Facebook [facebook.com/dfeswa](https://facebook.com/dfeswa)

 Call **000** to report a fire



# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

## STAY ALERT WHEN A FIRE STARTS

On hot dry days when bushfires are possible it is likely you will be inside with the curtains and blinds closed, and the air conditioner on.

A fire could be coming towards your home very quickly and you will not even know.

You need to stay alert on these days and look for information, regularly going outside to check for signs of bushfire.

If you see a bushfire, act immediately. Be ready to act without an official warning.

**Do not wait and see – this can be deadly.**

## EVACUATION

When bushfire is an imminent threat to life and property you can be directed to evacuate under section 14B(2)(b) of the *Bushfires Act 1954* or section 67(b) of the *Emergency Management Act 2005*. This is for your own safety and failure to comply with the direction is a criminal offence.



Red Hill Bushfire 2011



Coconut Wells, Broome Bushfire 2011

“As soon as I see smoke or fire on the ridge through our window, we’re loading up the car and taking the kids elsewhere.”

### Hesitation can be deadly

If you wait and see ‘what happens’ you could be putting your life at risk.

On Black Saturday in 2009, at least 26% of the people that died were going to ‘wait and see’ before deciding what to do.

### During hot weather

- ✓ Know the Fire Danger Rating for your area.
- ✓ Put your preparations into action the night before or early in the day if bad fire weather is forecast, do not wait and see.
- ✓ Have your bushfire survival plan and kit ready.
- ✓ Stay alert and monitor your surroundings by watching for signs of a bushfire, especially smoke and flames.
- ✓ Look and listen for information on television, radio, the internet, information lines and speak with your neighbours.
- ✓ Know what the levels of alert in the bushfire warning system mean.
- ✓ If you see signs of a bushfire, act immediately for your own safety.

Margaret River Bushfire 2011



## Stephen’s story

Kelmscott resident, Stephen Noblett said he had experienced bushfires before and thought he was prepared to fight a fire, but when a fire started near him unexpectedly it took him by surprise.



“Well the event for us started at around quarter to twelve and I was in the shower. Gail shouted from the bedroom there was a lot of smoke outside and even before I’d finished in the shower she said there is just so much smoke and she looked around the house,” Stephen said.

“I hear this almighty scream that there’s fire ... and she said get out, get out, you know and ... the fire was here, right on our doorstep.”

Stephen said the reality of dealing with the fire was beyond his wildest imagination and has made him rethink his plan.

“The events were beyond anything I could ever possibly imagine,” Stephen said.

“The scenes of white and yellow heat burning intensely and ... grass trees flaring and you ... put them out and they’d flare again and walls of flames rushing up slopes to the sound of ... what sounded like a jet engine to me and you know I’m only human and I have my fears and the fear is that I don’t want to die.”

“I had great intentions of defending our home but to say that I would die in such a situation ... in reflection might sway me if it ever happened again.”

“To see a huge gum tree disappear in three seconds ... I’ve never seen anything like that before. The wall of flames. Your humanity takes over and fear clicks in, and yeah my knees were shaking. I felt fear alright.”

## TOTAL FIRE BANS AND FIRE RESTRICTIONS

A Total Fire Ban (TFB) is declared because of extreme weather conditions or when widespread fires are seriously stretching firefighting resources.



They are declared on days where fires are most likely to threaten lives and property, and take into consideration local conditions, such as how moist the soil is and the amount of vegetation in the area that could burn during a fire.

When a TFB is declared, it is illegal to do anything that could or is likely to start a fire. The ban includes all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping.

It also includes incinerators, welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting.

### WHAT OTHER FIRE RESTRICTIONS ARE THERE?

Depending on the time of the year, there may be restrictions on lighting fires or other fire risk activities in your area.

Check with your local government for details on current restrictions in your area.

✂ FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON TOTAL FIRE BANS, REFER TO THE **TFB FACT SHEET** ON PAGE 41

### How will I know if a Total Fire Ban has been declared?

When a TFB has been declared it will be:

- Published on [www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans)
- On the DFES information line on **13 DFES (13 3337)**
- Broadcast on ABC local radio and other media outlets
- Displayed on local government roadside Fire Danger Rating (FDR) signs and variable message signs on major highways
- For more information visit [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au) or call the Total Fire Ban information line on **1800 709 355**



# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

## DURING THE FIRE

**Most people living in areas where bushfires happen know they are at risk but think it will happen to someone else. Many think about preparing but never get around to it. Bushfires impact people every year and there is a good chance it could be you. Be prepared and have a plan, your survival depends on it.**

During a bushfire the safest place to be is away from the fire. Being involved in a fire may be one of the most traumatic experiences of your life. You and your family's survival and safety depend on the decisions you make now and how you act. Put your safety first – do not wait and see.

Any decision you make should be based on survival, homes can be rebuilt.

If a fire starts, leaving hours before a fire can reach you will always be the safest option for you, your family or household.

Only stay and defend your home if it is well prepared and constructed, and you are capable of actively defending it. Prepare for the emotional, mental and physical impact of defending your property. If you have any doubts about defending your home, you should leave.

Act decisively the moment you know there is danger. Whether you choose to leave for a safer place or shelter in a well prepared and defensible home, preparation is the key for survival.

 CHECKLISTS TO HELP YOU PREPARE YOUR BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN ARE AT THE BACK OF THIS GUIDE.

### STILL WITHOUT A PLAN?

Don't have a plan? Think it won't happen to you? You are not alone. Advice and support are available.

You can:

- ✔ Join a Bushfire Ready Group
- ✔ Talk to your local brigade about how to plan for bushfire
- ✔ Contact your local government for bushfire information
- ✔ Visit [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)

## SHELTERING IN A BUSHFIRE

When the fire front passes the heat will be extreme and you must shelter at this time whether you planned to or not.

**This information will increase your chances of survival:**

- Stay in the house when the fire front is passing, this usually takes five to fifteen minutes. You need to actively defend (put out spot fires near you) while sheltering.
- Take shelter inside furthest from the fire front. Make sure you can easily escape from the building. It is best to shelter in a room with two exits and a water supply (eg. a laundry with a door that goes outside or a kitchen with two exits). People have died sheltering in bathrooms and other rooms without a door going outside.
- If your house catches on fire and the conditions inside become unbearable, you need to get out and go to an area that has already been burnt. Close all internal doors and leave through the door as far from the approaching fire as possible. Many people have died from toxic smoke and fumes when their house has caught fire.
- You should protect yourself from radiant heat with long sleeves, long trousers and strong leather boots. The majority of people die in a bushfire from radiant heat.

 USE THE **PREPARE TO ACTIVELY DEFEND CHECKLIST** ON PAGE 36

After the fire front has passed:

- Go outside once it is safe.
- Check for, and put out small spot fires and burning embers:
  - inside the roof space
  - under floor boards
  - under the house
  - on verandas and decks
  - on window ledges and door sills
  - in roof gutters and valleys
  - in garden beds and mulch
  - in wood heaps
  - in outdoor furniture
  - in sheds and carports
- Keep drinking lots of water.
- Stay at your property until the surrounding area is clear of fire.
- Look and listen for information on radio, television, the internet and information lines.

“Everyone was driving erratically and one young guy was coming up the hill as I was going down. You could just see blind panic on his face as he was hurtling along on the wrong side of the road. I thought my God, you know, please see me.”

Stephen Noblett, Kelmscott

## LEAVING FOR A SAFER PLACE

Many people plan to leave for a safer place but leave it too late. You and your family need to identify and agree to a trigger that will prompt you to leave early, and have a backup plan in case you cannot leave in time. It is too late and extremely dangerous to leave when roads are closed and full of smoke. Bushfires move quickly, make sure you and your family know where your safer place is, how you will get there and when you will go. Families who have children, members who are sick, elderly or with a disability, need to leave especially early. You need to act the moment you know there is danger, do not wait and see.

Driving is very dangerous and stressful during a bushfire with smoke making it hard to see, fallen trees over the road and power lines down. The speed of the fire could also trap you and burn your vehicle, cars do not protect you from radiant heat. You should know the travel time and distance to your safer place, and include this information in your bushfire survival plan.

If you are not able to leave early, staying and actively sheltering may be your safest option. You will need to actively defend your property regardless of what you planned to do. Preparing your property will give you and your home more chance of survival.

 USE THE **YOU AND YOUR FAMILY PLANNED TO LEAVE BUT IT IS TOO LATE CHECKLIST** ON PAGE 35 TO SEE THE ACTIONS YOU NEED TO TAKE TO PREPARE YOUR HOME.



Perth Hills Bushfire 2011



# PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

## WHERE TO GO AS A LAST RESORT

As a last resort, a safer place is a local open space or building where people may go to seek shelter from a bushfire.

Use of a safer place may be your backup plan when:

- Your bushfire survival plan has failed.
- Your plan was to stay and actively defend but the scale of the fire means your home cannot withstand the impact of the fire and your home is no longer a safe place to shelter.
- The fire threat has got worse and is now catastrophic or extreme, and leaving is your safest option.
- A safer place of last resort provides you and your family some level of protection from the effects of a bushfire.

If you plan to use a safer place as a last resort you need to think about their limits:

- They do not guarantee safety in all circumstances.
- Firefighters may not be there, they may be fighting the main fire front elsewhere.
- They do not cater for animals or pets.
- They do not provide meals or amenities.

- They may not provide shelter from the elements, particularly flying embers and hot weather.
- If you or a family member have special needs you should think about what assistance may be needed at a safer place.

### Once you have arrived at your safer place, you need to:

- Look and listen for fire information by whatever means of communication you have – on radio, your mobile phone, internet etc.
- If you are sheltering in a building as the fire approaches, make sure all doors and windows are sealed as best as possible. When the fire has passed and if safe, check for spot fires and embers outside, and put them out if possible.
- If you are sheltering in an open space, as the fire approaches seek protection from radiant heat and embers as best you can. Attempt to cover any exposed skin with blankets or clothing. You should lie flat on the ground during the passage of the fire front.
- Remain vigilant for possible new fire fronts from other directions.



A local dam or beach could be your safer place of last resort



© WA Tourism

## ACTIVELY DEFENDING YOUR HOME

Do not underestimate what is required to maintain your house as a place of safety during a bushfire. Actively defending your property will take huge physical and mental effort for many hours before, during and after the fire, as conditions will be unbearably hot. You need the right equipment, protective clothing for all your family or household members, and a property prepared to the highest level.

A defensible space around your home can provide protection from radiant heat but will not keep you safe from ember attack or spot fires. You will need to put out any spot fires that start long after the fire has passed, remain vigilant and keep checking for them. There may be many spot fires at once and you will need to prioritise these. Anyone who cannot help you to defend your home should relocate to a safer place well before the bushfire threatens.

When the Fire Danger Rating is catastrophic, extreme or severe it may not be possible to actively defend your home. On these days fires can be so bad that even homes prepared to the highest level and constructed to bushfire protection levels that are actively defended will not survive.

Being involved in a bushfire can have a serious and long lasting psychological and emotional impact. Think about your long term wellbeing.

## IF YOUR PLAN FAILS

Bushfires can be extremely frightening and may make it difficult to think clearly and make sensible decisions. Fires are very unpredictable and you need to be prepared to change your plans.

You need to act decisively the moment you know there is danger. Having a plan to follow will help you avoid last minute decisions that could cost you, your family or household their life. There are many reasons your plan may no longer work when the fire happens. It is okay to rethink your plan for your survival.

If your plan fails or your situation changes you must act quickly and go to a safer place. You need to identify a number of places you can go to at the last minute. This may be a shed, your home, a swimming pool, a dam or another place. If your safer place of last resort is a swimming pool or dam you must protect yourself with a woollen blanket while the fire front passes.

### How to handle the emotional impact

In highly stressful situations, the body often shows signs of anxiety, such as a racing heart, shortness of breath, dizziness and sweating. These reactions to stress usually trigger distressing thoughts such as 'I cannot cope' or 'I am so afraid'.

### Tips on how to feel more in control:

- Slow down your breathing to help calm your body's reaction.
- To slow your breathing down, take smaller breaths and pause between breaths to space them out. When you have breathed out slowly, hold your breath for a count of three before inhaling your next breath.
- While concentrating on breathing out slowly, say to yourself 'relax' or 'stay calm', or 'it is ok, I am managing ok'. These are good words to use because they are linked with feeling relaxed and in control.
- Replace frightening thoughts with more helpful ones.
- Try not to dwell on the bad things that might happen, instead tell yourself that the calmer you are, the better you will be at managing exactly what needs to be done.

Source: 'Don't panic: be prepared.' The Australian Psychological Society Ltd



## UNDERSTAND BUSHFIRE WARNINGS

During a bushfire, emergency services will provide as much information to you as possible through a number of different channels.

There are three levels of warning. These change to reflect the increasing risk to your life and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives.

**ADVICE:** a fire has started but there is no immediate danger, this is general information to keep you informed and up to date with developments.

**WATCH AND ACT:** a fire is approaching and conditions are changing, you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.


**EMERGENCY WARNING:** you are in danger and you need to take immediate action to survive as you will be impacted by fire. This message may start with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS).


SEWS is a distinctive sound effect that is broadcast immediately prior to major emergency announcements on radio, television and other communication channels. The signal sounds like 'whoop, whoop, whoop' and is broadcast for up to 15 seconds before the emergency information. SEWS tells you that you need to listen, there is an emergency in your area and you need to take action now. It is used like a siren and is strictly controlled by an authorised hazard management agency.

**ALL CLEAR:** the danger has passed and the fire is under control, but you need to remain vigilant in case the situation changes. It may still not be safe to return home.

SEE THE **BUSHFIRE WARNINGS: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?** ON PAGE 26

## Where to get information:


 Emergency WA website [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)  
You can also subscribe to receive alerts and warnings as RSS feeds


 DFES emergency information line **13 DFES (13 3337)**

 DFES twitter feed [www.twitter.com/dfes\\_wa](https://www.twitter.com/dfes_wa)

 DFES facebook [www.facebook.com/dfeswa](https://www.facebook.com/dfeswa)

Radio, television, newspapers and news websites. Each media outlet determines how often they will broadcast information

 ABC local radio broadcasts updates at quarter to and quarter past the hour in addition to news bulletins during a 'Watch and Act' or 'Emergency Warning'

 Your surroundings could be your best information source. Stay alert to what is happening around you. If you believe you may be in danger, act immediately to keep yourself safe

## RELOCATION AND ROAD CLOSURES

The priority of firefighters during a bushfire is the protection of lives, and a decision may be made to relocate residents who are in immediate danger.

Once you have been asked to leave your property and relocate to a safer place, it may be several days before emergency services give the all clear to allow you to return home.

During a bushfire, roads will be closed for your safety and for safe access to the fire by emergency services. These road blocks are managed by police who will not allow you to return home under any circumstance. It is important that you take everything you need when you leave, such as your bushfire survival kit, which should include important papers, medications and personal supplies.

If you are not at home when the fire starts you may not be able to get to your home as road closures may have been put in place. During the bushfire season take note of the fire danger rating for the following day to be prepared as possible in the event of a fire.



Emergency services will provide you with information on which roads are closed and where possible, what route to take to get to a relocation centre. The Main Roads Traffic Operations Centre is in regular contact with emergency services about road closures during incidents to ensure up to date information is available, however this information can change quickly.

In regional areas roads may be closed for days. It will be extremely hot and unpleasant waiting in a car with little or no shade, and no toilet facilities. If you live or are travelling in a rural area check at roadhouses and police stations if any roads have been closed in the area. You should always take water and food with you to last a number of hours.

## Where to find information about road closures:

### Main Roads

- [www.mainroads.wa.gov.au](http://www.mainroads.wa.gov.au)
- **138 138**

### Department of Fire and Emergency Services

- [www.emergency.wa.gov.au](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)
- **13 DFES (13 3337)**

## RELOCATION AND WELFARE CENTRES

After some bushfires, relocation and welfare centres may be established and coordinated by the Department for Child Protection. They are established so that appropriate support services such as shelter, emergency accommodation, food, clothing, financial assistance, registration, personal support and other welfare services can be provided.



Lake Clifton Bushfire 2011

## RETURNING HOME

Look and listen for information on radio, television, the internet and information lines to find out when an all clear advice has been issued and if it is safe to return home. Firefighters will have been working to cut down dangerous trees and make the area safe, but there may still be some hazards in the area so be alert when you return home.

When going home watch out for downed power lines, fallen trees, low branches and burning debris. Be careful of damaged infrastructure including walls, bridges, roads and footpaths. When driving in the fire area you should take extreme caution as emergency services personnel may be continuing their work.

A fire can be very destructive and selective, often leaving some homes untouched while others can be completely devastated. If your home has been badly damaged and you need a place to stay, seek help from welfare agencies.

You need to be mentally and emotionally prepared when returning to your property. If you live alone, you may want to bring someone with you when you first return. To minimise emotional hardship, it is best that you prepare mentally, have support and offer support to others during this time. Encourage your family to talk about their experiences with friends and neighbours, and become involved in community activities as soon as you can.

Access to your home should be limited to adults initially for safety reasons. When you arrive home you should:

- Use a face mask and wear protective clothing.
- Walk around the outside of your house to check for the following hazards:
  - live electricity
  - leaking gas (odour or hissing)
  - septic or sewage leaking
  - hot embers
  - trees and overhanging branches
  - major structural damage.

FOR MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ON HOW TO RECOVER FROM THE IMPACT OF A BUSHFIRE REFER TO THE DFES **AFTER THE FIRE** PUBLICATION AVAILABLE AT [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)





**EMERGENCY ALERT.**  
**BE WARNED. BE INFORMED.**

**BUSHFIRE WARNINGS: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?**

ALERT LEVEL	WHEN WILL IT BE ISSUED?	WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?
<b>ADVICE</b> <b>Be aware and keep up to date</b>  Issued at <b>11am</b> and <b>4pm</b> unless the situation changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ When a fire has started but there is no immediate danger</li><li>■ There is no threat to lives and homes</li><li>■ The fire is likely to be small and may be causing smoke near homes</li><li>■ Firefighters will be able to control the fire</li></ul>	<b>You need to be aware</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Stay alert and monitor your surroundings by watching for signs of a bushfire, especially smoke and flames</li><li>■ Check the Fire Danger Rating for your area</li><li>■ Close all doors and windows</li></ul>
<b>WATCH AND ACT</b> <b>Put your preparations into action – do not wait and see</b>  Issued <b>every two hours</b> unless the situation changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ When a fire is approaching and conditions are changing</li><li>■ There is a possible threat to lives and homes</li><li>■ The fire will be out of control. There may be smoke and embers around your home and roads</li><li>■ Firefighters will be working with machines to put in containment lines to stop the fire spreading</li></ul>	<b>You need to leave or get ready to defend</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Put your bushfire survival plan into action</li><li>■ If you have decided to leave for a safer place, leave now and take your survival kit with you</li><li>■ Leave well before roads are closed and full of smoke</li></ul>
<b>EMERGENCY WARNING</b> <b>Take immediate action to survive – you will be impacted by fire</b>  Issued <b>every hour</b> unless the situation changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ When there is immediate danger and the fire will impact your home</li><li>■ There is a threat to lives and homes</li><li>■ The fire will be out of control and moving very fast. This is the highest level of warning</li><li>■ Firefighters will find it difficult to control the fire and it will take significant firefighting resources and a change in conditions to bring it under control</li><li>■ A siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) may be used to get your attention on radio and television</li></ul>	<b>You need to act immediately to survive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ If you have not left yet and the way is clear leave immediately for your safer place and take your survival kit with you</li><li>■ If you have not prepared your home, it is too late to do it now. Your safest option is to leave for a safer place, if the way is clear</li><li>■ Do not relocate at the last minute in a vehicle or on foot as this is deadly, leave immediately if the way is clear</li></ul>
<b>ALL CLEAR</b> <b>Take care to avoid any dangers and keep up to date</b>  Issued when the threat has passed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ When the danger has passed and the fire is under control</li><li>■ Firefighters will be working to put the last bits of the fire out and make the area safe</li><li>■ It may still not be safe to return home. Emergency services will advise when you can go home</li></ul>	<b>You need to be careful</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Remain vigilant in case the situation changes</li><li>■ When driving in the fire area you should take extreme caution and drive slowly</li><li>■ Dangers like smoke, fallen trees and downed power lines may be on roads and emergency services will still be working in the area</li></ul>

**You may get an Emergency Alert**

Emergency Alert is one tool used to warn communities of an emergency and should not be relied on as your only source of information. It is an additional tool used to alert people in a specific location where there is immediate danger. Radio, television, government websites and information lines are all good sources of information during emergencies.

All home phones, including silent numbers, are automatically registered to receive Emergency Alerts. Mobile phones are automatically registered to the customer address which may be different to where you live.

Emergency Alert works by delivering emergency warnings direct to you when lives may be in danger in your neighbourhood. It is a system that uses web technology to send warnings to home phones or mobiles. It will only be activated when authorities have credible information that there is an emergency that could or will threaten lives and properties. It does not replace the need to look after your own safety by monitoring local conditions, keeping up to date by radio, television, internet and information lines, and taking preventative action where possible. Emergency Alert cannot be guaranteed and there may be no warning for some incidents, for example if a bushfire is moving very quickly and starts close to homes.

**How will I know if I have received an Emergency Alert?**  
**0444 444 444** is the number assigned to Emergency Alert. This number will always be displayed in the message header or caller identification.





## CHECKLIST PREPARING YOUR SURVIVAL KIT

PAGE 1 OF 1

Prepare a bushfire survival kit before the bushfire season starts. This will help you get through the first few days after a fire. Make sure you have transport and a bushfire survival kit ready regardless of whether you are going to leave or actively defend your house.

### GENERAL ITEMS

- ☐ Portable battery operated AM/FM radio
- ☐ Waterproof torch
- ☐ New spare batteries
- ☐ First aid kit with manual
- ☐ Woollen blankets

### FOOD AND WATER

- ☐ Drinking water [at least three (3) litres per person per day for four (4) days]
- ☐ Canned food (dried food is also a good alternative) to last four (4) days
- ☐ Can opener, cooking gear and eating utensils
- ☐ A portable gas stove or barbecue
- ☐ Water container (for washing and cooking water)

### ON THE DAY ADD

- ☐ Cash, key cards and credit cards
- ☐ Medications, toiletries and sanitary supplies
- ☐ Special requirements for infants, elderly, injured, those with disabilities and pets
- ☐ Mobile phone and charger, or phone card
- ☐ Emergency contact numbers
- ☐ Extra car and house keys
- ☐ Combination pocket knife
- ☐ Important documents, valuables and photos
- ☐ Change of clothes for everyone



A bushfire survival kit



## CHECKLIST PREPARING YOUR PROPERTY

PAGE 1 OF 3

Prepare your home and property for the bushfire season. It is everyone's responsibility. If you live in or near bush take the time to complete and action this checklist.

### STARVE THE FIRE

Reduce the fuel loads around your home so that embers will have less chance to start a fire when they hit the ground. This will also help reduce the damage caused by the fire.

For at least 20 metres around your home and other buildings:

- ☐ Cut long grass and dense scrub. Remove dead material.
- ☐ Remove all rubbish and rake up leaf litter, twigs, bark and material that may catch fire.
- ☐ Maintain a minimum two metre gap between your house and tree branches. Make sure that no trees overhang the house.
- ☐ Prune lower branches (up to two metres off the ground) to stop a fire on the ground spreading to the canopy of the trees.
- ☐ Do not clump shrubs, ensure that there is a gap. Shrubs should be planted at a distance of at least three times their height at maturity from buildings.

Other actions you will need to take:

- ☐ Keep your gutters free of leaves and other combustible material.
- ☐ Create a mineral earth firebreak, with no vegetation along your boundary.
- ☐ Build your paths adjacent to the building and have your driveway placed so that it maximises the protection to the house.
- ☐ If possible, plan your garden so that your vegetable garden, lawn, pool or patio is on the side of the house likely to face a fire (where the bush is).
- ☐ Store firewood away from the building.
- ☐ Ensure that your gas bottles are secured and positioned so that it will vent away from the building if it is subject to flame contact or radiant heat.
- ☐ Ensure fences are non-combustible so they can help to shield your home from a bushfire and radiant heat.

### FILL THE GAPS

Houses usually catch fire when embers get into the roof space, a wall cavity, on to ledges or under the house. Prevent sparks from entering your house by blocking all the gaps.

- ☐ Block any gaps under floor spaces, in the roof space, under eaves, external vents, skylights, chimneys and wall cladding.
- ☐ Place metal fly wire mesh on all windows, vents and install an ember protection screen on evaporative air conditioners to keep sparks and embers out.

### FIX THE FIRE TRAPS



- ☐ Do not pile wood against or near the house.
- ☐ Remove any timber, rubbish and old junk lying around.
- ☐ Move all fuel containers into a shed away from your house and have a firebreak around it.
- ☐ Keep gas cylinders on the side of the house furthest away from the likely direction of a fire (where the bush is). Ensure the pressure relief valve is directed away from the house. Store gas cylinders upright and secure them with a metal chain to a secure, non-combustible post to prevent cylinders from falling over.

### PROTECT YOUR ASSET

- ☐ Have a sufficient independent water supply of at least 20,000 litres and a petrol, diesel or a generator powered pump capable of pumping 400 litres per minute.
- ☐ Check that your home and contents insurance cover is adequate. Take into consideration renovations, fixtures and additions such as swimming pools, sheds, gazebos, luxury fittings or new appliances.



□ Create a minimum 20 metre building protection zone around your home and other buildings. Reduce the fuel load in this area by removing all rubbish, keeping grass cut short, and raking up leaf litter, twigs, bark and material that may catch fire.

-  Create a mineral earth firebreak along the boundary of your property. Make sure you meet your local government's firebreak requirements.
-  Cut long grass and prune the scrub so that it is not dense, and does not have fine, dead aerated material in the crown of the scrub.



- 16 Refer to DFES' Homeowners Bush Fire Survival Manual available at: [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)

32 **PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.**



- 17 Install gutter guards and keep gutters clear of leaf litter

**PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.** 33

**PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.** 34







#### AT THE START OF THE BUSHFIRE SEASON:

- ☐ Complete the checklists on page 29 and 30.
- ☐ What you will do if you cannot actively defend your home (have a backup plan).

#### ON THE DAY THE BUSHFIRE THREATENS

- ☐ Find out what the Fire Danger Rating is for your area.
  - If it is CATASTROPHIC leaving for a safer place is your best option. This is because homes are not built to withstand such dangerous fires.
  - If it is EXTREME leaving is the best option for your survival.
  - If you have not maintained your property or are in doubt, leave.

#### BEFORE THE FIRE FRONT ARRIVES

##### OUTSIDE

- ☐ Use a moistened mask or cotton cloth to help protect against ash.
- ☐ Move large animals and livestock to a safe location (as identified in your bushfire survival plan).
- ☐ Check your water supplies around the house, fill any additional containers that might be available.
- ☐ Bring outdoor furniture, mats and any other loose items that may burn inside.
- ☐ Wet down the side of the house and surrounding garden area that is facing the fire. If you have power and water, leave reticulation running.
- ☐ Block downpipes and fill gutters with water.
- ☐ Regularly patrol for spot fires around your home and put them out with your rake or knapsack spray.
- ☐ Turn off the mains gas supply to the house and any gas cylinders.

##### INSIDE

- ☐ Put your bushfire survival plan into action.
- ☐ Safely relocate young children and elderly family members.
- ☐ Everyone remaining needs to put on protective clothing.
- ☐ Bring pets inside.
- ☐ Turn off your evaporative air conditioner but leave water running through the system if possible.
- ☐ Fill basins, sinks, bath, troughs and buckets with water.
- ☐ Locate mops and other equipment.

- ☐ Soak towels and rugs in water, and lay along the inside of external doorways.
- ☐ Soak blankets and keep them handy for protection against radiant heat.
- ☐ Take down curtains and push furniture away from windows.
- ☐ Place a ladder and torch close to the manhole so you can regularly check the ceiling space for embers.
- ☐ Keep electricity on but be aware of electrical safety at all times.

#### AS THE FIRE FRONT APPROACHES AND DURING THE FIRE

- ☐ Take all hoses, hose fittings (including plastic tap attachments) and equipment inside.
- ☐ Move everyone into the house when you see flames or it is too hot and smoky to stay outside.
- ☐ Frequently check the roof cavity (through the manhole inside the house) for any spot fires.
- ☐ Stay inside the house while the fire front passes. This normally takes between five and fifteen minutes. Check for any spot fires inside the house.
- ☐ Drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- ☐ Tune into ABC radio for fire information.

#### AFTER THE FIRE FRONT HAS PASSED

- ☐ Ensure everyone continues to wear protective clothing.
- ☐ Check the house thoroughly for spot fires both inside and outside when it is safe.
- ☐ Check for embers or signs of smoke in places such as roof cavity, under house spaces and around verandas, wooden decking, stairs, window sills and doorways. Also check sheds, carports and fences.
- ☐ Patrol your home for several hours for small fires and burning embers.

#### IF YOUR HOUSE CATCHES FIRE

- ☐ If your house catches fire as the fire passes and you are unable to put it out, leave immediately after the fire front has passed.
- ☐ Move on to a fuel-free area such as a driveway, lawn or on to already burnt ground.
- ☐ Beware of any hazards such as burning logs or materials.
- ☐ Do not return inside the house for any reason.

#### LEAVING AFTER THE FIRE FRONT HAS PASSED

- ☐ Leaving immediately after the fire front has passed can be dangerous, there may be hazards such as fallen power lines, trees and other risks.
- ☐ You need to listen to the radio or check with local police for when it is safe to leave.

## FACT SHEET FIRE BEHAVIOUR

There are thousands of bushfires in Western Australia each year. Western Australia is one of the most bushfire prone parts of the world. No one knows where or when the next major bushfire will hit. You can increase the chance that your home and loved ones will survive a bushfire.

In 2010, career and volunteer firefighters responded to and put out more than 7000 bushfires across Western Australia.

#### HOW BUSHFIRES BEHAVE

It is important you understand how bushfires behave to help you protect your family and home against them. All fires need fuel, air and heat.

##### FUEL

Vegetation around your home like dry grass, leaves, twigs and bark provide fuel for a fire. This fuel plays a part in how hot a fire can be and how fast it can spread. If fuel is removed, the fire will starve.

##### HEAT

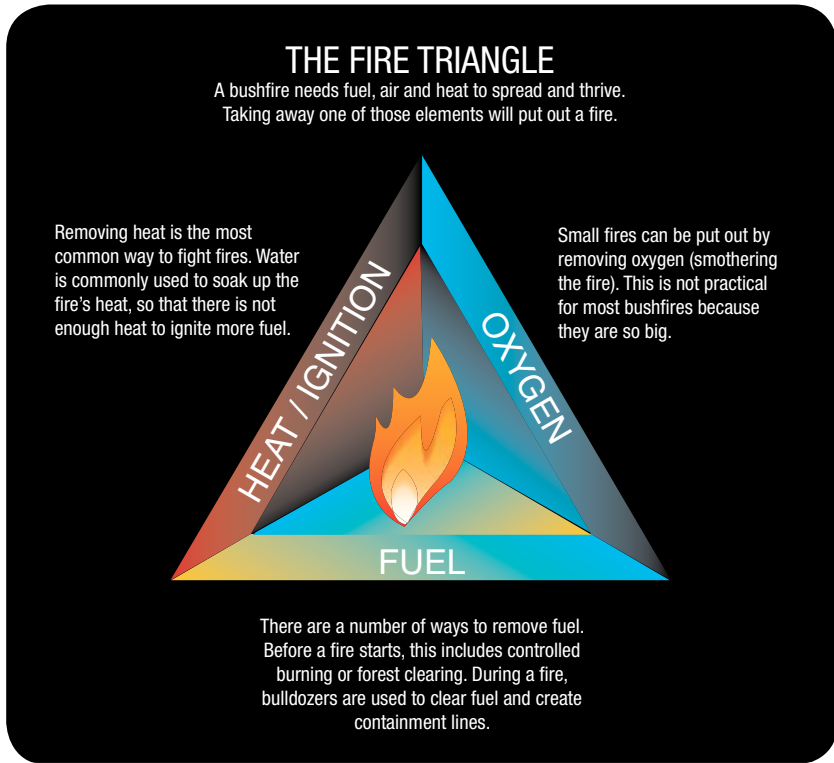
Bushfires generate unbelievable heat. Much of this heat goes up into the air but significant heat also radiates at ground level. This radiant heat spreads the fire by drying out vegetation so it will burn.

##### RADIANT HEAT

Radiant heat is the main cause of people dying in a bushfire. Radiant heat may not set fire to your home but it can crack and break windows that will allow embers in. The best protection from radiant heat is distance.

##### EMBERS

Even if the fire front does not reach your home it can still be damaged by burning embers carried by strong winds. Embers can get into your home through gaps in roofs, walls, evaporative air conditioners, windows and doors. They can land on materials that easily burn and this can



start a fire. Research has shown that ember attack is the main reason that houses catch fire during a bushfire. Embers can continue to threaten your home even after the fire front has passed.

##### DIRECT FLAME CONTACT

When materials close to your home catch fire flames can touch the outside of your home. How long flames are in direct contact with your home depends on the amount of fuel to be burnt.

##### AIR

A bushfire needs air to keep going and the more there is the faster the fire burns. Strong winds not only force the fire along but also increase air circulation and provide more air.

Any change in wind direction or speed can rapidly increase the rate of spread and the direction of the fire. The prevailing afternoon breeze in summer presents the most common threat as it fans bushfires when fuel is at its driest during the day.

##### WIND

Strong winds usually come with bushfires and as the wind increases so does the fires temperature. The wind pushes flames closer to fuel making the fire travel faster. Embers and other burning materials are also carried by the wind which can damage homes kilometres from the fire front.

## FACT SHEET TOTAL FIRE BANS



When a Total Fire Ban (TFB) is declared it will usually be in place from 12.01am to 11.59pm.

If conditions change through the day, a TFB can be declared or revoked.

When a TFB is declared, it is illegal to do anything that is likely to start a fire.

#### WHAT CAN'T I DO ON A TOTAL FIRE BAN DAY?

Some of the activities that are not allowed on TFB days include, but are not limited to:

- ✗ No barbecues that use solid fuel or have an open flame, this includes wood fired pizza ovens
- ✗ No grinding, welding or other forms of 'hot works' are allowed unless you have an exemption
- ✗ No burning of leaves, rubbish or an incinerator
- ✗ No camp fires, no cooking outdoors
- ✗ No fireworks or hot air ballooning.

#### WHAT ARE THE PENALTIES?

You could be fined up to \$25,000 and/or jailed for 12 months, if you ignore a TFB.

#### WHAT OTHER FIRE RESTRICTIONS ARE THERE?

Depending on the time of the year, there may be other restrictions on lighting fires or other fire risk activities in your area. Check with your local government for details.

#### How will I know if a Total Fire Ban has been declared?

When a TFB has been declared it will be:

- Published on the Emergency WA website at [www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans](http://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans)
- On the DFES information line on **13 DFES (13 3337)**
- Broadcast on ABC local radio and other media outlets
- Displayed on local government roadside Fire Danger Rating (FDR) signs and variable message signs on major highways.
- For more information visit [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans) or call the Total Fire Ban information line on **1800 709 355**

### Call 000 to report a fire.

To report suspicious activity, call Crimestoppers on **1800 333 000**



# **FACT SHEET BURNS TREATMENT**



**Burns can be life threatening. If you or someone near you is burnt, act immediately.**

## 1. Check for danger and call for help

Watch out for hazards such as electrical wires and fire. If it is safe to do so, stop, disconnect or remove these hazards before you help the patient to avoid injury to rescuers, bystanders or the patient. If the scene is unsafe, call **000** or the relevant authorities for help.

## 2. Stop the burning

*Stop, Drop, Cover, Roll. Remove the burning source or move the patient.*

The source of heat or burning should be stopped and the patient should be removed from the burning source.

This includes removing burned clothing, unless it is stuck to the patient. Jewellery on burned limbs should also be removed as it may constrict when swelling occurs over the next few hours.

## 3. ABCs

Remember to monitor Airway, Breathing and Circulation as part of basic life support. Call **000** if the patient is unwell.

## 4. Cool the burn for 20 minutes

Never use ice, oils or creams. Cooling methods should be applied for at least 20 minutes and be administered as soon as possible.

Cooling the wound is very important, it can significantly reduce the size of injury as well as reduce pain and swelling. Cooling the burn has an effect up to three hours post injury.

Clean, cool running water between 5-25°C is the best choice. Wet towels, refreshed with cool water every 2-3 minutes or burn specific gel sheets are useful alternatives.

Lakes, oceans, rivers and swimming pools can also help cool the burn, but there is an infection risk in still water. As such, these cooling methods should only be used when other first aid options are unavailable. Ice or icy water can cause further injury.

Never use water below 4°C as it causes reduced skin blood flow which can increase skin damage.

## 5. Chemical burns are serious

Chemical burns require additional irrigation and urgent medical attention for treatment specific to the chemical injury. If you are unsure of the chemical involved, bring the chemical bottle or label to the hospital.

## 6. Cover the wound

*Wet clothes or towels are good dressings*

Dressings help reduce pain and infection. Wet, clean, cotton dressings are a good choice. Gel based burns specific dressings are an alternative.

## 7. Avoid Hypothermia

*Cool the wound, but warm the patient*

Hypothermia is a risk of over-vigorous patient cooling, especially in children and the elderly.

Attempt to keep unburned areas of the skin dry and warm, remove wet clothing and wrap the patient in a blanket.

## 8. Seek medical aid urgently

Present to your doctor, local emergency department or call an ambulance. You can also get advice from HealthDirect on **1800 022 222**.

# **PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.**

# **SUMMARY**

Being prepared for the bushfire season is a shared responsibility between the Government, fire agencies and the community. If you live, work or travel in an area where bushfires may occur then you need to prepare a bushfire survival plan ahead of time and practise it regularly. If you are well prepared and stay informed you will improve your safety and chances of survival.

## **PREPARE**

**weeks and months  
before the bushfire season**

You must make the important decisions before the season starts.

Whether you choose to leave early to go to a safer place or to stay and defend your well prepared home, preparation is the key to survival.

- ☐ Know and understand your bushfire risk.
- ☐ Prepare yourself, your family, your house and business.
- ☐ If you decide to stay and actively defend be physically and mentally prepared to defend for several hours.
- ☐ Prepare a bushfire survival plan – a good plan is one that is practised and has backup plans to allow for different circumstances on the day.

## **ACT**

**on the daily  
Fire Danger Ratings**

The higher the Fire Danger Rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

Be prepared to act without receiving an official warning.

You need to:

- ☐ Know the daily Fire Danger Rating for your area and what you need to do.
- ☐ Stay alert to your surroundings and stay informed.
- ☐ Act decisively the moment you know there is a fire in your area.
- ☐ Put your plan into action.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) can not guarantee a fire truck or water bomber will be there to protect your property.

## **SURVIVE**

**during a bushfire**

Fires may threaten without warning – know what you will do to survive.

Your survival and safety depends on the decisions you make. The safest place to be is away from the fire. Being involved in a fire may be one of the most dangerous and traumatic experiences of your life.

- ☐ Monitor conditions and keep up to date.
- ☐ You need to know what to do if you are caught in or threatened by fire with little or no warning.
- ☐ Make decisions and take action to protect you and your family.
- ☐ Know where your places of last resort are in case your plan fails.

**For information on current alerts and warnings:**

 **13 DFES (13 3337)**

 **www.emergency.wa.gov.au**



# IMPORTANT CONTACT DETAILS: BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

DATE OF THIS PLAN:

## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Fire, Police, Ambulance:

**000 (TTY 106)**

Insurance Company:

Policy number:

Local Council:

Bank:

Doctor:

School:

Vet:

Water Supplier:

Electricity Supplier:

Gas Supplier:

Family / Friends:

Family / Friends:

Family / Friends:

Department of Fire and Emergency Services Information line:

**13 DFES (13 3337)**

The frequency of our local ABC and /or other radio station  
broadcasting emergency warnings and information:

Our Fire Ban District is:

A safer place we can go to is:

Our place of last resort to shelter in (for if all plans fail):

Leave early – who is going to leave early?

Name:

Phone Number:

Name:

Phone Number:

Name:

Phone Number:

Name:

Phone Number:

Stay and defend – who will stay and defend?

Name:

Phone Number:

Name:

Phone Number:

Name:

Phone Number:

Name:

Phone Number:

**Listen out for bushfire 'Watch and Act' and 'Emergency Warning' messages**

**Monitor your local ABC or other radio station broadcasting  
emergency information using a battery powered radio**