

Land Use Planning Guideline For

Planning permit applications for events in areas at risk of bushfire

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



Version 1 - Published August 2023

All material in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 international licence, with the exception of any images, photographs or branding, including CFA and government logos. In some cases, a third party may hold copyright on material in this publication and their permission may be required to use the material.

See creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0. Material obtained from this publication is to be attributed as © State of Victoria (Country Fire Authority) 2023.

Every effort has been made to ensure the information contained in this publication is free from error and / or omissions. No responsibility can be accepted by Country Fire Authority for any claims that may arise from a person acting on information contained herein.

Introduction

Victoria is proud to be the home of sports and major events within Australia. Victoria is also one of the most fire prone areas in the world, so it is critical that events in areas at risk from bushfire are carefully planned.

Given the risks involved there may be many different approvals required to run a large event in Victoria. This guideline focuses on the planning permit process, which typically occurs before many other approval processes begin.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with *Victoria's guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events* and will help event organisers to:

- determine the steps required when planning an event that may be at risk from bushfire.
- clarify when to consult with CFA during the planning permit process for an event.
- clarify the information required when seeking comment from CFA as part of a planning permit application.

CFA looks forward to working closely with event organisers to running safe events for all Victorians.

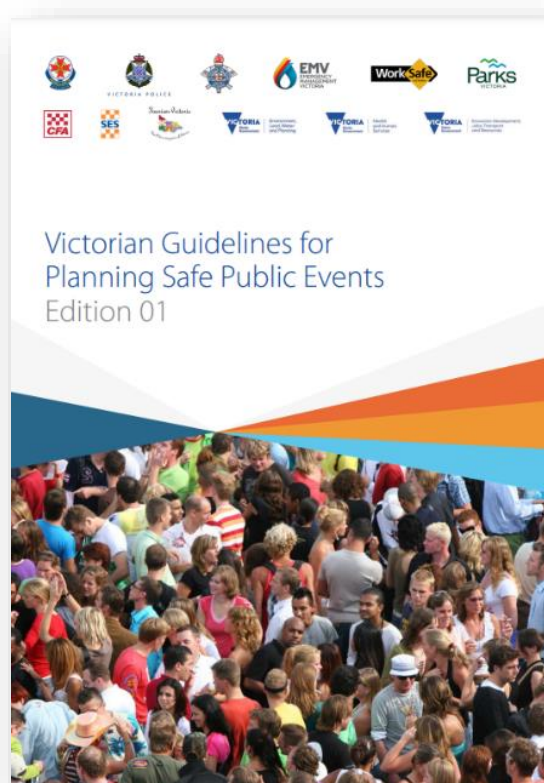


Table of Contents

- Introduction..... 3
- How to use this document 5
- CFA’s role in the planning permit process for events 6

- Step 1 – Consider the timing of the event 7**
- Step 2 – Consider the location of the event 7**
- Step 3 – Undertake a Bushfire Hazard Landscape Assessment 8**
- Step 4 – Consider shelter in place options 9**
- Step 5 – Determine appropriate cancelation or postponement triggers..... 10**
- Step 6 – Prepare Emergency and Fire Management Plans 12**
- Step 7 – Apply for a Planning Permit..... 13**

- Want more information? 14

How to use this document

Event organisers should follow Victoria's guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events when planning an event.

The steps in this document should be followed in order and be considered as an addendum to that guideline.

Certain sections of this document have been made into a checklist format for ease of use.

CFA's role in the planning permit process for events

Some events require a planning permit and event organisers should check whether this is that case with the relevant local council early in the planning process.

In some instances, councils are required to seek CFA's comment on planning permit applications (a Section 55 referral pursuant to the *Planning & Environment Act 1987*).

Other times councils may choose to seek CFA's comment on those applications (a Section 52 referral pursuant to the *Planning & Environment Act 1987*).

It is important that planning applications for events in areas at risk from bushfire adequately respond to clause 13.02-1S of the Victoria Planning Provisions. This is the States bushfire planning policy which has the following objective:

To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.

This is most likely done through consideration of the broader landscape (and whether it is appropriate for the event to occur in that landscape) and emergency management planning arrangements.

There are often different and often competing interests within the Victoria Planning Provisions and they all need to be carefully considered as part of a planning permit application. However, clause 71.02-3 of the Victoria Planning Provisions requires that in an area that may be at risk from bushfire, the protection of human life must be prioritised above over all other policy considerations.

For more information on Victoria's planning system, please visit <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/> or contact the Council where the event is planned to be held.

Step 1 – Consider the timing of the event

The weather (and climate) impacts how likely a fire may start, spread, travel in what direction and at what speed.

Bushfire risk can be significantly reduced by running an event when weather conditions are unlikely to be conducive to bushfires starting and spreading.

Each year a Fire Danger Period is declared for municipalities across Victoria and this signifies when, as the name suggests, fire danger is greatly increased. Fire Danger Periods are typically from November to March. Although it could start as early as October or finish as late as April in some areas – particularly in the northern parts of the state).

Outdoor events within the Fire Danger Period are at greater risk from bushfire and should be avoided where possible.

If this period can't be avoided and the event will be within or close to the Fire Danger Period, then proceed to Step 2.

If the event will be at other times, CFA is unlikely to object to the running of the event and no further consultation regarding bushfire matters with CFA is required.

For events involving large numbers of people, there may still be a need to finalise emergency management arrangements in consultation with emergency services, including CFA.

Step 2 – Consider the location of the event

Bushfire risk can be eliminated by choosing a location for the event that has no identified bushfire risk.

A planning property report is a simple way to determine whether there is an identified bushfire risk at a property. A planning property report can be found (for free) at <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/>

If the planning property report shows the property (or immediately adjacent area) is in a Bushfire Prone Area (or in the Bushfire Management Overlay), then this means there is an identified bushfire risk.

If the event location has an identified bushfire risk, then proceed to Step 3.

If not, then CFA is unlikely to object to the running of the event and no further consultation with CFA is required on bushfire matters.

Step 3 – Undertake a Bushfire Hazard Landscape Assessment

If the event location has an identified bushfire risk then further analysis needs to be done to determine whether the risk is acceptable or not.

A Bushfire Hazard Landscape Assessment should be undertaken on the event site in accordance with the process outlined on page 10 of the *Planning Permit Applications Bushfire Management Overlay Technical Guide* (DELWP, 2017).

Events are unlikely to be supported by CFA if:

- the Bushfire Hazard Landscape Assessment identifies the event site is within a:
 - Broader Landscape Type Three
 - Broader Landscape Type Four
- in a rural or remote area where access and egress in the event of a bushfire is not readily available.

In all other situations, proceed to Step 4.

Step 4 – Consider shelter in place options

Large numbers of people and their characteristics (such as whether they are under the influence of alcohol, aged etc.) can create significant challenges in evacuating an event or managing those people on-site during an incident. In some instances, it makes it an unrealistic option entirely.

It is important that events have a suitable place of shelter by:

- having at least one sufficiently sized (1.5m² per person) emergency assembly area that is capable of safely accommodating the expected numbers of attendees.

The assessment criteria for a Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort (open space) can be used as a reasonable way of measuring if this is possible. The criteria for this can be viewed at:

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/your-local-area-info-and-advice/neighbourhood-safer-places>

or

- be located to an adjacent urban, commercial or residential area of sufficient size that offers the opportunity for attendees to egress directly to in the event of an emergency.

Events are unlikely to be supported by CFA if either of the above cannot be provided.

In situations where a suitable place of shelter can be provided, proceed to Step 5.

Step 5 – Determine appropriate cancellation or postponement triggers

The Fire Danger Rating system provides information so people in areas at risk from bushfire can take action to protect themselves and others. The higher the fire danger, the more dangerous the conditions and the greater the impact will be if a fire starts.

The Fire Danger Rating (FDR) system is a national system and includes four (4) separate Fire Danger Ratings. The ratings and what the suggested actions are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 – Fire Danger Ratings

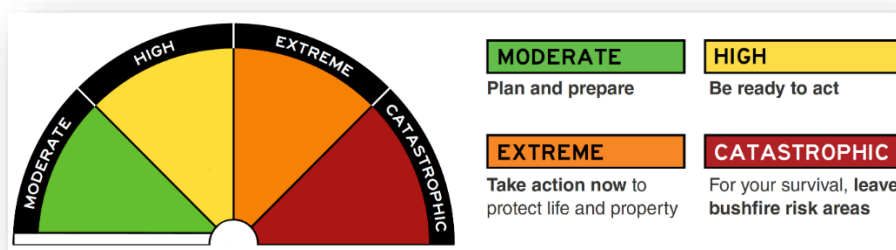


Figure 2 – Fire Danger Ratings and suggested actions

	What does it mean?	What should I do?
CATASTROPHIC	<p>If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire. 	<p>For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Your life may depend on the decisions you make, even before there is a fire. » For your survival, do not be in bushfire risk areas. » Stay safe by going to a safer location early in the morning or the night before. » Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave and help may not be available.
EXTREME	<p>Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » These are dangerous fire conditions. » Expect hot, dry and windy conditions. 	<p>Take action now to protect your life and property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Check your bushfire plan and that your property is fire ready » If a fire starts, take immediate action. If you and your property are not prepared to the highest level, go to a safer location well before the fire impacts. » Reconsider travel through bushfire risk areas. » Leaving bushfire risk areas early in the day is your safest option.
HIGH	<p>Fires can be dangerous.</p>	<p>Be ready to act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » There's a heightened risk. Be alert for fires in your area. » Decide what you will do if a fire starts. » If a fire starts, your life and property may be at risk. The safest option is to avoid bushfire risk areas.
MODERATE	<p>Most fires can be controlled.</p>	<p>Plan and prepare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire.

Event organisers should carefully consider each Fire Danger Rating and the suggested actions when developing emergency planning arrangements.

Emergency management plans should include clear procedures for monitoring the forecast Fire Danger Ratings and specify clear actions that will be taken when specific ratings are forecast. This should not include consultation with CFA when those trigger points are reached.

The *Victorian Guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events* recommends that event organisers should plan ahead by changing, cancelling or delaying their events on days of Extreme or Code Red (now Catastrophic) Fire Danger Rating. These ‘triggers’ are likely to mean very hot and windy conditions, which may have an impact on other potential hazards – such as heat health.

Event organisers may consider using the Fire Behaviour Index (FBI) in lieu of the FDR rating system. If that is the case then planning arrangements should result in the postponement, cancellation or delay of events when there is a forecast FBI of greater than 75.

An event is unlikely to be supported by CFA if it is proposed to occur on a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating or when the FBI is expected to be greater than 75.

Having regard to the earlier steps in this document and the specifics of the event, CFA *may* require a lower trigger point for cancellation.

In all other situations, proceed to Step 6.

Step 6 – Prepare Emergency and Fire Management Plans

A full risk assessment should be conducted by a suitably qualified professional. The risk assessment should consider the likelihood and consequences of a bushfire. Utilising that risk assessment an Emergency Management Plan should be prepared following the steps on page 13 of the *Victorian Guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events*.

A separate Fire Management Plan should be prepared which includes:

- a scale or dimensioned map of the event site. This should show where all key structures, locations and uses within the event will be. E.g., carparking areas, camping areas, stages, emergency assembly areas etc. Preferably having some form of gridded reference system.
- processes and procedures for monitoring the Fire Danger Ratings and or Fire Behaviour Index. Who, when and how.
- clear triggers for cancelation/postponement of the event based on forecast Fire Danger Ratings or Fire Behaviour Index value.
- details of any private firefighting services that may be provided during the event. The provision of such services should be escalated in line with the Fire Danger Ratings and include bump in and out times.
- clear triggers and procedures for:
 - evacuation of the site in the event of a bushfire (if safe to do so).
 - sheltering in place during the event (when evacuation is not safe).
- A map and details on any proposed fuel management such as the areas where grass will be mown, elevated fuels reduced and when those actions will occur. Fuel management should include 'buffer' areas and not just management of the event site itself.
- a map showing all areas set aside for emergency vehicle access. This should allow:
 - full perimeter emergency vehicle access around the event site
 - entry to the event whilst allowing for attendees to exit at the same time.
- A map that details any existing or proposed sources of firefighting water such as tanks or dams.

- A map that details the location of all firefighting infrastructure, such as fire extinguisher banks and the like.
- details on any other controls/treatments that were identified in the risk assessment.

Step 7 – Apply for a Planning Permit

If required, a planning permit application should now be lodged with the relevant local council.

If CFA is asked to provide comment on that planning permit application, then CFA will require the following:

- a copy of the risk assessment that has been conducted by a suitably qualified professional that adequately considers the likelihood and consequences of a bushfire.
- A response to clause 13.02-1S of the relevant planning scheme and a copy of the Bushfire Hazard Landscape Assessment.
- a scale or dimensioned map of the event site.
- a copy of the events Emergency Management Plan.
- a copy of the events Fire Management Plan (containing the information in Step 6 of this document)

Should CFA consent to the application, this is likely to be conditional on a number of actions occurring before the event.

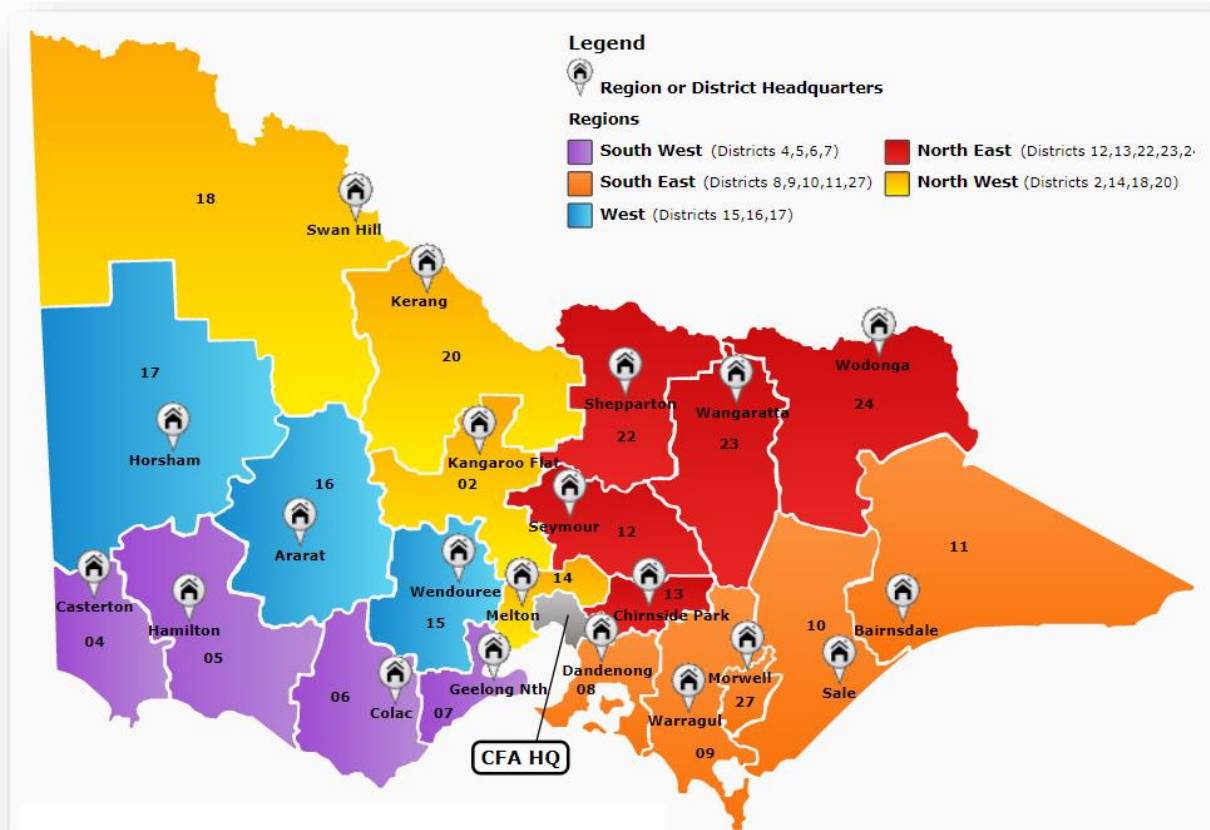
CFA recognises that planning an event is a complex a task and many details are likely to be changed between the time a planning permit application is applied lodged and closer to the event date. CFA's standard conditions are designed to setup a subsequent consultation and approval process so that minor changes can be resolved following the decision on a planning permit application.

Notwithstanding that, the quality of the information submitted with the planning permit application must provide CFA with an adequate level of confidence that the event can be conducted safely.

Want more information?

If you have any questions regarding a proposed event, please contact the relevant CFA Manager Community Safety within the Region where the event is planned to be held. You can find the relevant region by using the map in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Map of CFA regions and office locations



South West Region

Manager Community Safety
Email: mcs.d07@cfa.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 5240 2700

South East Region

Manager Community Safety
Email: mcs.d10@cfa.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 9767 1800

West Region

Manager Community Safety
Email: mcs.d15@cfa.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 5329 5500

North East Region (Districts 22, 23 & 24)

Manager Community Safety
Email: mcs.d22@cfa.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 5833 2400

North West Region

Manager Community Safety
Email: mcs.nwr@cfa.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 5450 9400

North East Region (Districts 12 & 13)

Manager Community Safety
Email: mcs.d13@cfa.vic.gov.au
Phone: (03) 8739 1300