

BEHAVIOUR AND INTENTIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN HIGH BUSHFIRE RISK AREAS

A TRACKINGREPORT FOR THE COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY

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Strahan Research Pty Ltd

Level 6, 90 William St
Melbourne Vic 3000
Tel (03) 9604 9199
Fax (03) 9604 9191

www.strahan-research.com

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BACKGROUND

The Victorian Government has launched the Bushfire Preparedness Program (BFPP) to strengthen community preparedness and the capacity of emergency services to respond to bushfire events.

A revised set of key messages has been communicated to the Victorian community to inform and raise awareness among the rural and urban populations of bushfire risk, and promote behaviours that will increase the chance of personal bushfire survival.

The content of the key messages has been adapted to reflect the lessons learned of 7 February; the recommendations of the Royal Commission and research into community perceptions^[1]. There is now a strong emphasis on *leaving* instead of *defending* and the Government has launched a new Fire Danger Rating that includes a *Code Red* (catastrophic) Danger Rating, which are for days where the community is advised that *leaving early* is the best option.

A key question for fire agencies and other stakeholders is to what extent the 7 February fires, their follow-up in the media and the new key messages have resulted in modified community behaviour and intentions.

Recent research indicates that although many Victorians felt impacted by the 7 February fires, only those living in high-risk areas acknowledge the risk. The general Victorian population while concerned does not feel threatened. Amongst those in high-risk areas, there remains a significant minority who do not feel at risk.

This research suggests a sense of casualness towards the coming fire season from many residents in high bushfire risk areas. Their preparations remain reactive to the potential threat – they are preparing their property (and while they have made a bushfire plan, ironically they are less likely to have practiced it than other Victorians).

A survey by Strahan Research of households in the 52 high-risk townships showed that the number of households that intended to stay and defend their property decreased compared to last year. A substantial number would *not* leave their property on the declaration of a Code Red day and a minority indicated that they are fully prepared and will plan for the safest possible outcomes. A substantial number of people still expect direction and advice from the emergency services during the events.

CFA requires monitoring research to provide a clear and accurate insight into perceptions and intentions of households within bushfire prone areas over the current fire season.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The objective of this research is to monitor the behaviour and intentions of householders in high fire risk districts before or during a bushfire or threat of a bushfire.

Specifically this includes:

- Existence and tangibility of Bushfire Preparedness Plan and whether it has been discussed and practiced with household members
- Understanding and perceptions of the new Fire Danger Ratings (FDR)
- Household intention on a Code Red Day to leave early including timing of early leaving
- Household stay or go intentions if threatened by fire and advised by various individuals
- Household confidence and anxiety toward current bushfire

METHODOLOGY

A random telephone survey of 400 households within 52 high fire risk townships in Victoria was undertaken in mid December 2009.

A tracking survey of 274 respondents was then undertaken from 27 to 30 January 2010. Townships were represented in the samples to reflect their significance within the total population.

A sample of this size allowed some limited geographic aggregation and analysis beyond the simple reporting based on the total sample.

It also allowed CFA to be 95% confident that sample results are within the following aggregate population values:

December 2009	+/- 5%
January 2010	+/- 6%

QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire was based on the research issues outlined in the Research Objectives and developed in conjunction with CFA Officers.

The average duration of the questionnaire was 11 minutes

SAMPLING

Strahan Research drew a random sample of households within the 52 townships from its telephone number database. These townships incorporate the following 80 areas as described over the page.

MANAGEMENT OF DATA COLLECTION

Our surveying of households was rigorous and comprehensive:

- one interview per household was obtained;
- sample households were telephoned up to three times in order to make contact to complete an interview;
- only individuals within the sample were interviewed;
- highly experienced interviewers were used

PRE-TEST

20 households were pre-tested to fine tune the questionnaire, ensure it was of an appropriate duration and ensure that it was able to achieve our collection objectives of meaningful, high quality data.

AUDIT

In order to continuously monitor quality, all our telephone interviewing was completed on the premises of Strahan Research under strict supervision. All surveys were thoroughly audited consistent with AMSRS practice. 10% of each interviewer's calls were audited at each interview session.

Area	CFA Region	Area	CFA Region	Area	CFA Region
Bendigo	2	Blairgowrie	8	Monbulk	13
Castlemaine	2	Cockatoo	8	Mt Dandenong	13
Eaglehawk	2	Gembrook	8	Mt Evelyn	13
Junortoun	2	Rye	8	Olinda	13
Kangaroo Flat	2	Sorrento	8	Rowville	13
Maiden Gully	2	Upper Beaconsfield	8	Sassafras	13
St Arnaud	2	Inverloch	9	Selby	13
Bolwarra	4	Noojee	9	Silvan	13
Nelson	4	Sandy Bay	9	The Patch	13
Dunkeld	5	Tarwin Lower	9	Upper Ferntree Gully	13
Peterborough	5	Venus Bay	9	Upwey	13
Barongarook	6	Walkerville	9	Warrandyte	13
Barwon Downs	6	Waratah Bay	9	Warrandyte North	13
Carlisle River	6	Loch Sport	10	Macedon	14
Forrest	6	Bemm River	11	Mt Macedon	14
Kawarren	6	Cann River	11	Woodend	14
Laver's Hill	6	Mallacoota	11	Blackwood	15
Marengo	6	Belgrave	13	Creswick	15
Wye River	6	Belgrave Sth	13	Daylesford	15
Aireys Inlet	7	Clematis	13	Greendale	15
Anglesea	7	Emerald	13	Hepburn	15
Breamlea	7	Ferntree Gully	13	Mt Clear	15
Deans Marsh	7	Ferny Creek	13	Mt Helen	15
Dereel	7	Kallista	13	Trentham	15
Jan Juc	7	Kalorama	13	Halls Gap	16
Lorne	7	Macclesfield	13	Pomonal	16
Steiglitz	7	Menzies Creek	13		

SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

A random telephone survey of 408 households in 52 Victorian townships was undertaken in mid December 2009 and with 274 households in late January 2010. Results for December are included in square brackets []. Although trends appear to be emerging, no statistically significant change can be identified..

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Last Bushfire Season

Written Bushfire Plan

In January 17.9% [18.4%] of respondents said they had a written Bushfire Plan during the 2008/09 bushfire season while 52.4% [62.7%] had a plan that was not written. More respondents (29.7%) [18.95%] say that they did not have a plan in the last bushfire season

Plan to Stay or Go

In January 65.2% [65.6%] of respondents reported that in the previous fire season they had planned to leave if threatened by a bushfire.

26% [27.8%] had planned to stay and defend their property.

When Plan to Leave

In January 35% [35.4%] of respondents had planned to leave as soon as they were aware there was a fire in their area. 30.5% [25.7%] planned to leave when advised by the emergency services and 16.4% [12.3%] had planned to leave when threatened by fire.

15.3% [23.9%] say they had planned to leave early, in advance of or on, a high fire danger day.

Attitudes to Bushfire Safety

In January over nine in ten respondents agreed that they:

- Accept responsibility for home and property during bushfire season (96.7%) [96.3%]
- Understand a bushfire could impact on their property (93%) [95.8%]
- Know that they need to be self sufficient in the event of bushfire (91.5%) [94.1%]

These attitudes have not in the short term and are unlikely in the long term to alter significantly.

Current Bushfire Plan

Written Bushfire Plan

In January, 25% [22.5%] of respondents say they have a written Bushfire Action Plan and 54.8% [62%] have a plan but it is not written. 20.2% [15.4%] now say that they do not have any type of plan. There has been a small increase in households with plans and an increasing recognition that if the plan is not written then you don't have a plan.

Discussed and Practiced Plan with Household Members

91% [92.4%] have discussed it with household members and 43.9% [52.7%] have practiced the plan.

Reasons for Not Having a Plan

In January respondents who do not have a written plan give the following reasons:

- Can remember their plan without writing it (22.1%) [11.6%]
- Know what to do (16.7%) [25.3%] without a plan because they are experienced and/or prepared
- Have few people in the household or are a single person (10.3%) [13.9%] so don't need to write their plan because it is discussed and/or understood.
- Haven't got around to it or don't have time to write one (11.8%) [10.6%]

Fire Danger Rating System

Knowledge of FDR

In January 70.7% [61.6%] of respondents cited the highest fire danger day as catastrophic or Code Red.

15.6% [21.7%] could not say what the highest fire rating was now called.

There has a trend increase in awareness of the name of the highest rating day in the comparison period.

Knowledge of Advice for Code Red Days

In January 80.1% [59.5%] of respondents say that emergency services advice is to leave in some manner including:

- Leave the night before or early in the morning (73%)[29.5%]
- "Leave early (1.9%) [12.8%]
- Leave immediately (3.7%) [11.0%]
- Leave (at an indeterminate time) (1.5%) [6.2%]

This represents a crystallisation of awareness of the emergency services' advice from a general understanding that "you should leave" to a more specific understanding that leaving should occur the night before or early in the morning of the Code Red day.

Knowledge of Advice for Extreme or Severe Days

In January 14.9% [15.5%] of respondents say emergency services advice is to leave early unless they are able to defend a properly prepared property.

29.5% [32.6%] say the advice is to leave including:

- The night before or early next morning (18.6%) [11.7%]
- Early (2.7%) [11.0%]
- At an indeterminate time (4.1%) [5.6%]
- Immediately (4.1%) [4.3%]

35.7% say that the advice is to stay including:

- Be alert to fire, wait and see what happens and be prepared to leave (19.7%) [13.3%]
- Leave if threatened by fire (5.1) [3.8%]
- Stay until advised to leave by emergency services (1.7%) [2.9%]
- Implement their bushfire plan (9.2%) [9.7%]

15.5% do not know what emergency services advise

Effectiveness of FDR

In January 38.5% [35.2%] of respondents say that the new fire danger ratings are very or extremely effective and a further 29.3% [33%] see the ratings as somewhat effective.

Code Red Day

Plan for Code Red Day

In January 53.2% [60.6%] plan to leave their property on a Code Red Day. 40.1% [31.3%] plan not to leave.

Those who plan to leave would do so:

- The night before a Code Red day (38.9%) [30.1%]
- On the morning of the Code Red Day (31.9%) [37.4%]
- When advised by emergency services (22.9%) [21.5%]

Reasons for Not Leaving on Code Red Day

The main reasons for not leaving on a Code Red Day are because respondents believe:

- There needs to be a fire for them to leave (35.2%) [25.3%]
- They are safe from bushfire and do not feel threatened (18.5%) [27.3%]
- Their property is defensible and they are prepared against bushfire (16.7%) [20%]

This reflects a discernible trend that appears to be hardening against leaving on a Code Red day and focusing on the need for an actual threat from bushfire as a motivation to leave.

Actions During a Bushfire

Respondents said that if a bushfire occurred in their area with all family members at home they would:

- Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property (9.9%) [9.6%]
- Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire (24.8%) [24.9%]
- Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services (18.6%) [20%]
- Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area (29.2%) [29.8%]
- Not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger (13.5%) [15.5%]

SECTION II: HOUSEHOLD SURVEY DATA

LAST SEASON HAD BUSHFIRE PLAN

Respondents were asked:

During the last bushfire season, did you have a written bushfire plan for what you and your family would do if there was a bushfire?

Written Bushfire Plan	Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %
Have a written plan	18.4	17.9
Have a plan but not written	62.7	52.4
Have no plan	18.9	29.7
Don't Know	0.0	0.0

Just over one in six respondents (17.9%) said that they had a written Bushfire Plan during the 2008/09 bushfire season. This is similar to the number identified in the December benchmarking survey

A majority of respondents (52.4%) said they had a plan but it was not written. This is significantly fewer than the number established in the benchmarking survey.

In addition almost three in ten (29.7%) say they did not have a Bushfire Plan last bushfire season. This is a significant increase on the numbers established in the December benchmarking survey

These last two factors together suggest that more respondents are able or willing to recognise that they do not have a plan if it is not written.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups did not have a bushfire plan last season tend to be:

- Those living in Bendigo and surrounding areas (47.8%)
- Men (34.9%)

People aged 65 years and over (63%) more than other groups tended to say they had plans that were not written.

PREVIOUS SEASON STAY OR GO PLAN

Respondents were asked:

During the last bushfire season, was it you and your family's plan to stay and defend your property or to leave your property early if you were threatened by a bushfire?

<i>Plan to stay or go</i>	<i>Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %</i>	<i>Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %</i>
<i>Stay and defend property</i>	27.8	26.0
<i>Leave if threatened by bushfire</i>	65.6	65.2
<i>Don't Know</i>	6.6	8.8

Over one quarter of respondents (26.0%) said that last bushfire season they planned to stay and defend their property in the event that they were threatened by bushfire.

Almost two thirds (65.2%) had planned to leave if threatened by bushfire while 8.8% did not know what they had planned.

These figures are almost identical to those of the benchmarking survey.

Demographic Analysis

Men (37.6%) more than other groups planned last season to stay and defend their properties.

TIME PLANNED TO LEAVE

Respondents who said that they planned to leave were asked:

During the last bushfire season when did you plan to leave?

<i>When planned to leave</i>	<i>Dec 09 Respondents (n = 268) %</i>	<i>Jan 10 Respondents (n= 178) %</i>
<i>When threatened by the bushfire</i>	12.3	16.4
<i>When advised by emergency services</i>	25.7	30.5
<i>As soon as aware there was a fire in the area</i>	35.4	35.0
<i>Before or early on a high fire danger day</i>	23.9	15.3
<i>Don't Know</i>	2.2	2.3
<i>Other</i>	0.4	0.6

Over one third of respondents (35.0%) said that in the 2008/09 bushfire season, they had planned to leave as soon as they were aware there was a fire in their area and three in ten (30.5%) planned to leave when advised by the emergency services. Compared to the benchmark survey results this represents a small and a statistically insignificant increase in those who say that they would have rely on the advice of emergency services.

Almost one in six (16.4%) said in the last fire season they had planned to leave when threatened by fire.

Over one in seven (15.3%) had planned to leave early, in advance of or on, a high fire danger day.

Although it may be too early to identify a trend these small changes in remembrance of plans for the previous season suggest a softening of commitment to leaving early following respondents' experience of this fire season.

Demographic Analysis

Men (27.8%) more than other groups tend to say that they had planned to leave when threatened by bushfire.

Women (18.7%) more than other groups tend to say that they had planned to leave before or early on a high fire danger day.

ATTITUDES TO BUSHFIRE SAFETY

Respondents were asked:

How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Statement pertaining to bushfire	December 09		January 10	
	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree
<i>I understand a bushfire could impact on properties around here including mine.</i>	4.2	95.8	7.0	93.0
<i>The thought of being involved in a bushfire makes me feel sick in the stomach</i>	30.0	70.0	27.7	72.3
<i>I accept responsibility for my home and property during the bushfire season</i>	3.7	96.3	3.3	96.7
<i>I know I need to be self sufficient in the event of a bushfire</i>	5.9	94.1	8.5	91.5
<i>I worry about being affected by bushfire</i>	26.2	73.8	29.0	71.0
<i>I spend time thinking about what I would do if a bushfire occurred</i>	24.8	75.2	25.6	74.4

Over nine in ten respondents agreed that they:

- Accept responsibility for home and property during bushfire season (96.7%)
- Understand a bushfire could impact on their property (93.0%)
- Know that they need to be self sufficient in the event of bushfire (91.5%)

Over seven in ten respondents agree that they:

- Spend time thinking about what they would do in the event of a bushfire (74.4%)
- Feel sick in the stomach at the thought of being involved in a bushfire (72.3%)
- Worry about being affected by bushfire (71.0%)

The tracking figures for these statements of attitudes to bushfire safety are almost identical to those collected in the December benchmarking study.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups agree that the thought of being involved in a bushfire makes them feel sick in the stomach tend to be:

- Women (88.3%)
- People living in households with dependents (81.8%)

Those who more than other groups agree that they worry about being affected by bushfire tend to be:

- Women (79.9%)
- People living in a household with dependents (79.8%)
- People living on a small acreage or large farm (79.2%)

People living more than 500 metres from bushland (38.5%) more than other groups tend to disagree they worry about being affected by bushfire.

Those who more than other groups disagree that they spend time thinking about what they would do if there was a bushfire tend to be:

- Men (32.7%)
- People living in households without dependents (30.4%)

CURRENTLY HAVE BUSHFIRE PLAN

Respondents were asked:

Do you now have a written bushfire plan for what you and your family would do if there was a bushfire?

Have you discussed your plan with members of your household?

Have you practiced your plan with members of your household?

Bushfire Plan	Dec 09 Have Plan (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=270) %
Yes (written plan)	22.5	25.0
Yes but not written	62.0	54.8
No	15.4	20.2

One quarter of respondents (25.0%) have a written Bushfire Action Plan and a further 54.8% say they have a plan but it is not written. Over one in five (20.2%) have no plan

These figures suggest two things. There is a small increase in the number of respondents saying they have a written plan compared to the benchmarking study. Second, significantly more respondents appear to recognise that if they do not have a written plan they have no plan.

Bushfire Plan Discussed	Dec 09 Discussed with Household (n=92) %	Jan 10 Discussed with Household (n=68) %
Yes	92.4	91.0
No	7.6	9.0

Of those who have a written plan 91.0% say they have discussed it with household members. This is similar to the result of the benchmarking report.

Bushfire Plan Practised	Dec 10 Practiced plan with household (n=92) %	Jan 09 Practiced plan with household (n=68) %
Yes	52.7	43.9
No	47.3	56.1

Of those who have a written plan 43.9% say they have practiced the plan with household members. This represents a significantly smaller number than that identified in the benchmarking study.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than others say they do not have a bushfire plan tend to be living:

- In the Bendigo region and surrounds (28.3%)
- More than 500 metres from bushland (27.7%)

Households with dependents (100%) more than other groups tend to say they have discussed their bushfire plan.

REASONS FOR NOT HAVING WRITTEN BUSHFIRE PLAN

Respondents who said that they did not have a bushfire plan were asked:

What is the main reason why you don't have a written plan?

Reasons for not having written plan	Dec 09 Responses %	Jan 10 Responses %
Know what to do	25.3	16.7
Small household/just me	13.9	10.3
Don't need to write /remember it	11.6	22.1
Haven't got round to it/not priority	10.6	11.8
Will leave when threatened	8.6	11.3
Not high risk	7.8	11.8
Intend to leave early	6.6	7.8
In the process of preparing a Plan	6.1	1.5
Fire too unpredictable/play by ear	4.0	3.4
Emergency services will tell me what to do	2.0	0.0
Haven't got enough information to prepare	1.0	0.0
Other	2.6	3.4

* Multiple responses possible

Respondents identified as important, a range of reasons for not having a Bushfire Plan including that they.

- Can remember their plan without writing it (22.1%)
- Know what to do (16.7%) without a plan because they are experienced and/or prepared
- Haven't got around to it or don't have time to write one (11.8%)
- Don't believe they live in a high bushfire risk area (11.8%)
- Intend to leave if threatened by a bushfire (11.3%)
- Have few people in the household or are a single person (10.3%) so don't need to write their plan because it is discussed and/or understood.

The benchmarking study identified similar reasons for not having a written plan although in this study the number of respondents saying they *don't need a plan because it can be remembered* has increased while the number saying they *know what to do* has decreased.

Demographic Analysis

People living more than 500 metres from bushland more than others tend to say they do not have a bushfire plan because they are not at high risk from bushfire (29.4%).

People aged 65 years and over (28.1%) more than other groups say they do not have a written bushfire plan because they don't need it to be written down.

Households without dependents (20.3%) more than other groups say they do not have a written bushfire plan because they know what to do.

Those who more than other groups say they do not have a written bushfire plan because they live alone or in a small household tend to be:

- In a household without dependents (14.1%)
- Aged 65 years and over (15.6%)

People aged 34 to 64 years more than other groups tend to say they do not have a bushfire plan because they haven't got around to it or have not had time (15.1%).

FIRE DANGER RATING

Respondents were asked:

A new Fire Danger Rating has been introduced in Victoria. Do you know what the highest danger rating is now called?

Highest FDR	Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %
Code Red/ Catastrophic Day	61.6	70.7
Other colour	1.5	0.7
Other description – extreme, severe etc	15.0	11.9
Don't Know	21.7	15.6
Other	0.2	1.1

Over seven in ten respondents (70.7%) were able to cite the highest fire danger day as catastrophic or Code Red. This represents a significantly higher awareness of what the highest danger rating is called.

Over one in ten (15%) used other descriptions such as extreme, severe, critical, and acute.

Over one in seven (15.6%) could not say what the highest fire rating was now called. This is a significant reduction compared to the number of respondents in the benchmarking study who did not know what the highest rating was called.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups were able to say that the highest fire danger rating is Code Red tend to be:

- Living in households with dependents (78.6%)
- Aged 35 to 64 years (77.1%).

Those who more than other groups say they do not know what the highest fire danger rating is tend to be:

- Living more than 500 metres from bushland (24.6%)
- Aged 65 years and over (23.5%).

EMERGENCY SERVICES ADVICE FOR CODE RED DAY

Respondents were asked:

Can you tell me what the emergency services advise you to do if there is a Code Red or catastrophic bushfire danger day?

Emergency Services Advise for Code Red Day	Dec 09 Responses %	Jan 10 Responses %
Leave night before/early in morning	29.5	73.0
Leave early	12.8	1.9
Leave or be able to defend	11.7	2.2
Leave immediately	11.0	3.7
Leave (at some time)	6.2	1.5
Implement Bushfire plan	5.0	3.7
Stay till advised by ES to leave	3.9	1.9
Go to refuge/safe place	3.2	0.7
Stay alert/wait and see/prepare to leave	1.6	1.5
Don't Know	12.1	6.7
Other	2.9	3.3

* Multiple responses possible

Over eight in ten responses (80.1%) cite emergency services advice is to leave in some manner. This is a significant increase on the number (59.5%) who cited a similar response in the benchmarking study.

Most importantly almost three quarters of responses (73.0%) say correctly that the emergency services advice for a Code Red Day, is to leave the night before or early in the morning. This represents a significant crystallisation of respondent awareness and understanding of emergency services advice since the benchmarking study in December 2009.

One in eight (12.8%) say that emergency service advice is to "leave early, 11.0%. say it is to leave immediately and a further 6.2% say it is to leave (at an indeterminate time).

The number of responses that say incorrectly that the advice is to leave or be able to stay and defend their property has dropped from 11.7% to 2.2%.

The number of responses that the respondent does not know what emergency services advise for a Code Red Day has almost halved to 6.7%.

Demographic Analysis

There are no significant differences between demographic groups for this question.

EMERGENCY SERVICES ADVICE FOR EXTREME OR SEVERE DAY

Respondents were asked:

Can you tell me what the emergency services advise you to do if there is an extreme or severe bushfire danger day?

Emergency Services Advice for Extreme or Severe Day	Dec 09 Responses %	Jan 10 Responses %
Leave or be able to defend	15.5	14.9
Be alert/wait and see/prepared to leave	13.3	19.7
Leave night before/early in morning	11.7	18.6
Leave early	11.0	2.7
Implement Bushfire plan	9.7	9.2
Leave (at some time)	5.6	4.1
Leave immediately	4.3	4.1
Leave if threatened by fire	3.8	5.1
Stay till advised by ES to leave	2.9	1.7
Prepare property	1.8	4.4
Go to refuge/safe place	1.8	0.0
Other	3.1	2.7
Don't Know	15.5	12.9

* Multiple responses possible

Over one in seven responses (14.9%) cite correctly that emergency services advice on an extreme or severe bushfire day is to leave early unless they are able to defend a properly prepared property.

Almost three in ten responses (29.5%) say the advice is to leave:

- The night before or early next morning (18.6%)
- At an indeterminate time (4.1%)
- Immediately (4.1%)
- Early (2.7%)

These outcomes are similar to those of the benchmarking study although relatively more responses say that leaving should occur the night before or early in the morning of the extreme day.

Over one third of responses (36.7%) say that the advice is to stay including:

- Be alert to fire, wait and see what happens and be prepared to leave (19.7%)
- Implement their bushfire plan (9.2%)
- Leave if threatened by fire (5.1%)
- Stay until advised to leave by emergency services (1.7%)

This represents a small increase in those who say the advice is to stay compared to the results of the benchmarking report. More responses are focused on being alert and prepared to leave if necessary.

Approximately one in eight responses (12.9%) indicate respondents do not know what emergency services advise on an extreme or severe bushfire danger day.

Demographic Analysis

People living on small acreages or large farms (31.2%) more than other groups tend to say that the emergency services' advice on extreme or severe days is to leave the night before or early in the morning of the extreme/severe day.

People living in areas other than Bendigo and surrounds more than other groups say that emergency services advice on extreme or severe bushfire danger days is to leave unless your property is properly prepared and defensible (21.7%).

Those who more than others say that they do not know what emergency services advise on an extreme or severe fire danger day tend to be:

- Living in areas other than the Dandenongs and Bendigo and surrounding areas (17.8%)
- Living more than 500 metres from bushland (18.5%)

EFFECTIVENESS OF FIRE DANGER RATINGS

Respondents were asked:

How effective do you think the new Fire Danger Ratings are in providing an indicator of potential danger from bushfire?

Effectiveness of FDR	Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %
Not effective at all	9.6	11.1
Slightly effective	11.1	11.5
Somewhat effective	33.0	29.3
Very effective	31.0	29.6
Extremely effective	4.2	8.9
Don't Know	11.1	9.6

Almost four in ten respondents (38.5%) say that the new fire danger ratings are very or extremely effective compared to 35.2% in the benchmarking study.

Three in ten (29.6%) believe the ratings are somewhat effective.

Over one in five respondents (22.6%) say that the new fire danger ratings are not effective at all or slightly effective compared to 20.7% in the benchmarking study.

Over one in ten (9.6%) cannot say how effective the ratings are.

Overall perceptions of the effectiveness of the Fire Danger Ratings have not moved significantly.

Demographic Analysis

Men (31.8%) more than other groups tend to say that the new fire danger ratings are not effective at all or slightly effective.

PLAN FOR CODE RED DAY

Respondents were asked:

This bushfire season, do you and your family plan to leave your property on a code red day - that is a catastrophic bushfire weather day?

<i>Plan to leave on Code Red Day</i>	<i>Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %</i>	<i>Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %</i>
Yes	60.6	53.2
No	31.3	40.1
Don't know	8.1	6.7

A majority of respondents (53.2%) plan to leave their property on a Code Red Day while over four in ten (40.1%) plan not to leave.

This represents a significant decrease in the number of respondents who say they will leave their property on a Code Red Day compared to the benchmarking study in December 2009.

Demographic Analysis

Women (67.5%) and people living in the Dandenongs (59.7%) more than other groups say that they plan to leave on a Code Red Day.

People living in Bendigo and surrounding areas (56.5%) and more than 500 metres from bushland (47.7%) more than other groups say that they plan **not** to leave on a Code Red Day.

WHEN LEAVE ON CODE RED DAY

Respondents who said they would leave on a Code Red day were asked:

Would you plan to leave?

<i>When leave on Code Red day</i>	<i>Dec 09 Respondents (n=246) %</i>	<i>Jan 10 Respondents (n=148) %</i>
<i>The night before the forecast code red day</i>	30.1	38.9
<i>When advised by emergency services</i>	21.5	22.9
<i>In the morning of the code red day</i>	37.4	31.9
<i>Sometime during the code red day</i>	7.3	3.5
<i>Don't Know</i>	2.4	0.0
<i>Other</i>	1.2	2.8

Of those respondents who plan to leave on a Code Red Day almost four in ten (38.9%) would leave the night before the Code Red Day and over three in ten (31.9%) would leave in the morning of the Code Red day.

Over one in five (22.9%) would leave when advised by emergency services.

These tracking figures for January 2010 are similar to those reported in the benchmarking study in December 2009.

Demographic Analysis

There are no significant differences between demographic groups for this question.

REASON FOR NOT LEAVING ON CODE RED DAY

Respondents who said they would not leave on a Code Red day were asked:

What is the main reason why you would not leave on a code red day?

<i>Why not leave on Code Red day</i>	<i>Dec 09 Responses %</i>	<i>Jan 10 Responses %</i>
<i>Safe not threatened</i>	27.3	18.5
<i>Needs to be a fire to leave</i>	25.3	35.2
<i>Can defend property/properly prepared</i>	20.0	16.7
<i>Nowhere else to go</i>	6.7	12.0
<i>Better/comfortable at home/in town</i>	6.0	2.8
<i>Can't keep coming and going</i>	4.7	6.5
<i>Code Red over-reaction/inappropriate</i>	na	5.6
<i>Don't Know</i>	1.3	0.0
<i>Other</i>	10.7	2.8

** Multiple responses possible*

The three main reasons for not leaving on a Code Red Day cited in over seven in ten responses (70.4%) are because respondents believe:

- There needs to be a fire for them to leave (35.2%)
- They are safe from bushfire and do not feel threatened (18.5%)
- Their property is defensible and they are prepared against bushfire (16.7%)

These three responses read together suggest respondents feel that without an undefensible bushfire threatening them they do not need to leave. The forecast of a Code Red Day is not a sufficient reason to leave.

Compared to the benchmarking study more responses in the January tracking study are more strongly highlighting respondent attitudes that a bushfire is necessary for them to consider leaving.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups say they would not leave on a Code Red day because they can defend their property tend to be:

- Men (25%)
- Living in a household without dependants (21.7%)

People living more than 500 metres from bushland (32.3%) more than other groups say they would not leave on a Code Red day because they feel safe from or not threatened by bushfire.

ACTIONS IF BUSHFIRE IN AREA

Respondents were asked:

*Which one of the following actions are **you** most likely to take if all members of your household were at home when a bushfire occurred in your area?*

*Which action would **other adult members (partner/spouse)** of your household take?*

*What action would any **dependants** (children under 18 years old or elderly) take?*

Actions likely to take	Dec 09 You (n = 406) %	Jan 10 You (n = 274) %
<i>Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property</i>	9.6	9.9
<i>Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire</i>	24.9	24.8
<i>Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services</i>	20.0	18.6
<i>Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area</i>	29.8	29.2
<i>I would not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger</i>	15.5	13.5
<i>Don't know what I would do</i>	0.2	3.6

Respondent's actions

Almost three in ten respondents (29.2%) say that they would leave as soon as they were aware of a bushfire in their area.

A further one-quarter of respondents (24.8%) would leave if threatened by bushfire.

Almost one in five respondents (18.6%) would wait to be advised by emergency services before they would leave.

Over one in eight (13.5%) would leave early on a day of high fire danger.

Just less than one in ten (9.9%) would stay and defend their property.

These figures are highly comparable with those reported in the benchmarking study.

<i>Actions likely to take</i>	<i>Dec 09 Partner (n = 406) %</i>		<i>Jan 10 Partner (n = 274) %</i>	
<i>Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property</i>	8.6	10.8	6.9	8.8
<i>Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire</i>	20.0	25.0	20.1	25.7
<i>Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services</i>	14.8	18.5	15.0	19.2
<i>Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area</i>	25.6	32.0	24.5	31.4
<i>I would not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger</i>	10.8	13.5	10.9	13.9
<i>Don't know what I would do</i>	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.9
<i>Not applicable</i>	20.1		21.9	

Partners/Adults actions

Of those respondents who have partners or other adults in the household over three in ten (31.4%) say that they would leave as soon as they were aware of a bushfire in their area and one quarter (25.7%) would leave if threatened by fire.

Almost one in five (19.2%) would leave if advised by emergency services

Almost one in seven partners/adults (13.9%) would leave early on a day of high fire danger.

Over one in twelve (8.8%) would stay and defend their property

These figures are highly comparable with those reported in the benchmarking study.

<i>Actions likely to take</i>	<i>Dec 09 Dependants (n = 406) %</i>		<i>Jan 10 Dependants (n = 274) %</i>	
	<i>Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property</i>	2.2	5.5	1.5
<i>Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire</i>	8.4	21.0	6.2	18.3
<i>Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services</i>	7.4	18.5	6.9	20.3
<i>Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area</i>	14.8	37.5	12.8	37.8
<i>I would not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger</i>	6.9	17.3	6.2	18.3
<i>Don't know what I would do</i>	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0
<i>Not applicable</i>	60.2		66.1	

Dependants

Of those respondents who have dependants in the household more than one third (37.8%) say that they would leave as soon as they were aware of a bushfire in their area.

Almost one in five (18.3%) would leave if threatened by fire and more than one in five (20.3%) would leave if advised by emergency services.

Over one in six (18.3%) would leave early on a day of high fire danger.

These figures are comparable with those reported in the benchmarking study.

Demographic Analysis

There are no significant differences between demographic groups for this question.

SECTION III: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAMPLE

	Dec 09% Respondents (n = 406) %	Jan 10% Respondents (n = 274) %
Household situation		
Couple with children or other dependents	34.1	31.2
Couple without children or other dependents	34.1	36.8
Single person with children or other dependents	5.7	5.6
Single person without children or other dependents	16.4	16.0
Group of adults	9.5	10.4
Other	0.2	0.0
Country of birth		
In Australia	77.1	79.1
Overseas	22.9	20.9
Main language spoken at home		
English	98.8	98.1
Another language	1.2	1.9
Geographic Area		
Dandenongs	47.3	44.7
Bendigo and surrounds	22.0	17.3
Remainder	30.7	38.0
Gender		
Male	42.4	39.8
Female	57.6	60.2
Age		
18-24	2.7	0.4
25-34	4.0	4.5
35-44	17.2	20.4
45-54	23.2	18.2
55-64	27.2	26.4
65-74	15.5	22.3
75 and over	10.2	7.8
Ref/Not Applicable	0.3	0.0
Distance from Bushland		
Less than 100 metres	49.1	46.4
100 to less than 500 metres	26.5	29.2
500 to 1 kilometre	22.4	23.4
More than 1 kilometre	2.0	1.1

Type of Property		
House on residential block	64.0	71.9
Hobby farm or small acreage	34.5	26.3
House on large farm	1.5	1.8
Other	0.0	0.0

SECTION IV: SURVEY

0. 0
0 _____

S. Hello. I am **[NAME OF INTERVIEWER]** ringing on behalf of the Country Fire authority (CFA) from Strahan Research. We are doing a survey on bushfire . It takes 7 minutes and your comments will be confidential. We would like you to answer all the questions but you don't have to.

1. What is the approximate distance between your house and the nearest bushland area? (An area of forest or trees or bush etc)

- m Less than 100 metres
- m Between 100 and less than 500 metres
- m Between 500 metres and 1 kilometre
- m Greater than 1 kilometre

2. Which of the following best describes the property you live on?

- m House on residential block
- m Hobby farm or small acreage
- m House on large farm
- m Other[specify] _____

S. IF Q1 = > 1 KILOMETRE + Q2 = HOUSE ON RESIDENTIAL BLOCK THEN TERMINATE. CALL OUTCOME *NOT SUITABLE*.

2a. During the **last bushfire season**, did you have a written bushfire plan for what you and your family would do if there was a bushfire?

- m Yes have a written plan
- m Yes have a plan but not written down
- m No
- m Don't Know

2c. **During the last bushfire season**, was it you and your family's plan to stay and defend your property or to leave your property if you were threatened by a bushfire?

- m Stay and defend property
- m Leave early
- m Don't Know

2d. **During the last bushfire season** when did you plan to leave

- m When threatened by the bushfire
- m When advised by emergency services
- m As soon as aware there was a fire in the area
- m Before or early on a high fire danger day
- m Don't Know
- m Other (SPECIFY) _____

3. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements . [Prompt on scale to begin with.....*Is that slightly agree, agree or strongly agree?*].

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| I understand a bushfire could impact on properties around here including mine | m Strongly disagree |
| | m Disagree |
| | m Disagree slightly |
| The thought of being involved in a bushfire makes me feel sick in the stomach | m Agree slightly |
| | m Agree |
| | m Strongly agree |
| I accept responsibility for my home and property during the bushfire season | |
| I know that I need to be self sufficient in the event of a bushfire | |
| I worry about being affected by bushfire | |
| I spend time thinking about what I would do if a bushfire occurred | |

4. Do you **now** have written plan of what you and others in your household would do if a bushfire occurred in the area where you live?

- m Yes have a written plan
- m Yes have a plan but not written down
- m No

4a. What is the main reason why you don't have a written plan?

— _____

— _____

— _____

4b. Have you discussed your plan with the members of your household?

- m Yes
- m No
- m Can't remember

4c. Have you practiced your plan with the members of your household?

- m Yes
- m No
- m Can't remember

5. A new Fire Danger Rating system has been introduced in Victoria. Do you know what the highest danger rating is now called? [DO NOT PROMPT]

- m Code Red/Catastrophic Day
- m Other colour - red, orange, yellow
- m Other description - extreme, severe, very high
- m Other (Specify) _____
- m Don't Know

6. Can you tell me what the emergency services advise you to do if there is a Code Red or catastrophic bushfire danger day?

—

—

—

7. What is advised for an extreme or severe fire danger day?

—

—

—

8. How effective do you think the new Fire Danger Ratings are in providing an indicator of potential danger from bushfire?

- m Not effective at all
- m Slightly effective
- m Somewhat effective
- m Very effective
- m Extremely effective
- m Don't Know

9. This bushfire season, do you and your family plan to leave your property on a code red day - that is a catastrophic bushfire weather day?

- m Yes
- m No
- m Don't Know

9a. Would you plan to leave

- m The night before the forecast code red day
- m When advised by emergency services
- m In the morning of the code red day
- m Sometime during the code red day
- m Don't Know
- m Other (SPECIFY) _____

9b. What is the main reason why you would not leave on a code red day?

— _____

— _____

— _____

10. Which one of the following actions are **you** most likely to take if all members of your household were at home when a bushfire occurred in your area? **[READ LIST]. 10b** Which action would **other adult members (partner/spouse)** of your household take? 10c What action would any **dependants** (children <18years old or elderly) take?

	You	Q10b Other Adults	Q10c Dependants
Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property	m Yes m No	m Yes m No	m Yes m No
Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire			
Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services			
Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area			
I would not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger			
Don't know what I would do			
Not applicable (no other adult or dependants in household)			

S. And now for the last few questions.

11. Which of the following best describes your household situation?
- m Couple with one or more children or dependents
 - m Couple without children or dependents
 - m Single person with children or dependents
 - m Single person without children or dependents
 - m Group of adults living together
 - m Other _____

12. Which of the following age groups do the following people belong to?

- | Household members | Age |
|-------------------|------------------|
| You | m 18 to 24 |
| Your partner | m 25 to 34 |
| | m 35 to 44 |
| | m 45 to 54 |
| | m 55 to 64 |
| | m 65 -74 |
| | m 75 and over |
| | m Not applicable |

12a. Were you born in Australia or overseas?

- m In Australia
 - m Overseas. Where were you born? (A COUNTRY)
-

12b. What is the main language that you speak at home?

- m English
 - m Another language. What language
-

13. What is the postcode of the area you live in?

Postcode _____

14. Are you or any member of your household a current member of CFA?

- m Yes I am in CFA
- m Yes a person in the household is in CFA
- m No

15. Sometimes our interviews are checked to make sure we have done them correctly. Could I have your first name only please?

Name _____

S. That is the end of the interview. Thank you for your time. Just to remind you that I am [NAME OF INTERVIEWER] from Strahan Research and If you have any questions, concerns or feedback please contact our office on 9243 3270.

16. RECORD GENDER

- m Male
- m Female

17. RECORD TELEPHONE NUMBER

Telephone _____

18. RECORD NAME OF INTERVIEWER

Interviewer _____