



GRASSFIRES

cfa.vic.gov.au



KNOW HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR PROPERTY



DO YOU HAVE A PLAN?

Grassfires spread rapidly and can quickly threaten lives and property.

If you live in a grassland area you need to have a Bushfire Survival Plan and prepare yourself and your property for grassfire.

You can be surrounded by grassland and paddocks living on a farm in rural Victoria, on a suburban block in Melbourne or in a small town.

Understanding the grassfire risk

- Grassland includes pasture grass, crops and areas of undisturbed natural grasslands.
 - Grassfires tend to produce far fewer embers than forest fires.
 - Grassfires can spread quickly and are extremely dangerous.
 - Grassfires can travel up to 25 kilometres per hour, in extreme circumstances pulsing up to 60 kilometres per hour in open grassland.
 - As grass is a fine fuel, fire burns through it faster than through forest.
 - Grassfires tend to be less intense than a forest fire however they can still generate enormous amounts of radiant heat.
 - The taller and drier the grass, the more intensely a grassfire will burn.
 - The shorter the grass the lower the flame height and the easier the fire will be to control.
 - Short grass under 10 centimetres is a much lower risk.
- Grassfires can start earlier in the day than forest fires as grass dries out more quickly than forest when temperatures are high.
 - Living in a grassland area with dried-out brown or golden-coloured grass that is over 10 centimetres high is a high risk. Some grasses such as Phalaris grass will burn even when green.
 - Grassfires can be started accidentally when using machinery such as chainsaws, lawnmowers, tractors and welders over summer.

Protecting yourself from grassfires

- Grassfires can start quickly and spread rapidly, catching people off guard.
- Grassfires are very hot and can produce large amounts of radiant heat that can kill anyone caught out in the open.
- The safest place to be during a grassfire is well away from the threat.



PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.
FireReady

Shelter from radiant heat

Shelter yourself from radiant heat by:

- going inside a building that is well prepared and actively defended
- going inside a private or community fire shelter that meets current regulations
- as a last resort, go to a Neighbourhood Safer Place (**Place of Last Resort**). If there is no such place, then a ploughed paddock, dam, swimming pool or other large water body may offer some protection from radiant heat. This does not include a water tank. Dams may not be reliable as their water levels fluctuate and they may be empty in summer.

Cars offer very little protection from radiant heat. A car is unlikely to protect you from the radiant heat of a grassfire. However, it offers more protection than being caught on foot in the open. If you are in a car and become caught in a grassfire, do not get out and run.

In a grassfire, the most dangerous places are usually along the roadsides where there is often a lot of fuel to burn. The fire may be hotter along the roadside than in a well-grazed paddock. If you are caught in a grassfire, move to places where there is minimal vegetation, such as a ploughed or well-grazed paddock.

Protective clothing

If you are threatened by a grassfire, always protect yourself by covering up all exposed skin with protective clothing.

- Long-sleeved shirt and pants made from a natural fibre, such as cotton or wool
- Sturdy boots and woollen socks
- Tough leather gloves
- A wide-brimmed hat
- A face mask or towel to cover your mouth and nose
- Eye protection, such as smoke goggles.

You need to shield yourself from radiant heat behind a solid structure such as a building.

Protecting your home and property from grassfires

- Decide what buildings or assets you need to protect from grassfire.
- **Reduce the height and proximity of grass to these buildings and other assets by:**
 - Slashing
 - Mowing
 - Grazing
 - Spraying and using herbicide
 - Creating fuel breaks by removing all fuel (vegetation) down to the soil.
- Narrow fuel breaks (under 3 metres wide) are ineffective at stopping a fire, however they may slow it down.
- It is important that you prepare and maintain your property for grassfire.
- By reducing the grass and other fine fuels around your buildings and other assets, you can reduce the fire risk. Reducing fuel can limit the ability of a moving grassfire to ignite a building through direct flame contact or radiant heat.
- It is too late to begin spraying and slashing as the fire approaches.
- You must prepare now.
- Farmers need to include fire preparations in their whole farm plan. CFA's *On the Land* booklet contains advice for all farmers.

For information on using machinery during the Fire Danger Period see the CFA's *Can I or Can't I?* brochure.

Further information

- CFA website cfa.vic.gov.au
- Victorian Bushfire Information Line **1800 240 667** (or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677** if you are hearing impaired).

