



# SECTION 01

# AM I AT RISK?



## **NEED SOME HELP?**

- Visit [cfa.vic.gov.au](https://cfa.vic.gov.au)
- Call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on **1800 240 667** or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677**

## SECTION 01 AM I AT RISK?

**Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world. Understanding your level of risk is the first step in developing your Bushfire Survival Plan.**

It only takes two weeks of hot, dry and windy weather to create dangerous fire conditions. So, if you live, work or travel in Victoria this summer, you may be at risk of bushfire.

If you live near or visit areas that are heavily forested, have thick bush or long, dry grass, or coastal areas with lots of scrub you are at risk of fire.

Fires can occur where suburbs meet the bush or in urban areas where houses have grassland, bush or parkland around them.





## ➤ WHAT CREATES BUSHFIRE RISK?

### VEGETATION

The intensity of a bushfire will be affected by the amount and type of vegetation around your home. Local terrain, such as hills and valleys, also plays a role.

Bushfire will behave differently depending on the environment it is burning in. These environments include:

- grass or paddocks
- forest and woodland
- coastal scrub
- bush and grassland fringes.

Have a look at pages 8-13 for more information about high-risk environments.

### WEATHER

Extreme heat, gusting winds and low rainfall dramatically increases the level of bushfire risk. The combination of dry conditions with hot, dry and windy days means bushfires can quickly become uncontrollable. This places lives and property at risk.

A change in wind direction is one of the most dangerous influences on fire behaviour. Many people who die in bushfires get caught during or after a wind change.

Have a look at page 25 for more information.

### TOPOGRAPHY

Topography influences the speed and intensity of a fire.

A fire will burn faster up a hill. As a fire moves up a hill it will intensify in speed and heat. Being on top of a hill in a bushfire makes you more vulnerable.

As wind passes over a hill or windbreak the wind can tumble, creating turbulence and erratic fire behaviour. Valleys and gullies can channel and strengthen wind.

**Poor road access, such as narrow streets in hilly areas, may make it difficult for firetrucks to get in and for residents to leave.**



### WHAT IS AN EMBER ATTACK?

- Embers are burning twigs, leaves and pieces of debris.
- Ember attack occurs when twigs and leaves are carried by the wind and land on or around a house.
- Embers can land on top of debris in your gutters and set fire to your house.
- Ember attack is the most common way houses catch fire during bushfires.
- Ember attack can happen before, during and after the bushfire.



### WHAT IS RADIANT HEAT?

- Radiant heat is the heat that you feel from a fire.
- Radiant heat is the biggest killer of people and animals in a fire.
- The best protection from radiant heat is distance.
- A solid object, such as a brick wall, and suitable clothing can offer some protection from radiant heat. But they may not save your life.

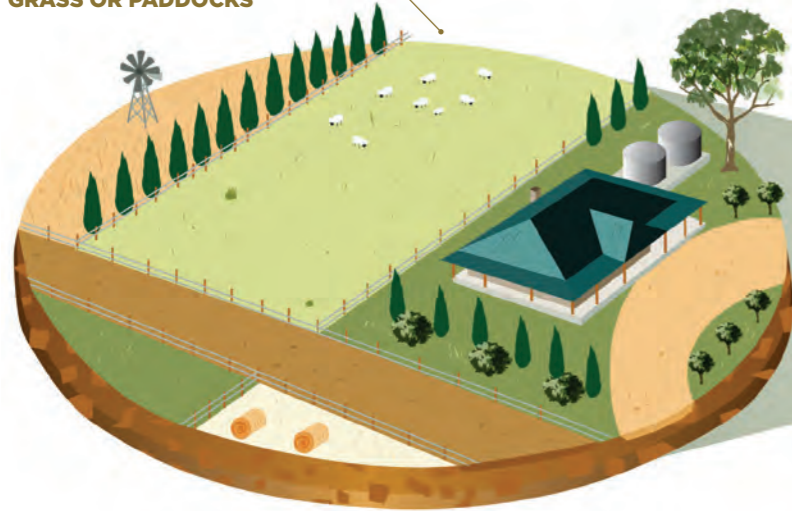
**Don't get caught in the open – radiant heat can kill you.**



➤ **LIVING IN A HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENT  
WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT?**

You are at risk if you live in any of these environments.

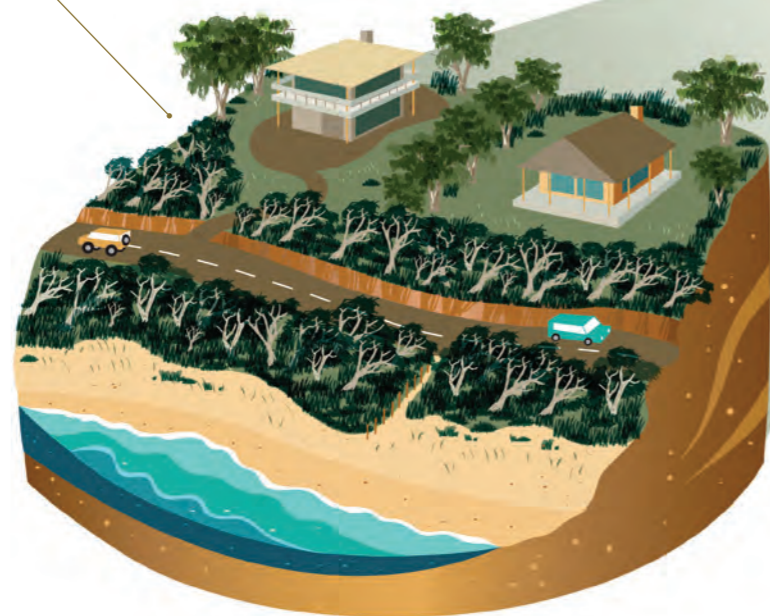
**A**  
CLOSE TO OR AMONG  
GRASS OR PADDOCKS



**B**  
CLOSE TO OR AMONG  
FOREST AND WOODLAND



**C**  
NEAR COASTAL SCRUB

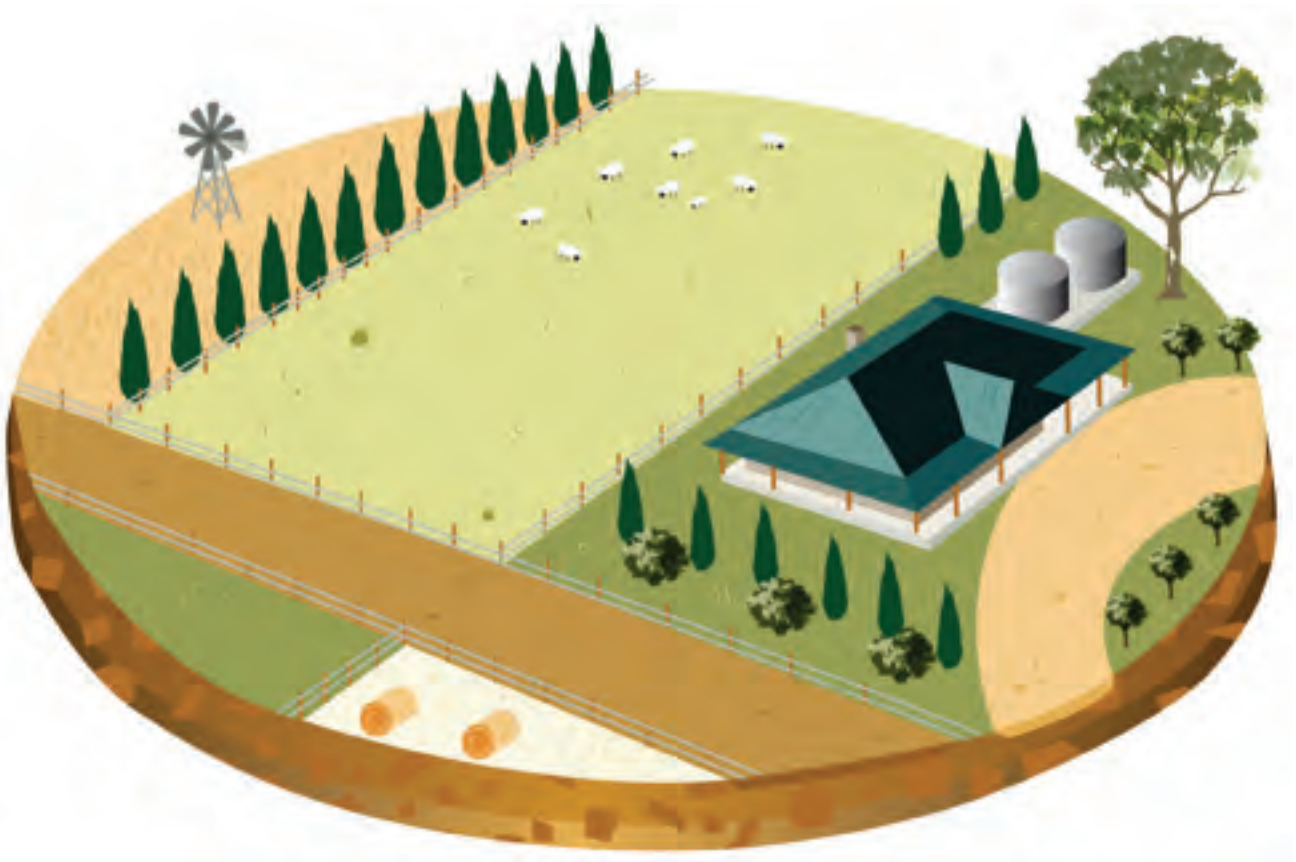


**D**  
WHERE SUBURBS MEET  
THE BUSH OR GRASSLANDS



## A. Close to or among grass or paddocks

Grassfires can be extremely dangerous – people can die in grassfires.



### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

- ✓ Dry and brown grass that easily catches fire.
- ✓ Grass more than 10 centimetres tall will have a higher flame height and intensity.
- ✓ Faster burning than through forests as grass is a finer fuel.
- ✓ Large amounts of radiant heat.
- ✓ Fires that can start early in the day.
- ✓ Faster moving fires that travel up to 25 kilometres per hour. In open grassland speed increases up to 60 kilometres per hour.



## B. Close to or among forest and woodlands

Risk is most extreme if you live surrounded by or near forest that is difficult to see through. However, all forest or woodland presents a bushfire risk.

### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

- ✓ Very hot fire and many embers.
- ✓ Embers such as twigs, bark and debris arriving from far away.
- ✓ Dangerous levels of radiant heat and fire intensity.
- ✓ Trees falling in high winds.
- ✓ Embers landing for a long time after the fire has passed.
- ✓ Fine fuels (the thickness of a pencil or less) that burn very quickly.
- ✓ Heavy fuels that will burn very hot for long periods of time.
- ✓ A reduction in visibility due to very thick smoke.

### C. Near coastal scrub

Burning scrub, heath or other coastal vegetation can create hot, dangerous bushfires. If you live by, work by or travel to the coast you are at risk. Beaches, foreshores and shallow waters may not be safe or protect you from radiant heat (see page 7). Often a fire will be burning between you and the beach.



#### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

- ✓ Very hot and fast-moving fires.
- ✓ Gusty ocean winds causing fire to behave erratically.
- ✓ A lot of embers.
- ✓ Fire reaching houses quickly.
- ✓ Busy, congested coastal roads.

## D. Where suburbs meet the bush or grasslands

You do not have to live in the bush to be at risk of bushfire. Suburban homes can burn down in bushfire, too.



### WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

- ✔ Scrub, forest and grass catching fire.
- ✔ A fire in a park or reserve quickly spreading to timber fences and gardens.
- ✔ Fire spreading from house to house once houses start to burn.
- ✔ A high risk of ember attack if the house is near dense bushland environments.
- ✔ Embers falling close to or on your house starting a new fire.
- ✔ Strong winds that bring embers from far away.

# STAY AWARE OF THE FIRE DANGER RATING AND KNOW WHAT TO DO.

The Fire Danger Rating predicts how a fire would behave if started, including how difficult it would be to put out.

The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions. The rating is your trigger to act, so to stay safe you need to stay aware of the Fire Danger Rating in your district.

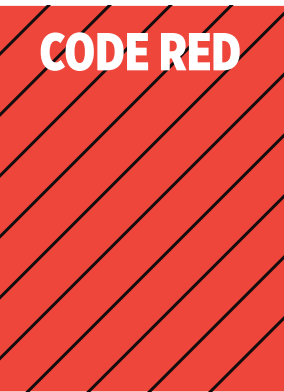
During the fire season, the Fire Danger Rating will feature in weather forecasts, be broadcast on radio and TV, and appear in some newspapers.

It can also be found on the websites of CFA, Department of Sustainability and Environment and Bureau of Meteorology, by calling the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or via National Relay Service on 1800 555 677.



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

## WHAT SHOULD I DO?



### CODE RED

- These are the worst conditions for a bush or grassfire.
- Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions.
- The safest place to be is away from high-risk bushfire areas.

- Leaving high-risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option – do not wait and see.
- Avoid forested areas, thick bush or long, dry grass.
- Know your trigger – make a decision about:
  - when you will leave
  - where you will go
  - how you will get there
  - when you will return
  - what you will do if you cannot leave.



### EXTREME

- Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions.
- If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and come from many directions.
- Homes that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety.
- You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.

- Consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to the highest level. This means your home needs to be situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, you are well prepared and you can actively defend your home if a fire starts.
- If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high-risk bushfire areas early in the day is your safest option.
- Be aware of local conditions. Seek information by listening to ABC local radio, commercial and designated community radio stations, or watch Sky News TV, visit [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au), call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on **1800 240 667** or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677**.



### SEVERE

- Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions.
- If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be uncontrollable.
- Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety.
- You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.

- Well-prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- If you are not prepared, leaving bushfire-prone areas early in the day is your safest option.
- Be aware of local conditions. Seek information by listening to ABC local radio, commercial and designated community radio stations, or watch Sky News TV, visit [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au), call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on **1800 240 667** or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677**.



### VERY HIGH

- If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions.
- Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk.

- Check your Bushfire Survival Plan.
- Monitor conditions.
- Action may be needed.
- Leave if necessary.



### HIGH

- Controlled burning off may occur in these conditions if it is safe – check to see if permits apply.



### LOW-MODERATE