

BEHAVIOUR AND INTENTIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS IN HIGH BUSHFIRE RISK AREAS

A TRACKINGREPORT FOR THE COUNTRY FIRE AUTHORITY

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CONTENTS

	Page
Background	3
Project Objectives	4
Research Methodology	5
Section I: Executive Summary	7
Section II: Household Survey Data	12
Section III: Demographics of Sample	37
Section IV: Survey	40

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 and 271 respondents were surveyed between 22 to 24 February 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%
February 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. A further 274 households were surveyed in late January 2010 and 271 in late February. Results for December and January are included consecutively in square brackets [].

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Last Bushfire Season

Written Bushfire Plan

In February 21.9% [18.4%;17.9%] of respondents said they had a written Bushfire Plan during the 2008/09 bushfire season while 48% [62.7%; 52.4%] had a plan that was not written. 29.7% [18.95%; 29.7%] of respondents say that they did not have a plan in the last bushfire season

Plan to Stay or Go

In February 70.5% [65.6%; 65.2%] of respondents reported that in the previous fire season they had planned to leave if threatened by a bushfire.

22% [27.8%; 26%] had planned to stay and defend their property.

When Plan to Leave

In February 28.6% [35.4%; 35%] of respondents said that they had planned to leave as soon as they were aware there was a fire in their area. 28.6% [25.7%; 30.5%] planned to leave when advised by the emergency services and 21.2% [12.3%; 16.4%] had planned to leave when threatened by fire.

19% [23.9%; 15.3%] say they had planned to leave early, in advance of or on, a high fire danger day.

Attitudes to Bushfire Safety

In February over nine in ten respondents agreed that they:

- Accept responsibility for home and property during bushfire season (96.5%) [96.3%; 96.7%]
- Understand a bushfire could impact on their property (97.3%) [95.8%; 93%]
- Know that they need to be self sufficient in the event of bushfire (96.6%) [94.1%; 91.5%]

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 February, 23.1% [22.5%; 25%] of respondents say they have a written Bushfire Action Plan and 54.5% [62%; 54.8%] have a plan but it is not written. 22.4% [15.4%; 20.2%]

now say that they do not have any type of plan. There has been an insignificant decrease in households with plans and a further recognition that if the plan is not written then you don't have a plan.

Discussed and Practiced Plan with Household Members

98.4% [92.4%; 91%] have discussed it with household members and 64.5% [52.7%; 43.9%] have practiced the plan.

Reasons for Not Having a Plan

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

- Will leave when threatened by bushfire (17.5%) [8.6%; 11.3%]
- Can remember their plan without writing it (17.0%) [11.6%; 22.1%]
- Know what to do (16.0%) [25.3%; 16.7%] without a plan because they are experienced and/or prepared
- Have few people in the household or are a single person (14.6%) [13.9%; 10.3%] 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%; 11.8%]

Fire Danger Rating System

Knowledge of FDR

In February 67.2% [61.6%; 70.7%] of respondents cited the highest fire danger day as catastrophic or Code Red.

15.7% [21.7%; 15.6%] could not say what the highest fire rating was now called.

The trend increase in awareness of the name of the highest rating day in the comparison period has been sustained.

Knowledge of Advice for Code Red Days

In February 77.2% [59.5%; 80.1%] of respondents say that emergency services advice is to leave in some manner including:

- Leave the night before or early in the morning (65.3%) [29.5%; 73%]
- "Leave early (2.6%) [12.8%; 1.9%]
- Leave immediately (7.8%) [11.0%; 3.7%]
- Leave (at an indeterminate time) (1.5%) [6.2%; 1.5%]

This continues the crystallisation of awareness of the emergency services' advice (detected in January) 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 February 5.3% [15.5%; 14.9%] of respondents say emergency services advice is to leave early unless they are able to defend a properly prepared property. This represents a significant reduction in the number of respondents correctly citing emergency services advice.

37.3% [32.6%; 29.5%] say the advice is to leave including:

- The night before or early next morning (25.6%) [11.7%; 18.6%]
- Early (1.9%) [11.0%; 2.7%]
- Immediately (9.8%) [4.3%; 4.1%]

38.7% say that the advice is to stay including:

- Be alert to fire, wait and see what happens and be prepared to leave (22.9%) [13.3%; 19.7%]
- Implement their bushfire plan (11.3%) [9.7%; 9.2%]
- Leave if threatened by fire (1.9%) [3.8%; 5.1%]
- Stay until advised to leave by emergency services (1.7%) [2.9%]

13.2% do not know what emergency services advise

Effectiveness of FDR

In January 29.9% [35.2%; 38.5%] of respondents say that the new fire danger ratings are very or extremely effective and a further 32.2% [33%; 29.3%] see the ratings as somewhat effective. Almost one in three (28%) [20.7%; 22.6%] now see the rating as not effective or slightly effective.

Code Red Day

Plan for Code Red Day

In January 56.4% [60.6%; 53.2%] plan to leave their property on a Code Red Day. 35.3% [31.3%; 40.1%] plan not to leave.

Those who plan to leave would do so:

- The night before a Code Red day (31.5%) [30.1%; 38.9%]
- On the morning of the Code Red Day (36.9%) [37.4%; 31.9%]
- When advised by emergency services (20.1%) [21.5%; 22.9%]

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 (39.4%) [25.3%; 35.2%]
- They are safe from bushfire and do not feel threatened (21.3%) [27.3%; 18.5%]
- Their property is defensible and they are prepared against bushfire (14.9%) [20%; 16.7%]

This reinforces the trend (identified in January) 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 (7.1%) [9.6%; 9.9%]
 - Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire (22.5%) [24.9%; 24.8%]
 - Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services (17.6%) [20%; 18.6%]
 - Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area (40.4%) [29.8%; 29.2%]
 - Not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger (11.2%) [15.5%; 13.5%]

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 Respondent s (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=271) %
Have a written plan	18.4	17.9	21.9
Have a plan but not written	62.7	52.4	48.0
Have no plan	18.9	29.7	29.7
Don't Know	0.0	0.0	0.4

Just over one in five respondents (21.9%) said that they had a written Bushfire Plan during the 2008/09 bushfire season. This is an increase in the number identified in the December benchmarking survey and the January monitor.

Slightly less than one half of respondents (48.0%) said they had a plan but it was not written. This is a further reduction on the January monitor reflected by more saying they had a written plan.

As in the January monitor almost three in ten (29.7%) say they did not have a Bushfire Plan last bushfire season. This confirms the January trend compared to the December benchmarking survey

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

Demographic Analysis

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

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?

Plan to stay or go	Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=271) %
Stay and defend property	27.8	26.0	22.0
Leave if threatened by bushfire	65.6	65.2	70.5
Don't Know	6.6	8.8	7.5

Over one in five respondents (22.0%) said that last bushfire season they planned to stay and defend their property in the event that they were threatened by bushfire.

Over seven in ten (70.5%) had planned to leave if threatened by bushfire while 7.5% did not know what they had planned.

These figures suggest a slight and not significant fall in the number saying they will stay and defend compared to the benchmarking and January survey.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups planned last season to stay and defend their properties tend to be:

- Men (32.4%)
- Living on a small acreage or large farm (29.5%)
- Living in a household without dependents (27.1%)

Those who more than other groups planned last season to leave if threatened by bushfire tend to be:

- Living in households with dependents (83.0%)
- Women (77.1%)

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>Feb 10 Respondents (n=189) %</i>
<i>When threatened by the bushfire</i>	12.3	16.4	21.2
<i>When advised by emergency services</i>	25.7	30.5	24.9
<i>As soon as aware there was a fire in the area</i>	35.4	35.0	28.6
<i>Before or early on a high fire danger day</i>	23.9	15.3	19.0
<i>Don't Know</i>	2.2	2.3	5.3
<i>Other</i>	0.4	0.6	1.1

Almost three in ten respondents (28.6%) 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 almost one quarter (24.9%) planned to leave when advised by the emergency services.

Over one in five (21.2%) said in the last fire season they had planned to leave when threatened by fire.

Almost one in five (19.0%) had planned to leave early, in advance of or on, a high fire danger day.

These small changes in remembrance of plans for the previous season suggest a slight softening of concern about bushfire due to the experience of this (so far) relatively benign fire season.

Demographic Analysis

Men (33.3%) more than other groups tend to say that they had planned to leave when threatened by bushfire.

Women (22.3%) more than other groups tend to say that they had planned to leave before or early on a high fire danger day.

Those who more than others planned to leave when advised by emergency services tend to be living:

- In Bendigo and the surrounding area (47.8%)

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- More than 500 metres from bushland (36.8%)

Those who more than others planned to leave when they were aware of a fire in the area tend to be living:

- More than 500 metres from bushland (39.5%)
- In areas other than the Dandenongs and Bendigo and surrounds (39.1%)

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		February 10	
	Disagree	Agree	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	2.7	97.3
<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	33.6	66.4
<i>I accept responsibility for my home and property during the bushfire season</i>	3.7	96.3	3.3	96.7	3.5	96.5
<i>I know I need to be self sufficient in the event of a bushfire</i>	5.9	94.1	8.5	91.5	3.4	96.6
<i>I worry about being affected by bushfire</i>	26.2	73.8	29.0	71.0	31.5	68.5
<i>I spend time thinking about what I would do if a bushfire occurred</i>	24.8	75.2	25.6	74.4	30.8	69.2

Over nine in ten respondents agreed that they:

- Understand a bushfire could impact on their property (97.3%)
- Know that they need to be self sufficient in the event of bushfire (96.6%)
- Accept responsibility for home and property during bushfire season (96.5%)

Almost seven in ten respondents agree that they:

- Spend time thinking about what they would do in the event of a bushfire (69.2%)

-
- Worry about being affected by bushfire (68.5%)

Two thirds of respondents say they Feel sick in the stomach at the thought of being involved in a bushfire (66.4%)

The tracking figures for these statements of attitudes to bushfire safety are similar to those collected in the December benchmarking study and the January monitor.

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 (82.3%)
- People living in households with dependents (76.6%)

Men (51.4%) more than others disagree that the thought of being involved in a bushfire makes them feel sick in the stomach

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

- Women (75.9%)
- People living on a small acreage or large farm (80.7%)

Men (38.9%) more than other groups tend to disagree they worry about being affected by bushfire.

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 Respondents (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=271) %
Yes (written plan)	22.5	25.0	23.1
Yes but not written	62.0	54.8	54.5
No	15.4	20.2	22.4

Less than one quarter of respondents (23.1%) have a written Bushfire Action Plan and a further 54.5% say they have a plan but it is not written. Over one in five (22.4%) have no plan

Since the December benchmark there has been a small (and insignificant) increase in the number of respondents saying they have a written plan. Significantly the trend of more respondents recognising that if they do not have a written plan they have no plan, appears to be continuing.

Bushfire Plan Discussed	Dec 09 Discussed with Household (n=92) %	Jan 10 Discussed with Household (n=68) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=62) %
Yes	92.4	91.0	98.4
No	7.6	9.0	1.6

Of those who have a written plan 98.4% say they have discussed it with household members. This is an increase on the benchmarking report and the January monitor.

Bushfire Plan Practised	Dec 10 Respondents (n=92) %	Jan 09 Respondents (n=68) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=62) %
Yes	52.7	43.9	64.5

No	47.3	56.1	35.5
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Of those who have a written plan 64.5% say they have practiced the plan with household members. This is an increase on the benchmarking report and the January monitor.

The increase may reflect the fact that these latest data were collected later in the fire season so that households may have had an opportunity to discuss and practice their plan.

Demographic Analysis

Men (30.6%) more than others say they do not have a bushfire plan.

People aged 65 years and over (66.1%) more than other groups tend to say they have a plan that is not written

Those who more than other groups say they have practised their bushfire plan tend to be:

- Men (85.0%)
- People aged 35 to 64 years (75.6%)

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 %	Feb 10 Responses %
Know what to do	25.3	16.7	16.0
Small household/just me	13.9	10.3	14.6
Don't need to write /remember it	11.6	22.1	17.0
Haven't got round to it/not priority	10.6	11.8	10.7
Will leave when threatened	8.6	11.3	17.5
Not high risk	7.8	11.8	9.7
Intend to leave early	6.6	7.8	8.7
In the process of preparing a Plan	6.1	1.5	2.4
Fire too unpredictable/play by ear	4.0	3.4	0.0
Emergency services will tell me what to do	2.0	0.0	0.0
Haven't got enough information to prepare	1.0	0.0	0.0
Other	2.6	3.4	3.4

** Multiple responses possible*

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

- Intend to leave if threatened by a bushfire (17.5%)
- Can remember their plan without writing it (17.0%)
- Know what to do (16.0%) without a plan because they are experienced and/or prepared
- Have few people in the household or are a single person (14.6%) 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 (10.7%)
- Don't believe they live in a high bushfire risk area (9.7%)

The benchmarking study and the January monitor identified similar reasons for not having a written plan although in this study the number of respondents saying they don't have a plan because they *will leave if threatened by bushfire* has increased.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups say they do not have a written bushfire plan because they know what to do tend to be:

- Living in households without dependents (22.1%)
- Aged 65 years and over (21.6%)

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 (19.1%)
- Aged 65 years and over (21.6%)

People living in households with dependents (27.4%) more than other groups tend to say they do not have a written bushfire plan because they will leave when threatened by bushfire.

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) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=271) %
Code Red/ Catastrophic Day	61.6	70.7	67.2
Other colour	1.5	0.7	2.6
Other description – extreme, severe etc	15.0	11.9	13.4
Don't Know	21.7	15.6	15.7
Other	0.2	1.1	1.1

Over two thirds of respondents (67.2%) identified the highest fire danger day as catastrophic or Code Red. This represents a small but not significant decrease in awareness of what the highest danger rating is called compared to the January monitor.

Over one in twelve (13.4%) used other descriptions such as extreme, severe, critical, and acute.

Over one in seven (15.7%) could not say what the highest fire rating was now called.

This continues the significant reduction compared to the number of respondents in the benchmarking study and the January monitor who did not know what the highest rating was called.

Demographic Analysis

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

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 %	Feb 10 Responses %
Leave night before/early in morning	29.5	73.0	65.3
Leave early	12.8	1.9	2.6
Leave or be able to defend	11.7	2.2	2.2
Leave immediately	11.0	3.7	7.8
Leave (at some time)	6.2	1.5	1.5
Implement Bushfire plan	5.0	3.7	5.6
Stay till advised by ES to leave	3.9	1.9	2.6
Go to refuge/safe place	3.2	0.7	1.1
Stay alert/wait and see/prepare to leave	1.6	1.5	1.5
Don't Know	12.1	6.7	7.5
Other	2.9	3.3	2.2

* Multiple responses possible

Almost eight in ten responses (77.2%) say that emergency services advice is to leave in some manner. This continues the significant increase, identified in January, on the number (59.5%) who cited a similar response in the benchmarking study.

Almost two thirds of responses (65.3%) say correctly that the emergency services advice for a Code Red Day, is to leave the night before or early in the morning. This is a small reduction on the January monitor but confirms the crystallisation of respondent awareness and understanding of emergency services advice since the benchmarking study in December 2009.

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

The number of responses that the respondent does not know what emergency services advise for a Code Red Day remains at a lower level of 6.7%.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups say that emergency services advise that people leave the day before or early in the morning of the Code Red day tend to be:

- Aged 35 to 64 years (70.9%)
- Living in the Dandenongs (70.0%)

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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 Advise for Extreme or Severe Day	Dec 09 Responses %	Jan 10 Responses %	Feb 10 Responses %
<i>Leave or be able to defend</i>	15.5	14.9	5.3
<i>Be alert/wait and see/prepared to leave</i>	13.3	19.7	22.9
<i>Leave night before/early in morning</i>	11.7	18.6	25.6
<i>Leave early</i>	11.0	2.7	1.9
<i>Implement Bushfire plan</i>	9.7	9.2	11.3
<i>Leave (at some time)</i>	5.6	4.1	0.0
<i>Leave immediately</i>	4.3	4.1	9.8
<i>Leave if threatened by fire</i>	3.8	5.1	1.9
<i>Stay till advised by ES to leave</i>	2.9	1.7	2.6
<i>Prepare property</i>	1.8	4.4	3.0
<i>Go to refuge/safe place</i>	1.8	0.0	0.0
<i>Other</i>	3.1	2.7	2.6
<i>Don't Know</i>	15.5	12.9	13.2

** Multiple responses possible*

Only one in twenty responses (5.3%) 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 (37.3%) say the advice is to leave:

- The night before or early next morning (25.6%)
- Immediately (9.8%)
- Early (1.9%)

Over one third of responses (38.7%) say that the advice is to stay including:

- Be alert to fire, wait and see what happens and be prepared to leave (22.9%)
- Implement their bushfire plan (11.3%)
- Leave if threatened by fire (1.9%)
- Stay until advised to leave by emergency services (2.6%)

Just over one in eight responses (13.2%) indicate respondents do not know what emergency services advise on an extreme or severe bushfire danger day.

These outcomes suggest a reduction in understanding of the more complex message of *stay only if you are prepared* and an increased perception that it is either a matter of *leaving early* or staying to wait to see if there is a bushfire then deciding what to do next. It appears that respondents believe that whether they are adequately prepared to defend their property will depend on the specific circumstances of the bushfire and they are willing to wait and see what they are.

Demographic Analysis

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

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) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=271) %
Not effective at all	9.6	11.1	8.7
Slightly effective	11.1	11.5	19.3
Somewhat effective	33.0	29.3	32.2
Very effective	31.0	29.6	26.9
Extremely effective	4.2	8.9	3.0
Don't Know	11.1	9.6	9.8

Almost three in ten respondents (29.9%) say that the new fire danger ratings are very or extremely effective.

Almost one third (32.2%) believe the ratings are somewhat effective.

Over one quarter of respondents (28.0%) say that the new fire danger ratings are not effective at all or slightly effective.

Almost one in ten (9.8%) cannot say how effective the ratings are.

Overall there has been a decrease in perceptions that the Fire Danger Ratings are very or extremely effective and an increase in the view that they are not effective.

Demographic Analysis

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

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?

Plan to leave on Code Red Day	Dec 09 Respondents (n=408) %	Jan 10 Respondents (n=274) %	Feb 10 Respondents (n=271) %
Yes	60.6	53.2	56.4
No	31.3	40.1	35.3
Don't know	8.1	6.7	8.3

A majority of respondents (56.4%) plan to leave their property on a Code Red Day while over one third (35.3%) plan not to leave.

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

Demographic Analysis

Those more than other groups who say that they plan to leave on a Code Red Day tend to be:

- Living on a small acreage or large farm (64.4%)
- Living in the Dandenongs (62.3%)
- Women (62.4%)

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>Feb 10 Respondents (n=149) %</i>
<i>The night before the forecast code red day</i>	30.1	38.9	31.5
<i>When advised by emergency services</i>	21.5	22.9	20.1
<i>In the morning of the code red day</i>	37.4	31.9	36.9
<i>Sometime during the code red day</i>	7.3	3.5	5.4
<i>Don't Know</i>	2.4	0.0	1.3
<i>Other</i>	1.2	2.8	4.7

Of those respondents who plan to leave on a Code Red Day over three in ten (31.5%) would leave the night before the Code Red Day and 36.9% would leave in the morning of the Code Red day.

Over one in five (20.1%) would leave when advised by emergency services.

These levels are similar to those reported in the benchmarking study in December 2009 and in the January monitor. There is some movement around whether respondents intend to leave the night before or early in the morning.

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?

Why not leave on Code Red day	Dec 09 Responses %	Jan 10 Responses %	Feb 10 Responses %
Safe not threatened	27.3	18.5	21.3
Needs to be a fire to leave	25.3	35.2	39.4
Can defend property/property prepared	20.0	16.7	14.9
Nowhere else to go	6.7	12.0	2.1
Better/comfortable at home/in town	6.0	2.8	4.3
Can't keep coming and going	4.7	6.5	7.4
Code Red over-reaction/inappropriate	na	5.6	6.4
Don't Know	1.3	0.0	0.0
Other	10.7	2.8	4.3

** Multiple responses possible*

The three main reasons for not leaving on a Code Red Day cited in over three quarters of responses (75.6%) are because respondents believe:

- There needs to be a fire for them to leave (39.4%)
- They are safe from bushfire and do not feel threatened (21.3%)
- Their property is defensible and they are prepared against bushfire (14.9%)

These three responses read together suggest respondents continue to 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.

The January and February tracking studies confirm respondent attitudes that a bushfire is necessary for them to consider leaving and that the declaration of a Code Red day is not sufficient.

Demographic Analysis

Those who more than other groups say they would not leave on a Code Red day because they feel safe from or not threatened by bushfire tend to be:

- Living in the Dandenongs (32.5%)
- Living on a residential block (28.4%)
- Men (27.3%)
- Living in a household without dependants (26.2%)

Those who more than other groups say they would not leave on a Code Red day because there needs to be a bushfire tend to be:

- Women (50.0%)
- Living in a household with dependents (48.5%)

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) %	Feb 10 You (n = 271) %
<i>Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property</i>	9.6	9.9	7.1
<i>Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire</i>	24.9	24.8	22.5
<i>Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services</i>	20.0	18.6	17.6
<i>Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area</i>	29.8	29.2	40.4
<i>I would not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger</i>	15.5	13.5	11.2
<i>Don't know what I would do</i>	0.2	3.6	1.1

Respondent's actions

Over four in ten respondents (40.4%) say that they would leave as soon as they were aware of a bushfire in their area.

Over one in five respondents (22.5%) would leave if threatened by bushfire.

Over one in six respondents (17.6%) would wait to be advised by emergency services before they would leave.

Over one in ten (11.2%) would leave early on a day of high fire danger.

Just less than one in fourteen (7.1%) would stay and defend their property.

Over the course of the study there has been a significant increase in the number of respondents who say they would leave as soon as they were aware that there was a fire in the area. At the same time there has been a significant fall in the number saying that they would "leave early".

<i>Actions likely to take</i>	<i>Dec 09 Partner (n = 406)</i>		<i>Jan 10 Partner (n = 274)</i>		<i>Feb 10 Partner (n = 271)</i>	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<i>Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property</i>	8.6	10.8	6.9	8.8	8.2	9.9
<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	17.6	21.2
<i>Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services</i>	14.8	18.5	15.0	19.2	13.9	16.7
<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	33.3	40.1
<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	9.0	10.8
<i>Don't know what I would do</i>	0.1	0.1	0.7	0.9	1.0	1.2
<i>Not applicable</i>	20.1		21.9		17.0	

Partners/Adults actions

Of those respondents who have partners or other adults in the household four in ten (40.1%) say that they would leave as soon as they were aware of a bushfire in their area and over one in five (21.2%) would leave if threatened by fire.

One in six (16.7%) would leave if advised by emergency services

Over one in ten partners/adults (10.8%) would leave early on a day of high fire danger.

Almost one in ten (9.9%) would stay and defend their property

Over the course of the study there has been a significant increase in the number of respondents who say that other independent adults in the household would leave as soon as they were aware that there was a fire in the area.

Actions likely to take	Dec 09 Dependants (n = 406) %		Jan 10 Dependants (n = 274) %		Feb 10 Dependants (n = 271) %	
Stay throughout the fire to try and protect the house and property	2.2	5.5	1.5	4.4	1.5	3.9
Do as much as possible to protect the house but leave if threatened by the fire	8.4	21.0	6.2	18.3	6.7	17.6
Stay but leave if advised to do so by emergency services	7.4	18.5	6.9	20.3	5.6	14.7
Leave as soon as you are aware that there is a fire in the area	14.8	37.5	12.8	37.8	19.1	50.1
I would not be home as I intend to leave the area on days of high fire danger	6.9	17.3	6.2	18.3	5.2	13.6
Don't know what I would do	0.2	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Not applicable	60.2		66.1		61.9	

Dependants

Of those respondents who have dependants in the household more than one half (50.1%) say that they would leave as soon as they were aware of a bushfire in their area.

More than one in six (17.6%) would leave if threatened by fire and more than one in seven (14.7%) would leave if advised by emergency services.

Over one in eight (13.6%) would leave early on a day of high fire danger.

Over the course of the study there has been a significant increase in the number of respondents who say that dependants would leave as soon as they were aware that there was a fire in the area. At the same time there has been a significant fall in the number saying that dependants would "leave early".

Demographic Analysis

Men (14.8%) more than other groups say that they would stay and defend their property if there was a bushfire.

Those who more than others say that they would leave if threatened by bushfire tend to be living:

- In Bendigo and surround area (35.0%)
- More than 500 metres from bushland (32.7%)

Those who more than others say that they would not leave if threatened by bushfire tend to be

- Women (82.2%)
- Living within 500 metres of bushland (80.0%)

Women (47.1%) more than other groups say that they would leave as soon as they were they were aware of the fire.

SECTION III: DEMOGRAPHICS OF SAMPLE

	Dec 09 % Respond ents (n = 406) %	Jan 10 % Respond ents (n = 274) %	Feb 10 % Respond ents (n = 271) %
Household situation			
Couple with children or other dependents	34.1	31.2	32.1
Couple without children or other dependents	34.1	36.8	37.7
Single person with children or other dependents	5.7	5.6	3.4
Single person without children or other dependents	16.4	16.0	14.3
Group of adults	9.5	10.4	12.5
Other	0.2	0.0	0.0
Country of birth			
In Australia	77.1	79.1	78.3
Overseas	22.9	20.9	21.7
Main language spoken at home			
English	98.8	98.1	99.6
Another language	1.2	1.9	0.4
Geographic Area			
Dandenongs	47.3	44.7	46.5
Bendigo and surrounds	22.0	17.3	13.9
Remainder	30.7	38.0	39.6
Gender			
Male	42.4	39.8	41.0
Female	57.6	60.2	59.0
Age			
18-24	2.7	0.4	3.4
25-34	4.0	4.5	7.2
35-44	17.2	20.4	18.3
45-54	23.2	18.2	20.9
55-64	27.2	26.4	27.4
65-74	15.5	22.3	14.1
75 and over	10.2	7.8	8.4
Ref/Not Applicable	0.3	0.0	0.4
Distance from Bushland			
Less than 100 metres	49.1	46.4	49.8
100 to less than 500 metres	26.5	29.2	30.3
500 to 1 kilometre	22.4	23.4	17.7
More than 1 kilometre	2.0	1.1	2.2

Type of Property			
House on residential block	64.0	71.9	67.5
Hobby farm or small acreage	34.5	26.3	29.5
House on large farm	1.5	1.8	3.0
Other	0.0	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 _____