

Lesson plan 2:

Houses, bushfires and the environment

Background

Awareness of bushfire hazards around the home and appropriate actions to remove or reduce these hazards will increase the safety of homes and the people who live in them in the event of a bushfire.

Students cannot be responsible for preparing the home in case of a bushfire or for preparing a Bushfire Survival Plan; however, they can be part of this planning with their parent or guardian.

Care should be taken to not unduly frighten students about the dangers of bushfires in their local area. Suggest that the students discuss the issue with their parents/guardians and encourage their families to prepare in case of a bushfire.

Ensure that **Support material 1: Letter to parent/guardian** is circulated prior to your visit and that any sensitivity is considered.

Suggested teaching time

45 minutes

Objectives

To develop an understanding of bushfires so that students are able to:

- describe ways in which houses can be protected from bushfires
- explain the dangers of a bushfire and the ways people can protect themselves.

Materials needed

- **Poster: Being prepared**
- **Film: Bushfire preparedness at home**
- **Worksheet 31: Preparing for summer**
- **Poster: Bushfire warning signs**
- **Poster: Radiant heat**
- **Film: Personal protective clothing**



Lesson outline

1. Houses and bushfires

15 minutes

- Introduce the topic of bushfires by asking ‘What is a bushfire? How do bushfires start? When are bushfires most likely to occur?’
- Present the problem ‘Who or what is at risk in a bushfire?’ Talk briefly about the possible loss of life, houses and property, and livestock, and the environmental consequences of a bushfire. Explain that everyone has a responsibility to help get ready early for the bushfire season.
- Ask the students if they can think of any ways that, together with their families, they can help to prepare for summer and the possibility of bushfire. Examples include: making and writing down a Bushfire Survival Plan; cleaning up around their homes; installing a sprinkler system, an easily accessible water source, and shutters on doors and windows; and ensuring working smoke alarms are in all buildings.

2. House preparation for bushfire

15 minutes

- As a group, brainstorm ways the students could help their family to make their home more fire safe before summer. Use **Poster: Being prepared** to generate ideas and discussion about things that could be done at home.
- Play the **Film: Bushfire preparedness at home**.
- Hand out **Worksheet 31: Preparing for summer** and ask the students to look for the areas that might cause problems in a bushfire.
- Ask the students to share their solutions to the problems with the rest of the class. Explain the reasons why we would fix each of the problem areas, and how, having done so, this would make the house safer in a bushfire.

3. Getting ready early

15 minutes

- Ask the students if they have talked with their family about getting ready for bushfires. Have they made a plan, and if so, what does it involve?
- Explain that people living in an area likely to experience bushfires must have a written Bushfire Survival Plan. They must make their plans before the fire season. If they plan to leave their home, they must do so well before a bushfire reaches the house.
- Show students **Poster: Bushfire warning signs**. Ask students if they have seen these signs before and if they know what each sign means. Explain what the signs mean and why they are needed.
- Make special reference to Code Red, this being the worst day possible for bushfire conditions.
- With help from students, create a list of all the different elements a Bushfire Survival Plan needs to include: what they plan to do when the Fire Danger Rating is Severe, Extreme or Code Red or when a Total Fire Ban is forecast, when and where they will go, what they might need to take with them, what they will do with their pets and things they could do to help prepare their house before they leave. Remind students to consider radiant heat: radiant heat is the warmth you feel from a campfire, a heater or a flame from a gas stove. Bushfires produce enormous amounts of radiant heat that travels in straight lines, radiating from a fire ahead of the flames. Radiant heat can be blocked by a solid object, such as a concrete wall or building, which creates a barrier between you and the bushfire. Use **Poster: Radiant heat** to help explain the concept. Play the **Film: Personal protective clothing** to summarise appropriate dress and why it is important.
- Emphasise that developing a Bushfire Survival Plan is their parents’/guardians’ responsibility but that students can remind them of the need to develop a plan. Suggest they discuss this with their family.

Extension activities

- **Worksheet 32: Is your property ready?**
- **Fire Safe Kids e-learning game** on CD-ROM and at www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- **Worksheet 8: Sophie badge**