

Lesson plan 1:

Preparing for summer

Background

Students need to be aware of the actions required to ensure the safe lighting and extinguishing of fires by an adult in the open air. This will enable them to act safely when camping.

Knowledge of the fire danger period being during summer (fire season), and the reasons why there are fire restrictions, will provide students with an understanding of the possible dangers of lighting fires, particularly during the warmer months. Knowing why a Total Fire Ban (TFB) is declared by CFA's Chief Officer in consultation with the Fire Services Commissioner, the Bureau of Meteorology and the other fire services will help children to understand that a TFB may be declared for the whole state or for one or more of the fire weather districts when fire danger is particularly increased.

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

Care should be taken not to unduly frighten children about the dangers of bushfires in their local area. Suggest 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:

- explain that fire is a common and natural occurrence in the Australian environment
- 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: Outdoor fire safety**
- **Poster: Bushfire warning signs**
- **Film: Bushfire preparedness at home**

Lesson outline

1. Bushfire awareness

15 minutes

- Ask the students to identify areas that would be more likely to experience bushfires and why they selected these areas. Discuss types of fires (for example, bushfires, grassfires, scrubfires) that might occur in these areas and in the area where the students live.
- Explain that parts of Australia, in particular Victoria, often experience bushfires because of the hot, dry, windy summer weather and dry lightning, the types of plants and in particular the topography of the local environment, for example, mountains.
- Explain that although fire can destroy things, many plants have adapted to survive and regenerate after a fire.
- Name some major bushfires. Discuss students' experiences and knowledge that they have learnt at school, from their family or through media about bushfires. Ask 'What might some bushfire warning signs be? What do you think a bushfire would sound, smell and look like?'

2. Fire safety outdoors

15 minutes

- List outdoor activities that involve fire, for example, burning off, barbecues and campfires – use **Poster: Outdoor fire safety** to prompt students. Discuss some of the actions that can be done to prevent these uses of fire starting bushfires, for example, clearing the area around the fire and not leaving fires unattended.
- Discuss fire danger periods, and show students the Total Fire Ban and Fire Danger Rating signs in **Poster: Bushfire warning signs**. Ask the students if any of them have seen these signs before, and if they know what each sign means. Explain what they mean and discuss the need for the signs.
- Discuss what constitutes a day of increased fire danger. Ask the students to describe the type of day when a Total Fire Ban would be declared.
- Explain how and why a day of Total Fire Ban is declared. On the map of fire weather districts, show the fire weather district in which the students live. Discuss the types of activities that are restricted on days of Total Fire Ban

3. Being prepared

15 minutes

- Play **Film: Bushfire preparedness at home**. Discuss the main causes of bushfires shown in the film. Discuss what happens to a house in a bushfire and some of the ways houses catch on fire.
- As a group, brainstorm what needs to be done to prepare a house in a bushfire area.
- Briefly discuss the main danger to people in a bushfire – radiant heat. Explain that firefighters have special clothing to protect them from radiant heat and other dangers. Explain that people can protect themselves from radiant heat by sheltering indoors or behind solid objects.
- 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.
- Emphasise that developing a Bushfire Survival Plan is their parents' or 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 36: Bushfire Survival Plan**
- **Fire Safe Kids e-learning game** on CD-ROM and at www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- Using classroom equipment set up a pretend campsite to show how to position a fire within safe distances from trees and tents; also have water handy. Sit students in a circle and get them to pretend they are around a campfire. Encourage them to share some experiences of camping and campfires. Discuss other fire safe behaviours for camping situations, such as how to put out a fire correctly and never leaving it unattended.
- Discuss that people should never go camping on high-risk fire danger days, and especially Code Red days. National Parks close on Code Red days, as it is too dangerous to be there on these types of days.
- **CFA campfire game** for those regions with access to this resource.
- **Worksheet 10: Captain Koala and friends badge**