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Section Four Staying Informed

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Staying Informed

During the fire season, it's up to you to stay informed.

Make it your habit to:

- › check your district's Fire Danger Rating (FDR) every day during the fire season
- › know if it is a Total Fire Ban day
- › check for warnings, especially on hot, dry windy days.

For updates on FDRs, restrictions and warnings, visit CFA's website or Twitter account, or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

The meaning of and difference between Fire Weather Districts, Fire Danger Ratings and Total Fire Bans is explained in the illustration at the start of this Kit.

WHERE ARE YOU TODAY IN VICTORIA?

Fire Danger Ratings and Total Fire Bans are declared by district. There are nine districts in Victoria and you need to know which district you are in or travelling to. Check the fire weather district whenever you are travelling away from home.

✓ KNOW YOUR FIRE WEATHER DISTRICT



Fire Danger Ratings

Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire would be if one started – the higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

Fire Danger Ratings are not a weather forecast. Ratings are issued using Bureau of Meteorology data for up to four days in advance, based on weather and other environmental conditions such as fuel load.

The rating should be your trigger to act. For more information about what each rating means and what you should do, see the Fire Danger Ratings table earlier in this Kit.

Total Fire Bans

Certain activities are banned on Total Fire Ban days. If you break these restrictions you can face large fines and imprisonment.

Total Fire Bans are declared by CFA on days when fires are likely to spread rapidly and be difficult to control.

As Total Fire Bans provide a set of legal restrictions on what activities can or cannot occur in a particular district for that day, they are usually not declared until the afternoon before to ensure they are based on the most accurate weather forecast.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire would be if one started.

Total Fire Bans tell you what you can or can't do on days where fire will spread rapidly and be out of control.

Warnings tell you that a fire has already started.

Check the FireReady App for up-to-date Fire Danger Rating and Total Fire Ban information, as well as information, warnings and locations about current fires.

Download the App free for Apple and Android devices.

The logo for the Fire Ready app, featuring the word "Fire" in red and "Ready" in black, both in a bold, sans-serif font, enclosed in a red rounded rectangular border.

Warnings and updates

Warnings are issued when a fire has started and you need to take action.

It's your responsibility to understand the different types of warnings and how to access them. You should never wait to receive an official warning before you leave. Bushfires can start, spread and become uncontrollable quickly.

How are warnings different from Fire Danger Ratings?

Fire Danger Ratings indicate how dangerous a fire would be if one started. Warnings are information about fires that have already started.

Levels of warnings

There are three different levels of warnings – **Advice, Watch and Act** and **Emergency Warning**. Don't expect warnings to be issued in any particular order. The first warning issued could even be an Emergency Warning.

ADVICE

There is a fire in your local area. You need to get information and monitor conditions.

WATCH AND ACT

Fire is heading toward you. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect yourself.

EMERGENCY WARNING

You are in immediate danger and need to act now. You will be impacted by fire.



Where to find warnings and information

Do not rely on one source of information for fire information.

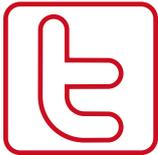


Listen to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations and watch Sky News TV.



1800 240 667

The Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) is a freecall.



Social Media outlets:
Twitter **@CFA_Updates** and
facebook.com/cfavic



1800 555 677

Callers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech/communication impairment can contact VBIL via the National Relay Service on this number.



CFA website: **cfa.vic.gov.au**
DEPI website: **depi.vic.gov.au**
MFB website: **mfb.vic.gov.au**



131 450

If you do not speak English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service for translated information from VBIL. If you know someone who cannot speak English, provide them with this number.

IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES



You may receive an SMS to your mobile.



You may receive a call to your landline phone.

Emergency Alert is a system used by emergency services to send voice messages to landlines and text messages to mobile phones about emergencies. For more information, go to **emergencyalert.gov.au**

Keep a map of your local area in an easy-to-find place. Use the map to locate where fires may be in your surrounding area.

If you are travelling through Victoria, you need to monitor conditions. Reconsider visiting high-risk bushfire areas on fire risk days.

CAUTION

Do not rely on an official warning to leave. Bushfires can start quickly and threaten homes and lives within minutes.

If you receive a warning, you must take it seriously. Failure to take action may result in death or injury to you or your family members.

Look and listen for information for surrounding towns as your suburb or town may not be mentioned.

Other information you might receive

RECOMMENDATION TO EVACUATE

A recommendation to Evacuate is issued in some situations. You should not rely on receiving one.

Evacuation is not a substitute for planning ahead or choosing to leave a high-risk bushfire area early before fire threatens.

In high-risk bushfire areas on **Code Red** days, it is always safer to leave the night before or early in the morning.

Recommendation to Evacuate

Evacuation is the planned relocation of people from a dangerous area to a safer place.

In some fires the emergency services may decide to issue a Recommendation to Evacuate for:

- › individuals
- › a house
- › a street
- › a large institution (such as a school or hospital)
- › a suburb
- › a town
- › a large area of the state.

A Recommendation to Evacuate depends on a number of factors, such as:

- › safety considerations
- › the location and type of fire
- › access routes and the local environment.

A Recommendation to Evacuate may identify:

- › the location you need to travel to
- › travel information
- › the length of time during which it is safe to travel.

For further information, go to police.vic.gov.au

Sometimes it is not possible for the emergency services to issue a Recommendation to Evacuate. You should not rely on receiving one.

While CFA will do its best to provide official warnings, fires can threaten lives and homes in minutes.

The safest option is to leave early.

Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS)

This is a distinctive siren sound that is transmitted over the radio, TV or phone prior to the alert message being broadcast. Designed to attract your attention, the sound tells you that important emergency information will follow.

All Clear

Emergency activity in the area has subsided and is no longer a danger to you.

Community alert sirens

A number of towns across Victoria are trialling the use of sirens to alert communities that there is an emergency in the area. For more information about this policy and the location of sirens, go to firecommissioner.vic.gov.au/policies

How and why will a siren sound?

Short (up to 90 seconds) – indicates a CFA brigade has responded to an emergency incident nearby.

Extended (up to 5 minutes) – indicates that a current emergency has been identified nearby and you must seek further information immediately from CFA’s website, VBIL, or local emergency broadcasters.

Know your local emergency broadcaster

These include:

- › ABC local radio
- › SKY NEWS TV
- › UGFM – Radio Murrindindi
- › Stereo 974
- › Plenty Valley FM
- › Various commercial stations across Victoria

You can find a complete list at firecommissioner.vic.gov.au

When to look for warnings

There are different situations when you might need to monitor and check for fire warnings and updates.

If you see flames or a column of smoke, always call Triple Zero 000 immediately.

WHEN	WHY
It’s a hot, dry, windy day	Fires can start suddenly at any time. During summer, check regularly for updates.
It’s a fire risk day. You have left early, or are preparing to do so.	Ensure the route you have planned is safe. Stay up to date about fires in your area. Know when it is safe to return.
I can see or smell smoke in the air and I want to check what is going on.	Check to see if there are signs of a fire in your area.
I’m staying to defend on a fire risk day.	It is critical that you know at the earliest possible stage if a fire is in your area so that you can implement your plan. Once you are aware of a fire, continue to monitor updates.

