

Water Storage

In some circumstances, you may not have access to mains water during a fire.

- On days of high fire risk, store water in the bath and laundry trough. 200 litre drums and rubbish bins filled with water can be strategically placed around the property before the fire season. Water stored in this way should be covered to prevent children from falling in and drowning.
- Water can also be stored in specially designed water tanks around the property. You will need to ensure that you have a petrol- or diesel-powered pump so that you can access the water should the power fail during a bush fire.
- Yarra Valley Water and South East Water work closely with CFA to provide information about the availability of water supplies in the event of fire, and access to alternative sources of water. CFA has the location of South East Water's, and Yarra Valley Water's major pump stations, in order to keep them safe from fire and to help ensure continued water supply.

Fire on the Doorstep

The information contained in this brochure provides methods of reducing water usage in a high fire risk area.

While it offers precautionary and long-term measures to reduce fire risk during water restrictions, if a fire threatens property, water restrictions will be waived to allow residents to defend their home.

Further information



Yarra Valley Water

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Water Restrictions in Bush Fire Season

Your guide to saving water
while reducing fire hazards



This year, the high fire danger period coincides with water restrictions.

CFA, Yarra Valley Water and South East Water recognise the difficulty of this situation, and have joined forces to provide information on how to reduce fire hazards around your home, and conserve our water supply.

The following hints and tips provide simple ways to balance the need to reduce both water consumption and fire hazards.

Mulching

Mulching is the most effective way to maintain a garden during water restrictions. However, burning embers from a bush fire can become embedded in dry mulch, causing fires to ignite close to your home.

- Ideally, gardens should be mulched immediately after the fire season to allow time for it to break down over the winter months. Decomposed mulch will still provide good moisture retention during the summer months and is less likely to ignite than more recently laid mulch.
- If mulch is still dry and aerated at the beginning of the fire season, ensure that it is fire retardant by covering it with soil or light sandy material.
- To reduce fire risk, mulch should be contained to small areas in garden beds, concentrating on individual plants and their root systems. These smaller areas can then be wetted down with water, including grey water which is taken from your laundry or shower waste.
- Pebbles and large rocks also help to retain moisture and can be used instead of plant-based mulch.
- Alternatively, weed matting can be used on garden beds and around shrubs. Old carpet cut to fit around individual plants, or layers of wet newspaper secured with rocks, pebbles or soil also provide good substitutes for traditional organic mulch.

Fire Safe Landscaping

Appropriate landscaping and vegetation management can be an effective addition to your wildfire survival strategy. A "fire friendly" garden aims to minimise the risk of fire by creating breaks in the fuel (plants, leaves and twigs):

- Consider planting gardens that require little watering.
- Use paths, driveways, tennis courts and veggie gardens to create breaks in the fuel.
- Create grass or bare surface areas at ground level with no shrubs beneath trees.
- Garden beds close to timber structures should be mulched with gravel or stones.
- Remove dry leaf and twig litter around the immediate perimeter of any structure to ensure there is no fuel on the ground.
- Trim back any trees or shrubs overhanging a building, or close to a window.
- Think about the arrangement of your garden. Plant trees and shrubs in "clumps" with clear areas between the groupings. This makes it more difficult for the fire to move from one area to another.
- Wind breaks can serve to trap embers that may otherwise land on or near the home. As fires are likely to be fanned by northerly or south-westerly winds, plant wind breaks on these sides of your property.
- Ground fuel under wind breaks should be managed to prevent fire spread. Wind breaks should be planted far enough away from your home to prevent direct flame contact and radiant heat should the wind break ignite during a fire.

Other Ways to Protect Property from Fire

- Check gutters for leaf build-up and remove prior to the fire season.
- Check gutters regularly during summer as many trees drop more leaves and bark in dry conditions, clogging gutters.

- Remove combustible doormats, building materials, paint cans, fuel and wood heaps from around your home.
- Rake and remove dry leaves and grass.
- Check for areas around your house that may trap embers, such as under verandas or in hard-to-reach corners. Use fine wire or mesh to stop embers getting into these areas and starting a spot fire.
- If you have LPG cylinders, make sure that the vent valve is turned away from your house. Remove fuels such as long grass from around the base of LPG cylinders.

Lawns

Dry lawns are a fire risk, but the risk is greatly reduced if they are kept short.

- Experts recommend that green lawns should not be cut shorter than 50mm. This inhibits weed growth that creates combustible fuel. Lawns cut to this length also shade the root zone, retain moisture, reduce evaporation rates and thereby reduce water consumption.
- When planting lawns in high fire risk areas consider using varieties that require very little watering.

