



PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

FireReady 

STAY AND DEFEND

BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLANNING TEMPLATE



➤ **Your Bushfire Survival Plan**

Use this guide to help you write your Bushfire Survival Plan. It is important to have read the *Stay and Defend* section of the FireReady Kit first. You will need to consider your personal circumstances and how they will affect your plan.

Not everyone thinks clearly in an emergency. A written and well-practised plan will help you remember what needs to be done during a fire. It also lists the preparations you will need to undertake to help become fire ready.

Your plan needs to outline:

Actions before the bushfire season

Actions during the bushfire season (the Fire Danger Period)

Actions to defend your property (the night before or morning of a high-risk day)

Actions when fire is in your area

What to do after the fire front passes

Your back-up plan.



Fill out this Template
and keep it handy

INTRODUCTION

- What year is this plan for? Every year you will need to update your plan. _____
- Who is this plan for? _____

In high-risk areas, leaving early is your only safe option on **Code Red** days. Do not wait and see. Know your trigger to leave – make a decision about when you will leave, where you will go, how you will get there, when you will return and what you will do if you cannot leave.

Houses are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in **Code Red** conditions. Defending your home is very risky. You could die or be seriously injured.

Only consider staying with your property on **Extreme** or **Severe** days if you are fully prepared and can actively defend your home. Defending a house requires at least two able-bodied, fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally prepared to work long and hard in arduous and difficult conditions. If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high-risk bushfire areas early is your safest option.

Children, the elderly, or people with special needs should be well away from the threat. The safest option is to leave early.

Attend a FireReady Victoria community meeting in your local area. Check cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) on 1800 240 667 for meeting dates and locations.

- If you – or someone you care for – will need help to prepare and leave early when there is high fire risk, get a Red Cross *Bushfire: Preparing to leave early* guide at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or request a copy by phoning the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667.

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ACTIONS BEFORE THE BUSHFIRE SEASON

Preparing your property – vegetation management

Managing the vegetation on your property will reduce a bushfire's intensity. You will reduce the amount of direct flame contact and radiant heat on your house.

Before you decide to develop a Stay and Defend Bushfire Survival Plan it is recommended that you book a free bushfire risk assessment of your home and property. Visit cfa.vic.gov.au or call 1800 240 667.

It is also a good idea to form or join a local Community Fireguard Group. Stay and Defend workshops may be offered by CFA in your area. Enquire through your CFA Regional Office.

Managing the vegetation includes:

Tick

- Clearing fine fuels from around your home (fine fuels are those that are the same thickness or less than a pencil, such as grass, bark and leaves)
- Keeping grass areas well trimmed and watered. Grass should be no more than 10 centimetres high
- Raking up and reducing leaf litter (dead leaves). Leaf litter must be no more than one centimetre high
- Removing or trimming shrubs. There should be no shrubs over one metre next to or below windows
- Trimming tree branches overhanging your house.

➤ What else will you do?

➤ Who will do this?

Preparing your property – house maintenance

This includes things such as:

Tick

- Clearing gutters of leaves and rubbish
- Ensuring underfloor areas are enclosed or screened
- Sealing gaps, vents and roof spaces to prevent embers entering your house
- Storing fuels and chemicals away from your house
- Storing LPG gas tanks appropriately. They should be vented away from your house
- Ensuring roofing is firmly fixed.

➤ What else will you do?

➤ Who will do this? _____

➤ List any firefighting equipment you need to purchase.

➤ Have you put together a personal protective clothing kit for each member of your household who is staying to defend? ^Y ^N

➤ Is there anything you still need? ^Y ^N _____

➤ Have you stored your personal protection kit/s in an easy-to-access location? ^Y ^N

➤ Do you have other important firefighting equipment, such as mops, buckets, ladders and shovels or rakes? ^Y ^N

➤ Do you have adequate house and contents insurance? ^Y ^N

➤ List your irreplaceable family keepsakes and valuables. Identify a safe location to store these valuables. Where will you store them? Consider moving these out of the area during summer.

➤ Discuss your plan with all family members. Everyone should be aware that staying to defend may involve trauma, injury and possibly death.

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ACTIONS DURING THE BUSHFIRE SEASON (THE FIRE DANGER PERIOD)

Tick

- Check Fire Danger Rating (FDR) daily.
- Monitor conditions.
- Check firefighting equipment – such as pumps, hoses and backpack water sprayers – and carry out maintenance as required.
- Do regular maintenance in your home and garden to reduce fine fuels. This includes weeding and cleaning out your gutters. List anything specific that you will do.

- Check you have plenty of fuel for your pumps.
- Move flammable items from around your house (e.g. paper, boxes, crates).
- Move woodpiles away from the house.
- Face the vent pipe of any LPG cylinders away from the house.
- Store fuel supplies and chemicals away from the house.
- Check you have sufficient water supplies. You may need to increase your independent water storage.
- Do you have a plan for where you will secure your pets and livestock?

ACTIONS TO DEFEND YOUR PROPERTY (THE NIGHT BEFORE OR MORNING OF A HIGH-RISK DAY)

Even people who are well prepared can die fighting fires at home.

- What is your trigger to activate your plan of action? How will you know that a fire is approaching?

Actions:

Tick

- Your personal protective kit is current and easily accessible (Your kit must have long-sleeved shirt or jumper, long trousers, broad-brimmed hat, goggles for eye protection, sturdy footwear, gloves – natural fibres only, not synthetics).
- Fill inside water storage such as bath, laundry trough and buckets. This is as back up when the power goes out.
- Fill outside water storage.
- Check all equipment (such as pumps, hoses and backpack water sprayers) is working and set up in the required locations.
- Move garden furniture, doormats and other loose outdoor items away from the house.
- Move furniture away from the windows to prevent embers that do enter your house from starting a fire.
- Set up a ladder under the manhole.
- Have a torch in the roof cavity.
- Move stock or large animals to a cleared or grazed-down paddock.
- Secure pets in a safe place.
- Listen for alerts and warnings on ABC local radio, commercial radio stations and designated community radio stations, watch SKY News TV or visit **cfa.vic.gov.au**. You can also receive warnings via the CFA Updates Twitter account.

➤ Ensure you have enough drinking water set aside for all those actively defending. How will you store this and where will you locate it?

➤ List family, friends and neighbours to call to let them know you are activating your Bushfire Survival Plan.

➤ What else will you do?

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ACTIONS WHEN FIRE IS IN YOUR AREA

- ✓ Dress in personal protective clothing (this is always the first thing you do).
 - ✓ Shut all windows and doors to prevent smoke and flames entering your house.
 - ✓ Switch your air conditioner to recycle/recirculate mode to reduce the amount of indoor smoke, or turn it off.
 - ✓ Turn off mains gas supply.
 - ✓ Block downpipes and fill gutters with water.
 - ✓ Place wet wool blankets or cotton towels around window and door edges inside the house to stop smoke and embers getting in.
 - ✓ Hose down the side of the house facing the fire and the garden area close to the house.
 - ✓ Move cars, tractors, caravans away from the house into a clearing.
 - ✓ Listen for alerts and warnings on ABC local radio, commercial radio stations and designated community radio stations (use a battery powered or wind-up radio). You can also watch Sky News TV, visit **cfa.vic.gov.au** and receive warnings via the CFA Updates Twitter account.
 - ✓ Keep an eye out for embers that the wind may be carrying. Extinguish them with wet mops, backpack sprayers or a fire pump.
 - ✓ Turn on your sprinkler system if there is one.
 - ✓ Drink lots of cool water often even if you don't feel thirsty.
 - ✓ Close window shutters.
- What else will you need to do?

➤ Power could be cut off or will be disrupted by the fire.
Mains water pressure could fail as other residents and firetrucks access water.
Telephone lines could be cut by falling trees and mobile coverage can quickly become congested.
Loss of power will prevent cordless phones from working.

Actions as the fire fronts impact

As the fire fronts impact it will become extremely hot outside. You will be unable to survive out in the open. You must protect yourself from radiant heat and move inside.

- ✔ Go inside when it becomes too hot to stay outside. The skin on your ears and hands will alert you that radiant heat has become too hot to survive outside.
- ✔ Take all your plastic firefighting equipment inside with you, including all taps and hoses, because they can melt if left outside.
- ✔ Stay inside with doors and windows shut, shutters or curtains drawn, but be alert to where the fire is. Don't hide in a part of the house where you can't see the progress of the fire. You may need to wind up shutters to check the fire's status.
- ✔ Do not shelter in the bathroom as it typically has only one door out and a small window that is often frosted, making visibility extremely difficult. In a bushfire, it is critical to maintain visibility in order to know what is happening outside with the fire.
- ✔ Check for embers in the roof and elsewhere in your home.
- ✔ Drink lots of cool water often even if you don't feel thirsty.
- ✔ Keep cool by splashing your face with water.
- ✔ If your house catches fire, close the door to the room that is alight and progressively close all doors moving to the other end of the house. Always have an exit from each room. Move outside, shielding yourself from radiant heat, when you can. Do not return to the house for any reason.

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WHAT TO DO AFTER THE FIRE FRONT PASSES

- ✓ Continue to wear your personal protective clothing and go outside again as soon as it is safe to extinguish any small fires that may have started.
- ✓ Water down the outside of the house, including the roof.
- ✓ Drink lots of cool water often even if you don't feel thirsty.
- ✓ Call family, friends and neighbours to let them know you are safe.
- ✓ Actively patrol your property for embers for hours after the fire has passed.
- ✓ Places to look for embers include:
 - on roof lines and in gutters
 - in garden beds and mulch
 - around outdoor furniture
 - in wood heaps
 - on door mats
 - in sheds and carports
 - on verandas and decking
 - on window ledges and door sills
 - under the house
 - inside the roof
 - under the floor boards.
- ✓ If you have lost your power supply and have frozen food, do your best to try to keep it cold. If food is still cold to touch, less than 5°C, it is safe to use.
- ✓ Once cold or frozen food is no longer cold to the touch, it can be kept and eaten for up to four hours and then must be thrown out.
- ✓ If power is restored when frozen food is still cold to the touch (less than 5°C), the food is safe to refreeze.
- ✓ Have details for your local council as a first point of contact for recovery assistance after a fire.

YOUR BACK-UP PLAN

- If it becomes clear that it is not safe to stay and defend, what is your back-up plan? Survival must be your main priority.

- Leaving as a last resort is extremely dangerous. Where do you plan to shelter if it is unsafe to leave your property or your area? Shelter options may include a well-prepared property or home (for instance a neighbour), a private bunker (that meets current regulations) or a designated community shelter or refuge.

- Do you have a designated Neighbourhood Safer Place (**Place of Last Resort**) in your area that could be used as a last resort?

- Other last resort options when fighting for your life may be a stationary car in a cleared area, a ploughed paddock or reserve, or a body of water such as a dam or swimming pool.

Note: Last resort options do not guarantee survival. There is a high risk of trauma, injury or death.

- What other things do you need to consider in your planning?

- What is your plan if your equipment fails? Consider having back-up equipment.

**For more information about bushfires visit cfa.vic.gov.au or
call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) on 1800 240 667
or via National Relay Service on 1800 555 677**

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