

Land Use Planning Guideline For

# Planning permit applications for events in areas at risk of bushfire

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## Introduction

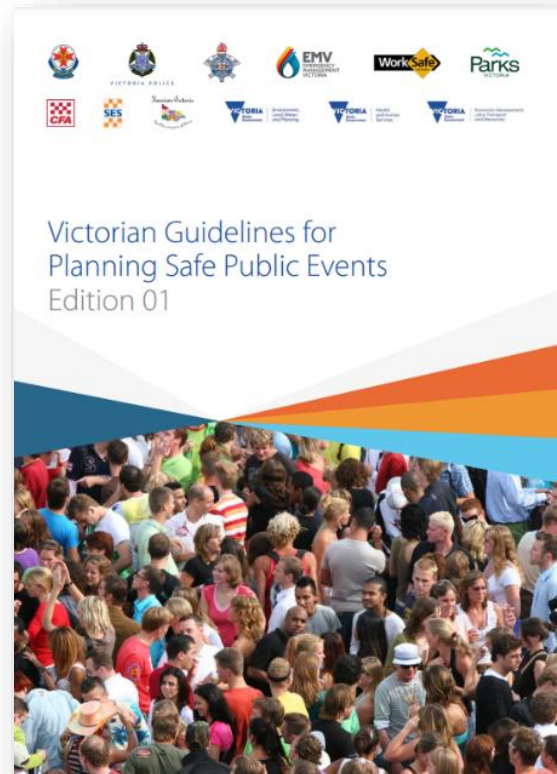
Victoria is proud to be the home of sports and major events within Australia. Victoria is also one of the most fire prone areas in the world, so it is critical that events in areas at risk from bushfire are carefully planned.

Given the risks involved there may be many different approvals required to run a large event in Victoria. This guideline focuses on meeting bushfire requirements in a planning permit application, which typically occurs before many other approval processes begin.

This guideline should be read in conjunction with *Victoria's guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events* and will help event organisers to:

- determine the steps required when planning an event that may be at risk from bushfire.
- clarify when to consult with CFA during the planning permit process for an event.
- clarify the information required when seeking comment from CFA as part of a planning permit application.

CFA looks forward to working closely with event organisers in running safe events for all Victorians.



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## How to use this document

Event organisers should follow Victoria's guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events when planning an event.

The steps in this document should be followed in order and be considered as an addendum to that guideline.

Certain sections of this document have been made into a checklist format for ease of use.

## CFA's role in the planning permit process for events

Many events require a planning permit, and event organisers should check with the relevant council to determine if one is needed.

In some instances, councils are required to refer a planning permit application to CFA (Section 55 of the *Planning & Environment Act 1987*). At other times councils may choose to seek CFA's comment on an application (Section 52 of the *Planning & Environment Act 1987*). Regardless of how CFA receives an application, the information requirements and emergency management considerations will largely be the same.

It is important that planning application for an event in areas at risk from bushfire adequately respond to Clause 13.02-1S and Clause 53.02-6 of the Victoria Planning Provisions. Clause 13.02-1S includes the following objective:

*To strengthen the resilience of settlements and communities to bushfire through risk-based planning that prioritises the protection of human life.*

Determining if a proposal for an event meets the bushfire objectives of the Victoria Planning Provisions will include consideration of the potential fire behaviour in the broader landscape, whether it is appropriate for the event to occur in that location; and the ability to implement suitable emergency management planning arrangements to ensure the protection of human life is prioritised.

There are often different and competing interests that need to be carefully considered as part of a planning permit application. However, clause 71.02-3 of the Victoria Planning Provisions requires that in an area that may be at risk from bushfire, the protection of human life must be prioritised above over all other policy considerations.

For more information on Victoria's planning system, please visit <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/> or contact the Council where the event is planned to be held.

## Step 1 – Consider the location of the event

Bushfire risk can be eliminated by choosing a location for the event that has no identified bushfire risk.

A planning property report is a simple way to determine whether there is an identified bushfire risk at a property. A planning property report can be found (for free) at <https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/>

If the planning property report shows the property (or immediately adjacent area) is in a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA) or in the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO), then this means there is an identified bushfire risk. CFA are unlikely to support large events in a rural or remote area identified as either BPA or BMO where access and egress to the site in the event of a bushfire is not readily available.

If the event location has an identified bushfire risk, then proceed to Step 2.

If not, then CFA is unlikely to object to the event based on bushfire risk. However, for events involving large numbers of people, there may still be a need to finalise emergency management arrangements in consultation with emergency services, including CFA.

## Step 2 – Consider the timing of the event

The weather (and climate) impacts how likely a fire may start and spread, and the speed and direction it will travel. Bushfire risk can be significantly reduced by running an event when weather conditions are unlikely to be conducive to bushfires starting and spreading.

Each year the Fire Danger Period (FDP) is declared for municipalities across Victoria, signifying when fire danger is greatly increased. The FDP is typically from November to March. Although, particularly in the northern parts of the state the FDP can start as early as October and finish in late April.

Outdoor events held within the FDP are at greater risk from bushfire and should be avoided where possible.

If the event will be within (or close to) the FDP, then proceed to Step 3.

If the event will be outside of the FDP, CFA is unlikely to object to the running of the event and no further consultation regarding bushfire matters with CFA is required. However, for events involving large numbers of people, there may still be a need to finalise emergency management arrangements in consultation with emergency services, including CFA.

## Step 3 – Undertake a Bushfire Assessment

If the event location has an identified bushfire risk, then further analysis is needed to determine whether bushfire risk can be suitably managed. This includes a Bushfire Assessment for the event site in line with the *Bushfire Hazard Assessments - Guideline (DTP May 2026)*. CFA suggest a suitably qualified bushfire consultant be engaged to support with the preparation of this report.

Proceed to Step 4.

## Step 4 – Consider shelter in place options

Large numbers of people and their characteristics (such as whether they are under the influence of alcohol, aged etc.) can create significant challenges in evacuating an event or managing patrons on-site during an incident. In some locations, the number and/or characteristics of the proposed attendees will mean suitable emergency management arrangements, including sheltering in place cannot be practically implemented and the event should not proceed.

It is important that events provide a suitable place of shelter by:

- Having at least one sufficiently sized (1.5m<sup>2</sup> per person) emergency assembly area that is capable of safely accommodating the expected numbers of attendees; and

Achieving the assessment criteria for a Neighbourhood Safer Place – Bushfire Place of Last Resort for an open space. This criteria for this can be viewed at: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/your-local-area-info-and-advice/neighbourhood-safer-places> .

or

- Being located adjacent to an urban, commercial or residential area of sufficient size to offer suitable shelter from a bushfire and can provide safe egress for attendees in the event of an emergency.

Events are unlikely to be supported by CFA if either of the above cannot be provided.

In situations where a suitable place of shelter can be provided, proceed to Step 5.

## Step 5 – Determine appropriate cancelation or postponement triggers

The Fire Danger Rating (FDR) system provides information so people in areas at risk from bushfire can take action to protect themselves and others. The higher the fire danger, the more dangerous the conditions and the greater the impact will be if a fire starts.

The FDR system is a national system and includes four (4) separate Fire Danger Ratings. The ratings and the suggested community actions are shown in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1 – Fire Danger Ratings

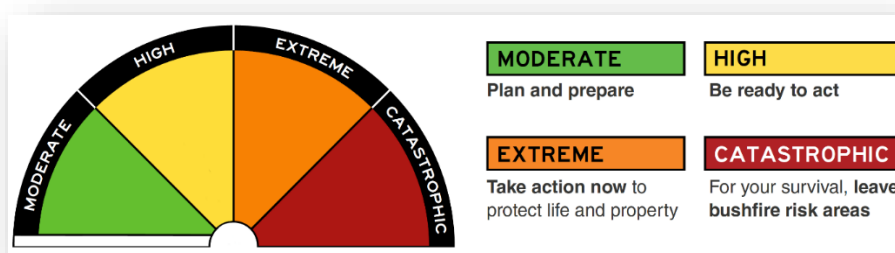


Figure 2 – Fire Danger Ratings and suggested actions

	What does it mean?	What should I do?
<b>CATASTROPHIC</b>	<p>If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire.</li> </ul>	<p><b>For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Your life may depend on the decisions you make, even before there is a fire.</li> <li>» For your survival, do not be in bushfire risk areas.</li> <li>» Stay safe by going to a safer location early in the morning or the night before.</li> <li>» Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave and help may not be available.</li> </ul>
<b>EXTREME</b>	<p>Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» These are dangerous fire conditions.</li> <li>» Expect hot, dry and windy conditions.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Take action now to protect your life and property</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Check your bushfire plan and that your property is fire ready</li> <li>» If a fire starts, take immediate action. If you and your property are not prepared to the highest level, go to a safer location well before the fire impacts.</li> <li>» Reconsider travel through bushfire risk areas.</li> <li>» Leaving bushfire risk areas early in the day is your safest option.</li> </ul>
<b>HIGH</b>	<p>Fires can be dangerous.</p>	<p><b>Be ready to act.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» There's a heightened risk. Be alert for fires in your area.</li> <li>» Decide what you will do if a fire starts.</li> <li>» If a fire starts, your life and property may be at risk. The safest option is to avoid bushfire risk areas.</li> </ul>
<b>MODERATE</b>	<p>Most fires can be controlled.</p>	<p><b>Plan and prepare.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire.</li> </ul>

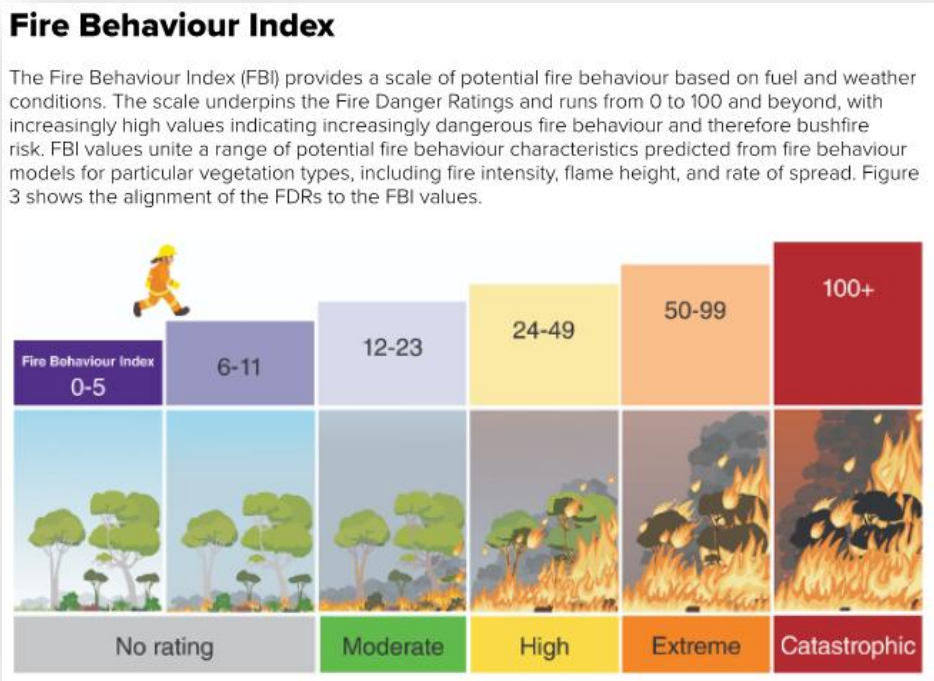
Emergency management plans should include clear procedures for monitoring the forecast FDR and clear actions that will be taken when specific ratings are forecast. A clear action does not include consultation with CFA when a trigger point is reached.

The *Victorian Guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events* recommend that event organisers plan to change, cancel or delay their event on days of Extreme FDR. On these days, fire will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous. Condition will be hot, dry and windy, and likely create other hazards – such as heat health.

Event organisers should carefully consider each FDR and the suggested actions when developing emergency planning arrangements. In many instances, open air events in the BMO will be unable to suitably manage bushfire risks once conditions reach Extreme.

With the support of suitably qualified bushfire consultant, an event in the BPA that can provide suitable access and egress, and shelter in place arrangements may be able to demonstrate detailed emergency management arrangements can be implemented to justify a closure trigger above Extreme. However, these events will need to close well before the FDR is forecast to be Catastrophic. In this instance, event organisers might consider using the Fire Behaviour Index (FBI) in lieu of the FDR rating system, see Figure 3. All events in the BPA should be cancelled or postponed with a forecast FBI of 70 or above.

**Figure 3 – FDR to FBI alignment**



Proceed to Step 6.

## Step 6 – Prepare Emergency and Fire Management Plans

A full risk assessment should be conducted by a suitably qualified professional. The risk assessment should consider the likelihood and consequences of a bushfire. Utilising that risk assessment an Emergency Management Plan should be prepared following the steps on page 13 of the *Victorian Guidelines for Planning Safe Public Events*.

A separate Fire Management Plan should also be prepared which includes:

- a scale or dimensioned map of the event site. This should show where all key structures, locations and uses within the event will be. E.g., carparking areas, camping areas, stages, emergency assembly areas etc. Preferably having some form of gridded reference system.
- processes and procedures for monitoring the Fire Danger Ratings and or Fire Behaviour Index. Who, when and how.
- clear triggers for cancelation/postponement of the event based on forecast Fire Danger Ratings or Fire Behaviour Index value.
- details of any private firefighting services that may be provided during the event. The provision of such services should be escalated in line with the Fire Danger Ratings and include bump in and out times.
- clear triggers and procedures for:
  - evacuation of the site in the event of a bushfire (if safe to do so).
  - sheltering in place during the event (when evacuation is not safe).
- A map and details on any proposed fuel management such as the areas where grass will be mown, elevated fuels reduced and when those actions will occur. Fuel management should include 'buffer' areas and not just management of the event site itself.
- a map showing all areas set aside for emergency vehicle access. This should allow:
  - full perimeter emergency vehicle access around the event site
  - entry to the event whilst allowing for attendees to exit at the same time.
- A map that details any existing or proposed sources of firefighting water such as tanks or dams.
- A map that details the location of all firefighting infrastructure, such as fire extinguisher banks, hydrants etc.
- Details on any other controls/treatments that were identified in the risk assessment.

## Step 7 – Apply for a Planning Permit

If required, a planning permit application should now be lodged with the relevant local council.

If CFA is asked to provide comment on that planning permit application, then CFA will require the following:

- a copy of the risk assessment that has been conducted by a suitably qualified professional that adequately considers the likelihood and consequences of a bushfire.
- A response to Clause 53.02-6 of the relevant planning scheme and a copy of the Bushfire Assessment.
- a scale or dimensioned map of the event site.
- a copy of the events Emergency Management Plan.
- a copy of the events Fire Management Plan (containing the information in Step 6 of this document)

Should CFA consent to the application, this is likely to be conditional on a number of actions occurring before the event.

CFA recognises that planning an event is a complex a task and many details are likely to be changed between the time a planning permit application is applied lodged and closer to the event date. CFA's standard conditions are designed to setup a subsequent consultation and approval process so that minor changes can be resolved following the decision on a planning permit application.

Notwithstanding that, the quality of the information submitted with the planning permit application must provide CFA with an adequate level of confidence that the event can be conducted safely.