



Defending your Property

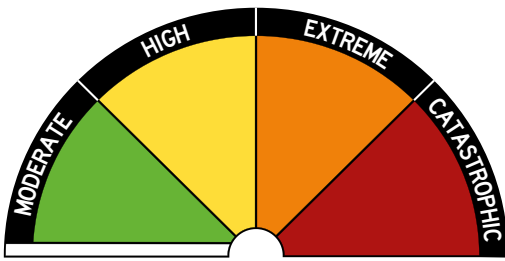
Bushfire Survival Planning Template

Some people, as part of their bushfire planning, will choose to stay and actively defend their property.

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 will also help with the level of preparation required to give you the best chance of successfully defending.



Know your daily fire danger rating



The Fire Danger Rating predicts fire behaviour (should a fire start) and how dangerous it would be to put out. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions. Fire Danger Ratings feature in weather forecasts during the fire season.

To check your district's daily Fire Danger Rating, visit cfa.vic.gov.au or call **1800 226 226**.

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

Monitor conditions and official sources for warnings by going to cfa.vic.gov.au, emergency.vic.gov.au or call the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226**

Defending your Property

Bushfire Survival Planning Template

Use this guide to help you write your Bushfire Survival Plan. While developing and discussing your plan with your household, it is also important to read and reference the Fire Ready Kit and Your Guide to Survival available at cfa.vic.gov.au

Your plan should be reviewed each year to consider changing circumstances.

Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in **CATASTROPHIC** conditions. Defending your home is very risky. You could die or be seriously injured. Do not plan to defend on **CATASTROPHIC** days.

In high-risk areas, leaving early is the safest option on **CATASTROPHIC** days. Make sure you know your trigger to leave (this could be a Fire Danger Rating). Do not wait and see. You will need to make a decision about:

- when you will leave
- where you will go
- how you will get there
- when you will return
- what you will do if you cannot leave (see page 11 of this plan).

Only consider staying with your property on **EXTREME** days if you are fully prepared and can actively defend your home.

Defending a house requires:

- at least two fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally prepared to work long and hard in arduous and difficult conditions
- at least 10,000 litres of water
- protective clothing
- appropriate firefighting hoses and pumps
- Equipment that is required if the power goes out.

You should prepare a leaving early bushfire plan to be used on **CATASTROPHIC** days. Advice on developing a leaving early plan is available on cfa.vic.gov.au/leave.

Children, the elderly, or people with special needs should be well away from the threat.



Before the bushfire season

Preparing your property – vegetation management

Managing the vegetation on your property will reduce a bushfire's intensity.

This will reduce the amount of direct flame contact and radiant heat on your house.

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.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT	WHO WILL DO THIS?	WHEN?*
Trim tree branches overhanging your house.		
Remove or trim shrubs. There should be no shrubs over one metre next to or below windows.		
Remove flammable mulch from around your house. It is extremely dangerous if used within 10m of your home especially under windows.		
Clear fine fuels from around your home (fine fuels are those that are the same thickness or less than a pencil, such as grass, bark or leaves).		
Slash or mow fire breaks to a width of 3m around your property (if on the land).		
Keep grass areas well trimmed and watered. Grass should be no more than 10 centimetres high.		
Rake up and reduce leaf litter (dead leaves).		
Ensure access tracks and driveways are clear and easy for vehicles to drive down.		
Create a heavily grazed or ploughed paddock for stock.		

*Date or month

- What else will you do?

For houses constructed before September 2009, some exemptions apply to the planning permit process of removing vegetation. See cfa.vic.gov.au/bushfire for guidance and further tips on vegetation management.

Before the bushfire season

Preparing your property – house maintenance



HOUSE MAINTENANCE	WHO WILL DO THIS?	WHEN?*
Ensure underfloor areas are enclosed or screened.		
Replace broken tiles and seal gaps, vents and roof spaces to prevent embers entering your house.		
Keep any LPG cylinders on a level concrete surface and secured by a chain. Face safety vents away from the house.		
Store fuels and chemicals away from the house.		
Move wood piles away from the house.		
Ensure decks and wooden features are well maintained.		
Check water supply and top up if necessary.		
Test pumps, sprinkler systems and hoses.		
Put together a protective clothing kit for each member of your household and store in an easy-to-access location.		
Assemble other important firefighting equipment such as mops, metal buckets, ladders and rakes.		
Ensure you have adequate house and contents insurance.		
Discuss your plan with all household members. Everyone should be aware that staying to defend may involve trauma, injury or possibly death. Everyone should be clear of their roles.		

*Date or month

- What else will you do?

Put your preparation tasks in your calendar or as a reoccurring calendar entry in your phone to serve as a reminder. Mark them off when they're done.



During the bushfire season

Stay informed – stay prepared

AWARENESS & MAINTENANCE	WHO WILL DO THIS?	WHEN?
Install the VicEmergency App on your phone and set up watch zones and alerts for bushfire.		
Check Fire Danger Ratings.		Daily.
Regularly maintain garden to reduce fine fuels.		
Regularly clean out your gutters.		
Identify what other maintenance needs to be done.		

STAY PREPARED	WHO WILL DO THIS?	WHEN?*
Test firefighting equipment – pumps, hoses, backpack water sprayers – and maintain them.		
Check you have sufficient fuel which is clean.		
Check firefighting water supply and top up.		
Put battery-powered or wind-up torches and radios in an easy to find place. Ensure you have spare batteries.		
Identify where pets will be secured or moved to on high risk days.		
Maintain your livestock refuge you prepared earlier.		

List anything else you will do

*Interval – weekly/fortnightly/monthly

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

Download and set up your watch zone to receive localised information and warnings. Free for Apple and Android devices.



Don't rely on one source of information for warnings. Use multiple sources.
See **page 10** for other ways to stay informed throughout the bushfire season.

On or before fire risk days

Be prepared to activate your plan



WHAT IS YOUR TRIGGER TO ACTIVATE YOUR PLAN?	HOW WILL YOU KNOW THAT A FIRE IS APPROACHING?

ACTIONS	WHO WILL DO THIS?	WHEN? TIME
Check that your protective clothing is accessible (long-sleeved shirt, long trousers, broad rim hat, goggles, leather boots, gloves – no synthetics).		
Fill inside water storage such as bath and buckets.		
Fill outside water storage.		
Roll out hoses, set up and check pumps, backpack sprayers and test sprinkler system.		
Move BBQ gas bottles away from house.		
Move garden furniture, doormats and other loose outdoor items away from the house.		
Park vehicles in driveway facing out.		
Move furniture away from windows.		
Set up a ladder under the manhole.		
Store a torch in the roof cavity.		
Move stock to refuge, remove rugs and halters.		
Secure pets in your pre-arranged place.		
Ensure you have enough drinking water.		
Listen for alerts and warnings on ABC local radio, commercial radio or turn on SKY News TV.		
Call family, friends and neighbours to let them know you've activated your bushfire survival plan.		

Your Protective Clothing Kit

- A** A wide-brimmed hat to protect your head.
- B** Eye protection such as smoke goggles to shield your eyes.
- C** A 'P2' type mask or cotton scarf/handkerchief for face protection and to filter smoke.
- D** A long-sleeved, collared shirt and long pants made from cotton or some other natural fibre.
- E** Tough leather garden gloves – not rubber or synthetic.
- F** Sturdy boots and pure wool or cotton socks.





When fire is in your area

Activating your plan

ACTIONS	WHO WILL DO THIS?	DONE
Put on protective clothing (always first thing to do).		<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitor the VicEmergency App, listen for alerts and warnings on your chosen radio/TV channels.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Shut all windows and doors to prevent smoke and flames entering your house.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Place wet wool blankets or cotton towels around inside of windows & doors to stop smoke & embers.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Close window shutters.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn off your air conditioner to prevent embers from being drawn into it.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn off mains gas supply.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Block downpipes and fill gutters with water.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Check cars are parked in the driveway facing out.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Check that pets are safely contained.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep a battery-powered or wind-up radio close in case power, telephone or mobile reception is cut off.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hose down the side of the house facing the fire and the garden area close to the house.		<input type="checkbox"/>
When embers start to appear, turn on your sprinkler system if you have one.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Patrol for embers that the wind may be carrying and extinguish them as they land. You may need to do this for several hours.		<input type="checkbox"/>
Drink lots of cool water even if you don't feel thirsty.		<input type="checkbox"/>

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

As the fire front approaches



As the fire front approaches 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.

This doesn't mean passively sheltering. You must remain active, checking for signs of fire inside the house and being aware of the fire activity outside.

ACTIONS

- Collect all your plastic firefighting equipment and take inside – including tap fittings and hoses as these can melt if left outside. With careful selection of fittings and adaptors hoses can be connected to washing machine taps inside to help during your active sheltering.
- 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.
- 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 from time to time to check the progress of the fire.
- Make sure you have more than one exit in every room used as a shelter. Most bathrooms are unsuitable to shelter in. They typically have only one door which can make escape impossible if that exit is blocked by flames and heat. Any place of shelter within a house or building should have two points of exit (this could include a window).
- 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:
 - it's important to keep sheltering from the bushfire's radiant heat for as long as possible
 - close the door to the room that is alight
 - progressively closing all doors as you move to the other end of the house
 - always have more than one exit from each room
 - when it becomes too dangerous to remain inside move outside, shielding yourself from radiant heat
 - move to an area that is already burnt and protect yourself from radiant heat if there is still fire in the area
 - do not return to the house for any reason if it's on fire.

Do you feel psychologically prepared to defend your property? Read pages 73-75 of the Fire Ready Kit to gain a better understanding of what you will experience during a bushfire. Analyse your plan and consider honestly if you have the psychological and physical strength to enact your plan.

Your home phone, computer or mobile device connected to the NBN will not work if there is a power failure during an emergency. You may not be able to call 000 to access emergency services from your home phone or connected devices. You may not receive an emergency alert warning message.




After the fire front has passed

Exercise extreme caution before deciding to go outside – depending on what is burning around you, the levels of radiant heat could be very high and potentially fatal. You will need to use your own judgement to assess when it is safe.

ACTIONS

- Continue to wear your protective clothing and go outside again as soon as the main fire front has passed and it is safe enough.
- Put out any fires that may have started near or on the house.
- 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 your situation.
- Actively patrol your property for embers for hours after the fire has passed
 - on roof lines and in gutters
 - in garden beds and mulch
 - around outdoor furniture
 - in woodpiles
 - on doormats
 - in sheds and carports
 - on verandahs and decking
 - on window ledges and door sills
 - under the house
 - inside the roof
 - under the floorboards.

 <p>Listen to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations and watch Sky News TV.</p>	 <p>VicEmergency website: VicEmergency app or emergency.vic.gov.au</p>
 <p>Social Media outlets: Twitter @CFA_Updates and facebook.com/cfavic</p>	 <p>1800 226 226 The VicEmergency Hotline is a freecall.</p>
 <p>1800 555 677 Callers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech/communication impairment can contact VicEmergency via the National Relay Service on this number.</p>	 <p>131 450 If you do not speak English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service for translated information from VicEmergency. If you know someone who cannot speak English, give them this number.</p>
<p>IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES</p>  <p>You may receive an SMS to your mobile phone.</p>	 <p>You may receive a call to your landline phone.</p>

Leaving Early

Bushfire Survival Planning Template

Fill out this Template and take it with you when you leave.



WHAT IS YOUR TRIGGER TO LEAVE?

Your trigger to leave is what prompts you to act. You should use the Fire Danger Rating to determine your trigger. On **Extreme** or **Catastrophic** days you should not be in a bush fire risk area.

Your trigger to leave is:



Extreme



Catastrophic

When will you leave?



The night before



Early in the morning

BEFORE YOU LEAVE	DONE
Add final items to your Emergency Kit such as medications, prescriptions, mobile phone chargers, pet food and water for everyone.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack the car, remembering your most important items such as wallet, cards, keys, banking, medical and insurance documents (these should be easily accessible on a USB stick or in an expanding file).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Turn off the gas supply.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Block the downpipes and partially fill the gutters with water, if time permits.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make sure everyone is wearing protective clothing – long pants, long-sleeved shirts and sturdy shoes such as leather boots. Clothes should be loose fitting and made from natural fibres such as pure wool, heavy cotton drill or denim. Do not wear synthetics.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tell people you are leaving.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Close all doors and windows and lock doors.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leave the front or access gate unlocked.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decide on your primary destination	<input type="checkbox"/>
Decide on your back-up destination	<input type="checkbox"/>

GETTING READY TO GO	DONE
Stay updated on fire information so you will know if a fire has started near you.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Move livestock to a large, safely fenced area and put your pets in a safe place ready for loading in the car.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pack personal items such as a change of clothing for each person and toys for children and pets and put them in the car.	<input type="checkbox"/>
If your car is behind an electric garage door, take it out of the garage and position it in the driveway facing out or on the side of the road.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remove any material that could burn easily from around your house, on decks, verandahs and pergola areas. This includes mats and outdoor furniture.	<input type="checkbox"/>



CAUTION

Leaving early is you taking action to protect your life and the lives of your family members. In some conditions, any fire that starts is likely to be uncontrollable.

Leaving early does not mean waiting for a warning or a siren. It does not mean waiting to see or smell smoke. And it certainly does not mean waiting for a knock on the door.

For more information about bushfires visit **cfa.vic.gov.au** or
call the VicEmergency Hotline **1800 226 226**
or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677**

For full information about preparing for fire,
go to the Fire Ready Kit

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