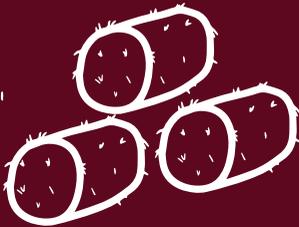


# Your Guide to Farm Fire Safety

OUR COMMUNITY • OUR CFA



[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)



*Your Guide to Farm Fire Safety* is for people who are looking for practical tips and suggestions for managing farm fire risk. It covers everything from land and fuel management to equipment maintenance and the protection of livestock and crops from fire.

*Your Guide to Farm Fire Safety* as a is a useful resource for planning or promoting fire management on agricultural land day-to-day and year-round.

## Farm Fire Management and your responsibilities

As a farmer or land manager there are farm fire safety legal obligations you should be aware of. Broadly speaking these include:

- ▶ The safety of all people living, working, or visiting your property
- ▶ Cutting the risk of starting unplanned fires, particularly when operating machinery, vehicles and equipment and controlling burns
- ▶ Preventing private power poles causing a fire
- ▶ Access to the property, assets and water for fire fighting purposes.

Refer to *On the Land* for detailed information on your legal obligations.

### Fire Danger Period

The Fire Danger Period (FDP) typically starts in late spring to early summer and is declared by CFA for an area of country Victoria. Once declared, the FDP stays in place until fire danger reduces sufficiently, typically during mid-autumn.

During this time activities that have the potential to start a fire are banned. This could be driving over dry grass or crops, and operating machinery that gets hot, sparks or ignites a fire. Check with the CFA for a full list of fire restrictions and to request permits, should they apply.

### Offences and Penalties

It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly allow a fire to spread to vegetation on another person's property. Failure to comply may result in a fine of approximately \$4,000 and/or 12 month imprisonment and note penalties double during total fire bans.

During a FDP, failure to comply with a permit condition or restriction may result in a fine of approximately **\$20,000 and/or up to 12 months imprisonment**.

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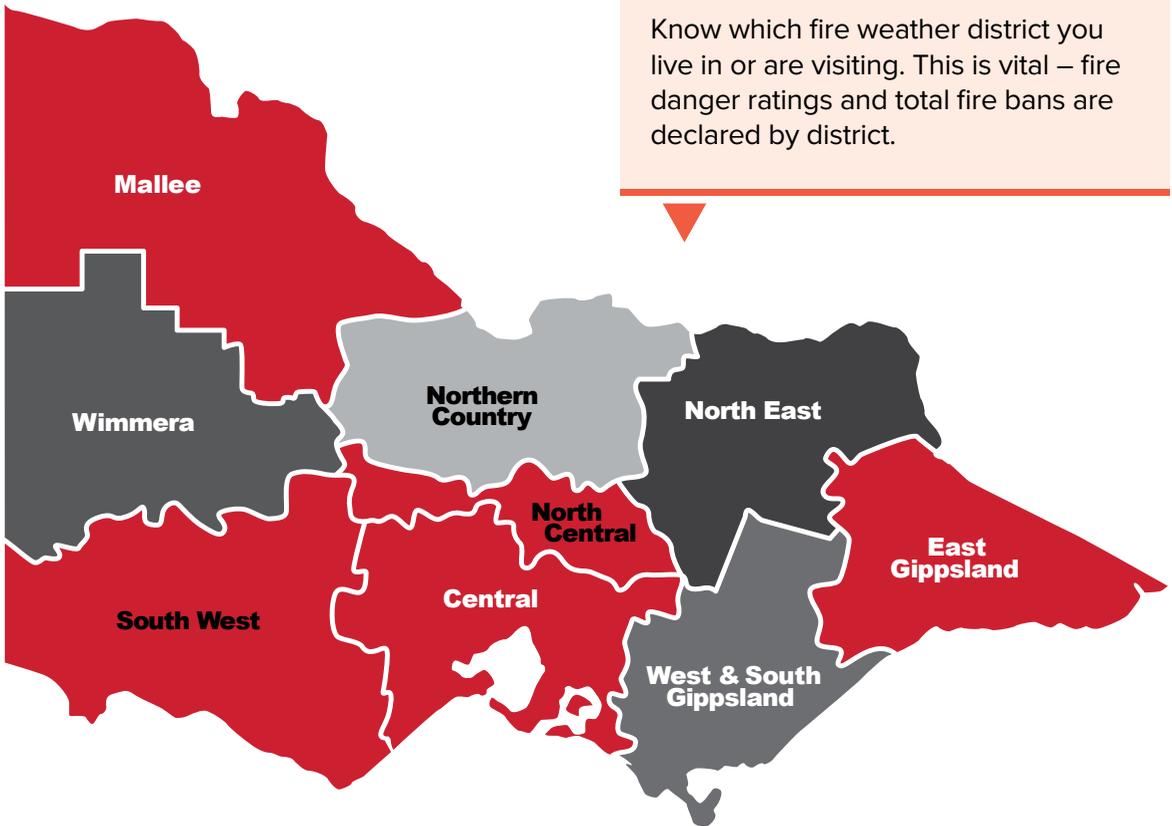
Check whether your council has local laws in place regarding lighting fires and burning rubbish in their municipality, especially near townships or in built-up areas.

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CFA's publication *Can I, or Can't I* provides details on what you should do to avoid penalties and using heat and fire more safely during these periods.

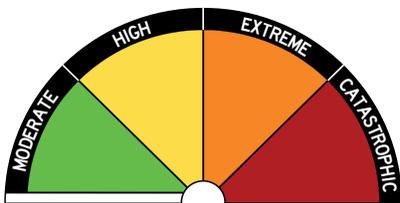
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# How bad is the risk today?



Know which fire weather district you live in or are visiting. This is vital – fire danger ratings and total fire bans are declared by district.

## Know your daily fire danger rating



### Fire Danger Ratings (FDR)

tell you how dangerous a fire would be if one started – the higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions. Refer to the Australian Fire Danger Rating table on page 4.

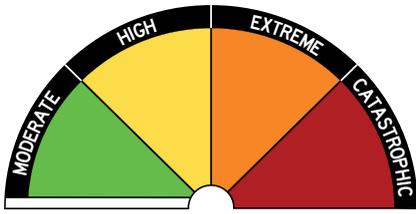
## Know your restrictions



### Total Fire Bans (TFB)

tell you what you can and can't do and what activities are banned on certain days during high fire risk months. For more information visit [cfa.vic.gov.au/can](http://cfa.vic.gov.au/can)

# Know your daily fire danger rating



Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire could be if one started. 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](http://cfa.vic.gov.au) or call **1800 226 226**.

	What does it mean?	What should i do?
<b>CATASTROPHIC</b>	<p><b>If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.</b></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><b>Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous.</b></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><b>Fires can be dangerous.</b></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><b>Most fires can be controlled.</b></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>

Monitor conditions and official sources for warnings by going to [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au), [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au) or call the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226**

# Properties in high fire risk areas:

## On a Catastrophic Fire Danger Day:

All people should plan to leave early on the morning of or night before. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires on Catastrophic Fire Days.

## On Extreme days:

Consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to the highest level. Children, the elderly, people with special needs or a disability should be fully prepared to leave early on these days.

## On High fire danger days:

Homes can provide safety if they are well-prepared and actively defended. Defending a house or assets is very risky – it requires at least two able-bodied, fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally prepared to work in difficult and dangerous conditions.

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

# Fire planning

You should treat fire planning like other aspects of business and farm planning like stock, weeds, soil and water. Your fire safety plan should consider:

- ▶ Planning for fire safety
- ▶ Plan communication and implementation
- ▶ Follow up to ensure the plan is being correctly implemented
- ▶ Review and updating plan when necessary.

Before a fire there are simple things you can do to prepare your property. It is a good idea to consult your local fire brigade in the development of your plan. Every good fire plan will have several backup plans that consider various changing scenarios.

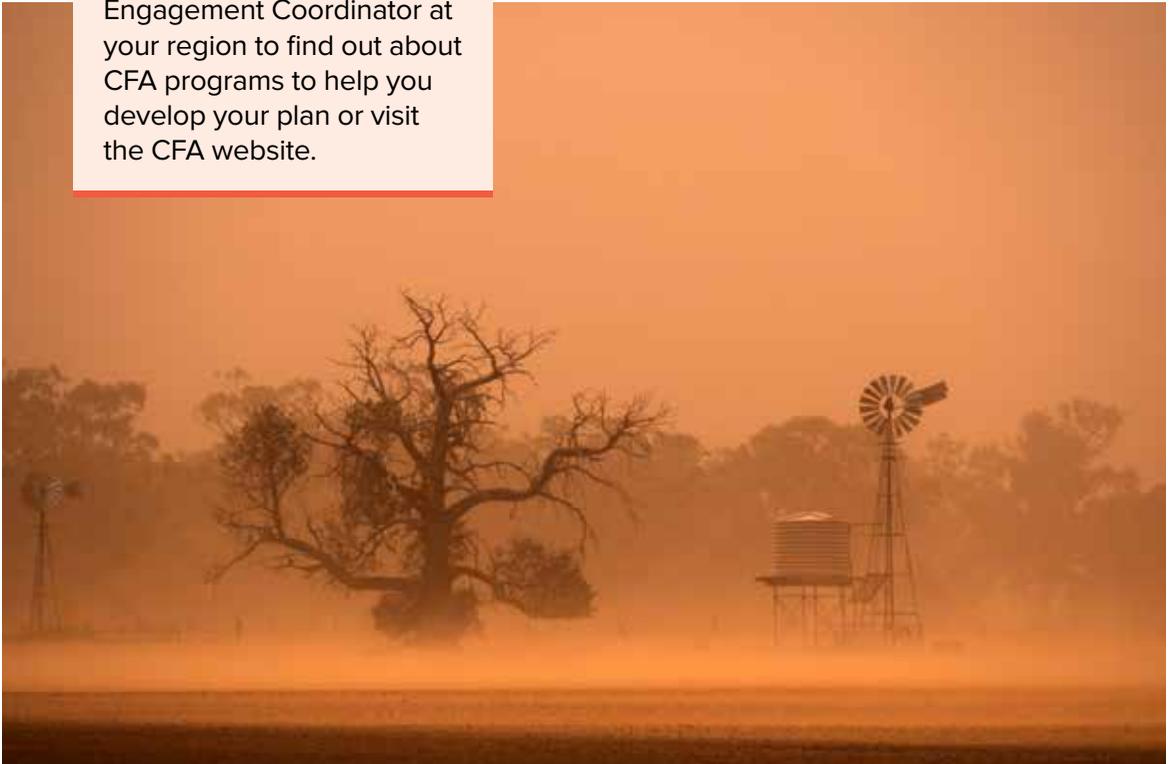
It is also important to establish routines ahead of fire risk days, for example checking machinery or holding off from using equipment on high fire risk days.

We understand that your property is your livelihood and that many farmers intend to stay and defend their livelihood in the event of a bushfire. It's important that you understand the risks in doing so and go to great lengths to prepare your property and equip yourself to undertake such a dangerous activity.

Identify well-prepared buildings in your area or on your property that could be a safer place to shelter from radiant heat if you are trapped on your property.

Use the Fire Danger Rating as your trigger to leave early and to make sure children or the elderly are safely away from your property on high-risk days. It is up to you to make and carry out that plan.

Contact the Community Engagement Coordinator at your region to find out about CFA programs to help you develop your plan or visit the CFA website.



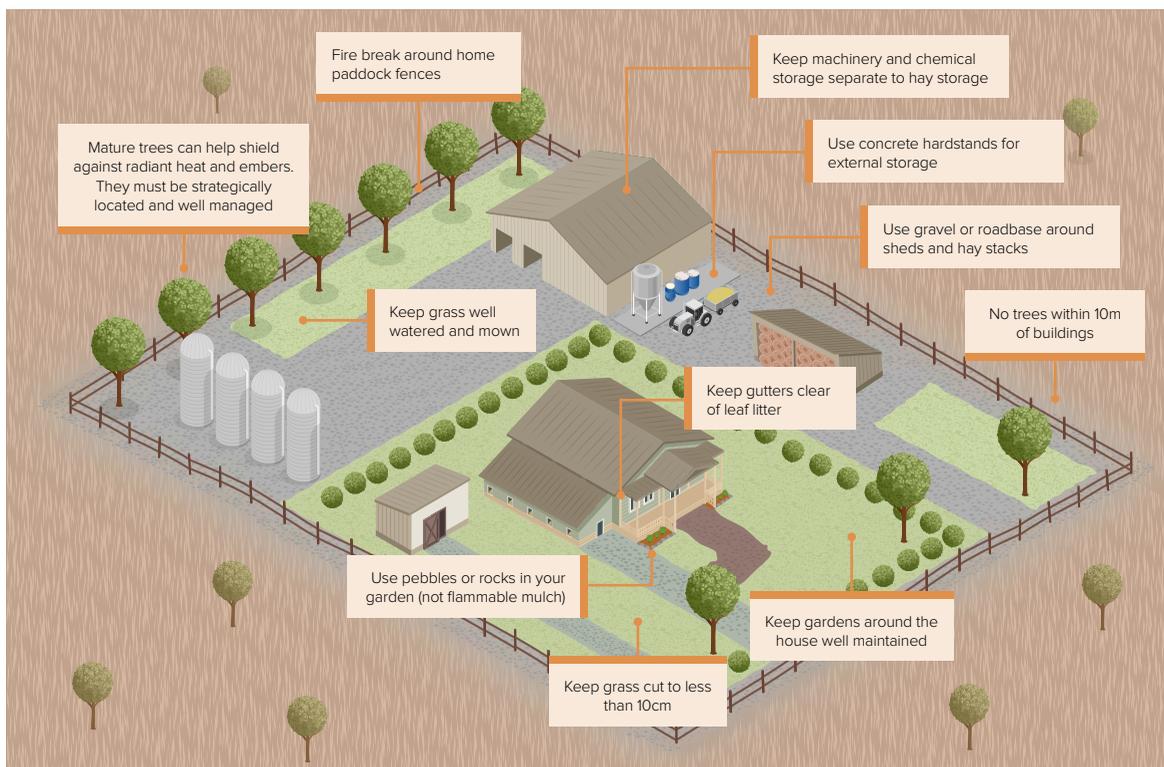
# Property preparation

Preparing your property is about carrying out work that reduces the impact of radiant heat, embers and flames near your buildings and assets. This includes fuel reduction around your property to cut down how hot and destructive a fire is as it passes through. Good preparation can also help you recover after a fire should one occur.

**There are five simple things you can do to prepare for fire:**

- 1 Prepare buildings:** Retrofit and maintain existing buildings to reduce the impact of embers. New buildings can be constructed to better withstand ember attack.
- 2 Manage vegetation:** Reduce vegetation and weeds around the house and other buildings including sheds.
- 3 Create fuel breaks:** Usually constructed by ploughing, slashing or spraying around paddock boundaries to create wide areas without fuel for a fire
- 4 Prepare for emergency management of livestock:** Plan for relocation of livestock on high risk days including preparation of containment areas or re-agistment to another location.
- 5 Prepare and maintain emergency equipment:** Prepare and maintain sturdy hoses and water pumps in case you need to defend your property.

The following pages will explain some ideas about how to do these steps and you want more detailed information refer to CFA's On the Land publication and website.



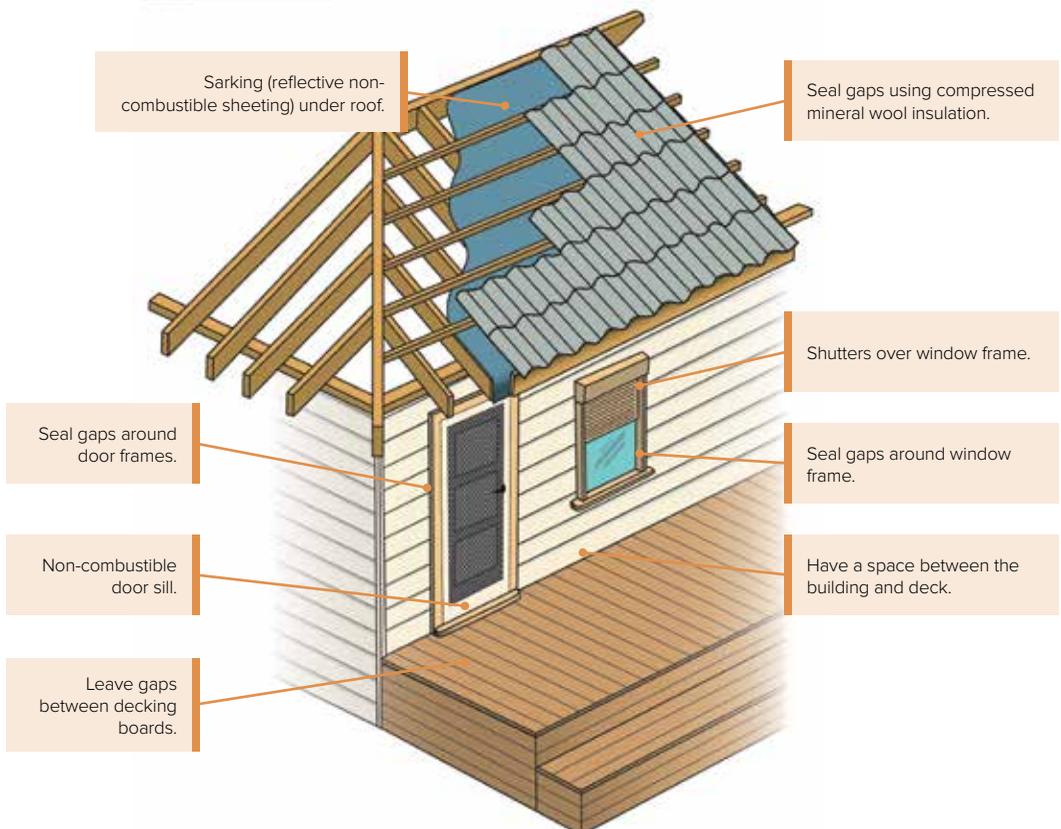
# Retrofitting and maintaining existing buildings

You can do a lot to reduce the impact of embers on your assets and prevent fire from getting into your house and other buildings on your farm. If you live in a high-risk fire area you should focus your attention to the north and western aspects of your buildings as the most severe bushfires will either come in from the northwest or the southwest.

### To protect your home and assets:

- ▶ Use fire retardant sealants around windows, door frames, eaves and the roof to prevent embers being able to get inside.
- ▶ Ensure window frames and sills are well maintained with no flaking paint.
- ▶ Use metal mesh to seal underfloor spaces and prevent leaf litter and embers getting under decks.
- ▶ Leave gaps between decking boards to allow most embers to fall through. It's important, though that there's no fuel under the deck.
- ▶ Alternatively, use non-combustible materials to build decks
- ▶ Install sarking (reflective non-combustible sheeting) under the roof
- ▶ Install bushfire sprinklers
- ▶ Install wire mesh screens (not aluminium) on windows and doors to protect them from embers.

Using road base or gravel around outbuildings and sheds can reduce the impact of grassfire on structures. Consider using windbreaks or shelterbelts to the north and west to slow wind as it approaches key assets and to catch embers before they reach them.



# Vegetation management

Vegetation management is the removal of trees, shrubs, branches and grass to reduce the impact of bushfire on a property. Many land owners will want to use fire to manage vegetation but that can be risky, so consideration should be given to alternatives to burning such as:

- ▶ cutting and mulching,
- ▶ strategic grazing,
- ▶ use of herbicides on grass and weeds
- ▶ use of inorganic materials like gravel around buildings and assets.



## Burning off

Burning off grass, stubble, weeds, undergrowth, or other vegetation is permitted outside the Fire Danger Period in accordance with legislation.

If you are considering burning off, we recommend you contact a vegetation management officer at your CFA District or Regional headquarters.

Before burning off you should register your burn-off to ensure it isn't mistaken for a bushfire:

- ▶ Visit [firepermits.vic.gov.au](http://firepermits.vic.gov.au) to complete the burn off notification form, or
- ▶ Call ESTA on 1800 668 511, or
- ▶ Email [burnoffs@esta.vic.gov.au](mailto:burnoffs@esta.vic.gov.au)

Visit the CFA website for more information on how to burn off safely and to ensure you're not breaking any laws.

## Smoke Management

Ideally you should burn when vegetation is dry and when wind is blowing away from your neighbours, crops, and towns.

You should contact either your council or VicRoads if there's a chance your use of fire might impact visibility on a nearby road.

## Reduce fuel loads ahead of the Fire Danger Period

All plants burn under the right conditions, but if they're well-managed they can offer both fire and environmental benefits. Plants that burn easily and produce embers should be located away from buildings.

Clearing vegetation, weeds and fuel loads around your house, sheds, fences and other assets will help protect them against fire.

A good rule is a minimum clearance of 10 metres around your assets to protect them. If your buildings are surrounded by dense bush, you'll need significantly more than this.

## The 10/30, 10/50 or fence line rule

Generally, a planning permit is required to clear vegetation on your property, including around buildings. However, if you live in a **Bushfire Prone Area** or **Bushfire Management Overlay**, the 10/30, 10/50 or fence line rule might apply to your property. These rules allow you to clear vegetation without a planning permit in specified circumstances.

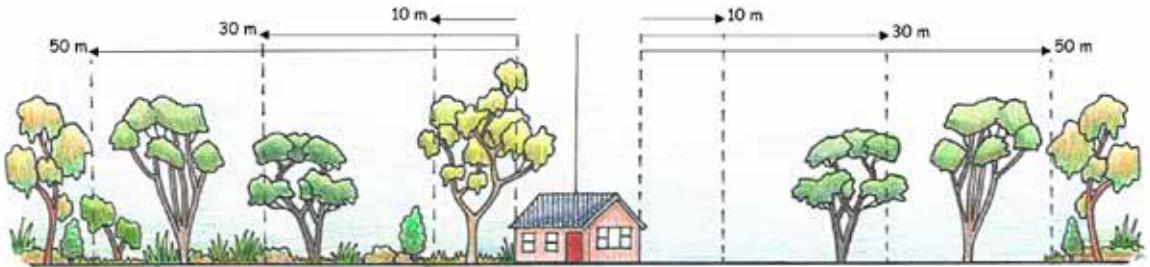


Image courtesy of Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

### When do the rules apply?

- ▶ The rules generally apply to property where buildings, including houses, are used for accommodation and were built or approved before 10 September 2009.
- ▶ They also apply to replacement houses and dependent persons units that were damaged by bushfire between 1 January 2009 and 31 March 2009.
- ▶ If your house or accommodation building on the property was built after 10 September 2009, you will likely require a permit to clear vegetation and should contact your local shire or council for more information.

Note: There are some additional circumstances where the rules may apply in the Bushfire Management Overlay where the building has been lawfully constructed or obtained relevant permits between 10 November 2009 and 10 November 2011.

- ▶ The fence line rule only applies to boundary fences constructed before 10 September 2009.

### The 10/30 rule

If your property is located in a designated **Bushfire Prone Area**, you will not need a permit to clear:

- 1 any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of your house
- 2 any vegetation, excluding trees, within 30 metres of your house.

### The 10/50 rule

If your property is located in a **Bushfire Management Overlay**, you will not need a permit to clear:

- 1 any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of your house
- 2 any vegetation, excluding trees, within 50 metres of your house.

### The fence line rule

This rule allows landowners and residents to clear any vegetation to a combined maximum of 4 metres width along both sides of a boundary fence

Where land has already been cleared 4 metres or more along one side of the fence, then up to 1 metre can be cleared along the other side of the fence.

Before clearing any vegetation, you need to visit [planning.vic.gov.au](http://planning.vic.gov.au) to find out if these rules apply to you.

# Environmental considerations

Protecting and improving the environment is integral to fire management planning and increasingly recognised by rural land management experts. Agricultural quality assurance systems often take environmental factors into account.

Landowners and managers are encouraged to identify environmental assets on their properties. Waterways, habitat for native fauna, and revegetation sites all need protection from both fire prevention works and fire threat.



Planning permits are usually required if you wish to remove native vegetation. To find out what exemptions might apply in your area, contact the planning department at your local council.

## Removing native vegetation

If your home or assets are located:

- ▶ Near a river or stream, you will need to contact your local catchment management authority and/or DELWP before managing any native vegetation within four metres of your boundary
- ▶ Adjacent to a national park, state forest or Crown land, you will need to contact DELWP to discuss any removal or modification of vegetation within four metres of your boundary.

## Roadside fuel management

You must obtain written consent before undertaking any roadside work other than mowing. For State roads, the relevant road authority is VicRoads; for municipal roads, it is the municipal council. If unsure, contact your local council.

## Environmental planning checklist

- ▶ Ensure that fuel reduction works do not result in large areas of bare ground that may cause erosion and encourage weed growth.
- ▶ Watch out for signs of erosion or weed invasion in large areas of bare ground
- ▶ Remove weeds that have high fuel loads for fire safety and environmental benefits
- ▶ Minimise soil disturbance around trees to protect their health
- ▶ Avoid removing trees with hollows that are habitat for native fauna
- ▶ Rehabilitate fire-affected areas as soon as possible
- ▶ Check if permits are required.



# Horses and livestock

**There's a lot you can do to help your animals survive fire. The following section contains tips on how to keep them safe during a fire.**

### **Prepare a low-risk area:**

- ▶ This could be a cultivated paddock, green space, or a sand manège that is located away from scrub or bushland to avoid the heat from fire. If you have a large number of animals, you may need several low-risk areas on the property.
- ▶ Provide sufficient drinking water and feed to enable stock to remain in this area during periods of high to extreme temperatures for several days.

### **Other preparations:**

- ▶ Make sure animal identification is up to date. Microchip and register horses on a licensed registry. For livestock, ensure your National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) and Property Identification Code (PIC) details are correct.
- ▶ If you plan to evacuate some animals, know which evacuation routes you will take, and what you will do if these are blocked. Practice with your animals and allow plenty of time. Last minute evacuation will put your animals and you at risk.
- ▶ Prepare an emergency kit, have it on hand and ready all fire season.
- ▶ Create instructions on animal care and where equipment (including first aid supplies) are located in case someone else needs to care for them.

## If your property isn't safe

Once a fire has started it is unlikely you will be able to safely move your animals to another location. Develop a plan to temporarily move them on Extreme or Catastrophic days to:

- ▶ A neighbour or friend's property that is better prepared than yours
- ▶ Local showgrounds
- ▶ Saleyards
- ▶ Racetracks
- ▶ Pony club grounds if they are better prepared than your own property



Find out before you arrive if your animals will be accepted and be prepared to stay with them. If you agist, find out if a bushfire plan is in place already and come up with a group strategy with other people/agistees.

## On high fire risk days:

- ▶ Move your animals to your designated low-risk area. Sheep often refuse to move when conditions get very hot, so they should be moved early in the day.
- ▶ Don't shut horses in stables or small yards. They are quite good at avoiding fire if they have room to move freely in a large area with minimal vegetation.
- ▶ Remove all equipment from animals. It can melt, heat up or catch on trees and fences as they try to escape the fire, causing serious injuries.
- ▶ Close external gates so animals don't end up on roads where they can be killed by traffic due to poor visibility. Open internal gates to allow them plenty of room to move around and escape the fire.
- ▶ Always seek veterinary care if animals are injured.

## Property access for emergency services

Fire trucks are large, heavy vehicles that can weigh up to 15 tonne. A turning circle with a minimum 8 metre radius is needed to allow fire truck access to buildings and key assets. Alternatively, a T or Y turning area with each leg of the turning area at least eight metres long, as measured from the centre of the T or Y can enable the truck to turn.

Driveways longer than 200m need to be 6m wide for the full length, or 4m wide with 6m wide passing bays no more than 200m apart.

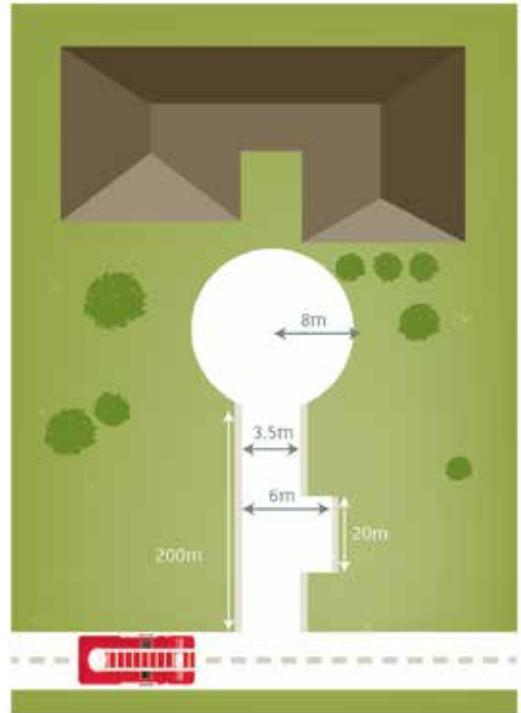
Ensure your property is identifiable from the entrance to assist emergency services, for example name or number. Fire trucks should be able to access each part of the property where it is practical to do so.

### Gates

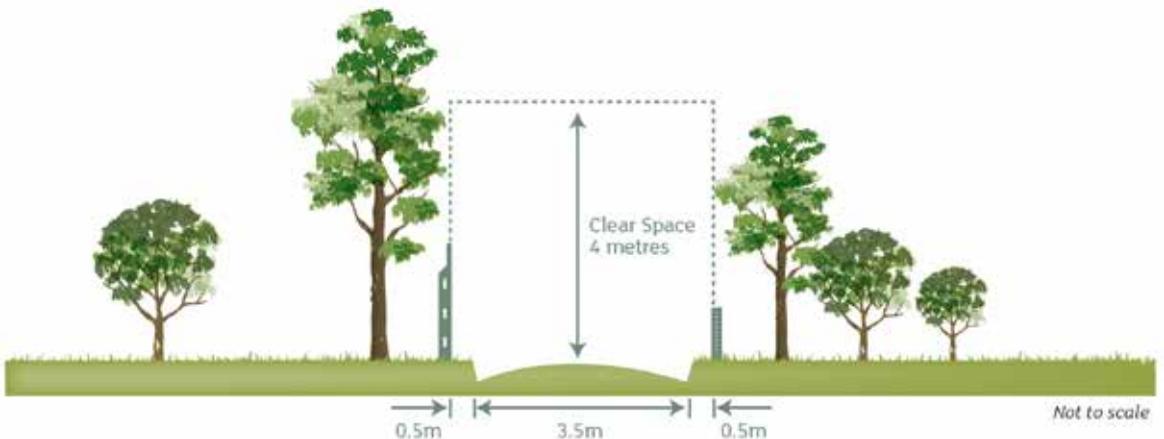
For tankers to fit through, gates need to be at least 3.5m wide, clear of encroachments for another 0.5m either side and clear of overhanging branches and structures for 4m above. Consider marking gates with a pole to aid visibility. Gates providing access to fenced-off areas of vegetation for firefighting and general management are particularly useful.

### Crossings

All bridges, culverts and creek crossings need to have at least a 15 tonne load-bearing capacity where fire truck suppression services are required.



0.5m required to open firetruck door



## Access to water supplies for emergency services

Farmers and landowners are strongly encouraged to have water supplies available for and accessible to emergency services.

As a rule, water supplies should:

- ▶ Be obvious or known to CFA or other agencies, that is through signs or property plans
- ▶ Be in an open, flat area with a hard standing area that allows a fire suppression pump to be within four metres of the water supply
- ▶ Be available even when water levels are low during summer months
- ▶ Have a turning circle loop or turn-around point.

## Water supply for the defence of buildings

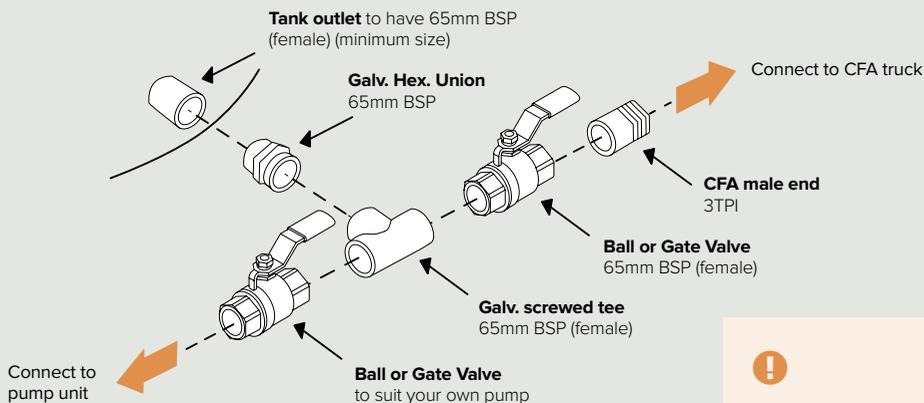
If you plan to stay and defend farm buildings as part of your fire plan, you should have a dedicated firefighting water supply of at least 10,000 litres available at each building. This supply is in addition to water available for fire suppression on remote parts of your property.

This additional supply should be independent of the reticulated water supply and mains power supply – for instance, a dam, tank or pool.

For more detailed information on defending your property, visit the CFA website or contact your CFA district or regional office.

## CFA fittings for tanks

CFA trucks use a special fitting to connect to tanks. There needs to be at least one 64mm, 3 thread per inch CFA male coupling. Consider using a 'tee' to allow the CFA fitting on one side of the branch and personal firefighting fittings on the other side of the pipe, as shown below.



BSP = British Standard Pipe

All sizes shown are a minimum diameter (except CFA connection)

## Private firefighting equipment



As a landowner operating vehicles, equipment, and machinery you're required to have private firefighting equipment on hand to stop the spread of fire. Private firefighting equipment ranges from rakes, shovels and fire extinguishers to farm firefighting units, slip-ons, and tankers (dependent on fire risk).

Provided private equipment is used safely and effectively it has an important role in fire management. Getting on top of a fire early can bring it under control or slow its spread before the brigade arrives on the property.

It's important everyone knows where the equipment is and how to use it in-case you're not home when a fire breaks out.

*Guidelines for Operating Private Equipment* is a comprehensive guide on the use of private equipment.



# Harvest fire prevention



## Harvesters

The most common cause of harvester fires is fine harvest dust collecting on hot engine components such as the exhaust manifold and turbocharger. In the highest fire-risk parts of the day, paddock work should be postponed.

Reducing your header speed one or two kilometres per hour can reduce machine temperatures to below ignition point of most dusts. A good strategy is to slow down when wind blows dust and debris into the header and speed up again when harvesting into the wind.

You can cut down the risk of fire by cleaning down your header before and during harvest. The timing of regular cleaning is dependent on the crop being harvested. Refer to the Preventing Harvest Fires factsheet for more detailed information on harvest and fire management and ask your local CFA for a Voluntary Grain Harvesting Guide sticker to put in your header cabin.



Monitoring conditions before and during harvest will cut down the risk of fire. Suspend harvesting operations when the local conditions are hot, dry and windy. The recommended conditions are shown in the *Voluntary Grain Harvesting Guide*.



## Haystack fires

### How haystack fires start

Spontaneous ignition is the leading cause of haystack fires in Victoria. Green or damp hay encourages elements like bacteria and fungi to grow and decompose. In these conditions, a series of complex biological and chemical reactions can cause a buildup of heat in the haystack. This, in turn, can produce flammable gases that may ignite.

### Minimising haystack fire risk

- ▶ Ensure hay is fully cured before baling
- ▶ Know the history of the hay you purchase
- ▶ Ensure haystacks are limited in size
- ▶ Store hay in multiple stacks that are separated rather than one large stack
- ▶ Store hay in a number of locations away from key assets
- ▶ Store hay away from possible sources of ignition (roadsides, powerlines, workshops and vegetation). Never store vehicles, machinery and equipment in your hayshed – there is increased risk of losing both hay and machinery
- ▶ Consider using temporary fencing to allow stock to graze close to hay and silage stores to reduce fuel loads near these assets

- ▶ Do not stack hay right to the top of a hay shed. Allow some air to circulate at the top – this helps to carry away moisture
- ▶ Protect hay from rain, leaking roofs and spouts, and cover stacks with tarps or hay caps
- ▶ Store hay in areas that are not likely to flood and in sheds that are in good repair to minimise the chance hay will get wet
- ▶ Bale and store hay at the correct moisture level
- ▶ Monitor hay with a correctly calibrated moisture meter. Moisture content should be no more than 20 percent (12-18 percent is recommended as a precaution).

Haystack fires are also caused by sparks from machinery and equipment, and embers from burn offs or bushfires and grassfires.



Refer to the Haystack Fire Factsheet for more information on haystack fire management.

## Using machinery

You should be particularly careful if you're operating machinery powered by a petrol, diesel or gas engine in or near grass and other vegetation. These include:

- ▶ Chainsaws, mowers and brush cutters
- ▶ Motorbikes, quadbikes, cars, utes and trucks
- ▶ Tractors, harvesters and other farming vehicles.

Modern vehicle emission control systems need to operate at extremely high temperatures.

**Catalytic converters:** are used to remove some of the more toxic gases from engine exhausts. They are located in the exhaust system, usually close to the engine and operate at over 400°C. This is hot enough to ignite dry grass.

**Diesel particulate filters:** are used to remove soot from the exhaust gases of diesel engines. These are also located in the exhaust system, close to the engine and some require temperatures above 600°C to do their job. Even those that use a special catalyst in the fuel to reduce the needed operating temperature still get hot enough to ignite dry grass.

### During the Fire Danger Period

Operating certain machinery during the Fire Danger Period is restricted if certain conditions can't be met. See CFA's Can I, or Can't I for more information.

Examples include:

**Machinery incorporating an engine** in contact with, or within nine metres of crop, grass, stubble, weeds, undergrowth or other vegetation must:

- ▶ be free from faults and mechanical defects that could cause an outbreak of fire,
- ▶ be fitted with an approved spark arrestor, and
- ▶ carry fire suppression equipment. This can be a knapsack spray pump or water fire extinguisher. It must be in working order, fully charged with water and have a minimum capacity of nine litres.

Tractors fitted with a turbocharger, or an exhaust-aspirated air cleaner do not require a spark arrestor.

**Cutting, welding and grinding equipment and bee smokers** must be operated with:

- ▶ a fire-resistant shield or guard in place to stop sparks and hot material
- ▶ an area of at least 1.5 metres clear of flammable material or sufficiently wet down
- ▶ a water supply or an effective water knapsack of at least nine litres capacity available
- ▶ cut-offs and electrode stubs placed directly in a fireproof container.



**Cutting, welding and grinding and bee smoking activities are banned on Total Fire Ban days.**

## Powerlines and electric fences

### Powerlines

In accordance with legislation, landowners and managers must ensure that private powerlines are maintained in sound condition and that they are clear of vegetation.

Detailed information on these requirements can be found at the Energy Safe Victoria website by following the links to electricity safety.



### Electric fencing

Check electric fences to make sure they are free of wire, grass, weeds and other vegetation, and operate them according to manufacturer's advice. It is a common practice to switch off electric fences at times of extreme fire danger.

Farm managers are required to carry a dry chemical fire extinguisher (ABE) suitable for Class A fires (normal combustible materials), Class B fires (fuels and other flammable liquids) and electrical fires.

## Pre-season checklist

### Essential planning before the fire season:

- Have a routine in place for fire risk days including things like:
  - a. moving stock,
  - b. limiting or postponing machinery use,
  - c. switching off electric fences.Make sure everyone on your property is aware of it.
- Know your trigger to leave early on higher fire risk days and the trigger to leave for family members, employees or contractors. Plan for contingencies such as children at school or visitors.
- Have a safety strategy in place for storing and monitoring hay – purchase a moisture meter or thermal probe if necessary.
- If you have private firefighting equipment, conduct a ‘refresher’ session with family and employees to make sure everyone can use it.
- Know which government grants or compensation you may be eligible for to help recover from the impact of fire.

### Essential preparation before the fire season:

- Reduce fuel loads around assets (house blocks, sheds and fences) and create strategic fuel breaks.
- Create a heavily grazed area, or bare paddock where stock can be moved during a fire
- Make sure that there are no gaps between the cladding and the ground or slab of your sheds, to prevent embers getting inside.
- Double check that spark arrestors on machinery are working and efficient.
- Make sure chainsaws, mowers, and other portable petrol powered appliances are free from faults.
- Have water fire extinguishers or knapsack spray pumps (minimum 9 litres) available that can be carried by any person using farm equipment or machinery.
- Make sure your property name or number is clearly visible so emergency services can identify it when approaching the entrance.
- Check access tracks around your property. Consider if access for fire trucks can be improved by clearing vegetation, signposting dead ends or creating turning circles.
- Make sure water supplies around your property are clearly marked in case emergency services need to access them.
- Test firefighting equipment – pumps, hoses, backpacks and sprayers
- Check firefighting water supply and top up
- Check that protective clothing is prepared and accessible (long-sleeved shirt, long trousers, broad rim hat, goggles, leather boots and gloves – no synthetics)

# CFA Programs and Services

CFA is divided into 5 Regions across Victoria and each Region contains a number of Districts. Your District office can provide a wealth of information to help you in many aspects of fire safety on farms. There are some key personnel you should know about.

## CFA Manager Community Safety (MCS)

The MCS is responsible for all aspects of community fire safety across your CFA Region and they each manage a team of specialists.

## Community Engagement Coordinator (CEC)

You will find CECs in all CFA District Offices. CECs have expert knowledge of all CFA's key fire safety advice and are responsible for coordinating delivery of our fire safety programs and community meetings in your area. If you're looking for information about when and where fire safety programs are being run in your area, give your District office a call and ask to speak to the CEC.

Some programs include:

- ▶ Fire Safety Essentials – to learn about your local fire risk and understand the steps you can take to manage your own risk, including planning and preparing for the fire season. This entry level program is useful for community members living in fire risk areas.
- ▶ Fire Safety Planning – teaches members of the community the basics about fire related decision making and will help you start developing a fire plan.
- ▶ Farm specific programs include Harvest Breakfasts and Farm Fire Safety sessions. Some CFA Districts offer these programs so check with your local District Office.

## Vegetation Management Officers (VMO)

VMOs provide advice to the community about management of vegetation on private land. They are also involved in coordinating programs to manage vegetation across your CFA District. Some VMOs are experts in ecological vegetation management or traditional burning techniques. Contact the VMO at your District Office if you'd like to discuss managing vegetation on your land.

## Local CFA Fire Brigade

Your local brigade is a valuable resource and contact point for CFA. The brigade Captain is usually a long-time resident of your area and a wealth of knowledge about local fire risk. The Brigade Community Safety Coordinator (BCSC) is a link to your District personnel and will usually have a good relationship with your District CEC.

Local CFA members are usually volunteers so they may not always be available for a chat. However many members tend to gather at the fire station on Sundays and this is a good time to drop in if you need any help with your fire planning. Note though, that some smaller fire stations may be open to the public less regularly.

## Council

### Municipal Fire Prevention Officer (MFPO)

MFPOs can issue some types of permits to burn in the Fire Danger Period. They also deal with concerns and complaints about fire hazards in the community.

### Council Planning Department

If you want to build or develop and think you may be in a bushfire risk area, contact the council's Land Use Planning Department and enquire whether any planning controls are in place regarding bushfire.

### Municipal Building Surveyor

Contact the Municipal Building Surveyor to report buildings that look unsafe or that you consider to be a fire hazard.

### Recovery Officer

After a fire event or any other major emergency, the local council will typically appoint a recovery team to assist in the community recovery process.

## Other agencies

### Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

[delwp.vic.gov.au](http://delwp.vic.gov.au)

### Agriculture Victoria

[agriculture.vic.gov.au](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au)

### Victorian Farmers Federation

[vff.org.au](http://vff.org.au)

### Australian Fodder Industry Association

[afia.org.au](http://afia.org.au)

### Grains Research and Development Corporation

[www.grdc.com.au](http://www.grdc.com.au)

Leaving early is always your safest option.

This booklet can help you prepare your property for bush and grassfire, but if you want to stay and actively defend your property, you will need to do far more preparation. You will also need to have a detailed understanding of fire risk, fire behaviour, property preparation, Fire Danger Ratings, warnings and alerts, and sheltering options.

Staying to actively defend your property is dangerous and you could suffer serious physical and emotional injury, or you could die. You must be fully prepared. We strongly recommend you talk to your local CFA brigade if you plan to stay to defend your property.

**Dial: 000** If you see smoke, flame or embers

**VicEmergency Hotline**

for fire warnings and updates: 1800 226 226

**Translating and Interpreting Service:** 131 450

**National Relay Service:** 1800 555 677

[cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au)

[delwp.vic.gov.au](http://delwp.vic.gov.au)

[emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au)