



Bushfire Preparation Toolkit





Bushfires happen every year. To survive a bushfire, you must be prepared to make your own decisions. The single biggest killer is indecision.

Read this book carefully and complete the checklists to create your bushfire plan. This will help you decide if you will **Be Safe and Leave Early** or **Be Prepared to Stay and Defend**.

Taking the time to create your bushfire plan will give you and your family the best chance of survival if there is a bushfire near you.

You can also create an online plan at mybushfireplan.wa.gov.au Once complete, your online plan can be shared with family and friends.



Visit mybushfireplan.wa.gov.au or download the **My Bushfire Plan** app.





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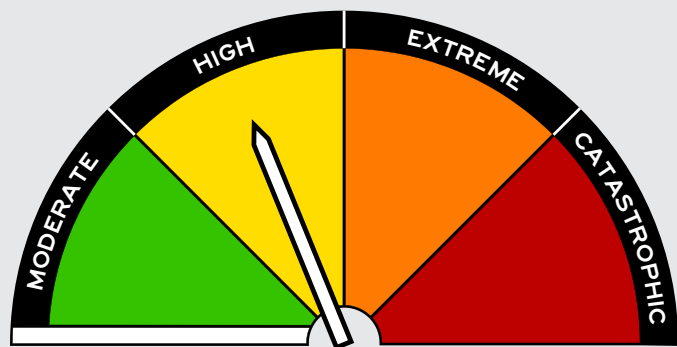
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1 Australian Fire Danger Ratings System

The Fire Danger Ratings describe the potential danger level you could face if a bushfire starts, while the Bushfire Warnings System provides information about what to do during a bushfire.

Fire Danger Ratings provide you with important information so you can take action to protect yourself and others from the potentially dangerous impacts of bushfires.

Before a bushfire



| Fire Danger Rating | Fire behaviour | Action required |
|---|--|--|
| Moderate Plan and prepare | Most fires can be controlled | Stay up to date and be alert for fires in your area |
| High Be ready to act | Fires can be dangerous | Decide what you will do if a fire starts |
| Extreme Take action now to protect life and property | Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous | Put your bushfire plan into action (see pages 11 and 17) |
| Catastrophic For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas | If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost | Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. Stay safe by going to a safer location early in the morning or the night before. |

When there is minimal risk, Fire Danger Ratings will be set to **'No Rating'**. At this level, fires are not expected to spread in a fast or life-threatening way.

2 Australian Warning System – Bushfire

During a bushfire, emergency services will issue a warning if the fire is impacting, or likely to impact the community.

There are three levels of warning. These change to reflect the increasing risk to your life or property, and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives.

During a bushfire



EMERGENCY WARNING

An out of control fire is approaching fast. There is a threat to lives and homes and you need to take immediate action to survive.

You must seek shelter or leave now if it is safe to do so.



WATCH AND ACT

If your plan is to leave, leave now. If your plan is to stay, get ready to actively defend.

Only stay and defend if you are mentally and physically prepared.



ADVICE

A fire has started but there is no immediate threat to lives or homes. Stay alert and watch for signs of fire.

Be aware and keep up to date.



**Don't wait for a text message or a knock on the door.
Make your own decision on when to leave.**

Stay informed at [emergency.wa.gov.au](https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)

Emergency WA is the primary and most up to date source of emergency information for:

- Current warnings
- Fire Danger Ratings
- Total Fire Bans

See back cover for other information sources.



3 Bushfire Risks and Dangers



Flames are not the only risk you face in a bushfire.

Bushfires happen every summer. They can start suddenly and without warning. It's important to understand your risks and plan what you'll do to keep safe when a bushfire threatens your life or home.



Ember Attack

Embers consist of burning bark, leaves or twigs and can start new fires up to 25km ahead of the fire front.

Embers can:

- Set alight flammable items such plants, leaves in gutters or outdoor furniture.
- Occur before, during and after a fire front passes.



Radiant Heat

Bushfires can generate an incredible amount of heat, known as radiant heat. It is important to consider flammable material near and around your home.

Radiant heat can:

- Dry and ignite fuels even before the flames have reached them.
- Cause injury and death from burns, heat exhaustion and possible heart failure.



Smoke

Lung injuries and suffocation can occur where the body is exposed to smoke and super-heated air.

You should:

- Seek shelter when heat and smoke becomes too intense.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a mask.

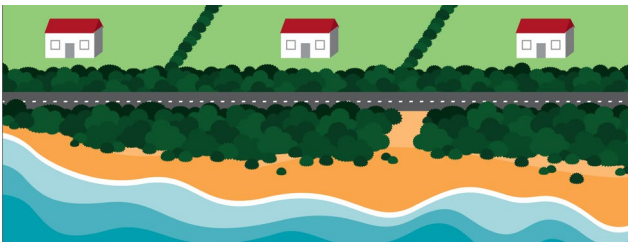
3 Bushfire Risks and Dangers

Continued



Remember, you don't have to live in the bush to be at risk from bushfires.

If you live in or near any of these environments, bushfire is a real threat to you and those you live with. You will need to prepare your home, property and household in case of a bushfire.



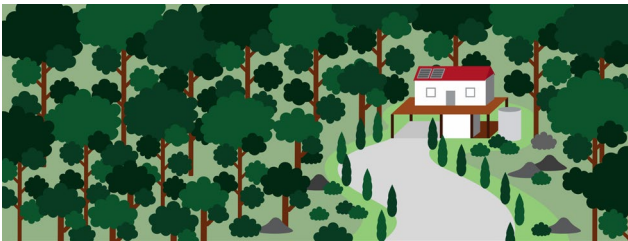
Coastal scrub

Coastal scrub fires can be hot and move very fast. If you live near areas of coastal scrub, you're at risk.



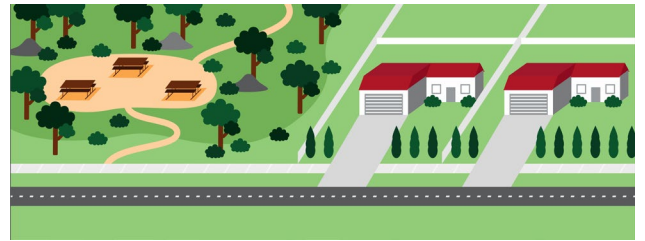
Farms and paddocks

Fires can spread quickly over large areas like paddocks. If you live on or near farmlands, you're at risk.



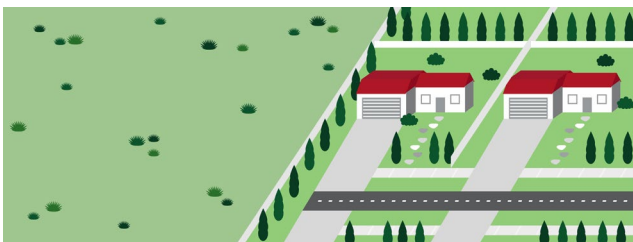
Forest and bushland

Fires in these areas can be very intense and extremely difficult for emergency services to reach and extinguish. If you live near forest or bushland, your risk is very high.



Parks and reserves

Flames and flying embers can travel many kilometres, crossing roads and impacting homes. If you live near parks or reserves, you're at risk.



Grasslands

Grass fires can start easily and spread quickly. If you live near grasslands, you're at risk.

4 Prepare Your Property

It doesn't matter if you're staying or leaving, there are some important yet simple things you can do to help protect your home from fire, even if you're not there.

Simple and ongoing property upkeep

Set calendar reminders to complete these monthly preparations during fire season.

| | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cut the grass around your property to 10cm or less | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Prune shrubs so they are not dense | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Clean gutters | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Check gas release valves face away from property | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

More lasting protection

Set calendar reminders to complete these preparations every year:

- Remove any shrubs from against the home.
- Keep gas cylinders away from the likely direction of fire (i.e. where bush is, or if surrounded by bush, where the wind comes from most often) and turn release valves outwards.
- Move any wood, mulch or flammable material away from the house.
- Create a minimum two metre gap between your house and tree branches.
- Install metal fly wire mesh on all windows and vents.
- Install a protective screen on your evaporative air conditioner.
- Block any gaps under floors, in roof spaces, under eaves, and in or around external vents, skylights, chimneys and wall claddings.

Additional protection for larger blocks and rural locations

- Create fire-breaks along all boundaries of your property suitable for fire trucks to access (refer to Fire-breaks page 6).
- Check bridge and cattle grid loading for fire truck access.
- Store petrol and gas safely away in a shed or covered area.
- Consider installing access to firefighting water such as underground water pumps that lead from dams to the house, or large water containers with 50mm male Camlock fittings for fire trucks (refer to Stay and Defend section page 16).

Find more information
about preparing your home at
dfes.wa.gov.au/bushfire



5 Fire-breaks

A fire-break is a strip of land that has been cleared of all trees, shrubs, grass or other flammable materials to allow access for firefighting vehicles to all areas of your property. It may also act as a barrier to help stop or slow a low-intensity fire.

Do I need a fire-break?

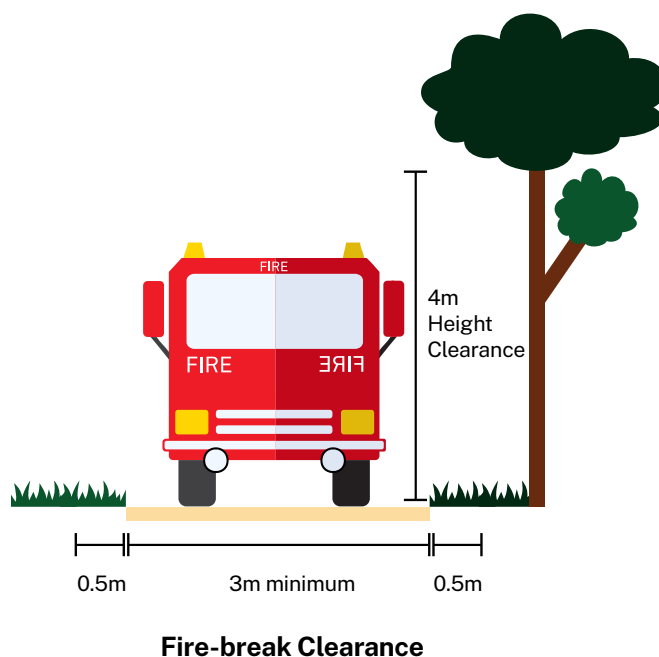
Your Local Government will determine whether you are legally required to construct and maintain fire-breaks. However, from a practical perspective, if you have a large, or difficult to access property, even if you're not legally required to, you should consider installing breaks to assist firefighters to access all areas.

To find out whether your property is legally required to have a fire-break, contact your local government.

What are the requirements for a fire-break?

The legal requirements vary across local governments, however as a minimum we recommend your fire-breaks:

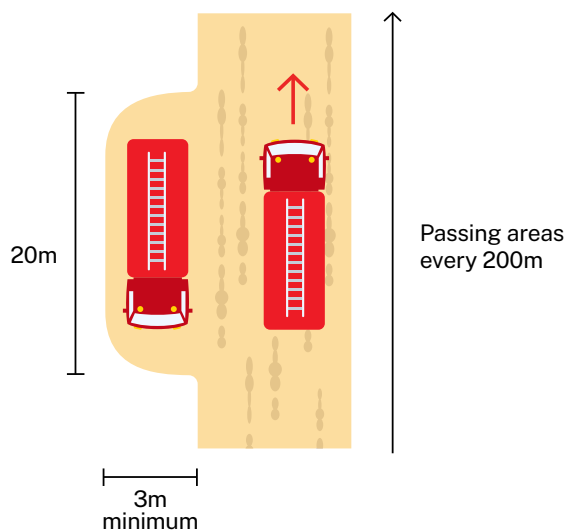
- Are at least three metres wide to mineral earth (clear of any trees, shrubs, grass or other flammable material).
- Are cleared for an additional 0.5m either side - this doesn't have to be to mineral earth, however you should be able to walk or drive over it, for example, grass.
- Are clear to a height of at least four metres – overhanging branches can block access for fire fighting vehicles or damage important equipment like hoses, lights or aerials.
- Provide a circuit that connects to other access routes, like your driveway or the road and doesn't lead to dead ends. It's important to ensure firefighters can escape in either direction, as the way out may be blocked by fire or other firefighting vehicles.



5 Fire-breaks Continued

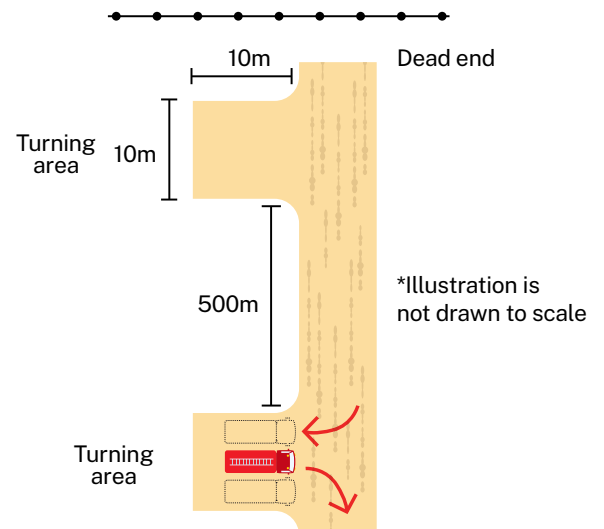
What else should I consider?

Fire trucks can be very large and need a lot of space to move around. There are things you can do to help keep firefighters safe and make it easier for them to defend your property.



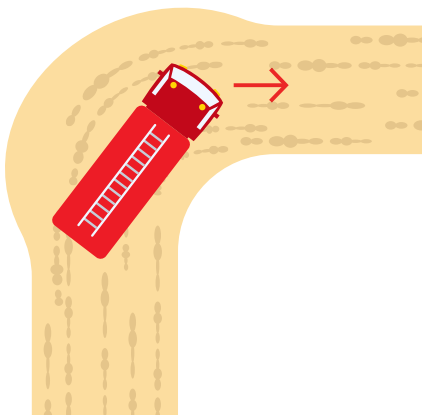
Fire-breaks longer than 200m

- If your fire-break is longer than 200m, include areas at the side of the break for trucks to pass each other. These should be at least 3m wide (so 6m including your fire-break) and 20m long. Include passing areas every 200m along your breaks.



Fire-breaks longer than 500m

- If your fire-break is longer than 500m, or if it must end in a dead end, include areas to turn around – these should be at least 10m x 10m and included every 500m and at any dead ends.



- Double the width of your breaks around corners or sharp bends.



You can find the requirements for your area in your Fire-breaks Notice, issued by your Local Government. It's important to speak to your Local Government prior to constructing your fire-breaks.

More information?

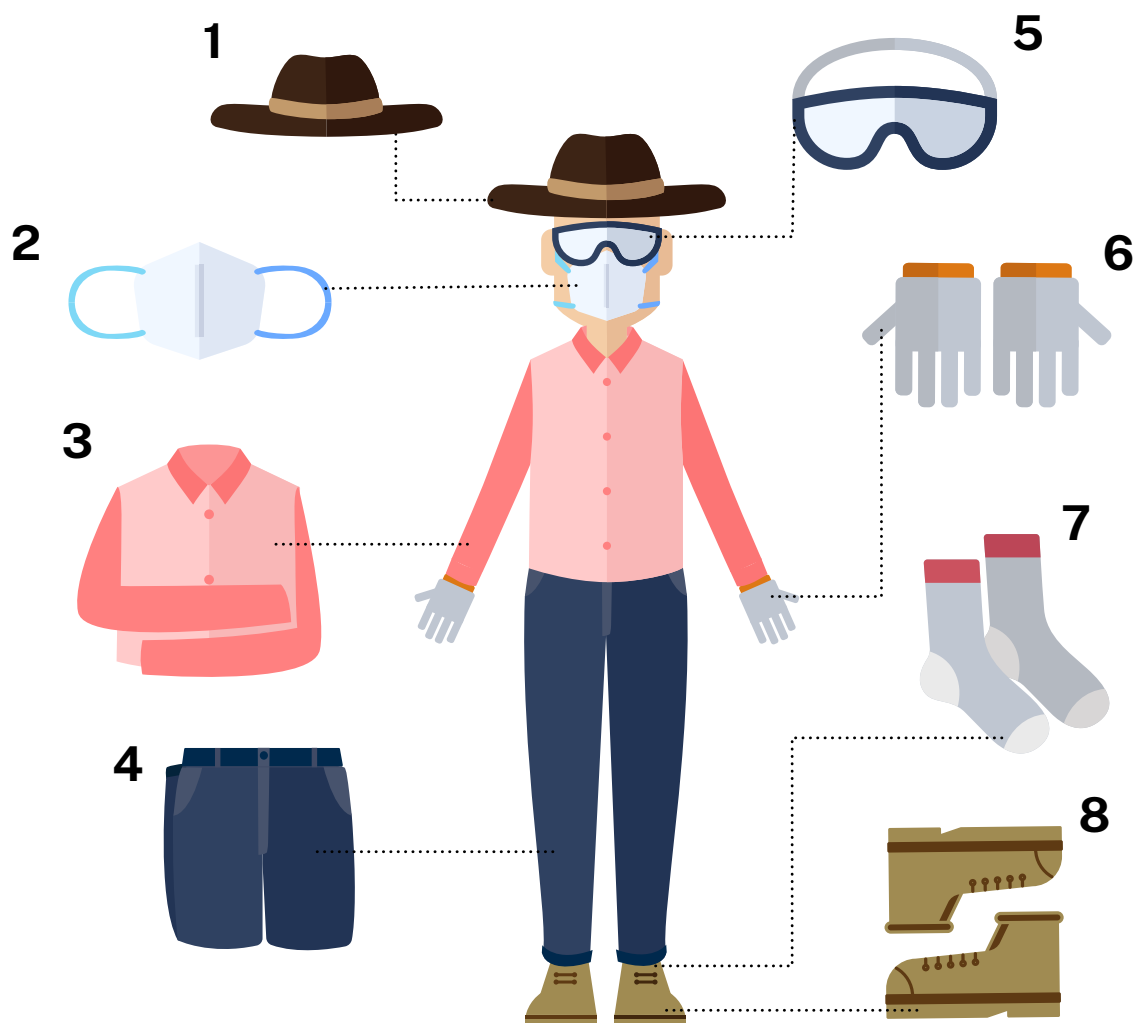
You can find more information in the Guide for applying the Bush Fire Risk Treatment Standards at publications.dfes.wa.gov.au or by contacting your Local Government.

6 Bushfire Protective Clothing

It doesn't matter if you're staying or leaving, everyone needs protective clothing.

Clothing and accessories

Prepare protective clothing and accessories for everyone in your household before bushfire season and store with your Emergency Kit. Clothing should be thick and loose-fitting, and made from natural fibres such as wool or cotton.



- 1. Wide brimmed helmet or hat to protect your head and shoulders
- 2. Smoke or particle mask
- 3. Long sleeved shirt and a thick coat
- 4. Long pants

- 5. Fire protection goggles or glasses
- 6. Gloves
- 7. Thick woollen or cotton socks
- 8. Sturdy footwear

7 Sheltering In Your Own Home

Sheltering in your home during a bushfire is very dangerous and should be your last option, when all other plans fail, and you are unable to leave.

Whether you plan to stay or leave, you need to identify somewhere you can shelter on your property in case you can no longer leave.



Important!

Have an emergency kit prepared and ensure there are protective clothing and accessories for everyone who may need to shelter.

If it's too late to leave the property:

- **Call 000 to report all fires.**
- If you are sheltering in place due to smoke, ember, radiant heat or direct flame attack, call **000**. This is a life threatening situation, make the call.
- If people are expecting you to leave, let them know you are now staying.
- Actively defend your property by putting out spot fires.
- Remember to check the roof cavity through the manhole for any spot fires.
- Remove flammable items from outside the house like door mats, toys or outdoor furniture.
- Take down curtains and push furniture away from windows.
- Make sure all doors and windows are sealed as best as possible to prevent smoke and embers getting into the house. You can use rolled up towels or clothes to seal any gaps.
- Soak towels and rugs in water and lay them along the inside of external doorways.
- Move inside the house if smoke, heat or embers become too much or if the front is approaching.
- Take shelter inside in a room with two exits, furthest from the fire front. At least one exit must lead outside. People have died sheltering in bathrooms and other rooms without an exit door.
- Get down low to limit your exposure to smoke and heat.
- Keep woollen blankets handy for protection against radiant heat. If covering yourself with a blanket, it should be dry to avoid steam burns.
- Drink plenty of water to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- Shelter in the house for as long as possible – if the house catches alight and it becomes too dangerous to stay inside, move outside to ground that has already been burnt.



People die in a bushfire from radiant heat.

Protect yourself with thick long sleeves and long trousers, strong leather boots, gloves and head protection. Ensure protective clothing is dry to avoid steam burns from radiant heat.

What Will Our Household Do?

One of the most important things you can do to prepare for a bushfire is have a discussion with the entire household about what to do if a bushfire threatens.

Use the tool below to help you decide whether to **Be Safe and Leave Early** or **Be Prepared to Stay and Defend**.



Important!

Before considering staying to defend you must ask yourself:

| | NO | YES |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Do I have a good understanding of bushfire behaviour? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do I have, or am I willing to get, all of the necessary firefighting equipment? (See page 19) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Am I able to do everything required to fight a fire without the help of firefighters? (Carefully read the Stay and Defend section on pages 17-24) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Am I mentally, physically and emotionally prepared to fight spot fires for hours, even days at a time? Being in a bushfire could be the most physically demanding and traumatic experience of your life. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Am I committed to prepare our property for a bushfire? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Does everyone in the household agree with the plan to stay? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do I have a plan to evacuate vulnerable people? Children, guests, dependents, elderly or sick household members need to leave early and be cared for. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered **NO** to any of the questions, you must **Be Safe and Leave Early**.

If you answered **YES** to all 7 questions, **Be Prepared to Stay and Defend**.





Be Safe and Leave Early Plan

If you and your property are not prepared to the highest level, **Be Safe and Leave Early.**

Fill in the spaces to create your fire plan then tear out and display the plan where everyone can see it. It could save lives.



You can also visit mybushfireplan.wa.gov.au or download the **My Bushfire Plan** app to create this plan.

Be Safe and Leave Early Plan

1 Where is your bushfire plan for?

2 Who do we need to protect?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Me | <input type="checkbox"/> People who need assistance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other adults | <input type="checkbox"/> Pets |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Babies and children | <input type="checkbox"/> Livestock and other animals |

3 When will we leave?

We will leave when:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The fire danger rating in my area is Extreme or Catastrophic | <input type="checkbox"/> There is lightning in my area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There is a bushfire Advice in my area | <input type="checkbox"/> We believe a fire will affect our property in the next 24 hours |
| <input type="checkbox"/> There is a bushfire Watch and Act in my area | <input type="checkbox"/> We see or smell smoke close by |

Is there anything else we need to consider?

4 Where will we go and how will we get there?

Safe Place A:

Route:

Safe Place B:

Route:

Be Safe and Leave Early Plan

5 Who will we call?

Emergency Contact 1:

Mobile:

Emergency Contact 2:

Mobile:

6 What will we take?

Prepare before bushfire season:

- Important/legal documents
- Drinking water, food for the trip
- First aid kit
- Precious items (jewellery, medals)
- Personal hygiene items
- Phone, computer, chargers
- Clothing for everyone

Items to grab when leaving:

- Medication, life support equipment
- Wallet
- House and car keys
- Pets and supplies
(food, bowls, cage, leash, etc)
- Phone and charger
- Laptop and charger

Other items:

7 Where will you store your Emergency Kit?

8 What is your backup plan?

What if no one's home?

- If there is a Bushfire Advice, consider returning home to prepare your property or pick up family or pets. **Do not wait and see.**
- Have a backup person who can help, in case you're not able to get home. Make sure they know what actions they need to take. Have your Emergency Evacuation Kit Ready, so it's easy to collect.
- On days with a fire danger rating of Extreme or Catastrophic you may have your children and pets stay at a friend or family member's house.

Write your backup plan on the next page.

Be Safe and Leave Early Plan

Write your backup plan here.

What if you have guests staying at your house?

- Talk to your guests about your bushfire plan and when everyone will leave.
- Stay informed through **Emergency WA** and monitor fire danger ratings daily.
- Consider what is needed to evacuate your guests and household - will you need to take multiple trips?
- If the fire danger is Extreme or above, or if there is a bushfire Advice, guests need to be contactable.
- Make sure any children staying with you understand your bushfire plan and know what is expected of them.

Is there anything else you need to consider?

What if it's too late to leave your property, where will you shelter?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beach | <input type="checkbox"/> Oval |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dam | <input type="checkbox"/> Open cleared paddock |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In a room with two exits (one exit must lead outside) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: <div style="background-color: #e0e0e0; width: 150px; height: 20px; display: inline-block;"></div> |



If you are unable to leave:

Wear heavy duty non-flammable clothing including gloves, boots, goggles, head cover and filter mask and have non-flammable blankets for extra protection from extreme heat.

Call 000 and inform them of your situation, how many people and where you are sheltering and ensure everyone including pets stay together.

Preparing Your Emergency Kit

Your Emergency Kit should include the essential items you need to keep you and your family safe. Prepare your Emergency Kit before bushfire season and keep it in an accessible spot. Make sure everyone knows where it is kept.

Essentials

Prepare before bushfire season

- Important documents (birth certificates, passports, deeds)
- Precious items (jewellery, medals)
- First aid kit
- Drinking water
- Personal hygiene items
- Bushfire protective clothing for everyone (see page 8)
- Portable battery powered AM/FM radio with spare batteries

Important Extras

Items to grab when leaving

- Wallet
- Driver's license or other ID
- Medications, life support equipment
- Phone and charger
- House and car keys
- Laptop and charger

Packing for pets

- Food, water and bowls
- Bedding
- Medication or special requirements
- Registration/microchip information
- Lead
- Crate



Be Prepared to Stay and Defend Plan

Fire is frightening; it roars as loud as a jet engine and the smoke can plunge day into night.

Read this section carefully so that you and your family understand what it takes to be completely prepared.

When a bushfire is likely to impact your home, staying to defend is extremely dangerous.

You must be mentally and physically ready. You need to be highly prepared and have an in-depth understanding of bushfire behaviour. Everyone in your household must be 100% comfortable with the decision to stay and defend.

Always have a backup plan, and an independent power and water supply.



You may be cut off from basic services and may not be able to leave to re-supply. Even if you plan to leave, you need to be prepared in case you are forced to shelter.

If you are unsure about your decision, you must be safe and leave early.



You can also visit mybushfireplan.wa.gov.au or download the **My Bushfire Plan** app to create this plan.

Firefighting Equipment Checklist

Minimum equipment required to stay and defend

- An independent water supply of at least 20,000 litres – mains water is likely to be shut off
- A generator (>1.5kVA) and sufficient fuel to power a pump for up to five days – the electricity is likely to be shut off and may not come back on for several days
- A firefighting or pressure pump that can operate up to 400lpm and is shielded from high temperature
- At least two hoses with metal hose fittings (so they won't melt) that are long enough to reach all parts of your house
- Ladders for inside and outside the house to reach gutters and roof spaces
- Metal rakes and shovels to break up burning materials
- Knapsack or backpack spray unit to help put out spot fires
- Cotton mops to put out embers
- Protective clothing, masks, gloves, boots and hat/helmet for everyone
- Emergency Kit
- Metal buckets you can carry

I understand fully what is required and still want to stay

Fighting a fire can quickly turn into a very dangerous, life-threatening situation. There is a very good chance you will be on your own as firefighters may be too busy fighting fires on the frontline to help defend your property, and it is highly likely that the water and electricity to your property will be shut off. The heat will be intense.

Think about it; is your life, or the lives of your family worth risking?

Our Stay and Defend Plan



Do not wait and see!

Stay up to date with current alerts and warnings and be ready to put your plan into action. There are limited fire trucks so you cannot plan on firefighters being there to defend you and your family. You need to make your own decisions. Waiting to see flames before acting is too late.

Even if your plan is to stay and defend, consider the conditions on the day. On some days the risk may be too high and you will need to leave. Know the Fire Danger Ratings ahead of time and consider how you are feeling physically and mentally. On days rated Catastrophic, even emergency services may be unable to control fires that start in these conditions.



Bushfires can happen at anytime.

If you see any signs of fire and there are no warnings out, call 000.

1 When will we put our plan into action?

Consider your personal circumstances and identify triggers that give you sufficient time to act. It is recommended that you put your plan into action as soon as a **Watch and Act** is declared.

- If the **Fire Danger Rating** is forecast to be **Extreme**, start getting your equipment ready and consider relocating vulnerable family members such as children and elderly people.
- If it is **Catastrophic**, for your safety it is recommended you leave the area. Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave, and help may not be available.

2 Where is our bushfire plan for?

Our Stay and Defend Plan

3 Who do we need to protect?

- Me
- Other adults
- Babies and children
- People who need assistance
- Pets
- Livestock and other animals

What is our plan to evacuate vulnerable people or animals?

(Children, guests, dependents, elderly or sick household members need to leave early and be cared for)

4 How will we stay up to date?

5 What will we do before the fire front arrives?

Inside

- Turn off evaporative air conditioners but leave water running through the system if possible
- Fill all containers/basins with water - check all water supplies
- Find woollen blankets for protection against radiant heat. They should be dry to avoid steam burns
- Soak towels and rugs in water and lay alongside the inside of external doorways
- Take down curtains and move furniture away from windows
- Place a ladder and torch close to the manhole to check the ceiling for embers

Outside

- Bring any loose flammable material inside
- Wet downside of house and garden that faces the fire front
- Block downpipes and fill gutters with water
- Regularly patrol around the home for spot fires
- Turn off gas supply

Is there anything else we need to consider?

Our Stay and Defend Plan

6 What will we do as the fire approaches our property?

- Bring all hoses, hose fittings (including plastic tap attachments) and equipment inside
- Move everyone into the house when it is no longer safe outside
- Frequently check the roof cavity for spot fires
- Stay inside the house until the front passes, if it is safe to do so
- Have access to drinking water and drink regularly, even if you don't feel thirsty. Dehydration is a serious risk when fighting a fire

Is there anything else we need to consider?

7 Where will we shelter?

Take shelter in a room with two exits, furthest from the fire front with at least one exit leading outside. **Do not shelter in the bathroom.**

We will shelter in:

If the house catches fire we will move to:

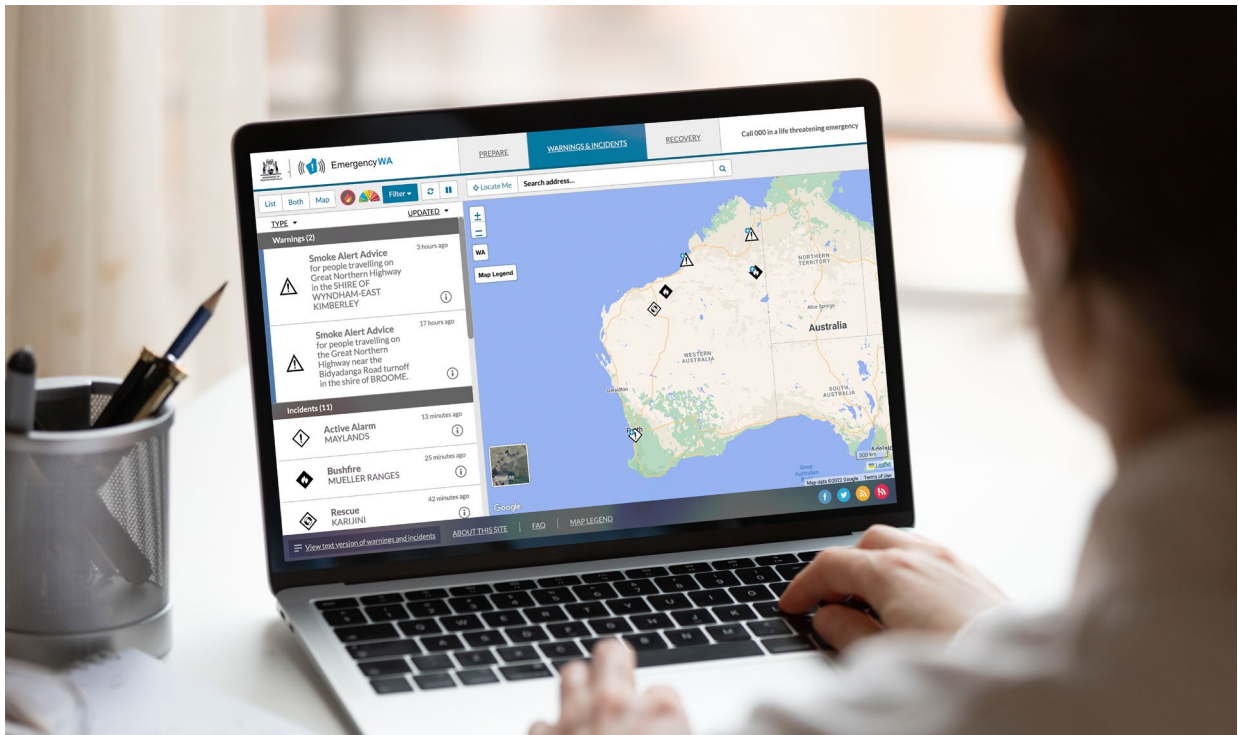
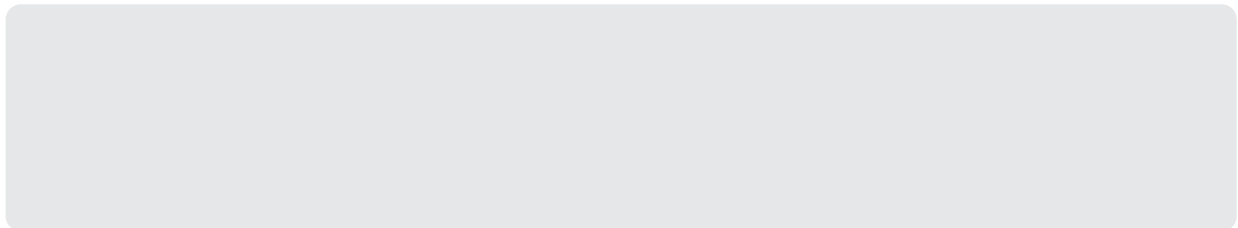
Is there anything else we need to consider?

Our Stay and Defend Plan

8 What will we do after the front has passed?

- When it is safe, check inside and outside for spot fires, including under floors, in roof spaces and gaps.
- Patrol your house for several hours checking for small fires and burning embers - even after the fire is out, trees, logs and other flammable material can continue to burn for hours or even days.
- **DO NOT** leave your property immediately after the front has passed. It can be extremely dangerous due to damaged infrastructure like roads, bridges or powerlines, or hazards like burnt out trees or underground fire.
- Listen to your local **ABC radio station** and keep up to date via **Emergency WA** for when it is safe to leave. Be cautious and pay attention to your surroundings as there may be many hazards remaining, other than fire.

Is there anything else we need to consider?



Preparing Your Emergency Kit

Your stay and defend emergency kit

Your **Stay and Defend Emergency Kit** should include the essential items you need to keep your family comfortable and safe. **Prepare your Emergency Kit** (page 16) before bushfire season and keep it in an accessible spot.

Make sure everyone knows where it is kept.



You will also need supplies to last at least 5 days. There may be road blocks and you may not be able to get additional supplies.

- Food, drinking water and medications for you and your pets
- First aid and trauma kit
- A place for important documents and valuables that is protected from fire as much as possible – consider storing copies offsite or digitally
- Waterproof torch and battery powered lights
- AM/FM Battery operated radio
- Emergency contact numbers
- Head protection and goggles
- Smoke and particle masks
- Non-flammable or woollen blankets
- Bushfire protective clothing made of natural fibres



Your surroundings are also an important information source. Look for signs of fire such as smoke or embers and take action for your own safety.

All fires should be reported to 000.

Stay informed at [emergency.wa.gov.au](https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au)

Emergency WA is the primary and most up to date source of information for:

- Current warnings
- Fire Danger Ratings
- Total Fire Bans

You can also access this information via

- 📱 13 DFES (13 3337)
- 📞 National Relay Service 1300 555 727

When warnings are published on Emergency WA they will also be shared via:

- 📘 DFES Facebook
- 🐦 DFES Twitter
- 📻 Local ABC Radio

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