

CFS FACT SHEET

Planning to stay and defend

**Staying and defending your home during a bushfire is very dangerous.
If you are planning to stay, you will need to prepare throughout the year.**



The better prepared you and your home are, the more likely you are to survive a bushfire.

It is important that you consider the Fire Danger Rating when deciding whether to stay and defend your property.

The daily Total Fire Bans and Fire Danger Ratings should define your Bushfire Survival Plan.

On days where the Fire Danger Rating is forecast to be Catastrophic, leaving early is the best option for you and your family's survival.

What to do during the year

Complete your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Prepare an Emergency Kit.

Clean up and manage fine fuels within 20 metres of your home.

Maintain your home and property e.g. close underfloor spaces, seal gaps around your home, install a water tank and sprinklers.

What to do before and during the Fire Danger Season

Ensure you have adequate water supplies.

Clean and maintain gutters.

Move firewood away from your home.

Check your pump(s), run it for approximately 5 minutes and then refuel.

Practise your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Check your Emergency Kit and test your hoses and fittings.

What to do on high fire danger risk days

Charge phones and tablets.

Keep pets in close proximity.

Water your garden early in the morning, wet down any problem areas.

Monitor conditions using multiple sources of information (radio, TV, CFS website, social media, Information Hotline).

Discuss the day's action with your family, friends and/or neighbours.

Check your pump, run it for approximately 5 minutes, refuel it and ensure you have additional fuel on hand.

Ensure you have a plenty of drinking water and food.

Remember to keep hydrated.



Physical and emotional preparedness

People often panic when a fire approaches and their first thought is to flee.

More people die in their vehicles attempting to out-run a bushfire than those who stay and defend once a fire has arrived.

It is important that you try to stay calm in a bushfire, avoid making panic-driven decisions, and keep to your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Defending a property from fire is traumatic, and both physically and mentally exhausting.

Smoke and radiant heat can be hazardous to your health, and defending your home can be a very long process.

If you intend to stay and defend your property, you will need to be able to physically and emotionally cope with intense stress.

You will need to be alert, be adaptable to changing conditions and be prepared to act independently.

Ideally you will need at least two people to help you defend your property.

You will need to be able to make decisions under extreme pressure, be able to help members of your family, keep others calm, and be able to deal with the physical and emotional stress of a fire for many hours.

If you have any doubts about your ability to stay and defend, or the preparedness of your property, you should plan to leave early.

Even if you choose to stay and defend, you must have a contingency plan.

A change in household circumstances, or a fire starting near you without warning, may require you to change your Bushfire Survival Plan.



Protection from Radiant Heat

Radiant heat is the biggest killer of people in a bushfire and can kill as the fire approaches.

As the fire front approaches your property, it is vital that you seek protection from the radiant heat by going inside or getting behind (see Emergency Kits Fact Sheet) a solid structure.

Your home may give some protection provided essential preparatory work has been done throughout the year.

Radiant heat cannot pass through solid structures, so the best place to be as a fire passes is inside.

Do not shelter from radiant heat inside your car, a swimming pool or a water tank - these do not provide adequate protection from radiant heat or smoke.

Before the fire approaches

- Make sure everyone is in protective clothing and has a P2 mask (a type of dust mask) to help shield them from radiant heat, smoke and embers. Everyone needs to be wearing sturdy boots to protect their feet from the hot ground.
- Remind everyone of your plan, and check that they understand their role.
- Prepare for the possibility that power and phone lines may fail.
- Tune your battery operated radio to your local ABC - or another Emergency Broadcast Partner - and have spare batteries handy.
- Charge mobile phones and tablet devices.
- Let family or friends know that you are staying at home.
- Prepare inside your home by removing curtains, moving furniture away from windows and closing doors and windows.
- Keep pets inside with sufficient drinking water and food.
- Put tape across the inside of windows so they remain in place if broken.
- Fill containers and your sink with water, and have a torch and ladder ready to check the ceiling space.
- Remove flammable items from the exterior of your home (e.g. blinds, outdoor furniture, door mats etc).
- Block down pipes and fill gutters with water.
- Shut all windows and doors and place wet blankets and towels around windows and door edges.

As the fire approaches, stay calm and ensure that you

- Wet vegetation near your home with a hose or sprinkler.
- Stay close to your home, drink water and check on the welfare of others.
- Patrol inside your home as well as the outside for embers or small fires.

As the fire front arrives

- Take all firefighting equipment inside - such as hoses and pumps - as they may melt during the fire.
- Shelter inside until the fire front passes, ensuring you have two exits.
- Patrol inside your home - including the ceiling space - for embers or small fires.
- From inside, monitor where the fire front is and check on what the conditions are like outside.

After the fire front has passed

- Go outside and extinguish small fires and burning embers.
- Patrol the property inside and out, including the ceiling space and under decking.
- Extinguish any fires, as sparks and embers will continue to fall and smoulder. You will need to keep checking for several hours or even days.
- Let everyone know that you are okay.
- Monitor the radio for updates.