November 2009

CFS FACT SHEET

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A BUSHFIRE

All residents living in bushfire risk areas need to have a pre-prepared checklist and prepared and practiced Bushfire Survival Plan listing what their actions will be in the event of a bushfire. Include simple things that can be acted upon *immediately*. To make your checklist easier to follow divide it up into things to do inside and outside the house before, during and after the bushfire has passed. The actions below will assist if you are staying to defend your property or are unable to leave.
Remember, property can be replaced but lives cannot, if you intend to leave early, make sure that you do so either early in the morning or even the night before.

As fire front approaches

Inside

- Alert family and neighbours.
- Bring pets inside.
- Dress in protective clothing.
- Shut all doors and windows.
- Fill bath, sinks and buckets etc with water.
- Place wet towels in any crevices, such as gaps under doors etc.
- Take curtains down and push furniture away from windows.
- Place ladder in ceiling access ready to inspect ceiling cavity.

Take curtains down and push furniture away from windows.

Plug drains and fill gutters with water.

Outside

- Remove last minute combustibles from around house including flammable blinds, wooden furniture and doormats etc.
- Start pump for fire hose and/or roof sprinklers. *(Make sure to manage your water supply well, so that there is sufficient water left for when the fire front actually arrives)*
- Wet down all areas on side of house facing the direction of the fire.
- Dampen window ledges allowing water to penetrate any gaps.
- Plug drains and fill gutters with water.
- Wet down any pre-determined problem areas.
- Patrol for spot fires and extinguish.

When fire front arrives

- Retreat inside your home.
- Bring buckets, hoses, mops and tap fittings etc inside with you.
- Patrol inside for spot fires and extinguish.
- Check ceiling cavity.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Reassure family and pets.
- Make sure you are situated in a room with two exits

After fire front has passed

- Return outside when safe to do so.
- Patrol for spot fires and extinguish.
- Continue to patrol for 3-8 hours.
- Let family and neighbours know you're okay.
- Continue drinking plenty of water.

What can you expect?

There will be a shower of sparks and embers as the main fire front approaches. This shower of embers will continue for several hours after the fire has passed. There will be strong winds and heavy smoke, which will make it dark and very difficult to see. When the fire front actually arrives it will generally pass within 5 to 15 minutes. During this time the radiant heat will become unbearable. It is therefore essential that you retreat indoors taking with you any firefighting equipment such as hoses and buckets etc that may melt if left outside. Refer to the CFS Bushfire Fact Sheets– "Bushfire Behaviour" and "How Houses Burn" for more information on what to expect in a major fire.

What should you wear?

Shield your skin from radiant heat. Every member of the household should change in to long sleeved shirts, long pants (made from natural fibres) and sturdy leather foot wear, wear a broad rimmed hat, gloves and goggles to protect your eyes from smoke and flying embers at the first warning of fires in the area. For more information on protective clothing refer to the CFS Bushfire Fact Sheet– "Bushfire Survival Kits".

Drink water frequently

Remember to drink water frequently, preferably every 10 minutes to prevent dehydration. Your body will be under stress from heat, so fluids must be replenished.

During a bushfire expect strong winds, heavy smoke and a shower of sparks and embers. Remember to retreat indoors as the fire front passes and radiant heat becomes unbearable.

Further information can be obtained from: www.cfs.sa.gov.au or SA CFS, GPO Box 2468, Adelaide, SA 5001. 08 8463 4200.