



BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

Your personal guide to creating a Bushfire Survival Plan

AM I AT RISK?

All people living, working, travelling or going to school in bushfire prone areas, including those in the suburban fringes of Adelaide and in regional South Australia, are in danger of experiencing a bushfire.

It is your responsibility to prepare yourself, your family and your home to survive bushfires.

Decisions must be made before a bushfire threatens so you are able to respond to the conditions and circumstances in the best possible way.

This booklet is designed to walk you through the decision making process, providing information and guidance towards developing a Bushfire Survival Plan that works for you and your family.

FIRE DANGER RATING

There has been an increased frequency of extreme bushfires over the last 10 years. In Australia we have experienced several such events including the recent Victorian Black Saturday Bushfires in February 2009 and the Wangary Bushfires in January 2005. The reality of experiencing an extreme bushfire is a risk for which everyone must prepare for.

A national Fire Danger Rating system has been introduced to accommodate these events and to provide you with a clearer picture of how to prepare and respond.

To help you assess your level of bushfire risk, it is important that you understand the Fire Danger Rating. The rating is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology for the following day and is an early indicator (or 'trigger') for you of the potential danger. Your actions and Bushfire Survival Plan should reflect this.

CATASTROPHIC is the highest level of Fire Danger Rating. On a day of predicted Catastrophic fire danger, leaving early is the best option for your survival. You must leave for a safer place the night before or early in the morning, well before a fire starts.

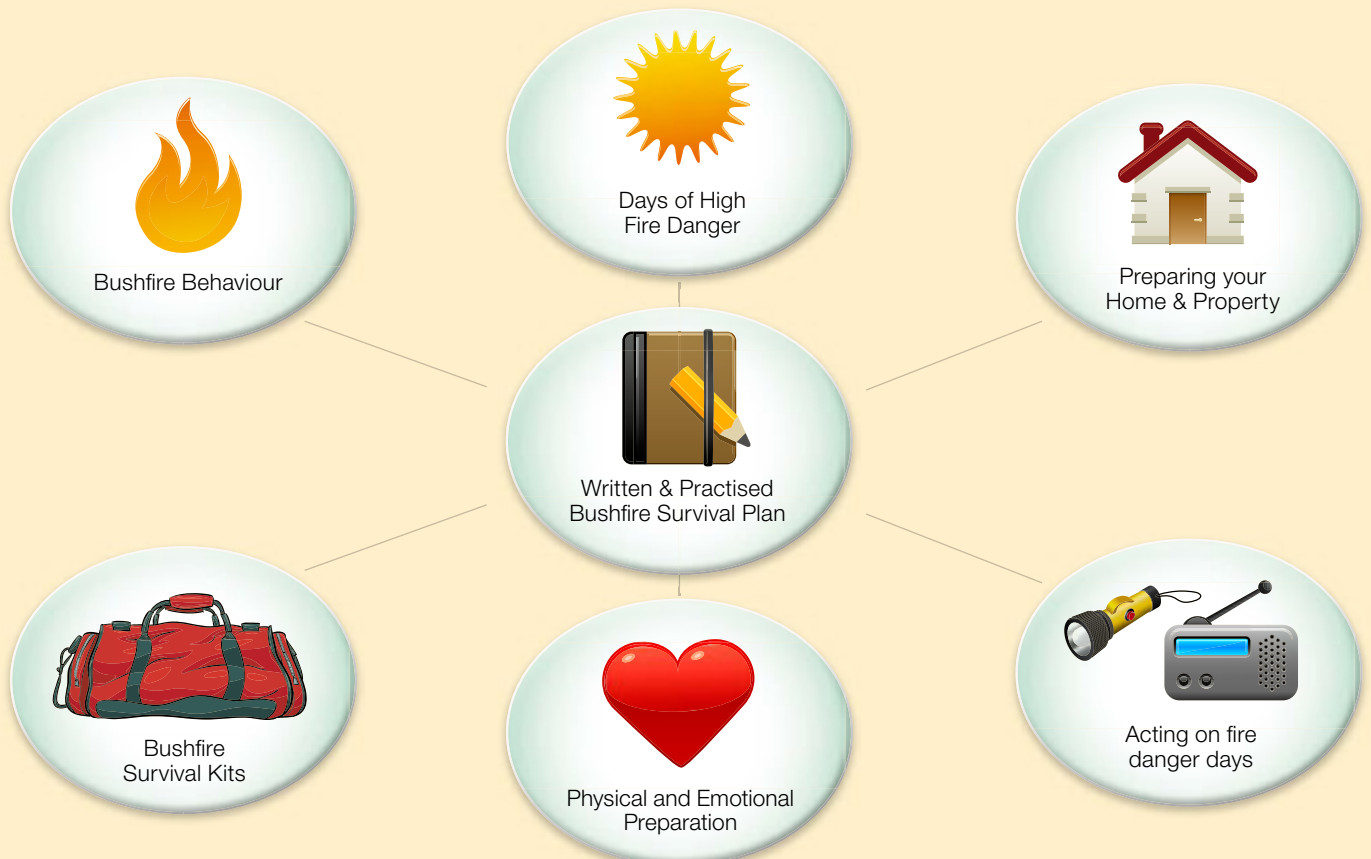
EXTREME is the next highest level Fire Danger Rating. Regardless of your plans, leaving early is the safest option for your survival.

SEVERE Unless you and your home are extremely well prepared, the safest action is to leave early.

FIRE DANGER RATING	RECOMMENDED ACTION
CATASTROPHIC 100+	Leaving early is the best option for your survival.
EXTREME 75 - 99	Leaving early is the safest option for your survival.
SEVERE 50 - 74	Leaving early is the safest option for your survival. Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.
VERY HIGH 25 - 49	Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.
HIGH 12 - 24	Know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes.
LOW-MODERATE 0 - 11	Know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes.

SURVIVING BUSHFIRES

There are seven keys to surviving bushfires. It is recommended that you review these and your circumstances as part of developing your Bushfire Survival Plan. There are detailed fact sheets available from the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au which provide further information on each of these keys.



Bushfire Behaviour - Characteristics and behaviour of bushfires, which is influenced by vegetation, topography and climate.

Days of High Fire Danger - What is the fire danger season, what is a total fire ban day and what to expect.

Preparing Your Home and Property - Preparation strategies, defensible space, vegetation management, ember proofing, water supply and delivery, and seasonal activities.

Bushfire Survival Kits - Relocation kits (what to take with you); survival kits (what you need to help survive the day) and recovery kits (what you need for the 24-48 hours following a fire).

Physical and Emotional Preparation - Your physical and emotional coping mechanisms; the influences on your decision-making, roles and responsibilities, and strategies to assess and improve your psychological capability.

Acting on Fire Danger Days - Preparation activities on fire danger days and putting your plans into action.

Bushfire Survival Plans - How to develop, write and practise a Bushfire Survival Plan that accommodates individual needs and circumstances.

Thinking about these keys will enable you to identify what actions you will need to consider when developing your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Thinking “I will leave early” is not enough. You must **PREPARE to ACT and SURVIVE.**

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

It is difficult to make a single decision, whether you intend to stay and defend your property or leave early, as circumstances can vary. It is important to recognise that in an emergency, unexpected things are likely to occur so you will need to adapt to changing circumstances and have a plan that will work in different situations.

Your plan should alter according to the predicted Fire Danger Rating and is likely to change depending on your circumstances. Your children for example may be at school, your car may not be available or you may have a health issue that could restrict your capability.

You may also decide to have different plans to suit the daily Fire Danger Rating and enact one plan on days where the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be Severe and a different plan when the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be Catastrophic.

This section takes you step-by-step through each option. Use it to complete your personalised Bushfire Survival Plan.

CONSIDERING WHETHER TO **STAY AND DEFEND**

Even if you are unsure whether to stay and defend your property on fire risk days, both you and your property need to be well prepared. On days where the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be Catastrophic, leaving early is the best option for you and your family’s survival.

Consider the following:

- Is your home constructed to meet the latest regulations for building in bushfire prone areas?
- Is your property prepared and maintained for bushfires?
- Are you physically fit to fight spot fires in and around your home for up to 10 hours or more?
- Does your home have a defensible space with at least 20 metres cleared of flammable materials and vegetation?

- Do you have the resources, equipment, water supply, necessary skills and knowledge to effectively fight a fire?
- Are you mentally and emotionally prepared to actively defend your property?
- Are you able to implement your plan while caring for distressed young children, elderly or disabled people in your home?

If these questions make you doubt your ability, the preparedness of your property, or if you are for any reason unsure about staying and defending your property, then you should prepare a plan to leave early.

Preparing to leave early

In making the decision to leave early, you need to consider:

- When will you leave – have you decided what will be your trigger?
- Will your plan be different for weekdays, weekends or if someone is home sick?
- Are all members of your household going to leave early?
- Which members of your household (if any) will stay and defend?
- Where will you and your family go to ensure you are all safe?
- What route will you take to get there?
- How long will it take to get there?
- What will you take when you leave early?
- What will you do if there are many fire risk days in one week?
- What warnings can you expect to get?
- Do your friends, family and neighbours know the details of your plan?
- What will you do with your pets and animals?
- Do you have a contingency plan if it is unsafe to leave?

Even though your choice is to leave early, well before a bushfire threatens, you should still have a contingency plan as part of your Bushfire Survival Plan. There are many scenarios to consider, such as what you will do if a fire starts quickly in your local area making roads impassable or travel particularly dangerous. You should have other options if road travel is not safe.



PREPARING TO STAY AND DEFEND

Staying to actively defend your home involves the risk of psychological trauma, injury and death. Your property must be well prepared if you intend to stay and defend. The better prepared your home, the more likely it will survive a bushfire. On days where the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be Catastrophic for you and your family's survival, leaving is the best option.

In making the decision to stay and defend, you need to consider:

- Is your property defensible?
- Are you physically and emotionally prepared to actively defend your property?
- Do you have well maintained firefighting equipment, access to an independent source of water (minimum of 5,000 litres) and a pump (either diesel or petrol driven)?
- Do you have appropriate protective clothing?
- Will your Bushfire Survival Plan need to be different for weekdays, weekends or if someone is home sick?
- Do you have a contingency plan?

What will you need to do if preparing to stay and defend?

Before the fire approaches:

- Dress all members of the household who are staying to actively defend in adequate clothing to protect them from radiant heat, smoke and embers
- Locate your Bushfire Survival Kit
- Tune your radio to your local ABC AM radio station or FIVEaa and have spare batteries handy
- Ensure there is enough drinking water as it will be extremely hot
- Secure livestock in well cleared areas with sufficient drinking water
- Let family or friends know that you are staying at home
- Prepare water buckets, a torch and ladder ready to check the ceiling space
- No power and possibly no phone lines will be available
- Keep pets inside with sufficient drinking water and food.

As the fire approaches, stay calm and ensure that you:

- Remove flammable items from the exterior of the house (e.g. blinds, outdoor furniture, door mats etc)
- Block down pipes and fill gutters with water
- Wet vegetation near your house with a hose or sprinkler
- Shut all windows and doors and place wet blankets and towels around windows and door edges
- Prepare inside your house (e.g. remove curtains, move furniture away from windows, close doors & windows)
- Stay close to the house, drink water and check welfare of others
- Patrol the inside of the 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
- Move inside the house until the fire front passes
- Patrol the inside of the home, including the ceiling space, for embers or small fires.

After the fire front has passed:

- Go outside and extinguish small spot fires and burning embers
- Patrol the property inside and out, including the ceiling space, and extinguish any fires
- Let everyone know that you are okay
- Monitor the radio for updates
- Stay with your home until you are sure the surrounding area is clear of fire.

Contingency Plan

Even though your choice is to stay and defend, you must still have a contingency plan as a part of your Bushfire Survival Plan. A change in household circumstances, someone home alone or unexpected visitors, or a fire starting quickly in the local area may all require you to reconsider your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Bushfire Survival Plan Checklist

Important phone numbers



Emergency: 000	Friends:	Insurance Company:
Ambulance: 000	Friends:	Gas Supplier:
Police: 000	Friends:	Doctor:
Family:	Water Supplier:	Bank:
Family:	Local Council:	School:
Family:	Electricity Supplier:	Vet:

Bushfire Information Hotline **1300 362 361**

Leaving early - who is going to leave early?

Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number

Stay and defend - who will stay and defend?

Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number
Names	Phone Number

Listen out for bushfire **'Watch & Act'**
and **'Emergency Warning'** messages

Monitor your local ABC AM radio station or FIVEaa for information on bushfires using a battery powered radio.



Leaving early



The CFS recommends that you plan to leave early on days that are forecast as Catastrophic and that you only stay and defend on a day of Extreme Fire Danger if you are extremely well prepared and your home is properly constructed.

I will use this plan:

- When the Fire Danger Rating is Very High
- When the Fire Danger Rating is Severe
- When the Fire Danger Rating is Extreme
- When the Fire Danger Rating is Catastrophic

Where to go:

(Consider low fire risk areas, for example visiting the beach or relatives in low fire danger areas)

When to go:

(Plan to leave early enough to avoid being caught in smoke, the fire or on congested roads)

How to get there:

(Consider a number of travel routes and how long the journey will take. Plan alternative routes in case the route is blocked)

What to take:

(Prepare a relocation kit – blankets, water, first aid kit, medications, change of clothes, important documents. Organise household members and make arrangements for pets)

Who to tell:

(Before and after)

Know the forecast Fire Danger Rating
by visiting **www.cfs.sa.gov.au**

Check local weather reports or contact the Bushfire Information Hotline on 1300 362 361.



Stay and defend



On a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating leaving early is the best option for your survival – regardless of any plan to stay and defend. You must leave for a safer place well before a bushfire threatens your home.

I will use this plan:

- When the Fire Danger Rating is Very High
- When the Fire Danger Rating is Severe
- When the Fire Danger Rating is Extreme

Before the fire approaches:

(activate your plan – those leaving early should have already left the property, list the things you need to do in preparation)

As the fire approaches:

(prepare for ember attack on or near your home, list the actions you are going to take)

As the fire front approaches:

(stay safe by monitoring the fire from inside your home, document what you will do)

After the fire has passed:

(patrol your property to extinguish burning embers. You may need to do this for several hours. Outline what actions you will take)

Contingency plan:

(what will you do if you can't activate your plan? Leaving late is deadly. Make sure you identify a safer location and safe route)

Know the forecast Fire Danger Rating
by visiting **www.cfs.sa.gov.au**

Check local weather reports or contact the Bushfire Information Hotline on 1300 362 361.



ACTIVATING YOUR BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

Once the plan is completed, it is important that you practise and review your plan regularly. This will mean that if you need to activate your plan in a real bushfire, you will have already gone through the process and be able to respond appropriately.

FOLLOW THESE STEPS:

Identify the Fire Danger Rating

Identify and use the Fire Danger Rating for the day to guide which plan to activate.

Activate your Bushfire Survival Plan

Activate your plan that is relevant to the Fire Danger Rating. Someone must take charge and lead the family through the process by communicating clearly what needs to be done. Make sure you know who is doing what and when.

Prepare yourselves

Retrieve your survival kit and put on personal protective clothing.

Prepare to leave early

Pack your relocation box into the car and relocate to a safer place. Make sure you have plenty of time to leave and do not return until it is safe to do so.

OR

Prepare to stay and defend

Ensure you have the necessary equipment ready and are mentally prepared to actively defend.

Keep Informed

Monitor Bushfire 'Watch & Act' and 'Emergency Warning' messages through your local ABC radio and FIVEaa as well as the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au and Bushfire Information Hotline on **1300 362 361**.

Bushfires are unpredictable and you need to be prepared for the unexpected. Do not rely solely on one source of information for information about bushfires.

PREPARE.ACT.SURVIVE.

Contact the Bushfire Information Hotline on **1300 362 361** or visit **www.cfs.sa.gov.au**

