



BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

Your personal guide to creating a Bushfire Survival Plan



Government
of South Australia

PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.



Am I at risk?

All people living, working or travelling in the bush, including those in suburban fringe areas 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 in the last 10 years. In South Eastern Australia we have experienced several such events including the recent Victorian Black Saturday bushfires in February 2009 and the Wangary Bushfires in 2005. The reality of experiencing an extreme bushfire is a risk that everyone must consider.

A new national Fire Danger Rating system has been introduced to accommodate these events and to provide the community 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 Catastrophic fire danger, leaving early is the best option for your survival – regardless of any plans you may have. You must leave for a safer place well before a fire threatens your home.

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

The Fire Danger Rating chart will assist you to understand the predicted bushfire behaviour, potential impacts and recommended actions you should take for each category level. Take the time to review and understand the chart.



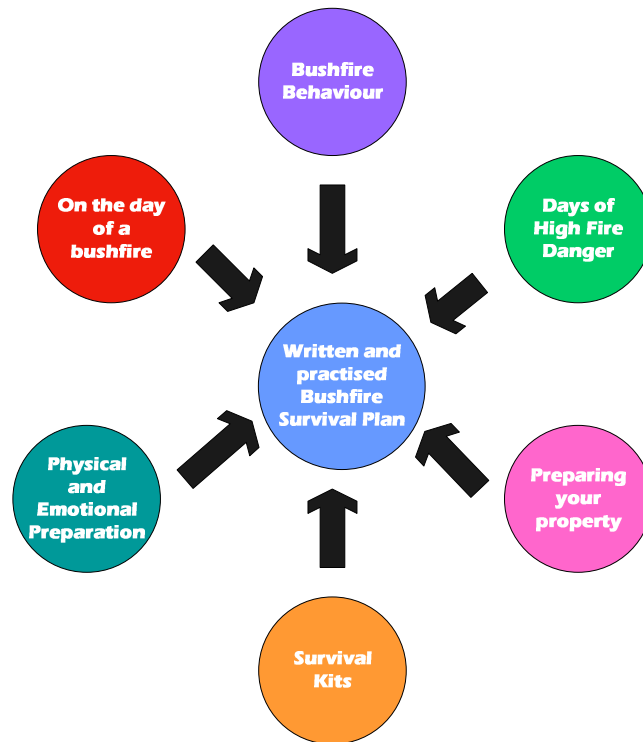
Fire Danger Rating	Recommended Action and Potential Fire Behaviour and Impact
CATASTROPHIC FDI 100+	<p>ACTION: For your survival, leaving early is the best option.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Flames will be higher than roof tops. Thousands of embers will be blown around. Spot fires will move quickly and come from many directions, up to 20 km ahead of the fire. There is a very high likelihood that people in the path of the fire will die or be injured. Thousands of homes and businesses will be destroyed. House construction standards do not go beyond a Fire Danger Index of 100. Well prepared, constructed and actively defended homes may not be safe during a fire.
EXTREME FDI 75-99	<p>ACTION: Leaving early is the safest option for your survival.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Flames will be higher than roof tops. Thousands of embers will be blown around. Spot fires will move quickly and come from many directions, up to 6 km ahead of the fire. There is a likelihood that people in the path of the fire will die or be injured. Hundreds of homes will be destroyed. Only well prepared, well constructed and actively defended houses are likely to offer safety during a fire.
SEVERE FDI 50-74	<p>ACTION: Leaving early is the safest option for your survival. Only stay if you and your home are well prepared and you can actively defend it during a fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires will be uncontrollable and move quickly. Flames may be higher than roof tops. Expect embers to be blown around. Spot fires may occur up to 4 km ahead of the fire. There is a chance people may die or be injured. Some homes and businesses will be destroyed. Well prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire.
VERY HIGH FDI 25-49	<p>ACTION: Only stay if you and your home are well prepared and you can actively defend it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can be difficult to control. Flames may burn into the tree tops. Expect embers to be blown ahead of the fire. Spot fires may occur up to 2 km ahead of the fire. There is a low chance people may die or be injured. Some homes and businesses may be damaged or destroyed. Well prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire.
HIGH FDI 12-24	<p>ACTION: Know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can be controlled. Expect embers to be blown ahead of the fire. Spot fires can occur close to the main fire. Loss of life is highly unlikely and damage to property will be limited. Well prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire.
LOW - MODERATE FDI 0-11	<p>ACTION: Know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fires can be easily controlled. Little to no risk to life and property.



Keys to survival

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, vegetation, typography 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.
- **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.
- **On the Day of a Bushfire** – Preparation activities for the passage of a fire and what to do at each stage.
- **Bushfire Survival Plans** – How to develop, write and practise a Bushfire Survival Plan that accommodates individual needs and locations.

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

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 or plans 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. For example, your children 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 another 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 Extreme or Catastrophic for you and your family's survival leaving is the best option.

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 of at least 20 metres cleared of flammable materials and vegetation?
- Do you have the resources, equipment, 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?
- What will you take when you leave early?
- What will you do if there are many high fire risk days in one week?
- What fire 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?
- 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 unpassable 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 house 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 Extreme or 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 resources and equipment and do you know how to use them?
- 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 clothing to protect them from radiant heat, smoke and embers
- Locate your Bushfire Survival Kit
- Tune your radio to ABC or FIVEaa and have spare batteries handy
- Ensure there is enough drinking water as it will be extremely hot
- Secure livestock and pets 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

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)
- 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)
- Block down pipes and fill gutters with water
- Patrol the inside of the home as well as the outside for embers or small fires
- Wet vegetation near your house with a hose or sprinkler
- Stay close to the house, drink water and check welfare of others

As the fire front arrives:

- Take all fire fighting 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 at the property 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 in the local area may all require you to reconsider your Bushfire Survival Plan.



Bushfire Survival Plan

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Emergency : 000

Ambulance: 000

Police: 000

Bushfire Information Hotline: 1300 362 361

Family:

Friends:

Family:

Friends:

Family:

Friends:

Water Supplier:

Local Council:

Electricity Supplier:

Insurance Company:

Gas Supplier:

Doctor:

Bank:

School:

Vet:

Leave early – Who is going to leave early?

Names	Phone Number

Stay and defend – Who will stay and defend?

Names	Phone Number

- Follow your Bushfire Survival Plan – be Bushfire Ready.
- Monitor your local ABC radio station or FIVEaa for information on bushfires on a battery powered radio.
- Monitor the CFS website – www.cfs.sa.gov.au
- Contact the Bushfire Information Hotline – 1300 362 361

Leave Early

I will use this plan on:

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

On days where the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be Catastrophic it is advisable to leave early. Leaving early will be the safest option for you and your family. It is extremely important for you to prepare and complete a plan to ensure everyone understands what to do and when.

Where to go (consider low fire risk areas, for example local shopping centre, beach or city)

 _____

How to get there (Consider a number of travel routes, how long the journey will take)

 _____

When to go (plan to leave early enough to avoid being caught in smoke the fire or on congested roads)

 _____

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)

 _____

Stay and Defend

I will use this plan on:

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

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 during less dangerous conditions. You must leave for a safer place well before a fire threatens your home.

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 form 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)

 _____

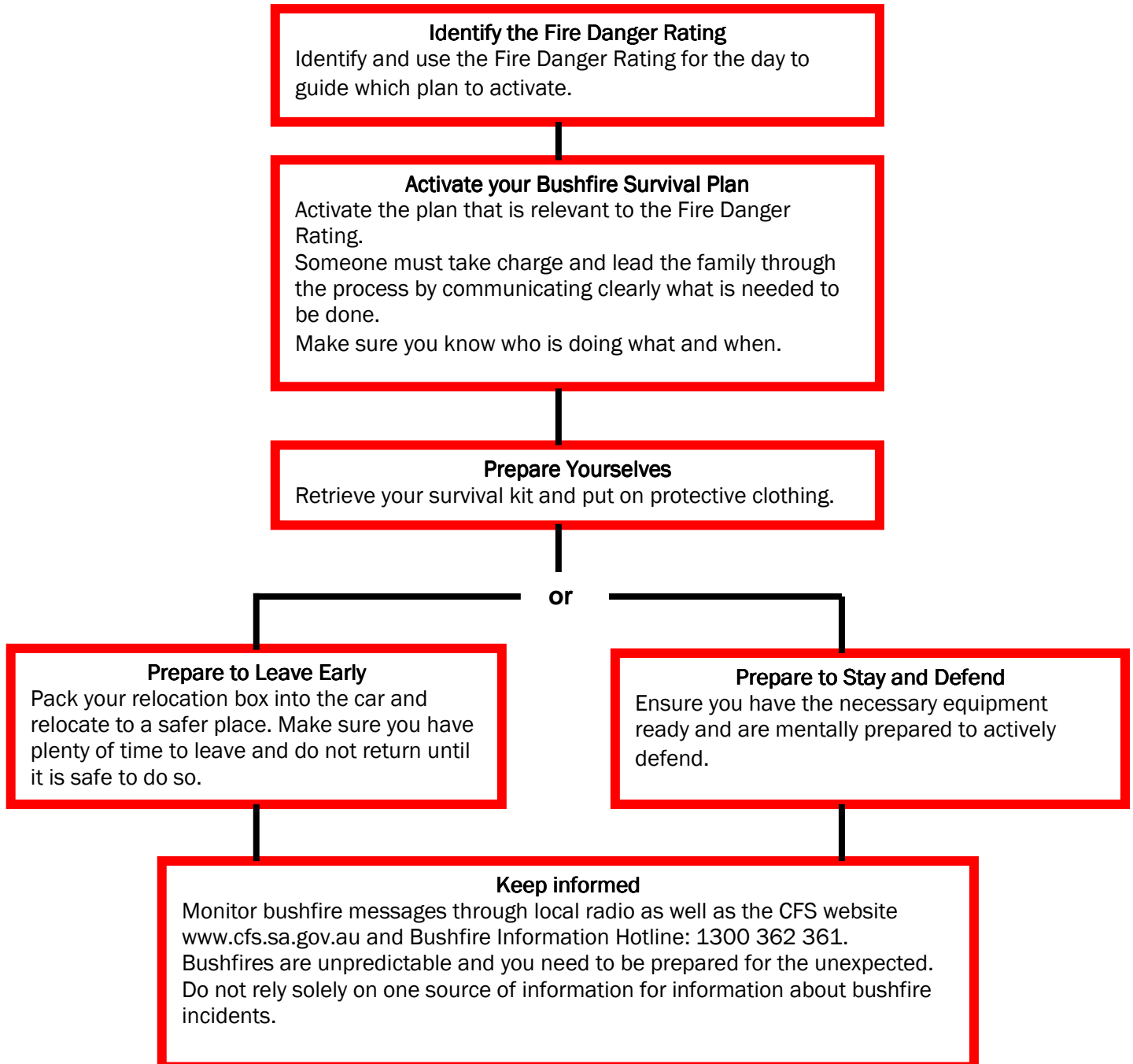
Contingency Plan (what will you do if you can't activate your plan? Leaving late is deadly. Make sure you identify a safer location and safe route)

 _____

Activating your Bushfire Survival Plan

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

Follow these steps:





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For more information about bushfire safety or current incidents
visit the CFS website: www.cfs.sa.gov.au

For more information during a bushfire or for further advice call the
CFS Bushfire Information Hotline on
1300 362 361



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