



Tasmania Fire Service

BUSHFIRE **2015-21** *Survival Plan*



Know your bushfire risk. Make a plan.

PREPARE • ACT • SURVIVE



Bushfires



Bushfires in Tasmania

If you live in or near the bush, your home is at risk from bushfire. Bush includes bushland, scrub, grassland, farmland, heath, marram grass and buttongrass.

You should use these pages to guide you through the steps necessary to prepare your home so it can be defended against bushfires, either by yourself or by firefighters, except bushfires burning on days of 'catastrophic' fire danger.

Most bushfires in Tasmania occur during relatively mild summer weather and are easily controlled by firefighters. However, bushfires that break out on very hot, dry and windy days can spread rapidly and may be difficult or impossible for firefighters to control. These fires can burn large areas of forest and farmland, destroy homes and livestock, and sometimes kill and injure people.

The devastating bushfires that destroyed more than 300 properties in south east Tasmania in January 2013 are an example of what can happen under these conditions.

A properly prepared home is more likely to survive a bushfire than one that hasn't been prepared, and the chances increase significantly if able-bodied people are there to protect your home.

Properly prepared and defended homes can provide a safe haven during almost all bushfires.

However, Tasmania Fire Service recommends that **you should not plan to defend your home when:**

- **Fire Danger Rating exceeds 50 (severe)** in your area, unless you have created a defensible space and ember-proofed your home.
- **Fire Danger Rating exceeds 75 (extreme)** in your area, unless your home has a defensible space and has been designed and built specifically to withstand a bushfire*.
- **Fire Danger Rating exceeds 100 (catastrophic)** in your area, regardless of any preparations you have made, unless firefighters have assessed your home as defensible in the prevailing conditions.

Leaving early is always the safest option

Leaving early is always the safest option when a bushfire threatens your home. If you are not staying to defend your property, you should plan to leave early. Many people have died in bushfires because they have tried to relocate too late, and have been trapped and burnt in their cars or on foot. Fewer lives will be lost if people who choose to leave do so well before a bushfire threatens their home.

**Australian Standard AS 3959 Building in Bushfire Prone Areas or equivalent measures*

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**Living in or near bushland? –
make sure you survive the next bushfire**



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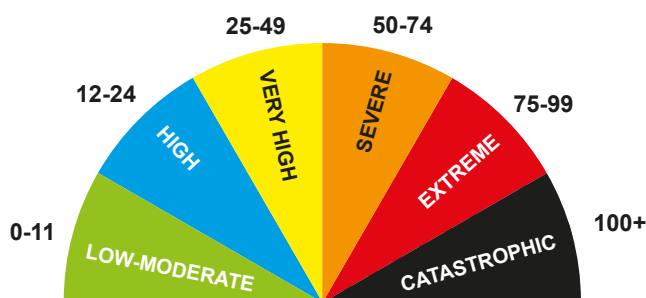


Download extra copies
of the checklist and plan
from the web site –
fire.tas.gov.au



Go to fire.tas.gov.au to find out
more about Community Bushfire
Protection Plans and nearby safer
places for your area

Fire Danger Rating



Fire Danger Rating (FDR)

The Fire Danger Rating (FDR) warns of the potential impact of a bushfire on any given day, based on forecast weather conditions. This summer the Fire Danger Rating will be widely publicised.

Categories **Severe**, **Extreme** and **Catastrophic** indicate a fire will be unpredictable, uncontrollable and fast-moving.

If a fire breaks out in these conditions, the safest option is to relocate to a safe place away from any fires.

Ratings above 50 occur in Tasmania around three times a year. Ratings above 75 have occurred only half a dozen times in Tasmania during the last 90 years. However, with the impact of climate change, the potential for such days is increasing.

It is worth noting that the Fire Danger Rating on Black Saturday in Victoria on 7 February 2009 approached 200.

We strongly urge you take the time to review and understand the Fire Danger Ratings so you can react appropriately to any FDR forecast.

For warnings and alerts tune in to your local ABC as the emergency broadcaster. You can also tune in to your Local ABC Radio station anywhere on the free ABC listen app.

| ABC Local Radio | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| EAST COAST | WEST COAST | NORTH/NORTH EAST |
| Bicheno 89.7 FM | Savage River/Waratah 104.1 FM | Launceston 102.7 FM |
| Fingal 1161 AM | Rosebery 106.3 FM | NE Tasmania 91.7 FM |
| Orford 90.5 FM | Queenstown/Zeehan 90.5 FM | Weldborough 97.3 FM |
| St Helens 1584 AM | Strahan 107.5 FM | SOUTHERN |
| Swansea 106.1 FM | Waratah 103.3 FM | Hobart 936 AM/ DAB ABC Radio Hobart |
| St Marys 102.7 FM | NORTH WEST | |
| | Devonport 100.5 FM | Maydena: 936 AM/89.7 FM |
| | Burnie 102.5 FM | |
| | King Island 88.5 FM | |
| | Lileah 91.3 FM | |

| FIRE DANGER RATING | RECOMMENDED ACTION AND POTENTIAL FIRE BEHAVIOUR AND IMPACT |
|----------------------------------|--|
| CATASTROPHIC FDR 100+ | <p>ACTION: Leaving early is the safest option for your survival – regardless of any plan to stay and defend.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most 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. Some people may die and be injured. Thousands of homes may be destroyed. Well-prepared, constructed and actively defended homes may not be safe during a fire unless firefighters have assessed them as defensible in the prevailing conditions. |
| EXTREME FDR 75-99 | <p>ACTION: Leaving early is the safest option for your survival. Only well-prepared, well constructed and actively defended houses are likely to offer safety during a fire.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some 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. Some people may die and be injured. Hundreds of homes may be destroyed. |
| SEVERE FDR 50-74 | <p>ACTION: Leaving early is the safest option for your survival. Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some 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 some people may die and be injured. Some homes will be destroyed. Well-prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire. |
| VERY HIGH FDR 25-49 | <p>ACTION: Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some 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 possibility people may die or be injured. Some homes may be damaged or destroyed. Well-prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire. |
| HIGH FDR 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 FDR 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 controlled easily. There is little to no risk to life and property. |

Bushfire Alert

Bushfire alert levels

Tasmania Fire Service will provide as much information about bushfires as possible, principally through its website fire.tas.gov.au and ABC Local Radio. It will use three levels of messaging to help people make the right safety choices.

However, remember that fires can threaten suddenly and without warning, so you should always be ready to act even if you don't receive an official emergency warning.

Tasmania Fire Service messages take into account the risk posed by fire, which will depend to some extent on the Fire Danger Rating and how quickly bushfires are spreading.

There are three bushfire alert levels:

Advice –

A bushfire has started and general information is provided to keep individuals, households and communities up-to-date with developments.

Watch and Act –

A bushfire is approaching and conditions are changing. Individuals, households and communities need to monitor their development and start taking action to ensure safety should the threat escalate.

Emergency Warnings –

Individuals, households and communities will be impacted and are in imminent danger. Action must be taken immediately.

The three levels of alerts have taken into account concerns about over-warning people. These concerns, coupled with a tendency for people to act at the last minute, have determined the choice of message levels. While the intent is to inform people before fires directly threaten them, fires can break out suddenly and without warning, making it impossible to get messages out in time on all occasions.

You should be aware of the forecast Fire Danger Rating each day during summer, and remain alert to the potential for bushfires to break out suddenly and spread rapidly. You should not wait for an official emergency warning if you are threatened by a bushfire.



National Emergency Warning System

Emergency Alert is a national telephone-based emergency warning system to warn the public in the event of major emergencies, including serious bushfires.

Using Emergency Alert, emergency warning messages may be sent by emergency services as recorded voice messages to fixed phones and as SMS text messages to mobile phones to people in affected areas..

If you receive an emergency warning about a bushfire or other emergency occurring near you on your fixed or mobile phone, act on the warning – it could save your life.

**Fires can break out suddenly and without warning.
There may be no time for official warnings.
You will need to use your own judgement.**



TAS ALERT

Tas ALERT is the Tasmanian Government's website that brings together information from emergency services and government agencies.

Information about current bushfires is available at fire.tas.gov.au and alert.tas.gov.au

What it's like



What it's like in a bushfire

Understanding what a bushfire is like will help you choose whether to leave if a fire threatens, or stay and defend your property, and prepare you for the conditions you might experience if you choose to stay.

Most bushfires in Tasmania that threaten homes burn on hot, dry days with strong, gusty winds. If a bushfire is burning towards you on a day like this, it will become increasingly smoky and difficult to see, and your eyes may temporarily become reddened and sore. Breathing in heavy smoke may be uncomfortable. As the fire gets closer, it will get darker and burning embers will begin to land around your home. The closer the fire gets, the more embers there will be. As the fire approaches, you will be able to hear it roaring. Burning embers will rain down on your home and collect in corners and on flat surfaces.

On catastrophic days, winds will be strong enough to blow roofs from houses, and bring down trees and power lines. These winds may occur well before a fire threatens, and cut off your means of escape. So plan to leave early.

As the fire reaches your home, the radiant heat from the flames may become unbearable, and you will need to shelter inside.

By the time the bushfire has passed and it is safe to leave the shelter of your home, the noise will have abated. Outside it will be very hot, smoky and windy.

You will need to wear appropriate clothing to protect you from radiant heat and embers that will continue to fall for several hours.

Fires look a lot worse at night than during the day, even though they are usually much milder at night.

Fighting a fire under severe, extreme and catastrophic conditions may be one of the most frightening things you ever experience. Many people who have successfully defended their homes in bushfires have later made decisions not to defend them again as they found the experience too traumatic. The strong winds created what they have described as an 'ember storm'. Others have reported that under no circumstances would they expose their children to such an experience, while others have said that their average fitness levels were inadequate to cope with firefighting in the very hot and stressful conditions.

The risk of dying or being seriously injured defending a home under extreme and catastrophic conditions (Fire Danger Rating exceeds 75) is real. Many people have died defending their homes under these conditions, sheltering passively inside their homes or fleeing at the last minute.



What Happens



Why houses burn down in bushfires

Homes burn down in bushfires for one of the following reasons:

- Burning embers collect on combustible surfaces or blow through cracks in a home's external cladding. Embers begin falling before the fire reaches the home, and may continue falling for several hours after the fire has passed. Often homes only exposed to this ember attack don't burn down until several hours after the fire has passed. If residents are there, homes usually can be defended successfully.

Homes with too much vegetation close to them are difficult to protect from bushfires.

- Flames and radiant heat from burning vegetation and other bushfire fuels too close to the home cause it to catch fire. Homes exposed to flames and radiant heat begin burning as the bushfire passes by.

Well-prepared homes that are only subjected to ember attack can be defended by able-bodied people in most bushfires.

Unattended homes are three times more likely to burn down than homes that are actively defended.

Why people have died in bushfires

Many people who have died in bushfires were caught by the fire in the open, either in their cars or on foot. Sadly, many were caught because they decided to flee at the last minute. In many cases, the homes they fled survived the bushfire.

Some people have died when they stayed to defend poorly prepared homes, while others have perished defending well-prepared properties which could not withstand extreme or catastrophic fire danger conditions.

Some fatalities were the result of remaining and sheltering passively in the home, which has then caught fire. Some sheltered in their baths, thinking this was a safe place to be, but were unable to get out of the bathroom and escape as their house burned down.

Others were unaware of the frightening conditions they would experience, and became overwhelmed and panicked, leading to poor decision-making.



A properly prepared home can be defended by able-bodied people under most conditions experienced in Tasmania, but if severe, extreme or catastrophic conditions are forecast, leaving early is the safest option.

Bushfire survival plan



Prepare a bushfire survival plan

If you live in or near the bush, you should make a plan that sets out what you will do to prepare your home for bushfire, and what you will do if a bushfire approaches. Writing and practicing a bushfire survival plan will help you think through the actions logically, give you something to refer to and can help control fear and anxiety if a bushfire breaks out nearby.

The plan should be prepared carefully and thoughtfully. People usually have two safe options when threatened by bushfire:

- Leave early.
- Stay and defend adequately prepared properties.

Leaving early is always the safest option.

You should understand the risks you face and explore options well in advance of the bushfire season. Your plan should be adaptable, as circumstances may change before and during bushfires.

Burns, injury, exhaustion, a more intense fire than anticipated, failure of equipment, loss of power supplies or water, structural damage to the building caused by wind or flames, or some other unforeseen circumstance can compromise plans.

Your plan should include:

- The steps you are going to take to prepare your home for bushfire.
- If you are planning to stay, the steps you are going to take to make sure you can defend your home safely.



Go to fire.tas.gov.au to find out more about Community Bushfire Protection Plans and nearby safer places for your area

- The steps you are going to take to make sure you can leave early for a safe place (even if you are planning to stay).
- A list of nearby safer places that you can flee to at very short notice as a last resort in case your plan fails. Examples include cleared open spaces such as a beach, ploughed paddock or recreation ground. If nearby safer places are unavailable, you must plan to leave early.
- If you plan to leave early, where you will go, how will you get there, what you take with you, and what will trigger your plan to leave.

The plan should also include what your family members should do if they are not at home, for example children at school.

Let your family, friends and neighbours know what you are planning to do.

Remember that if your home has not been prepared and is closely surrounded by flammable vegetation, there is a high probability that it will burn down if threatened by an intense bushfire, even if firefighters are nearby. Firefighters will concentrate on saving homes that can be protected with minimum resources and without putting lives at risk.

Therefore, regardless of whether you plan to stay with your home if it is threatened by bushfire or leave early for a safe place, the Tasmania Fire Service urges you to prepare your home so that it can be defended.

If you do not prepare your home and property so you can defend it against a bushfire, you should plan to leave early, well before fire threatens your home and make sure it's well insured.

Leaving early is always the safest option.

Make a decision



Will I leave or will I stay?

After preparing your home for bushfire and well before a bushfire breaks out, you should decide whether you will leave early or stay and defend your home if a fire breaks out.

Before making a decision, consider the following principles:

- **The safest option is always to leave early** rather than to stay and defend.
- Not all homes are defensible in all circumstances and you are advised to undertake an individual assessment of the defensibility of your home.
- Unless a property is defensible you should leave early.
- You should consider the impact of the landscape, fire weather and fire intensity on the defensibility of your home. For example your home may be defensible when the Fire Danger Rating is very high, but undefensible when the Fire Danger Rating is severe. The table on page 4 describes what fires will be like at different fire danger ratings. Check your daily newspaper or fire.tas.gov.au for the forecast FDR in your area.
- The risk of staying to defend includes the risk of physical injury and death.
- Your plan should be adaptable, and include options, as circumstances may change before and during bush fires. Even well prepared plans can fail.
- Even if you plan to stay, you should make preparations to leave, including the preparation of a relocation kit, identifying community fire refuges and other places you may go.

You should also consider the psychological impacts of staying to defend your home. Families with young children, older people and people with disabilities should plan to leave early. You should appreciate the dangers of leaving late, and understand that a warning may not be received.

Staying to defend a well-prepared home is a reasonable choice for many physically fit and emotionally prepared people in less than extreme fire conditions.

Even for less intense fires, if your home has not been properly prepared and radiant heat from nearby vegetation makes it difficult to defend and unsafe to shelter inside, it will be safer to leave early.

Remember, regardless of how well prepared your home may be, leaving early may be the best option for young children, the elderly or people with disabilities, people who are not physically fit, and people who do not feel comfortable about staying. If a fire breaks out in 'Catastrophic' conditions the safest place for **everyone** to be is away from any fires, regardless of any plans to stay and defend a property.

People should not flee at the last minute.

If you are going to defend your home and are likely to be away when a bushfire breaks out, you need to have a means of learning about the fire. When bushfires are likely to break out, you should regularly monitor the Tasmania Fire Service website, or the emergency broadcaster ABC Radio, and plan to return home as soon as quickly as possible, assuming it is safe to do so.

Prepare

Prepare your home – create a defensible space

Your home is more likely to survive a bushfire if you have prepared it properly. The most important job is to create a defensible space, an area around your home where you have modified the vegetation and removed most flammable material to reduce the fire's radiant heat intensity. Flames and radiant heat from an approaching bushfire will be reduced, so sparks and embers will have less fuel to ignite when they land, and any spot fires will be easier to put out.

A defensible space makes it much easier to defend your home. And if you choose not to stay, a defensible space will help firefighters protect your home, or may even protect your home if firefighters cannot reach it.

Tasmania Fire Service recommends that you should not plan to defend your home when the Fire Danger Rating exceeds 50 (severe) in your area unless you have created a defensible space and ember-proofed your home.

Once a defensible space has been created, it needs to be maintained in a bushfire ready state all year round.

A defensible space includes two 'zones':

- An inner zone where flammable materials are minimised.
- An outer zone where a low level of flammable material is permitted.

In the **inner zone**, flammable materials on, under and around your home should be moved away from the house. Use Table 1 opposite to work out the distance you need to apply.

In the inner zone:

- Include non-flammable areas such as paths, driveways, and mowed lawns.
- Use non-flammable mulch, do not use woodchips or bark.
- Locate any dams, orchards, vegetable gardens and any effluent disposal areas on the fire-prone side of the home.



- Use radiation shields and windbreaks such as stone or metal fences and hedges using low-flammability plants.
- Remove fire hazards such as wood piles, rubbish heaps and stored fuels.
- Replace all highly-flammable plants with low-flammability plants. (Contact Tasmania Fire Service to obtain a copy of the *Fire Resisting Garden Plants* brochure.)
- Prune lower branches on trees and remove flammable shrubs from under and between trees.
- Rake up bark and leaves and keep roofs and gutters clear of flammable debris.

It is not necessary to remove all vegetation from the inner zone. Individual trees rarely cause houses to burn in bushfires. And trees can screen a building from windblown embers while protecting it from radiant heat. Smooth barked trees are less likely to catch fire than those with rough bark. No tree should be able to fall on the home.

In the **outer zone**, small-sized natural fuels (such as leaf litter, bark, sticks, tussocks and some shrubs) should be removed and larger fuels (trees and shrubs) should be cut back to reduce the intensity of an approaching bushfire.

Natural fuels, both on the ground and between the ground and any larger trees, should be reduced by selective removal of vegetation, both horizontally and vertically, followed by ongoing maintenance.

In the outer zone:

- Retain established trees to trap embers and reduce wind speeds.
- Selectively remove small trees and shrubs to create clumps (rather than a continuous wall of trees) separated by open areas.
- Remove the vegetation between the ground and the bottom of the tree canopy, to a height of at least two metres.
- Minimise fine fuels at ground level, such as grasses and leaf litter.

Table 1

| SLOPE | | | | INNER ZONE (Measured along the ground from the edge of the building) | | OUTER ZONE (Measured along the ground from the outer edge of the inner zone) |
|--------------|---------|----------|--------|---|-----------|---|
| | | | | GRASSLAND | FOREST | FOREST |
| DESCRIPTION | DEGREES | PER CENT | RATIO | | | |
| Flat | 0 | 0 | - | 10 metres | 20 metres | 15 metres |
| Gentle | 5° | 9% | 1:11 | 10 metres | 20 metres | 25 metres |
| Moderate | 10° | 17% | 1:6 | 15 metres | 25 metres | 30 metres |
| Mod. - steep | 15° | 27% | 1:3.7 | 15 metres | 30 metres | 45 metres |
| Steep | 20° | 36% | 1:1.27 | 15 metres | 40 metres | 50 metres |

There is no need to remove most trees as they can be beneficial in trapping embers and reducing wind speeds, and will not be involved in a bushfire once the fuels on the ground and the understorey have been modified. Effective landscaping design should provide for safety while retaining a pleasant environment. The final impression from a distance is that all the vegetation has been retained, while up close the impression is of more open vegetation.

If you plan to remove bushfire fuels by burning them during a Fire Permit Period, you may need a permit issued by a Fire Permit Officer (call 1800 000 699).

If it is a Non Fire Permit Period, contact your local council for information about local restrictions. At all times register your fire by freecalling 1800 000 699.



Ember-proofing your home

You need to make sure your home is protected against 'ember attack'.

Embers will build up on horizontal surfaces, particularly in corners. They can enter your home through small gaps around window and door frames, eaves, cladding and roofing. Timber decks can be ignited, particularly if embers can build up beneath them.

Small gaps should be sealed with protection strips or non-combustible filler, and larger under-deck areas should be protected with non-flammable screens.

Measures to ember-proof your home should be taken well before the beginning of summer.

More information:

For more information about how to prepare yourself and your home for a bushfire, read the Tasmania Fire Service brochures *Using Fire Outdoors*, *Fire Resisting Garden Plants*, *Bushfire Survival Plan* and watch the video *Bushfire: Prepare to Survive* fire.tas.gov.au



If you plan to remove bushfire fuels by burning them during a Fire Permit Period, you may need a permit issued by a Fire Permit Officer (call 1800 000 699).

Prepare

Provide access for firefighters

In some cases, firefighters may be able to help you defend your home. If your home is set back from the road and a fire truck needs to use your driveway, it should have a minimum width of 4 metres, clear to a height of 4 metres. Any bush 2 metres either side of the driveway should be cleared as for the **outer zone**. The inner radius of any turns should be no less than 10 metres, and there should be adequate room at the end of the driveway for a fire truck to turn around.



Provide water for firefighting

Whether you are staying to protect your home or leaving early, it is essential to have water available. Firefighters might need it even if you are not there.

Putting water on fires that threaten your home is the best way to extinguish them. However, during a bushfire, mains water pressure may drop or fail altogether.

Consider alternative water sources such as a nearby pond or dam, creek, swimming pool or water tank. The Tasmania Fire Service estimates that if you are relying on one of these alternative water supplies, in the most intense bushfires you may need up to 10,000 litres or 2,500 gallons of water to defend your home.

You should make it accessible by fire trucks, and it is advisable to have a male 50mm Storz coupling (the old 64mm 5V thread is still in use and acceptable) fitted to the base of your water tanks to allow for direct connection by firefighters.

If staying and you rely on one of these alternative water supplies and an electric pump, this will be useless if power supplies are interrupted – a generator or a diesel or petrol-powered pump is an important backup.

Pumps can be heavy, so consider mounting the pump on a trolley to make it easier to move around. It is important that all those likely to stay and defend your property know how to start and operate the pump.

Caution: Petrol-powered pumps and generators are suitable if they are shielded from high ambient temperature, which is likely to cause petrol in the carburettor to vaporise and the engine to stall. Petrol engines in above or below-ground insulated boxes and well-ventilated under-floor spaces may continue to operate effectively.

Plastic tanks and pipes melt.

Plastic tanks, exposed plastic pipes, fittings and hoses may melt in the heat of a fire - just when you need them the most.



To avoid this:

- Install steel or concrete tanks. If installing a plastic tank, ensure it is at least 30 metres from the bush, and not too close to any other fuels such as a woodpile, shed, shrubs and other flammable fuels.
- Use metal pipes and pipe fittings rather than plastic fittings above ground, and
- Bury any plastic pipes (PVC and poly pipes) at least 30 centimetres underground.

If you decide to leave

Even if you have decided to leave early for a safe place well before a bushfire threatens your home, you should take steps to prepare it for bushfire. If you do:

- Firefighters are more likely to defend it.
- Even if firefighters are unavailable, your home will be more likely to survive on its own.

When and where to go

If you have chosen to leave your home if it is threatened by bushfire, you should leave early, hours before the fire reaches your home.

Many people who die in bushfires do so because they leave just before the fire arrives, are overrun by the fire in the open, are trapped by fallen trees and power lines, or crash due to poor visibility. If leaving, leave early, well before fire threatens your home and your escape route.

On days when extreme or catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings are forecast, winds are likely to be strong enough to bring down trees and power lines well before any fire threatens, making travel difficult. If there is the possibility of fire threatening your home, you should plan to leave well before gale-force winds develop.

When leaving, lock up your home and tell neighbours where you can be contacted. Go somewhere safe, such as relatives or friends who live in areas that are not close to the bush.

If you have nowhere to go, listen to ABC Radio for the location of any evacuation centre. This should be a safe alternative place to relocate to. Leave in plenty of time to arrive safely.

How to get there

Plan the route you might take, including alternative routes and avoid driving in areas where fires are burning. If driving, make sure your car has enough fuel for the journey and is mechanically sound. If nervous about driving, consider using a taxi or asking a friend to collect you.

What to take

You should plan to be away from home for at least 24 hours, and if the worst happens and your home is destroyed, you should ensure that you have taken with you important documents and other valuable items and memorabilia.

Take cash and credit cards, insurance policies, family albums and other easily carried items of value. Take spare clothes and other items you would normally take on a short trip. Ensure you take sufficient water and food for the trip.

Pets can be frightened by bushfires. If possible, take them with you, or make sure they have plenty of water and food.



If you have chosen to leave your home if it is threatened by bushfire, you should leave early, hours before the fire reaches your home.

During a bushfire your pets will need water, shade and a safe place to stay. If you have livestock that can be moved out of the area, allow yourself plenty of time to relocate them.

If possible, move larger animals to paddocks with little vegetation. At the start of the bushfire season consider slashing a paddock to create a safer area. Never turn animals out on to the road to run free. This is dangerous for fire trucks and vehicles, and you may be legally responsible if they cause a crash.

Pets and livestock are not always allowed at evacuation centres, so you need to consider what you will do with them in your bushfire survival plan.

If you decide to leave

This summer, the Tasmania Fire Service may identify places in bushfire-prone areas where people can shelter during a bushfire.

Evacuation Centres

Evacuation centres are for people who leave early when a bushfire threatens, and do not have somewhere safe to go outside of the fire impact area, such as the home of a friend or family member.

Evacuation centres are buildings that have been identified by councils, in partnership with TFS and other government services. They will usually be public buildings that provide temporary shelter, drinking water and toilet facilities.

- Evacuation centres will usually be outside the expected path of the bushfire.
- If they are in the area directly affected by bushfire, evacuation centres will provide shelter from the fire's radiant heat, smoke and embers.
- Evacuation centres will not be available for all bushfires. There will not be one in every community.
- If an evacuation centre is opened, TFS will advertise it through ABC local radio and the TFS website.
- Evacuation centres may only have very basic shelter and services. They will only be open for a short period of time.
- You can take pets to the refuge, as long as you can control and look after them. You may not be allowed to take pets inside the shelter. Livestock and large animals won't be allowed at the refuge.

TFS advises that the safest option in a bushfire is to leave early for a place that is outside the bushfire affected area.

If you are not sure where to go if there is a bushfire you may choose to go to an evacuation centre.

**Bushfires do not arrive at convenient times.
Many bushfires start late in the afternoon.**

What will you do if you have visitors staying with you? Will any family members be away on business or holiday?

Make sure you revise your Bushfire Survival Plan whenever your circumstances change.



Download extra copies
of the checklist and plan
from the web site –
fire.tas.gov.au

If you've left it too late to leave safely

Nearby safer places

A nearby safer place is a place of last resort for people during bushfire emergencies. If you have no bushfire survival plan, or your plan has failed, a nearby safer place may be your last resort when there is an imminent threat of bushfire.

A nearby safer place is a building or space that may give some protection from the life-threatening effects of radiant heat during a bushfire. Nearby safer places may include town centres, ground level water (eg rivers, in-ground pools, dams), or large open areas (eg beaches, ploughed or green fields, golf courses, well-maintained sports fields or parks).

If you leave early, you should relocate to somewhere well away from the bushfire affected area. A nearby safer place may not be the safest choice, as there are risks getting to a nearby safer place and sheltering there.

Risks include:

- **Death or serious injury**
- Travelling to a nearby safer place may be dangerous, and the road could be blocked by fire, heavy smoke, fallen trees, poor visibility and heavy traffic.
- There is no guarantee that you will be safe from fire or radiant heat when travelling to a nearby safer place, or when sheltering there.
- You may experience extreme conditions while sheltering in a nearby safer place, such as extreme heat, high winds, fire noise, embers, smoke and ash.
- There is no guarantee that emergency services will be present to help or protect you.
- There may be limited parking and space.
- There will be no food, water or toilet facilities.
There will not be assistance for people with special needs (eg infants, people with disabilities or health issues).
- Nearby safer places do not exist in all communities. There may not be one in your community or near enough to you home for you to reach it in time.

A nearby safer place is a last resort for shelter during a bushfire. While it is safer than trying to out-run a fire front in a car or on foot, it is much safer to have left the fire area much earlier or to be defending a well-prepared home.



Getting back after the fire

Check with police, fire authorities and your local emergency services before trying to go home. Even if the fire has been controlled, there may be other safety issues that you are unaware of that may affect your ability to return home.

Plan to return home as soon as it is safe to do so. Often homes don't burn down until several hours after the fire has passed, so if you can return safely, you still may be able to save your home.

Be aware that fire trucks, fallen trees, power poles and wires and burnt bridges may close some roads for several hours or days. Electricity workers will be working to restore power supplies to affected areas as quickly as possible may also block roads.

In some cases road blocks will have been established. This is because the area you plan to enter is unsafe. Take advice from the authorities and avoid trying to re-enter unsafe areas. Access may be restricted and residents may be unable to return home for several hours or days.

For details of road closures listen to ABC Radio or local radio stations, or visit the Tasmania Fire Service website.

If your home is destroyed, contact your local council in the first instance for assistance.



Go to fire.tas.gov.au to find out more about Community Bushfire Protection Plans and nearby safer places for your area

Leave early checklist



Go to fire.tas.gov.au to find out more about Community Bushfire Protection Plans and nearby safer places for your area

Leaving early is always the safest option

On high fire risk days or actual fire days:

- Block drain-pipes and fill gutters with water.
- Remove flammable items from the exterior of the house e.g. blinds, outdoor furniture, door mats.
- Pack planned belongings into your car and leave in accordance with your plan.

When to leave?

- What will prompt you to go? The trigger might be a very high fire danger rating (check the weather page of your daily newspaper or the TFS website) or a fire breaking out nearby. Plan to leave early, many hours before the fire reaches your home to avoid being caught in smoke, the fire, or on a congested road.

Most people who die in bushfires are caught in the open, either in their car or on foot, because they've left their property too late, when the fire is approaching.

Where to go?

- Consider low fire risk areas, such as a nearby safe town or beach or a community fire refuge.

How to get there?

- Consider a number of travel routes to avoid areas where fires are burning.

What will you take?

Develop a list of items your family will need, and prepare an Emergency Kit. You might like to consider the items below:

- Bottled water
- Medications.
- Tent.
- First aid kit.
- Glasses.
- Folding chair.
- Wallet/purse.
- Clothing.
- Children's toys.
- Blankets.
- Sleeping bag.
- Air mattress.
- Mobile phone and charger.
- Money, identification and credit cards.
- Battery operated radio and spare batteries.
- Phone numbers of family and friends.
- Sun shelter (Sun umbrella or fold up gazebo).
- Important items (such as insurance policies, family photos and valuables).
- Organise household members and make arrangements for pets.

Because everyone's **Bushfire Survival Plan** will be different, complete the **Leaving Early Survival Plan** for you and your family's circumstances and keep it in a safe and easily accessible place.

Everyone must have a contingency plan

Fire services know that many people don't make timely decisions about what they will do when bushfire threatens. They wait until the fire is too close before making up their minds. When fires are burning under 'severe', 'extreme' or 'catastrophic' fire conditions, this can be fatal.

Nearby Safer Places

- You need to have somewhere nearby where you can shelter if you've left it too late to leave safely and your home isn't safe to shelter in.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____

- On Catastrophic days the safest option is for you and your family to **Leave Early**, hours before a fire threatens your home. These are the worst conditions for bush or grass fire. Even well-prepared and constructed homes may not be safe unless firefighters have assessed them as defensible in the prevailing conditions. Fires will likely be uncontrollable, unpredictable and very fast moving with highly aggressive flames extending high above tree tops and buildings.
- On Extreme days **Leave Early** will always be the safest option for you and your family. Stay and Defend should only be considered if your home is well prepared, specifically designed and constructed for bush fire and you are capable of actively defending it. Fires will likely be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving with flames in the tree tops, and higher than roof tops.

For warnings and alerts tune in to your local ABC as the emergency broadcaster. You can also tune in to your Local ABC Radio station anywhere on the free ABC listen app.

| ABC Local Radio | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| EAST COAST | WEST COAST | NORTH/NORTH EAST |
| Bicheno 89.7 FM | Savage River/Waratah 104.1 FM | Launceston 102.7 FM |
| Fingal 116.1 AM | Rosebery 106.3 FM | NE Tasmania 91.7 FM |
| Orford 90.5 FM | Queenstown/Zeehan 90.5 FM | Weldborough 97.3 FM |
| St Helens 158.4 AM | Strahan 107.5 FM | SOUTHERN |
| Swansea 106.1 FM | Waratah 103.3 FM | Hobart 936 AM/ DAB ABC Radio Hobart |
| St Marys 102.7 FM | NORTH WEST | Maydena: 936 AM/89.7 FM |
| | Devonport 100.5 FM | |
| | Burnie 102.5 FM | |
| | King Island 88.5 FM | |
| | Lileah 91.3 FM | |

Leave early plan



- Follow your Bushfire Survival Plan – Be Bushfire Ready.
- Monitor your local ABC radio station. Pack your Emergency Kit into your car.
- Prepare your property before leaving as per requirements for actual fire days:
 - Block drain-pipes and fill gutters with water.
 - Remove flammable items from the exterior of the house (e.g. blinds, outdoor furniture, door mats, hanging baskets).

When to go (what will prompt you to go):

Where to go and how to get there (identify one or more safe locations and what roads will take you there - have several alternatives). Where a Community Protection Plan exists for your community know your Nearby Safer Place/s:

Location 1 _____ Route: _____

Location 2 _____ Route: _____

Location 3 _____ Route: _____

Who to tell (before and after, list names and telephone numbers):

Name: _____ No: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

Name: _____ No: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

Name: _____ No: _____ Name: _____ No: _____

What to take (make a list of your valuable items and important documents and add to your emergency kit):

Important phone numbers

Fire: 000

Police: 000

Ambulance: 000

School: _____ Work: _____ Family: _____ No: _____

Friend: _____ No: _____ Family: _____ No: _____

If you decide to stay

Tasmania Fire Service recommends that you should not plan to defend your home when the Fire Danger Rating exceeds 50 (severe) in your area unless you have created a defensible space and ember-proofed your home. Unless your home has a defensible space and has been designed and built specifically to withstand a bushfire, you should not plan to defend it if the Fire Danger Rating exceeds 75 (extreme). Tasmania Fire Service recommends that you should not plan to defend any home when the Fire Danger Rating exceeds 100 (catastrophic) in your area, regardless of any preparations you have made. If a fire starts on these days, you should leave for a safe place well before the fire threatens your home.

Personal protection

If staying to defend your home against bushfires, it's important to protect yourself from radiant heat and from the numerous embers the fire will generate.

Wearing the clothing you would normally wear on a hot summer day will not provide you with protection during a bushfire.

Wear clothing made from natural fibres (cotton or wool), such as overalls or a long sleeved cotton shirt and cotton trousers or jeans and a wide-brimmed hat or safety helmet. Cotton or leather gardening gloves will protect your hands, and goggles or safety glasses will help keep sparks and embers out of your eyes.

A good dust-mask will help protect your throat and lungs. It is very important to wear sturdy, fire - resistant boots or shoes so you can move around safely outside.

Firefighting equipment

If you create a defensible space around your home and choose to stay and defend it, your chances of success will improve if you have some basic tools available.

As a minimum, you should have a ladder for access to roof gutters and into the roof space, a torch for moving safely inside the roof space, a hose and fittings, a rake and a strong bucket. A wet mop can be handy for putting out embers and small fires.

If you can't rely on mains water, you need an alternative supply. You should purchase a small firefighting pump and hose. Look under 'fire protection equipment' in the Yellow Pages. A pump kit should include the pump and its petrol or diesel-driven motor, a suction hose, strainer and float (to get water to the pump), sufficient 19 mm or 25 mm diameter firefighting hose or 19 mm garden hose to reach around all sides of your home, a firefighting nozzle for each hose, and spare fuel. Practice using the equipment regularly.



During the fire, make sure that the pump and hose are protected from high ambient temperatures and radiant heat and sheltered from embers and sparks. Any plastic pipes and fittings should be buried below ground or covered so they won't melt.

Smaller fire-fighting pumps should be taken inside as the main fire front passes. Larger fixed pumps should be protected with a non-combustible cover or pump-housing.

Defending your home

Be sure to connect garden hoses and prepare your firefighting pump or generator and extinguish any sparks, embers and spot fires burning on or close to your home. A hose or a wet mop is handy for this.

As the fire front passes your home, it may be necessary to shelter inside from the radiant heat and ember attack.

If possible, keep clear of large windows on the side of the house nearest the fire or you may be injured by breaking glass.

The coolest place is likely to be on the side of the house furthest from the fire. Don't shelter in a part of the house you cannot easily escape from if your home catches fire, such as the bathroom, which often has windows too small to squeeze through.

Only leave your home if it catches fire and you are forced out, or when it is safe to leave. Put out any fires burning on or near the outside of your home. A wool blanket will give you added protection from radiant heat.

Your home has a much greater chance of surviving the fire if you actively defend it.

If a bushfire is burning nearby and you have chosen to stay:

1. Listen to ABC Radio for news of the bushfire (use a transistor or car radio if the power is off), or visit the Tasmania Fire Service website.
2. Dress in protective clothing.
3. Drink water every 10 minutes to avoid dehydration.
4. Clear roof gutters of leaves and sweep or rake leaves from decks and lawns near the house.
5. Block your downpipes (a sock full of soil/sand will help) and fill your gutters with water.
6. Move flammable outdoor furniture, doormats and hanging baskets away from your home.
7. Close all doors and windows, remove curtains and close shutters if you have them.
8. Put tape across the inside of windows so they remain in place if broken.
9. Fill the bath and any buckets and containers with water.
10. Put a ladder inside to access the roof space.
11. Connect garden hoses and prepare your firefighting pump or generator.
12. Extinguish any sparks, embers and spot fires burning on or close to your home. A hose or a wet mop is handy for this.
13. Don't stand on the roof with your hose. In bushfires, often more people are injured falling from roofs than suffer burn injuries.
14. Don't waste water wetting down roofs and walls. Use the water only for extinguishing burning material.
15. Ensure all family members and pets are safe. You should consider relocating children, other vulnerable people and pets well before the fire arrives.

When the fire arrives:

1. If you need to shelter, store your pump and firefighting hose where it won't get burnt.
2. Take a garden hose and fittings inside and fit them to a tap in the laundry.
3. Check around the inside of your house constantly for fire, including in the roof space.
4. If fire breaks out, extinguish it using water you have collected in the bath and in buckets or with the hose attached to your laundry taps.

Once the fire has passed:

1. Extinguish any part of your house that is alight. Your neighbours may be able to help.
2. Check under the house and any decks, on the roof and inside the roof space. Check around window frames and door jambs, and under the eaves for any fire.
3. Sparks and embers will continue to fall, so keep checking for several hours.
4. Have a drink of water every 10 minutes to avoid dehydration.

If it gets hotter than expected ...

A well-prepared home will protect you from a bushfire's radiant heat in most circumstances.

Do not attempt to flee in your car at the last minute.

If you are defending your home against a bushfire and it catches fire and you can't put it out, you will need to exit the house before toxic fumes overcome you.

If it is unsafe to exit immediately, close all interior doors and shelter inside at an exit as far from the fire as possible. Leave once it is safe outside, and before it becomes unsafe inside.

Relocate to a nearby safer place. If necessary, shelter from radiant heat. This might be in your vegetable garden, the park across the street or your next door neighbour's house.

You should identify nearby safer places in your bushfire survival plan. Choose a place that is very close, will be safe to get to and will be safe when you get there.



Go to fire.tas.gov.au to find out more about Community Bushfire Protection Plans and nearby safer place for your area

Stay and defend checklist

Staying to defend a well-prepared property during a bushfire always carries the risk of injury or death. However, defending your home is a reasonable choice if:

- Your home is well-prepared.
- You are physically fit and emotionally prepared.
- Fire conditions are less than 'extreme'.

Most people who die in bushfires are caught in the open, either in their car or on foot, because they've left their property too late, when the fire is approaching.

If you are unsure about defending your property, you should prepare a Leave Early Plan as well.

Prepare your fire fighting equipment

- A firefighting pump, hose and nozzle.
- Firefighting water supply (not just mains water).
- Ladder – for access to roof gutters and into the roof space.
- Garden hose and fittings.
- Rake and a strong bucket.
- A wet mop for putting out embers and small fires.

Prepare for your safety

- Prepare a bushfire survival kit – e.g. long-sleeved woollen or cotton clothing, broad-brimmed hat, sturdy leather boots, leather gloves, protective eye wear, a face mask, a torch for moving safely inside the roof space, a battery powered radio, spare batteries, first aid kit and drinking water.
- Go to fire.tas.gov.au to check if there is a Community Bushfire Protection Plan for your area.

As the fire approaches

- Dress in appropriate clothing.
- Clear leaves from roof gutters, decks and lawns.
- Block downpipes and fill gutters with water.
- Remove flammable outdoor furniture, doormats and hanging baskets.
- Remove curtains from windows, close and tape windows, close doors.
- Fill bath, buckets and containers with water.
- Patrol property for spot fires to extinguish.
- Stay close to house, drink water and check the welfare of others and pets.

As the fire front arrives

- Take shelter inside the house, protect yourself from radiant heat ensuring fire-fighting equipment is safe.
- Connect a hose to a laundry tap.
- Continually check for outbreak of fires inside, including in the roof space.
- Soak towels and place under external doors.
- Ensure you can exit the home should it catch fire.

Once the fire has passed

- Extinguish any part of your house that is alight.
- Patrol the property (including roof space) to extinguish fires.
- Keep checking for several hours.
- Drink water frequently to avoid dehydration.

Because everyone's **Bushfire Survival Plan** will be different, complete the **Stay and Defend Survival Plan** for you and your family's circumstances and keep it in a safe and easily accessible place.

For warnings and alerts tune in to your local ABC as the emergency broadcaster. You can also tune in to your Local ABC Radio station anywhere on the free ABC listen app.

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| | Burnie 102.5 FM | |
| | King Island 88.5 FM | |
| | Lileah 91.3 FM | |



Stay and defend survival plan

- Follow your Bushfire Survival Plan – Be Bushfire Ready.
- Monitor your local ABC radio station.
- Access firefighting and personal safety equipment.



Before the start of the bushfire season, I will:

Even though I'm well prepared, I will leave if the fire danger rating is _____
and a fire has broken out nearby (fill out the 'Leave Early' plan as well).

As the fire approaches, I will:

As the fire front arrives, I will:

After the fire has passed, I will:

Everyone must have a contingency plan – even the best plans can fail. Remember, leaving late can lead to death or serious injury. You must identify a number of nearby safer places that you can relocate to at very short notice if all else fails e.g. well prepared neighbour's house, ploughed paddock, sports ground or beach.

Nearby Safer Place 1 _____

Nearby Safer Place 2 _____

Nearby Safer Place 3 _____

Important phone numbers

Fire: Triple Zero (000) **Police: Triple Zero (000)** **Ambulance: Triple Zero (000)**

School: _____ **Work:** _____ **Family:** _____ **No:** _____

Family: _____ **No:** _____ **Family:** _____ **No:** _____

Friend: _____ **No:** _____ **Friend:** _____ **No:** _____

Emergency calls

Call triple zero '000'

- Ask for Fire, Police or Ambulance.
- Stay calm, don't shout, speak slowly and clearly.
- When asked give the:
State you live in, Street number, Street name, Suburb, Nearest cross street.



Important

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, there are six ways of contacting emergency services.

If you find yourself in an emergency which is either life threatening or where time is critical, you can contact fire services, police or ambulance:

- By TTY – dial **106**.
- By internet relay – and ask for **triple zero (000)**.
- By captioned relay – and ask for **triple zero (000)**.
- By SMS relay – text **0423 677 767**.
- By video relay – login to Skype and contact one of the NRS contact names.
- By ordinary phone – dial **1800 555 727** and ask for **triple zero (000)**.



further information

relayservice.gov.au/making-a-call/emergency-calls/
or relayservice.gov.au

Calls to 106 and 000 are FREE 24 hours a day, every day.

Community bushfire protection plans

Since 2010, Tasmania Fire Service has been developing community bushfire protection plans for bushfire prone areas.

These plans include:

- A map of the area.
- Roads in and out.
- Local radio frequency for bushfire alerts.
- Locations of some nearby safer places.

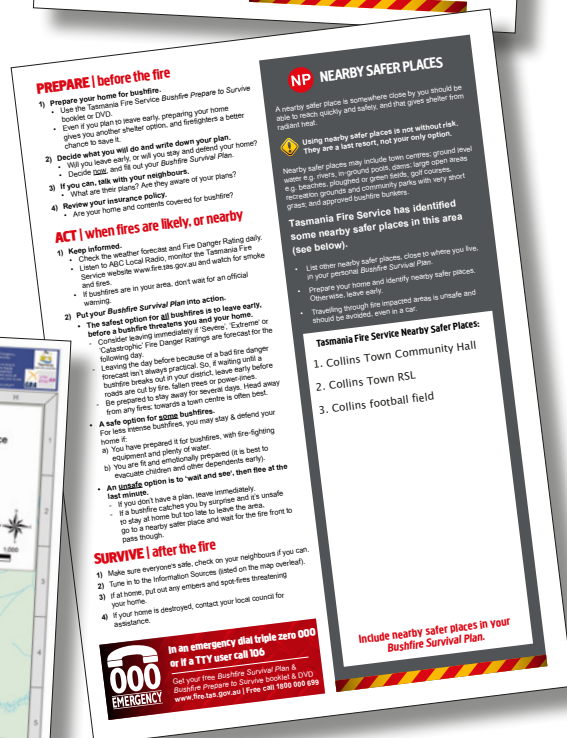
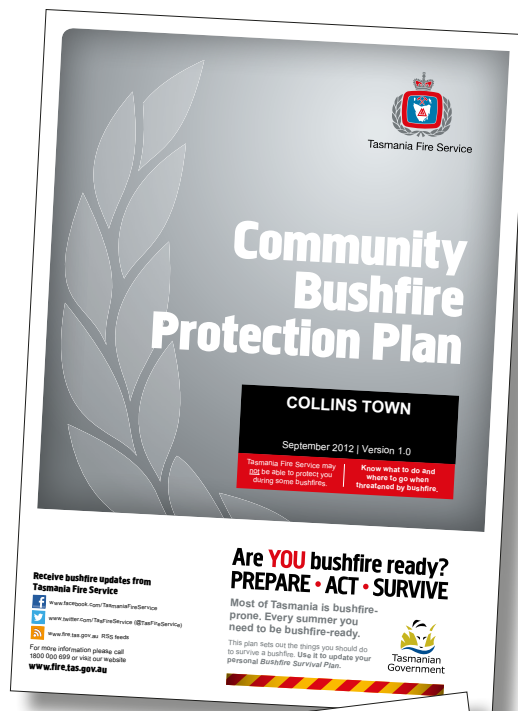
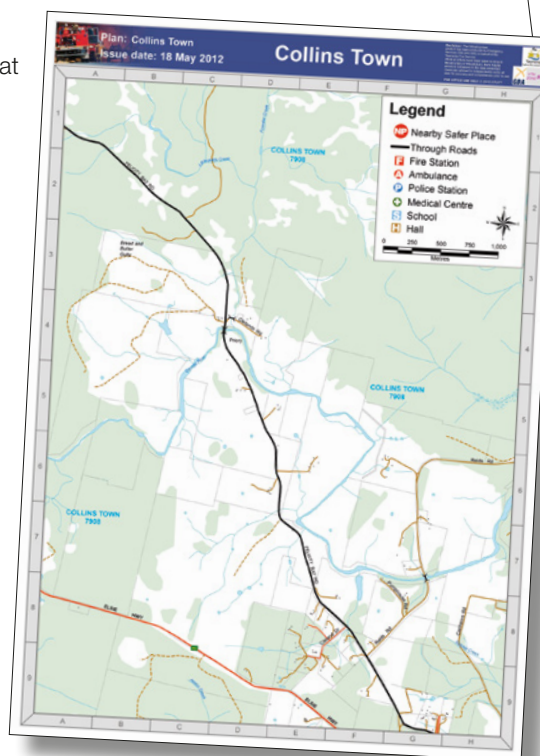
If there is a plan available for an area where you live or spend leisure time, use it to help you plan:

- How early you will need to leave if there is a bushfire (based on how difficult and dangerous it will be to get out).
- What roads you would use to get out of the area.
- If there is more than one way out of the area. Will you be able to get out if the main road is blocked by fire, smoke, emergency vehicles or fallen trees?
- How to get more information about an approaching bushfire.
- If there is anywhere to shelter as a last resort if you have left it too late to leave safely.

The community bushfire protection plans are a valuable tool to help you make a bushfire survival plan for yourself and your family.

Completed plans are available at fire.tas.gov.au or freecall 1800 000 699

More planning is underway. Keep watching the website for more information and updates.





To watch the video *Bushfire Prepare to Survive*,
 or for more information on bushfire safety,
 visit fire.tas.gov.au



Use water to make sure your fire is completely extinguished. Do not use soil.

Fires can still smoulder under soil and can stay hot for more than eight hours.

fire.tas.gov.au



Tasmania Fire Service



While the State Fire Commission has made every effort to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information contained in this booklet, the State Fire Commission does not accept any responsibility for the accuracy, completeness, or relevance to the reader's purpose, of the information contained in this booklet and those reading it for whatever purpose are advised to verify its accuracy and to obtain appropriate professional advice. The State Fire Commission, its officers, employees and agents do not accept any liability, however arising, including liability for negligence, for any loss or damage resulting from the use of, or reliance upon, the information contained in this booklet. © Copyright Tasmania Fire Service 2020