

COMMUNITY EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE READY NEWSLETTER



Issue 4 • Bushfire-Ready Edition - November 2015



Helping Tasmanian Communities to Work Together to Prepare for Bushfires.

Welcome to edition number 4 of the *Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods* newsletter. The theme for this edition is being bushfire-ready for the bushfire season which is here.

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For more information on how to contact the team visit www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn

Firestorm 50 Years On: A Community Storytelling Project



The 7th of February 2017 will mark 50 years since the devastating Black Tuesday bushfires in Tasmania. On that date, 110 separate fire fronts burnt through 2,640 square kilometres of land. As much as 90 percent of the Mount Wellington Park was on fire. There was extensive damage to agricultural property, public infrastructure, properties and many decimated small towns.

The fires claimed 62 lives in a single day. There were 900 injured and thousands of people were left homeless. Property loss was also extensive with 1,293 homes and over 1,700 other buildings destroyed. The total damage cost amounted to \$40,000,000 in 1967 Australian dollar values. In terms of both loss of property and loss of life, the Tasmanian 1967 bushfire event is considered to be one of Australia's worst disasters.

Many in the Tasmanian community can still tell a story of the 1967 fires based on their firsthand experience of that day, while others have had stories passed down to them through older relatives. There are numerous tales of people's escape, as well as the stories of the workers and volunteers who responded to this crisis. Within these stories are recurring themes of survival, resilience, community connectedness and recovery.

The TFS *Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods* program is embarking on an innovative collaborative project to commemorate the 50 year anniversary and raise awareness about bushfire risk by collecting people's stories. Over the next 18 months, people, businesses and organisations are invited to tell their stories and share any images and artefacts to commemorate the event.

The 50 year anniversary of the 1967 bushfires digital storytelling project aims to collect these stories at major community venues and events across Tasmania.

The collection of stories will feature on the TFS website (www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn) and form part of a major exhibition planned for 2017 at the Tasmania Museum and Art Gallery, it will also be incorporated into the Tasmanian historic archives.

To find out more about how to register interest by telling a story, volunteering with the project, loaning or donating artefacts to the TMAG exhibition, contact Lesley King on 6225 8504, or email lesley.king@fire.tas.gov.au.



Tasmania Fire Service

www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn

Planning to Leave Early

The bushfire season is here and it is the time for all of us to start moving from thinking about our Bushfire Survival Plans to developing them into a document that everyone in your circle knows about and has access to.

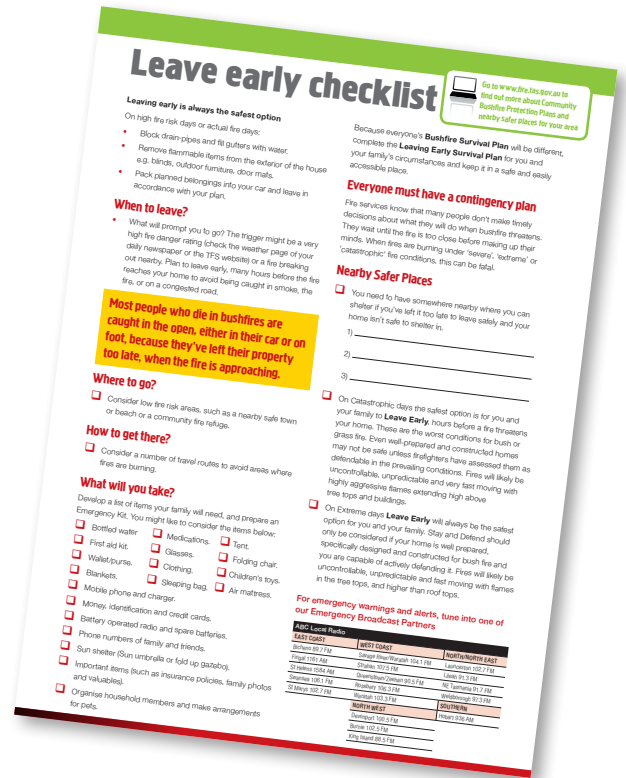
When you think about what you might do in the event of a bushfire, are you planning to stay and defend? Or are you/ some of you, planning to leave early? Did you notice that both of these considerations have within them the word 'planning'? A lot of us tend to think a range of things when it comes to the risk associated with bushfires, from; 'oh we had a fire here only a couple of years ago so we'll be right', to 'we haven't had a fire here in 30 years so no need to worry', and 'I know what I am going to do, I've thought about it heaps'. These ways of thinking can cause serious risk to you and your loved ones. There is a significant unknown entity to Mother Nature and when a bushfire might happen in your area. The key is not to think 'if' but rather 'when' a bushfire will impact your patch.

The BRN program is working hard to help people understand the level of risk they live with and to put active plans in place to empower them to respond to the risk in a much more proactive way. In the Tasmania Fire Service Bushfire Survival Plan document and accompanying DVD, there is information, resources and documents to help guide what you can plan to do. This planning ensures that when a fire impacts on your local patch you have thought through, written down and discussed the aspects of decisions you and your circle of influence will make. Trying to decide what you will do once you are faced with an impending bushfire puts you and all those in your network at significant risk. We are all able to think more clearly when we are calm and not effected by the stress that can cause us to take actions that may expose us to harm.

One of the things you can do in this time is to develop a Leave Early plan – Remembering that leaving early is the safest option. This means intentionally thinking through what you need to do to be able to leave early safely and that everyone understands who is going where and doing what.

Some things to consider are;

- What are my triggers to leave? What do I need to consider?
 - Am I going to wait for visual triggers such as smoke or flames before I choose to leave? Often this is too late.
 - Do I understand the Fire Danger Rating system and will this be my trigger?



- What do I understand of the TFS advice levels?
- Will I wait until TFS contacts me?
- Do I have a disability, am aged, care for someone who is a child, do I have animals? What extra things might I need to consider in terms of time for leaving?
- If I am leaving what might I need to consider?
 - When – when will I leave:
 - Understanding and sticking to my agreed triggers to leave
 - Where – where will I go?
 - Where am I going to go?
 - Have I mapped this out?
 - Do I have a plan b if my access road is cut off?
 - What – am I taking?
 - Money
 - Credit cards
 - Medication
 - Photos
 - Relevant paperwork including insurance papers, phone contacts
 - Water

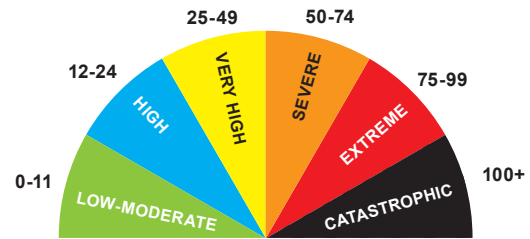
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Planning to Leave Early

- Clothes
- Supplies for animals such as water, food, restraints for in the car
- Who – what are the plans for your networks?
 - Are all people leaving early?
 - Is someone choosing to stay and defend? How will you communicate through this?
 - Whose place are we going to? Have we established a backup place for contingencies?
 - If I have left – who have I let know?
 - What about those at work or away from home? Have I contacted them to let them know?
 - Have I planned for my animals? When will I make sure they are secured so that once we decide to leave they are easily located.
- How – how am I leaving?
 - Am I driving? Is the petrol tank full? Is the car road worthy? Mechanically sound?



Check the forecast FDR in your area

- Is someone going to collect me? Who and what are their contact details.
- Have I informed those around me of my plans?

Developing a leave early kit that you can grab and go, will really help with the time it takes for you to leave. Make sure on severe and above Fire Danger Rating days you have organised your pets, such as keeping your cat inside or your dog restrained outside. Take this time to look at your Bushfire Survival Plan, sit down with your family, friends, etc. and work out the details that will ensure you are all able to leave early and as safely as possible. Invest in your special people, things can be replaced, but people can't.

It works better when we all work together

Collaboration would be a word to describe the *Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods* project underway at St Marys. Shared responsibility is another word we commonly use.

A collaboration of Community groups (Transition Break O Day, Break O'Day Regional Arts), Break O' Day Council, St Marys Volunteer Fire Brigade, residents and businesses contributed to establish the St Mary's Bushfire-Ready Group, who over the last year has facilitated bushfire safety and preparedness events in St Marys with strong support from residents.

Collaboration effectively shares the responsibility for bushfire safety and preparedness by providing a wide network for spreading the message, increased numbers of residents undertaking preparations and a better understanding of bushfires in general.

Sharing the responsibility for prevention, preparedness, response and recovery builds greater resilience within communities, improves safety and generally drives better outcomes following an emergency. Outcomes are improved when TFS, communities, volunteer brigades, residents and business can all work together. St Marys is a good example of how this works.

Dominated by hard working community volunteers and community groups, St Marys has been an enjoyable and rewarding community to be involved with and is a stand out because of the levels of involvement from a wide range of people and groups including strong support from Break O'Day Council.

Surrounding communities have also benefited from the St Marys community with events being held in Falmouth and Scamander over a similar time period. All have seen a good commitment from volunteer brigades, which is a key measure for success.

Evidence from across the region has found that in communities where brigades are involved in the *Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods* program, the outcomes for communities are improved and more widely adopted by residents, which enhances safety for both volunteers and community members who are involved in bushfire response.

There are many excellent examples from across the state where brigades, communities, councils and *Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods* have worked exceptionally well together with great outcomes. It is a positive experience with brigades being one of the important beneficiaries.



Records Tumble in October, with a Severe Bushfire Season Forecast

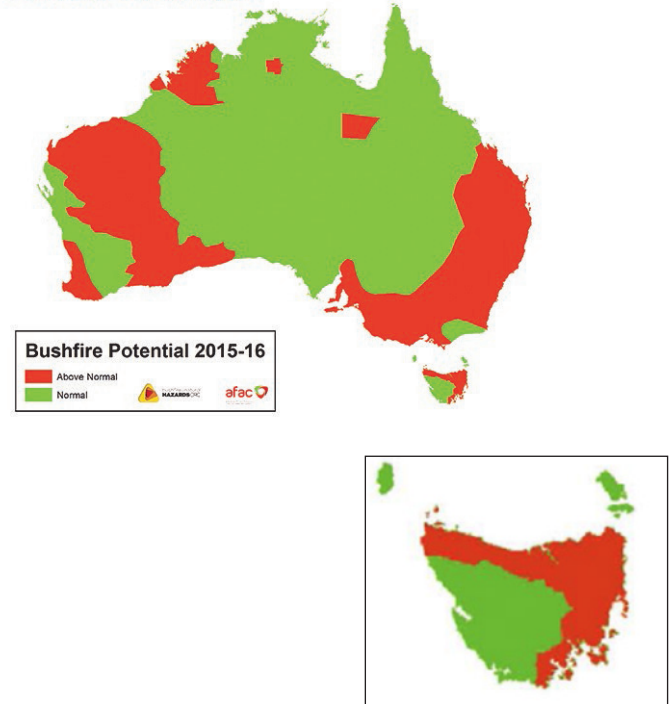
Across Southern Australia, spring has so far been exceptionally dry. With record warm temperatures experienced across the country in October, the bushfire seasonal outlook has been re-examined for South Australia and Tasmania.

This has resulted in an update to the Southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook. This new edition, released as Hazard Note 12, replaces the previous Outlook for these two states, previously published as Hazard Note 10 in September 2015.

For Tasmania the potential for bushfire has been assessed as above normal across Northern and Eastern Tasmania, as well as in the Midlands and the South East. This is a significantly larger area than the September assessment. The bushfire potential in the remainder of the state is currently normal. The first half of spring has seen very low rainfall for almost all of Tasmania, especially in the west. Above-average daytime temperatures have increased evaporation rates, which further increases fuel dryness. The fire season has commenced in the eastern half of the state, with many fires proving difficult to control because of the dryness of fuels.

To read the update in full, visit the Bushfire and Natural Hazards CRC [website](#).

SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA SEASONAL BUSHFIRE OUTLOOK 2015-16: NOVEMBER UPDATE



New Community Education Posters Available!

Available for download on the TFS website.

Campfire Safety

SOAK IT. STIR IT. SOAK IT AGAIN.
Make sure your campfire is out.

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.

www.fire.tas.gov.au

Don't risk your life on a last minute decision

DRIVING IN BUSHFIRE SMOKE CAN BE DEADLY.
Risks include serious injury or death.

Know your bushfire risk. Make a plan.

Roads can be blocked by fire, heavy smoke, fallen trees and power lines, along with heavy traffic.
Leaving early is always the safest option.

For more information
www.fire.tas.gov.au | 1800 000 699

Prepare for bushfire - Protect what matters to you

Be Bushfire Ready - PREPARE • ACT • SURVIVE

Know your bushfire risk. Make a plan.

Prepare your property, prepare a bushfire survival plan, prepare yourself and your family for bushfire.

For more information
www.fire.tas.gov.au | 1800 000 699

Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods Program Wins More Awards in 2015

The approach TFS is taking with engaging with communities is continuing to be highly regarded at the state and national level. Recently the BRN program was awarded:

- 2015 International Association of Public Participation (emergency services category) Award for best practice in community engagement (national award)
- BRN, in collaboration with the Tasmanian Visitor Information Network and SES, was awarded the 2015 Resilient Australia Award for their 'Emergency preparedness project'.



Community Education Unit- Community Development Team accepting the award

Research investigates community mapping and social media for empowering Tasmanian communities in bushfire preparation

In recent disaster events volunteer mapping efforts and information from community members sent through social media proved highly useful in connecting people, managing the disaster, and understanding the extent of impacts. Examples include global mapping efforts after the Haiti and Nepal earthquakes and the use of Facebook in the 2013 Dunally fires. Sharing information using social media, smartphones and online mapping facilitates fast two-way communication. It allows a huge variety of local information to be collected and it allows for increased connectedness of individuals, communities and authorities.

PhD candidate Billy Haworth is working with the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program to explore how these information sharing technologies may be useful in engaging Tasmanian communities in bushfire preparation. His research has three main components:

- Surveys across 12 at-risk communities in the state revealed high potential for these technologies to be valuable, but also important considerations, such as demographics, internet access and mistrust of online information.

- Interviews with emergency management professionals provided insight into how community members sharing information together with these technologies can work alongside emergency agencies' efforts, and how agencies can best-support community practices by valuing their local knowledge.
- Billy will be running community mapping workshops in Kettering (November 21), St Marys (November 28), St Helens (November 29), and Tolmans Hill (December 5) to investigate how sharing local information on maps together as a community may be useful in increasing bushfire preparation. Anybody interested in attending should get in touch! billy.haworth@sydney.edu.au



Community Liaison during Bushfire Incidents Takes Shape

2015 has seen the endorsement of the involvement of TFS Community Development/Engagement staff from the Community Education Unit and the Fuel Reduction Unit in coordinating the 'Community Liaison' functional area of 'Public Information' during major bushfire incidents.

As per the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System during a prolonged incident or incidents that impact or may impact a community a community liaison officer may be appointed within the Incident Management Team to work with stakeholders and affected communities.

In early October, Community Development staff undertook the Community Liaison role with a bushfire that had potential to impact the community of Orford. Staff worked with the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council, Tasmania Police and the Triabunna Volunteer Fire Brigade to establish and coordinate a drop-in centre at the Orford Community Hall. Approximately 300 people attended the Community Hall over a two-day period to ask questions and gather further information about the nearby bushfire.

Fortunately the bushfire did not escape its boundaries. Positively the session allowed the community to gain bushfire preparedness information and discuss their Bushfire Survival Plans.

In early November, a number of staff got together to workshop some core procedures; templates for promoting community liaison events and to discuss the difference between day to day community engagement and emergency response community engagement.

Photos from around the State



1800 000 699

www.fire.tas.gov.au/brn

communityed@fire.tas.gov.au

