

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE-READY NEIGHBOURHOODS NEWSLETTER



Issue 14 • Enhancing Disaster Resilience Edition • December 2018

Helping Tasmanian communities to work together to prevent, prepare for and respond to bushfires.

Welcome to edition number 14 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

This edition features:

- TFS volunteer – community engagement workshop

- BRN Group in Jackeys Marsh
- A collaboration to enhance disaster research opportunities and outcomes
- Tips to manage ember attack
- Mythbusting Bushfires
- Tips to reduce the fire risk in your garden
- New BRN resource: The Fire Game.



Volunteers undertake community engagement workshop

A TFS volunteer community engagement workshop was held in Launceston in September that provided the participants with the knowledge, skills and confidence to engage their local residents in fire safety education. Topics covered in the workshop were the principles of community engagement, fire safety messaging, public speaking, guidelines on connecting with vulnerable groups, property assessment tips, flexible volunteering, community engagement tools and information about the TFS Volunteer Community Engagement Officer role.

Congratulations to the TFS volunteers of Branhholm, Brighton, Carrick, Chudleigh, Claremont, Deloraine, Derby, Dover, Frankford-Birrallee, Glendevie, Grove, Hadspen,

Hillwood, Kelso, Koonya, Margate, Middleton, Midway Point, Molecreek, Musselroe Bay, New Norfolk, Pipers River, Richmond, Risdon Vale, Seven Mile Beach and Triabunna Brigades who participated in the workshop.

There will be future opportunities for skills development for volunteers interested in community fire safety engagement in the coming year. Volunteers interested in knowing more about the Tasmania Fire Service Volunteer Community Engagement Officer role can contact Peter Middleton, Coordinator Community Development, on 0418 145 746 or email peter.middleton@fire.tas.gov.au

Peter Middleton, Coordinator Community Development



Tasmania Fire Service

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhood group of Jackeys Marsh

Community Development Officer, Suzette Harrison has been working in the Jackeys Marsh area for some time by assisting residents to establish a Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhood group to look at broader community issues in the bushfire safety and preparation space, in particular by assisting with hazards in the inner and outer zones of their properties. The group decided that it would be important to share a water source that residents can use when undertaking mitigation burning to manage their vegetation.

The Jackeys Marsh area does not have reticulated water. A concern raised by residents was that people must burn safely on their land and be able to extinguish the fire properly. This meant residents require a large quantity of water. For a community bushfire-ready project, the group decided on a mobile community water tank trailer.

The community worked hard to bring their plan together and it was no small task. Points of consideration and action involved, but were not limited to:

- Where the water trailer would be housed and safe storage requirements
- Who would be able to use it and when
- The requirements involved with insurances and a terms of use document that was assessed by a local lawyer to cover off any issues such as public liability
- A booking system for its use
- A tool and equipment list to be completed at pick-up and return; and
- Instructions, requirements and legalities around safe burning practices with references to the Planned Burning Manual and templates for risk assessment and a burn plan. (http://www.sfmc.tas.gov.au/sites/sfmc.tas.gov.au/files/Planned%20Burning%20Manual_APRIL%202014_0.pdf)



Jackeys Marsh community water tank trailer

The community's water trailer project is almost complete. The process has involved many meetings, actions, communications between stakeholders, grant applications and the funding towards the project. It has been exciting to be a part of the process with the community including all of the challenges, learnings and achievements. Jackeys Marsh Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhood is now working toward a formal launch of the trailer next year.

The Jackeys Marsh bushfire water tank trailer is an example of an innovative solution addressing the barriers that residents had to burning activities on their own properties in getting ready for the bushfire season. Suzette has found it to be quite a privilege to work alongside such a committed group of people: Kim Clark, Darryl and Shannon Peacock, Brian McGowan, Max Herron and John Robbin.

Suzette Harrison, Community Development Officer (North West/North)



Tasmania Fire Service

TasFire
EQUIPMENT

Is your business or home safe from bushfire?

We have a range of products to help protect you and your home from the threat of bushfires.

- Fire extinguishers
- Firefighting pumps and hoses
- Personal protective equipment
- Knapsacks and drip torches
- And more.

Check out our products online tasfireequipment.com.au or visit one of our stores. Hobart, Youngtown or Burnie 1300 008 337



Tasmania Fire Service

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods partners UTAS

In the North of Tasmania, Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods participated in a series of workshops held in the Break O'Day municipality. The workshops were facilitated by researchers from the Centre for Rural Health, College of Health and Medicine of the University of Tasmania. The 'Enhancing Disaster Research Opportunities and Outcomes in Tasmania' event focused on emergency preparedness for seniors before, during and after disasters, in particularly bushfires.

With an aging population, the workshops identified many barriers seniors face in relation to emergency preparedness and were a reminder that there are people in the community who live with an elevated level of vulnerability in a disaster event.

Speakers at the workshops addressed a wide variety of issues with plenty of questions and topics covered with participants. Chris Hughes, Emergency Management Coordinator from Break O'Day Council, explained the role of evacuation centres during emergencies and the services that are usually assembled there. Howard Colvin from Red Cross presented the new 'Get Prepared' phone app, also explaining what their role is during disasters. Station Officer, Clynt Allen, and Community Development Officer, David Cleaver discussed the role of TFS from an operational point of view during bushfire emergencies; and I presented a session about personal and property preparedness, ember attack, the leaving early plan and survival kits.

Discussions on the day included:

- Preparing properties before bushfire season
- Taking action during a bushfire including, how and when to leave early, what to take, where to go and how to get there.

Identified barriers that seniors may be confronted with in a bushfire emergency include:

- Limited mobility making it difficult to prepare a property
- Limited use of technology such as internet to source emergency alerts
- Limited access to transport making it difficult to leave early
- Limited ability to defend a property impacted by bushfire
- An increased dependency on emergency services and care providers.



Merylin Cross of UTAS at the St Helens workshop



Chris Hughes of Break O'Day Council explains council's role in emergencies with Fingal residents

Participants were asked to complete a survey about some of their individual circumstances of living in a community with bushfire risk. The outcome from the workshops and survey will provide further research in this area of emergency management, particularly in relation to those most vulnerable and at risk.

When considering how to get help with assisting those more vulnerable in your community, there are a wide range of stakeholders that you can work with. Break O'Day Council's involvement in these events provided an excellent insight into the work that local council representatives do behind the scenes to assist residents in disaster preparedness, response and recovery and their role in enhancing disaster resilience.

David Cleaver, Community Development Officer (North)



Tips to manage ember attack

The biggest threat to your home in a bushfire may come before the flames are anywhere near you. Sparks and embers move with the wind, land on the ground and set fire to vegetation and flammable building materials way ahead of the fire front. Because of this, it's very important

to make sure your house and sheds are as ember proof as possible by covering gaps bigger than 2mm with screen mesh, silicone or metal plates. Here are some common hazards that increase a building's vulnerability to ember attack.



Figure 1: Ventilation holes

Weep holes and vents in brick veneer walls can provide an avenue for embers to enter the wall space. The level of risk depends on the type of construction. Double brick and block walls being constructed entirely of non-combustible materials are less at risk. Timber-frame constructed buildings are more at risk of catching fire. Gaps like this should not be completely blocked, so screening it with a metal mesh is a reasonable option to allow ventilation.

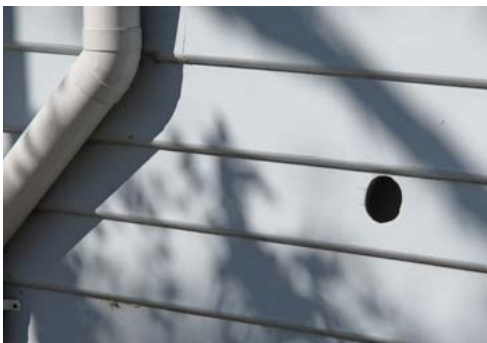


Figure 2: Holes

Holes in weatherboard walls can allow embers to enter the wall cavity or the rooms within. Walls constructed of combustible materials such as timber are at most risk of catching fire.



Figure 3: Window and door gaps

This image shows a substantial gap beneath a door that could easily allow embers to enter.

Installing weather shields below the door to cover the gap could help to prevent embers entering the room and igniting the carpet and other flammable items in the room.



Figure 4: Damage and decay

Damage and decay to timber and fascias can permit embers to be blown into the roof and eaves cavity space. Areas of damage and rot like this can make a building more vulnerable due to the embers being able to access the roof space where they may lodge in fine combustible materials, such as dust, rubbish or bird nesting materials. It is recommended that any damage like this should be repaired.

Continued on page 5.

Tips to manage ember attack *Continued from page 4*



Figure 5: Storage and clutter

Ideally combustible materials like this should not be stored under buildings constructed in bushfire prone areas. Embers would easily ignite a pile such as this. It would be beneficial to remove this material and to enclose the sub-floor area.



Figure 6: Mulch close to buildings

Bark mulch immediately against timber weatherboard walls is very susceptible to catching fire due to embers. Burning mulch can easily spread fire into the walls. Mulch products, including rubber mulch, should be at least 6 metres away from a building and combustible structures such as decking. An alternative material around buildings is pebbles or stones.



Figure 7: Vegetation close to the house

Overhanging trees and branches can drop large amounts of leaf, bark and stick litter onto the roof and in the gutters. A large build-up of this sort of flammable material can be easily ignited by embers. Regularly clean out guttering, clear roofs, trim branches and remove trees which overhang the roof in the lead-up to and during the bushfire season.



Figure 8: Roller doors

Roller doors that are not well sealed and have large gaps can allow embers to enter the garage. To fix this, consider installing a nylon brush fixed to the head, sides and bottom of the door that covers the gap to prevent from entering.

*Lesley King, Community Development Officer (South),
and Bill Hilston, Bushfire Assessment Officer.*

Mythbusting bushfires

Bushfire Myth:

There'll be plenty of warning before I'm in danger.

Fact:

The rate of fire spread depends on a number of factors including wind speed, fuel load, fuel type, fuel moisture, air temperature, humidity, terrain.

The rate of fire spread in undisturbed, flat to undulating grasslands can reach more than 20 km/hr in certain conditions and up to about 12 km/hr in forest areas. Burning bark, twigs and leaves carried upwards in convection columns can cause new fires that are also known as spot fires, kilometres ahead of the main fire.

Fires travel faster uphill, as flames can more easily reach new fuel, and this effect is increased if the uphill slope is aligned with the wind direction. For every 10 degrees of uphill slope, fires travel twice as quickly.

During the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in February 2009, many people spoke of seeing smoke in the distance, before seeing their homes engulfed in flames just minutes later. The catastrophic Blue Mountains bushfire in 2013 also demonstrated how fast fires can spread. On 13 October, 196 houses burned down and 146 buildings were damaged in the space of three hours. The phenomenon of pyro-convective fire activity (fire storms) is becoming more common, such as in Canberra in 2003 when tornado-like winds generated by intense fires tore mature trees out of the ground and roofs off buildings.

Having a Bushfire Survival Plan is extremely important. As climate change contributes to lengthened bushfire



House destroyed from the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria in 2009

seasons and more frequent and extreme bushfire weather, these plans may need to be updated to accommodate increased risks. Relying solely upon previous fire behaviour and experience may not guarantee safety as bushfires become more intense. With lengthening fire seasons, it's also important to be prepared throughout the year.

Source: 'Bushfires: 2018 Mythbusting Guide' climatecouncil.org.au



These easy-to-follow video guides on the eight aspects of property preparedness will give you the tips and tricks to being better prepared for the bushfire season.

New property preparedness videos

Now is the time to prepare for the bushfire season. BRN has developed a series of video guides on the eight aspects of property preparedness. Check them out by clicking [here](#) or go to our website fire.tas.gov.au/brn.



Reducing the fire risk in your garden

The flammability of a plant is determined by how readily it burns and by plant type or shape. How readily a plant burns depends on things like moisture, or mineral content of leaves.

Characteristics of plants with low flammability include:

- High moisture content
- Broad fleshy leaves
- Low and compact
- Do not retain dead material
- Smooth trunks
- Low/no volatile oil content.

Remember all plants, even succulents, can burn in extreme fire events.

Garden design to reduce risk includes:

- Plant selection – choose low flammability plants
- Plant location – where to place plants in your defensible space
- Leaf litter or mulch hazards – choosing the least flammable mulch such as gravel
- Keeping the moisture levels up to your plants over the bushfire danger period (generally October to March)
- Hard landscaping or mown lawns
- Windbreaks
- Plant maintenance – maintain the health of your plants, so they are less susceptible to fire, such as by trimming off dead branches.

This information is part of a six page fact sheet on Reducing the Fire Risk in Your Garden.

The BRN website has a range of fire safety information, fact sheets and templates to help you to prepare your property and create your own Bushfire Survival Plan with your family.

<https://www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/other-brn-resources>



THE FIRE GAME

New community bushfire safety education resource for BRN

Thanks to Victoria's Surf Coast Shire Council and its partnering agencies, the Tasmania Fire Service has a new bushfire education game called *The Fire Game*. The award-winning Fire Game has been adapted to a Tasmanian context featuring known community areas, local emergency information and images of Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods.

The aim of the game is to move around the board and put players' fire knowledge to the test; to build an understanding along the way; and use that understanding to help inform plans of people living in or visiting a fire risk area.

To win The Fire Game

The first player to correctly answer one question from each of the four categories (Before Fire, During Fire, After Fire and Fire Knowledge) wins the game.

Why play the game?

At the end, players might like to have a quick look back over the cards they have 'won' to remind themselves about any actions they want to follow up to improve their household's Bushfire Survival Plan.

If your Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhood or community group would like to play The Fire Game, contact your local TFS Community Development Officer.

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E: David.Cleaver@fire.tas.gov.au

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Be **AWARE** of your risks

Be **PREPARED** to survive and recover

Get **CONNECTED** with information and your community!



1800 000 699

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

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