

# COMMUNITY EDUCATION > BUSHFIRE READY NEWSLETTER



Issue 3 • TFS Conference Edition - July 2015

## Helping Tasmanian communities to work together to prepare for bushfires.

Welcome to issue number 3 of the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

The theme for this edition is preparing for the bushfire season ahead.

### In this edition:

- Bushfire Ready – Has your community thought about developing a phone tree network?
- Ember proofing your property
- Bushfire Survival Planning and Emergency Kits
- Fire Equipment List
- Case Study: BRN: From informed and aware to engaged and prepared
- Rising from the Ashes short film
- BRN presented on the world stage.

For more information on how to contact the team visit [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au) and click on the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods button on the home page.

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The BRN program saw a busy period from September to March.

*"Practical advice on fire preparation. Increased knowledge about the reality we might face. Made good connections with local community. Excellent day."* Southern resident.

*"...you have brought many of us together in a common goal and shown us more about what it is and means to be a community, so many thanks for that..."* Northern resident.



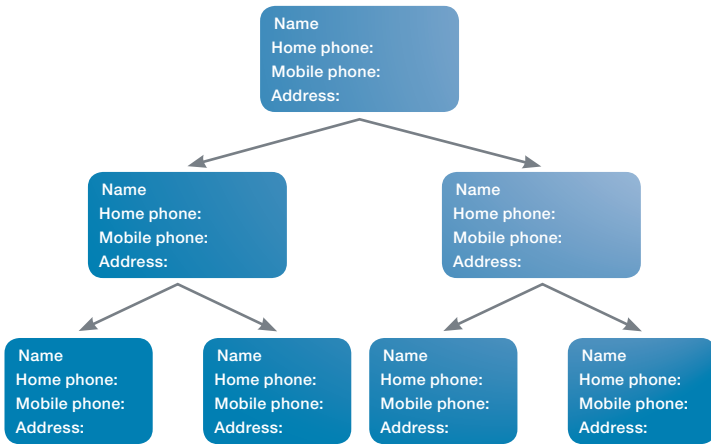
## Bushfire Ready – Has your community thought about developing a phone tree network?

The winter months can be a great time to do some planning and preparation for those larger projects that are hard to get to. Things like preparing our properties, developing and practicing our Bushfire Survival Plans and having shared the details with all of our family members. In the colder months this is also a critical time to look at how best to empower and inform communities on a broader level.



Tasmania Fire Service

[www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au)  
[www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au](http://www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au)



One such way of doing that is through developing a community early warning/communication system called a Phone Tree. A Phone Tree is a structured system that is developed in local areas that outline who will contact who in the event of a fire.

Above is an example of a phone tree template that clearly outlines the flow on process of a Phone Tree.

Phone Trees are a community based, community run system that enable the shared responsibility approach to benefit all members of that area. Developing a phone tree is not a quick or easy task and relies very much on collaboration and partnership with local community volunteers and stakeholders, local TFS Brigade members and Group Officers. Two areas that are starting to develop their Phone Trees over this winter are Golden Valley and Weegena.

In the development of these Phone Tree systems volunteers complete door knocks with templates of basic information

such as; name, number of residents in a household, home phone, mobile, whether away for work and any other details that may be relevant to your community. Once that information is collected it is then coordinated into a Phone Tree template that identifies the people that will contact the next people on their list, who will then contact the next identified on their list and so on. This then becomes a resource to that community that goes to each household to enable effective communication strategies in the event of a bushfire or other emergencies.



As you can see, this process would not come together without the BRN team working collaboratively with the communities they are engaging with. Supporting and assisting communities to action their broader community Bushfire Survival Plans is one aspect of the work we do across the colder months. The BRN program works hard to resource motivated communities and volunteers and really values working in partnership to achieve the broader goals of their respective communities.

## Photos from around the State

*Golden Valley Property Assessment Day 2015*



*Falmouth/Four Mile Creek Forum 2014*



*Dulcot Fire Field Day, June 2015*



*Sandfly Brigade Open Day 2014*







## Ember proofing your property

Preparing your property gives it the best chance of surviving a bushfire and is an essential first step in bushfire planning. Typically, houses are lost due to the effects of radiant heat, building to building ignition and EMBER ATTACK. Ember attack may persist for hours and can be a tiring exercise to defend against. Now is the time to prepare your property for next fire season, here are some useful facts and general information to assist to prepare and defend against ember attack.

Embers and ash from bushfires can rain down kilometres ahead of a fire front (over 20 kilometres under the worst of conditions). These embers can cause spot fires and secondary outbreaks for firefighters and property owners to contend with. They can also land in and on your house and land.

If left untreated they have the potential to damage or destroy your property. Embers can easily ignite fine fuels around your property such as dry grass, leaves, dry plants, cob webs, outdoor furniture, door mats, pet beds even clothing on a clothes line.

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 mesh screens.

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

This should be included in your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Some examples of ember traps –

- Under elevated floors, decks and balconies
- Roof gutters and ridge capping
- Brick vents, Roof mounted air conditioners
- Fibre glass fly screen
- Gaps under access doors, exhaust fan vents
- Door mats, outdoor furniture and toy boxes
- Fire wood piles
- Pine bark and mulch garden beds
- Areas of dry grass, weeds and garden beds.

It is common to think Embers will float down gently, similar to rain or snowflakes. Unfortunately this isn't true with experienced firefighters often advising that embers swirl around in all directions, fanned by wind these embers blow into any small opening around your property.

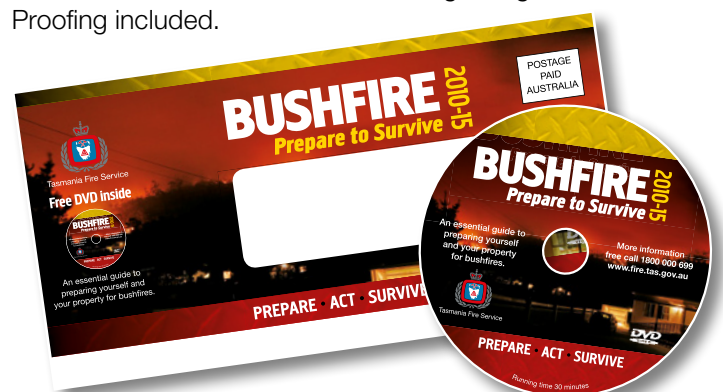
Ember attack can occur for several hours before a fire front arrives. Embers may land in large groups or in smaller quantities. Mostly embers will land already extinguished or cold / black in appearance.

However most often embers will remain alight, glowing red or fanned by ground winds where they will easily ignite whatever they land on.

One small ember can land on an outdoor seat and smoulder for several minutes then ignite the cushion of the seat. This seat then has the potential to ignite a timber deck, break windows if too close, and ignite a roof and extend to engulf your residence.

Embers can be easily extinguished IF you're there to extinguish them. Having several large buckets full of water and a floor mop is an easy way to extinguish embers so place several of these around your yard for easy access. Sprinklers may also slow down ember ignition but is very heavy on water usage.

TFS Free BUSHFIRE – Prepare to Survive DVD is a useful source of information with sections regarding Ember Proofing included.



## Bushfire Survival Planning and Emergency Kits



A BUSHFIRE IS COMING! It will become increasingly smoky and difficult to see and your eyes may temporarily become reddened and sore. Breathing in the heavy smoke will be uncomfortable. Emergency alerts say the front of the fire is about 2 hours away from your area.

Being directly involved in a potentially life-threatening bushfire like this can be genuinely terrifying. Under severe stress you may be unable to think as clearly as usual and this can affect your decisions and reactions.

Being prepared by having a written well thought-out Bushfire Survival Plan with an emergency kit can assist you to think more clearly and reduce the risk of serious injury and loss of life. Being cooler, calmer and more collected can also be very helpful to family members, young children and pets who may not be as well prepared for what is happening. Be aware that when confronted with a crisis, children will be less capable of concentrating. They may be anxious and more attuned to nonverbal cues such as tone of voice, body posture and facial expressions. Animals also will be stressed and difficult to control.

Before a bushfire comes your way, why not take the time to sit with your family and get an emergency kit together –now! And set it aside ready for the upcoming bushfire season. You will more likely be able to think clearer knowing that you have a plan and a kit ready to go.

A small bushfire in Albion Heights in the spring of 2014 put a family's emergency kit and bushfire survival plan to the test. The family had a kit in the garage, water tanks and some equipment. With the assistance of volunteer brigade firefighters the fire was under control and no one was injured. Here are a few emergency kit post fire reflections to assist you with your plan and emergency kit.

*"Without power and no lighting finding things in the house was impossible, everyone needed a torch on their helmet. The house quickly filled with smoke.*

*The protective clothing we had in our kit no longer fitted our son, within 4 or 5 years he had grown from a size 12 to 16. We had gumboots and boots but with no power for lights we could not shelter in the house and put on our gear. We were forced to try to put on protective clothing outside and try to make do with what we had. We had helmets but they were more a nuisance as they did not fit properly. We did not have socks in our kit to put on, it had been a hot day, which did not help with our boots running around in the bush. We had no drinking water available in our kit and with no power the water pump did not work so we could not get any fresh drinking water from within the house.*

*The protective face masks we had were not sufficient to breath in thick smoke and if we had not have had shelter under the house with breathable air we would have had health consequences other than the sore throats and eyes. To fight the spot fires occurring around the garden we had a system to get water from our tank but needed at least 12 buckets between 3 people running to throw water on the fire and I was filling the buckets as fast as the water flowed out of the tank and the 50,000 litres of water in the tank only lasted 50 minutes!*

*A battery operated radio would of assisted - not that we had time to listen but we had no idea how far the fire had spread, we were in the middle and surrounded by it. The smoke and heat were a lot worse than I ever expected.*

*I suggest that if you are planning to stay at home to fight a fire, have a practice run. Get your emergency kit all together, put on all the gear, fill up buckets of water and run with them 20 or more times from your water source for at least 25 metres. This should assist you in knowing if you are fit and able to survive fighting a fire."*





## Time to put together your emergency kit...

Your emergency survival kit is an essential part of your families bushfire survival planning. Along with a written plan of when to go, where to go, how to get there and who to tell; you must make a kit of the essential items to take with you. In an emergency you may be away from home for a few days, so make sure there is enough in your kit to sustain everyone over that time.



Consider special needs of seniors, infants and small animals and larger livestock and make sure your plan and kit includes them and accommodates their survival.

Whether staying and defending, evacuating and relocating an emergency kit will provide you, your family and pets/animals with the resources required for survival. This includes to deal with injury, sustenance, hygiene, protection, communication and identification.

All items should be in a waterproof container and kept in a well-known and accessible place. This kit should be checked every year and updated according to your families current circumstances.

A checklist of essential items can be placed on the lid of the container, to run through just before leaving to ensure all items are in the kit.

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

- Bottled water
- Battery operated radio and spare batteries
- Medications
- First aid kit

- Glasses
- Mobile phone and charger
- Wallet/Purse
- Money and credit cards
- Blankets
- Children's toys
- Phone numbers for family and friends
- Important items such as, insurance policies, family photos and valuables.

You should include items to address special needs of people and pets in your house:

- Mobility aids, medications and scripts
- Nappies and supplies for infants
- Children's toys, colouring books, pens and pencils, cards or board games
- Items to keep your pets comfortable including a leash, basket, travelling cage and a familiar toy.

Your emergency kit is a vital part of your bushfire survival plan. Whether you plan to leave early or stay and defend your property, your kits will be much the same. This allows for a change of plan if required.

A well thought out Bushfire Survival Plan considers all issues and contingencies and needs to be flexible enough to cope with varying circumstances. Ensure that all members of the household know the plan and their roles and responsibilities.

Store your kit in an easily accessible place and let every member of the family know where it is. Emergency kits should be prepared before the fire season and the best emergency kit is one that can be used for all hazards – not just bushfires.

For more emergency kit information visit the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods' website at [www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/other-bushfire-planning-resources](http://www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/other-bushfire-planning-resources)

## Volunteered geographic information, community engagement and bushfire preparation in Tasmania

Natural disaster events remind us of the importance of geographic information in all aspects of disaster management. A new stream of online user-generated geospatial data termed volunteered geographic information (VGI) presents new opportunities for the creation and dissemination of disaster-related geographic data from a dense network of intelligent observers.

Visit [www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/resilient-people-infrastructure-and-institutions/1064](http://www.bnhcrc.com.au/research/resilient-people-infrastructure-and-institutions/1064) to view an article about Billy's collaborative research with the BRN program.



## Fire Equipment List

The planned burning on private land program 'Red Hot Tips' has developed a handy fire equipment supplies list. The list is hand for those considering burning on their properties and for those looking to purchase equipment for defending their property.

The list highlights types of equipment to consider and suppliers state-wide that sell fire equipment.

To view the list [www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/other-bushfire-planning-resources](http://www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/other-bushfire-planning-resources)



## Rising from the Ashes

Directed by Lesley King, this story explores the bushfire inspired jewellery of Sally Ferrar of Copping, Southern Tasmania. Hear Sally's amazing bushfire survival story and how she has turned this dramatic experience into a positive by using her creativity to assist her community's recovery and developing unique jewellery.

Keep an eye out for more video content and the 1967 Bushfires project in future editions of this newsletter.

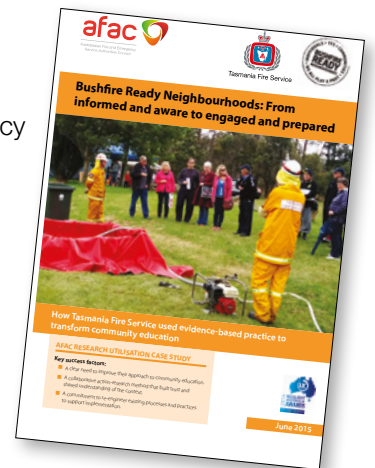
To view the video click here- <https://vimeo.com/132495384>



## Case Study: Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods: From informed and aware to engaged and prepared

TFS Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods program in collaboration with the Australian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council has released a community engagement case study Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods: From informed and aware to engaged and prepared.

In this case study, TFS explains how and why research helps the agency achieve its goals for enhancing community education and engagement, highlights the opportunities and obstacles in adopting and operationalising research for a specific agency purpose, details its research utilisation path from the initial concept, through a pilot, to planning, implementation and evaluation and shares its critical success factors for this award winning initiative. To view the case study visit: [www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/news/need-inspiration-research-utilisation](http://www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/news/need-inspiration-research-utilisation)



## Lesley King achieves Diploma of Management

Southern Community Development Officer Lesley King recently achieved a Diploma of Management qualification through TAFE Tasmania.



*Congratulations on achieving this qualification Lesley!*



# Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods on the World Stage

Human behaviour - at individual, organisational and community levels - lies at the root of many of fire management's most serious challenges, including areas such as community and homeowner preparedness, fire communication and education, and public response during fires.



Peter Middleton and some of the Australian contingent



Warm Springs Fire Wise Group Visit

Keen to share TFS's BRN program on the international stage following a National Resilient Australia Award in 2014, Peter Middleton attended the International Association of Wildland Fire *Human Dimensions of Wildland Fire* conference in Boise, Idaho US in April 2015. The conference provided a unique opportunity to present, discuss, and learn about the latest research findings, innovations, and best practice regarding human behaviour in bushfires from across the globe.

During Peter's time in Boise he participated in the following activities:

- National Fire Protection Association Workshop in 'Assessing Residential Wildfire Hazards';
- Conference program;
- US National Inter-Agency Fire Centre tour in Boise;
- Oregon Trail Bushfire Mitigation Works Presentation and Field Trip;
- Community Firewise Group Visit to Warm Springs;
- Participation in Boise Fire Department Community Outreach Smoke Alarm Program; and
- Tours of Boise Fire Stations #1 and #5.



## Entry for the 2015 Resilient Australia Awards are open

The awards showcase innovation and best practice in disaster resilience. Applications will be accepted until 9 August 2015. For more information and to apply online go to <https://resilient.awardsplatform.com>



# El Niño explained

In early May, the Bureau of Meteorology declared that El Niño has developed for 2015. While the impacts of El Niño on Australia vary from one event to another, previous El Niño years can provide valuable information about potential impacts.

The Bureau tells us that central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean sea surface temperature indices are more than 1 °C above average for the sixth consecutive week. El Niño events typically strengthen during the second half of the year, reaching full strength during late spring or early summer. However, at this stage it is not possible to determine how strong this El Niño will be.

### SPOTTING AN EL NIÑO

- TEMPERATURES**  
in the tropical Pacific Ocean warm, both at the surface and below
- SURFACE PRESSURE**  
changes across the Pacific; higher in the west, lower in the east
- TRADE WINDS**  
weaken, and sometimes reverse
- CLOUD**  
increases near the Date Line

### TYPICAL IMPACTS ON OUR CLIMATE

- RAINFALL DECREASES** IN EASTERN AUSTRALIA
- TEMPERATURE INCREASES** IN SOUTHERN AUSTRALIA (DAYTIME TEMPERATURES)

### OTHER IMPACTS

- INCREASED BUSHFIRE RISK
- FEWER TROPICAL CYCLONES
- LATER START TO NORTHERN WET SEASON
- MORE HEATWAVES
- LONGER FROST RISK SEASON
- REDUCED CHANCE OF WIDESPREAD FLOODS
- LESS CHANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN HEATWAVES
- STRONGER SEABREEZES

### WHEN DO THEY OCCUR?

USUALLY EL NIÑO DEVELOPS IN **AUTUMN TO WINTER** AND STARTS TO DECAY IN SUMMER

EL NIÑO EVENTS CAN LAST FOR AS LITTLE AS **6 MONTHS** OR AS LONG AS **2 YEARS**

ON AVERAGE THEY OCCUR EVERY **3 TO 5 YEARS**

THE LAST EL NIÑO WAS IN **2009-10**

### EVERY EL NIÑO IS DIFFERENT

EL NIÑO WINTER AND SPRING RAINFALL

1982      1997

RED = DRIER THAN NORMAL    BLUE = WETTER THAN NORMAL

THERE HAVE BEEN **26** EL NIÑO EVENTS SINCE 1900

**17** HAVE BROUGHT WIDESPREAD DROUGHT

**7** OF AUSTRALIA'S 10 DRIEST YEARS ON RECORD WERE DURING EL NIÑO

GLOBALLY, **7** OUT OF **10** OF THE HOTTEST YEARS ON RECORD WERE IN AN EL NIÑO YEAR OR THE YEAR FOLLOWING

www.bom.gov.au

1800 000 699

[www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au)

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