



2023 - 2026

Bushfire Risk Management Guide



*Are you
prepared?*

A burning issue...

The impact of climate change has resulted in an increased frequency and severity of extreme weather events in Australia and across the globe.

Australia is the driest inhabited continent on Earth. In recent years we have witnessed:

- An increased frequency of large scale heatwaves and record high temperatures.
- Longer fire seasons with more extreme fire danger days.
- More severe bushfires.

**Start preparing
EARLY
for the
bushfire season!**

It is important for every parish that owns or occupies property in a designated BPA (Bushfire Prone Area) to have a documented risk management plan that includes the following:

- Pre-season activities for the preparation of buildings and grounds to minimise fire risk including details of tasks, timeline and person(s) responsible.
- Routine ongoing activities concerned with the maintenance of buildings and grounds throughout the fire season, including details of tasks, frequency and person(s) responsible.
- Access details for information regarding fire danger ratings, warnings and updates (e.g. phone apps, websites and local radio stations), and information about exit routes and community fire refuges or neighbourhood safe places.
- Collection of important information that will be needed in an emergency – emergency contact numbers, important documents, etc.



Fire Risk Sign
Sourced from www.afdrs.com.au

Are we at risk of bushfire?

You don't have to be in the bush to be at risk of bushfire. If you are near areas that have significant bush, forest, long grass or coastal scrub – including town and suburban areas – you need to plan ahead for the fire season.



Close to or among dense or open bush



Close to or among grasslands or paddocks



Where cities or towns meet the bush



Near coastal scrub

Source: Victorian Country Fire Authority

Local government and fire authorities in every state provide maps and/or tools that will enable you to determine if you are in a designated BPA (bushfire prone area). Refer to [Attachment 2](#) for links to these information sources. A designated BPA is land that has been designated by the relevant state or territory authority as being subject to bushfire attack. It is based on local conditions such as vegetation type, topography and other indicators, and shows the potential for a bushfire to take hold, spread and do damage.

A risk management plan – where do we start?

Getting ready for a bushfire is easier than you think. Some simple strategies to include in your risk management plan are described below and in [Attachment 1](#), and links to more detailed information is provided in [Attachment 2](#).

**Your church property
is more likely to**

SURVIVE

**a bushfire if you have
prepared it properly.**

Do familiarise yourself with bushfire prevention and planning activities in your local community. Many fire authorities organise fire preparation meetings and bushfire planning workshops in the community, and some are willing to visit your site to review your plans and provide further advice.

In planning your risk management activities, it helps to know how bushfires spread so that you understand which prevention activities are the most effective and why they are the most important. The next section provides this background.

How do bushfires spread?



Embers

In a bushfire, **the most common way** properties catch fire is through wind-driven embers (burning twigs, bark and leaves) landing on or around buildings. Embers can be driven a long way ahead of the main fire front and blow into spaces and cracks, gutters and eaves, or set fire to flammable material close to the building. Ember attacks can occur before, during or after a bushfire, including long after the fire front has passed.



Direct Flame Contact

Fire can also spread because of direct flame contact between a combustible fuel (such as unmanaged vegetation) and the fire.



Radiant Heat

This is the heat that emanates from a fire; it travels in a straight line and can be felt up to 150m from the fire. Radiant heat can dry and ignite fuels without any direct flame contact.

How do bushfires spread?

EMBERS SPREAD BUSHFIRES



Most houses catch fire during bushfires because of embers – burning twigs, leaves and pieces of debris blown ahead of a fire by the wind.

If embers land on or around your property they can start fires in gutters, under your eaves or in small gaps around window and door frames, cladding and roofing.

While embers begin falling before the fire reaches the home, they may continue falling for several hours after the fire has passed.

Often homes exposed to ember attack don't burn down until several hours after the fire has passed.

Properties that have been well prepared before the beginning of summer have a greater chance of surviving an ember attack.

Source: Tasmania Fire Service

More information about the most common way properties catch fire during a bushfire is provided in this [Ember Attack video](#).

■ What risk management measures should we consider?

The most important preventative measures you can take now and throughout the bushfire season are about creating a defensible space around buildings (minimising the combustible fuel load) and ember-proofing all structures.

Minimising the combustible fuel load

Create a defensible space – this is an area of land around the building where vegetation is modified and managed to reduce the effects of bushfire attack. Defensible space breaks up or reduces the amount of fuel available to burn during a bushfire, and separates the bushfire fuel (vegetation, flammable material) from a building. Before clearing vegetation you should check with your local council on whether you need a planning permit and what exemptions may apply for fire prevention.

- Trim overhanging trees and remove flammable shrubs from under and between trees.
- Keep grass short and well watered. Rake up bark and leaves. Remove woodchips or bark mulch (consider replacing with non-flammable materials such as pebbles).
- Keep roofs, gutters and downpipes clear of flammable debris. Check that gutters are in good condition and will hold water if you block the downpipes. Consider installing metal gutter guards to prevent accumulation of debris.
- Remove fire hazards such as wood piles, outdoor furniture and play equipment, rubbish heaps and stored fuels.

Ember-proofing structures

- Repair or fill nooks and crannies where leaves or embers could gather. Seal vents, air conditioner units, etc. with fine wire mesh.
- Repair any loose tiles or gaps in the roof.
- Seal gaps around window frames and door frames using a fire-retardant product. Maintain window and door sills so there is no flaking paint. Ideally, install metal mesh screens over timber doors and windows.
- Keep areas under floor and decks free of flammable material and debris, and enclose the subfloor with a non-combustible material.

Effective Bushfire Risk Management



St John's Anglican Church, Port Albert, VIC
(located in a designated Bushfire Prone Area)

- Defendable space around building
- Trimmed vegetation
- Clipped and watered grass
- Cleared gutters
- Enclosed subfloor



A non-Anglican church, QLD
(located in a designated Bushfire Prone Area)

- Trees too close to building
- Overhanging branches
- Long grass growth near building
- Exposed subfloor of building
- Combustible debris in surrounding area

❌ REALLY NOT GOOD



What else can we do to prepare for bushfire?

Other things you can do in advance of bushfire season:

- Ensure there is clear access with a turnaround point for emergency vehicles.
- Provide access to a water supply, e.g. water tanks, dams, hoses, sprinklers.
- Identify where and how to turn off any electricity and gas mains and make safe any gas bottles.
- Know your local fire warning systems and emergency support services. Download and print copies of essential information.
- Prepare evacuation plans and ensure they are widely disseminated and understood.



A well prepared property has a better chance of withstanding ember attacks and destruction by fire!

*Sampson Flat Bushfire, SA,
The Weekly Times, January 2015*

On days of high fire risk

- Stay informed – monitor fire danger ratings and bush fire alerts.
- Remove any materials from around the building that could burn easily, such as external door mats, outdoor furniture, play equipment, etc.
- Ensure fire trucks have a clear path to the property by clearing away anything blocking the driveway and leaving gates open.
- Turn off gas supply.
- Block downpipes and partially fill gutters with water (if time permits).
- Evacuate people early.



Another property spared as a result of effective preparation!

*Currowan Fire, NSW,
ABC News, December 2019*

In conclusion...

The risk of bushfire is real — and increasing — as extreme weather patterns continue to increase in frequency and severity. There is no room for complacency — the risk of bushfire in a particular location is determined not by whether it has occurred there before, but by the existence of conditions that make it possible. If you are in a designated Bushfire Prone Area, you need to be prepared.

Getting prepared is not as difficult as it may seem. Make it a part of your usual maintenance routine and prevent an avoidable catastrophic event. Complete a **Local Church Bushfire Risk Management Plan**, using the Love My Church template (shown below) available from your diocese or www.lovemychurch.com.au — or develop your own.

Love*my*
Church

LOCAL CHURCHES

Bushfire Risk Management Plan



PARISH NAME

PROPERTY NAME

DATE AGREED BY PARISH COUNCIL

FORM COMPLETED BY



Attachments

Attachment 1

THE TOP 5 ACTIONS TO MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER

There are some simple things you can do around your home to prepare it for a bush fire. You need to prepare well beforehand as leaving it to the last minute is too late.

Here are five simple things you can do before and during the bush fire season.



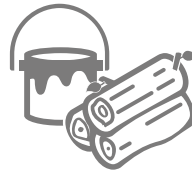
1. TRIM

Trim overhanging trees and shrubs. This can stop the fire spreading to your home.



2. MOW

Mow grass and remove the cuttings. Have a cleared area around your home.



3. REMOVE

Remove material that can burn around your home (e.g. Door mats, wood piles, mulch, leaves, paint, outdoor furniture).



4. CLEAR

Clear and remove all the debris and leaves from the gutters surrounding your home. Burning embers can set your home on fire.



5. PREPARE

Prepare a sturdy hose or hoses that will reach all around your home. Make sure you've got a reliable source of water.

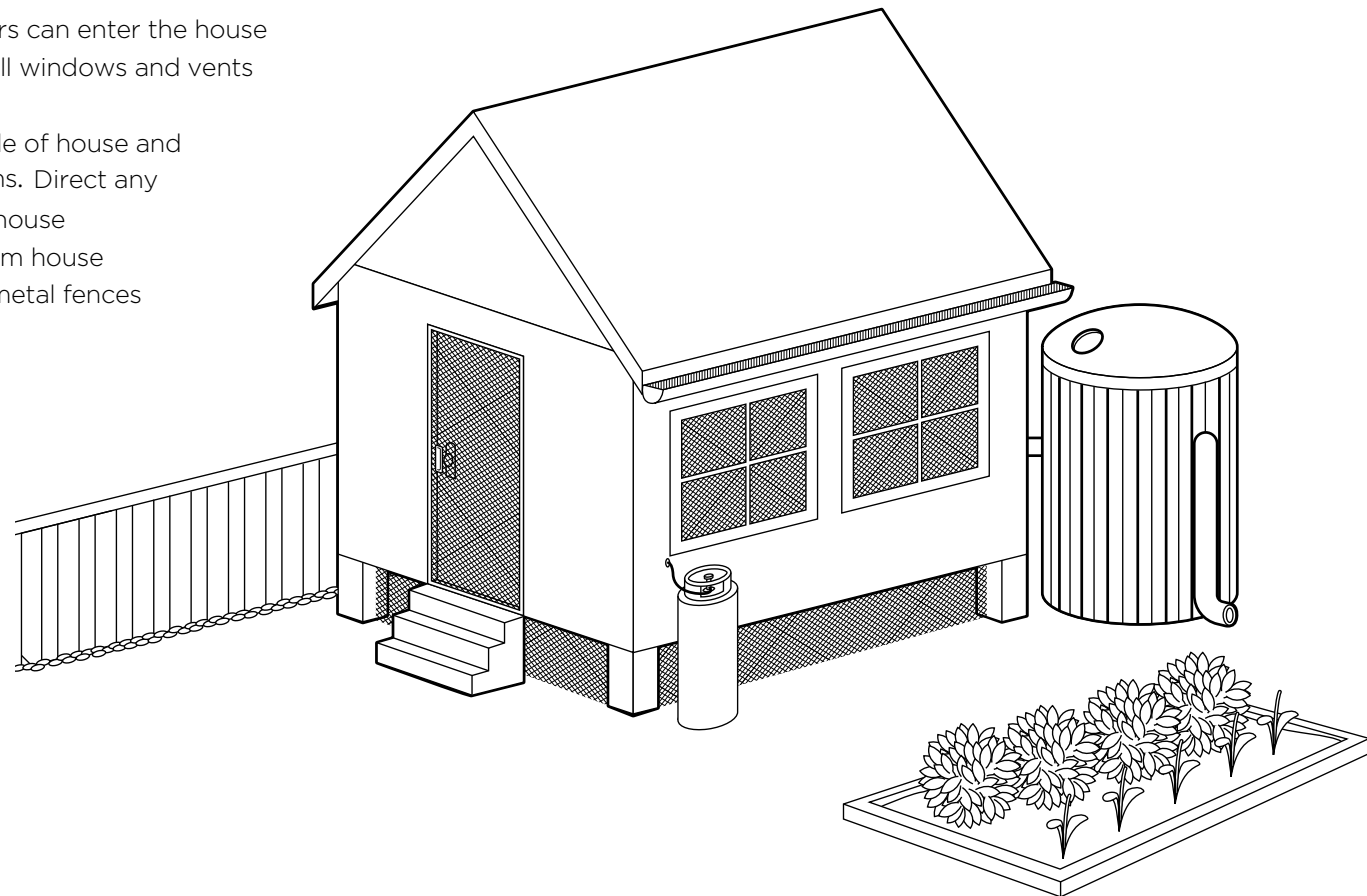
Source: NSW Rural Fire Service

Attachment 1 Cont.

MORE PERMANENT PROTECTION FOR YOUR HOME

☒ **Tick as you complete**

- ☐ Block up areas where embers can enter the house
- ☐ Install metal fly screens on all windows and vents
- ☐ Install metal gutter guards
- ☐ Position gas cylinders on side of house and away from trees and gardens. Direct any pressure valves away from house
- ☐ Move garden beds away from house
- ☐ Replace wood fences with metal fences
- ☐ Use stones instead of mulch



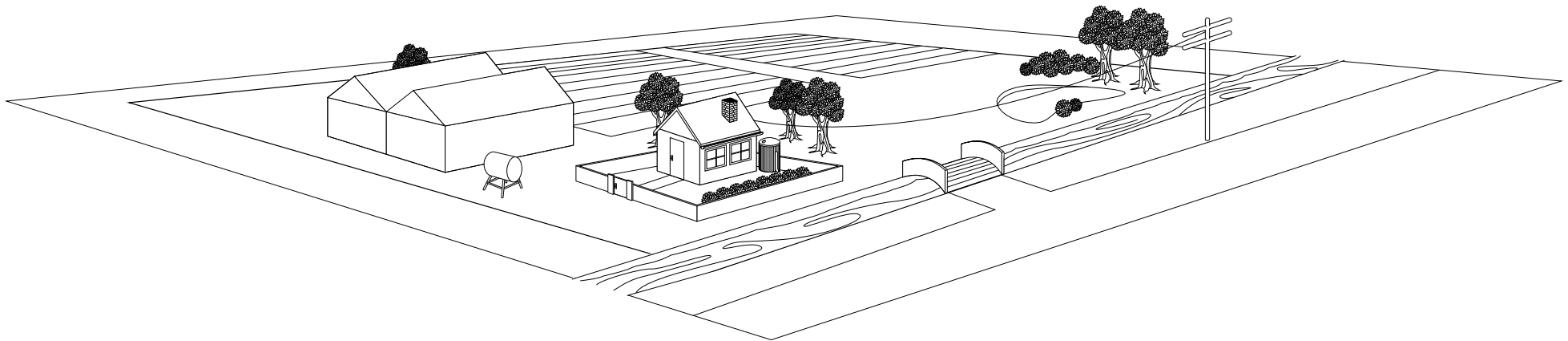
Source: NSW Rural Fire Service

Attachment 1 Cont.

PREPARE YOUR RURAL PROPERTY

☒ **Tick as you complete**

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Remove overhanging branches from power lines | <input type="checkbox"/> Place water pipes from dams underground and install pump to the house |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure that a fire tanker can access your property | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sure hoses have spray nozzles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clear fire breaks along paddock boundaries | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep water tanks full and connect them to pumps |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Store petrol, diesel and gas away from home | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a well-maintained area around the home and sheds | |



Source: NSW Rural Fire Service

Attachment 2

Local Information Sources

Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

The [ACT Emergency Services Agency](#) provides resources that can help you to prepare for bushfires. Check whether you are in a designated Bushfire Prone Area here: [ACTmapi - Bushfire Map Viewer](#).

New South Wales (NSW)

The [NSW Rural Fire Service \(RFS\)](#) has resources to help you prepare yourself and your property for bushfires. You can check if you're in a designated [Bushfire Prone Area here](#). [NSW RFS](#) also provide real-time information about fires in your area.

Victoria (Vic)

The [Country Fire Authority \(CFA\)](#) tells you how to prepare your property in case of a fire. Emergency Management Victoria has an incidents and warnings map. To identify whether you are in a designated Bushfire Prone Area, check here: [Vicplan](#). View [Vic Emergency](#) for a real-time map of fires.

Northern Territory (NT)

[SecureNT](#) has information to help you prepare for bushfires. View [NT Fire Incident Map](#) for real-time map.

Queensland (Qld)

The [Queensland Fire & Emergency Services \(QFES\)](#) has information on bushfire readiness. The Queensland Government's [Get Ready Queensland](#) website also has information to help you prepare for bushfires. You can see whether you are in a Bushfire Prone Area, using the [Postcode Checker | QFES](#). QFES also have a [map](#) with active incidents.

South Australia (SA)

The [South Australian Country Fire Service](#) can help with information on preparing for bushfires. They also have a warnings and incidents list [map](#). You can see whether you are in a Bushfire Prone Area, using the [Location SA Viewer map](#).

Tasmania (Tas)

The [Tasmania Fire Service](#) has resources to help you create a bushfire survival plan. They also have real-time information and alerts [map](#) about incidents. You can identify whether you are in a Bushfire Prone Area using the [Risk Ready - TasALERT](#) page.

Western Australia (WA)

The [Department of Fire & Emergency Services](#) has information about preparing for a bushfire. [Emergency WA](#) has a warning and incidents map. You can check whether you are in a Bushfire Prone Area by entering your postcode into the [Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas](#).

Love *my* Church

Taking Good Risks on God's Mission

www.lovemychurch.com.au