



## **GET READY FOR A BUSH FIRE** **FOUR SIMPLE STEPS TO MAKING** **YOUR BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN**

Getting ready for a bush fire is easier than you think. By taking 20 minutes with your family to discuss what you'll do during a fire, you could save their lives, as well as your home.



[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

## DO YOU KNOW YOUR RISK?

Where you live is one of the things that determines if both you and your home are at risk of bush fire, and what kind of fire you might experience. Think about the area you live in:



### BUSH

If you live in an area that's close to or surrounded by bush you're at risk. Bush fires can be hot, intense and throw burning embers towards your home.



### GRASSLANDS

If you live in an area where grasslands meet built up areas or homes, you're at risk. Grass fires can start easily and spread quickly.



### COASTAL

If you live along the coast near scrub, you're at risk. Fires in coastal scrub can be hot and move fast.



### PADDOCKS

If you live on a farm or near paddocks, you are at risk. Fires can spread quickly over great distances.



### ON A HILL

If you live at the top of a hill, you're at risk. Fires travel uphill faster. For every 10 degrees of slope, the fire can double in speed.



Around **90 percent** of homes destroyed in a bush fire are lost because of burning embers. Embers can travel many kilometres from the fire, so even if you're a few blocks back from the bush you may be at risk.





## 4 SIMPLE STEPS

Preparing for a bush fire is easier than you think. It's your responsibility to prepare yourself, your home and your family.

There are four simple steps to get ready for a bush fire:



### 1. DISCUSS

what to do if a bush fire threatens your home.



### 2. PREPARE

your home and get it ready for bush fire season.



### 3. KNOW

the bush fire alert levels.



### 4. KEEP

all the bush fire information numbers, websites, and the smart phone app.



### NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE STRONGLY RECOMMENDS

that everyone in your home has a **conversation about exactly what they'll do** in a bush fire. It should take just 20 minutes. Use our discussion guide. Many households find that having a discussion over dinner works best as everybody is together and focused.



20min



# **STEP 1: DISCUSS** **WHAT WILL YOU DO IN A BUSH FIRE?** **PLAN NOW.**

Get the whole household together and discuss your plan.  
This fold out takes you step-by-step through the process.





# LEAVING EARLY OR PREPARING TO STAY?

One of the most important things to do before a bush fire is to decide what you'll do if one should start. This guide can help you make that decision, and assist you with the steps in preparing yourself, your home and your family. Once you've had the discussion and made a decision, get your family to sign this document.

## WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

### LEAVE EARLY, YOUR SAFEST CHOICE.

**When will we leave?**  
 What will be your sign to leave? It could be smoke in your area, or as soon as you find out there's a fire near you.

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**Where will we go?**  
 Where's a meeting place that's safe and away from a fire area? It might be a friend or relative's place, or even a shopping centre.

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**How will we get there?**  
 What road will you take? What's your backup plan in case the road is blocked?

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**What will we take?**  
 Make a list of what you'll take in the event of a fire. Remember to include pets, identification and irreplaceable items like photos or documents.

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**Who will we call to tell that we're leaving and that we have arrived safely?**  
 Who will we call to let them know we're leaving and that we've got there safely?

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**What is our backup plan?**  
 What if things don't go to plan? Identify a safer location nearby such as a neighbour's home that is well prepared, or a place of last resort. Is there a Neighbourhood Safer Place nearby?

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Neighbourhood Safe Places are a place of last resort, such as a sports ground or local building that has been specially identified for use during a fire.

Not all areas will have a Neighbourhood Safer Place so check [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/nsp](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/nsp) for locations.

### DECIDE TO STAY. ONLY IF YOU'RE WELL PREPARED.

**Before you start, ask your household:**

- **Is your home well prepared to make it as safe as possible during a fire?**  
Check the Step 2 property protection checklists.
- **Are we putting anyone in our family at risk by staying?**  
For example children, the elderly, or people with asthma.
- **Will we cope in an emergency situation? In a fire, it will be hot, smoky and physically draining. Even trained firefighters can find it challenging.**

**If you're not sure or aren't prepared, you should leave early.**

**Do we have all the equipment we need?**  
 Go through all the items on the Decide to Stay checklist and see what's missing. Make a commitment to get all equipment by a specific date.

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**When there is a fire, what is our sign to start defending our home?**  
 It could be as soon as you find out there's a fire near you. Do not wait for an official warning.

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**Do we know what to do BEFORE, DURING and AFTER a fire?**  
 Study the Decide to Stay action checklist.

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**Do all members of our household KNOW WHAT TO DO in all situations?**  
 Give specific roles to each person.

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**What is our backup plan?**  
 Consider unexpected events such as if one of us is home alone, if we aren't home, if the fire moves faster than expected or if the phone lines and electricity are down.

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**It's not safe to stay with your property under some circumstances, like:**

- If the fire danger rating is Catastrophic.
- There is an Extreme fire danger rating and your home is not specially designed or constructed for bush fires.
- Your property is not well maintained.
- You or the people in your home aren't mentally and physically fit and ready.

**Under these circumstances, you should leave early.**

Remember that bush and grass fires can move quickly and catch you off guard.

If you are caught in a fire, protect yourself from the heat.

The safest option is to leave early before the fire reaches you.

We have discussed and agreed with the entire household we will:

Leave early       Decide to stay

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# DECIDE TO STAY, BUT BE PREPARED

## EQUIPMENT CHECKLIST

Defending your home from a bush fire can be challenging and you will need the right equipment.

Check off all the equipment you will need in a bush fire emergency.

Remember, while firefighters and emergency services will do everything they can to help you, there's no guarantee that there will be a fire truck available when you need it. If you decide to stay with your property, it's your responsibility to be prepared.

### **FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT WE WILL NEED:**

- A hose, or hoses, that can reach all around the house
- Water supply of at least 10,000L e.g. water tank, dam, pool
- Petrol/diesel water pump and fuel in a safe, accessible place
- Ladders to access inside the roof
- Buckets and mops
- Shovels and metal rakes

### **PROTECTIVE CLOTHING**

- Wide-brimmed hat
- Eye protection goggles
- Moistened facemask or cloth
- Loose, long sleeved cotton shirt
- Gloves
- Long cotton pants/jeans
- Sturdy leather shoes or boots

We will make sure that we have all the equipment we need by:

/ /



If you have not ticked off all of the items above you are not prepared to tackle a major fire.





# DECIDE TO STAY, BUT BE PREPARED

## ACTION CHECKLIST

Defending your home can be physically and mentally demanding. It's important that everyone knows exactly what to do if a fire happens.

### BEFORE (well before the fire has arrived)

#### OUTSIDE:

- Turn off gas mains and/or bottle
- Move flammable items away from the house
- Block drain pipes with socks full of sand and fill gutters with water. Don't get on the roof to hose it down
- Move animals to a well-grazed or ploughed area away from the house and wind
- Patrol the house well before the fire arrives to put out embers and spot fires
- As the fire approaches, wet the side of the house and garden that faces the fire
- Move your firefighting equipment to a place where it won't burn inside

#### INSIDE:

- Close doors, windows and vents
- Fill baths, sinks, buckets and bins with water
- Confine pets to one room
- Place ladder next to roof access hole so you can check for spot fires
- Soak towels and rugs and lay them across external doorways
- Move furniture away from windows

### DURING (as the fire is upon you)

- If flames are on top of you or the heat become unbearable move inside until the fire front has passed (usually 5-10 minutes)
- Patrol the inside of the house, including roof space, looking for sparks and embers
- Shelter in a room on the opposite side of the house from the approaching fire and ensure you have clear access to an exit

### AFTER (immediately after the fire has passed)

- Check the house both inside and out for fires, including roof cavity, under the house, deck, stairs, windowsills etc
- If possible, and safe to do so, check all your neighbours are OK
- Contact relatives or friends to tell them you are safe
- Patrol your home for several hours, looking for small fires and burning embers



Drink lots of water throughout so that you don't dehydrate.



**STEP 2: PREPARE YOUR HOME AND GET READY**  
**THE TOP 5 ACTIONS TO MAKE YOUR HOME SAFER**





## STEP 2: PREPARE YOUR HOME AND GET READY

### 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.



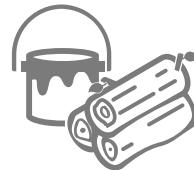
#### 1. TRIM

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.



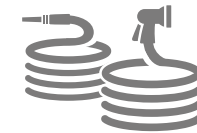
#### 3. REMOVE

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.



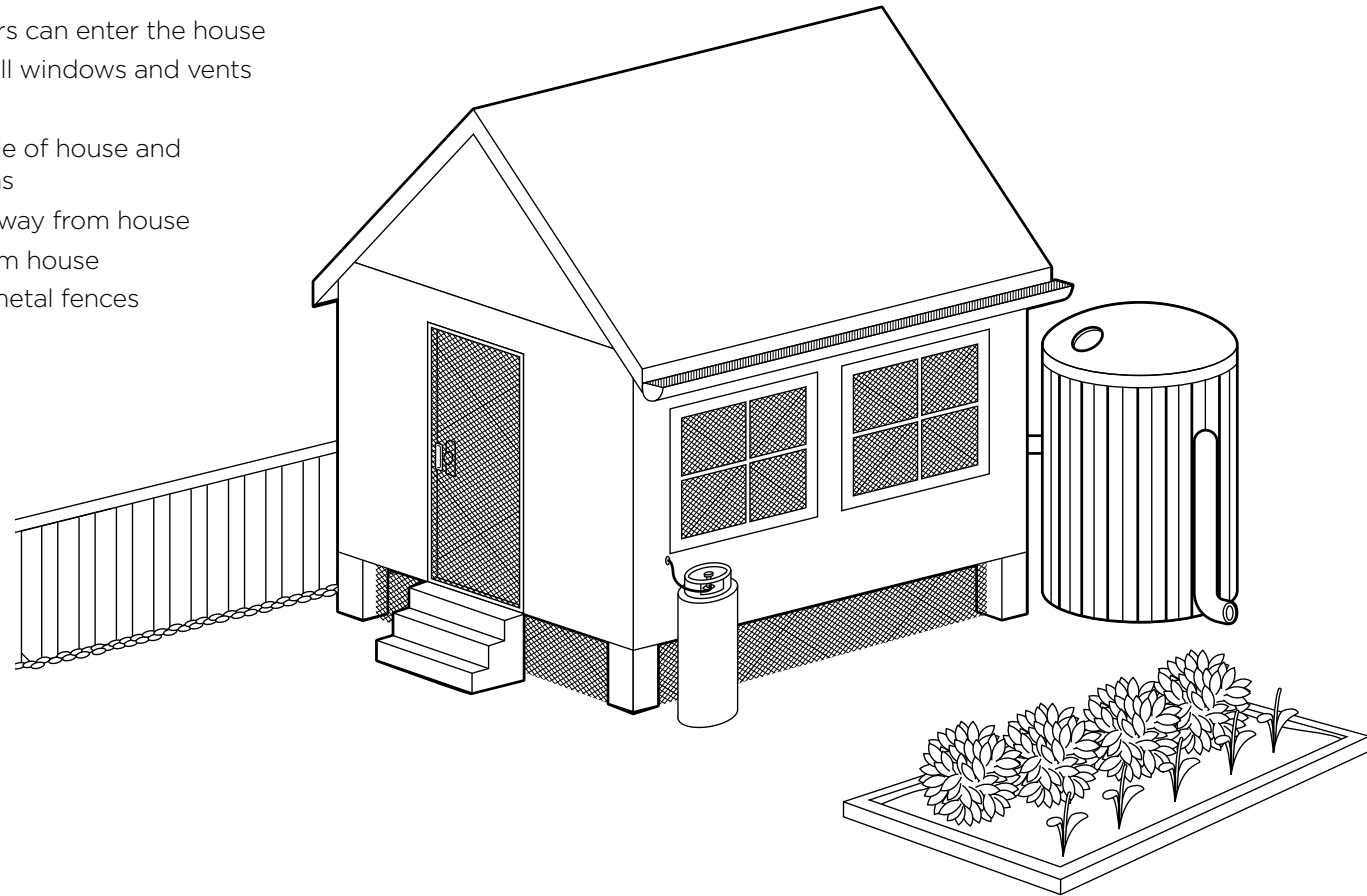
Join others in your neighbourhood in completing these Top 5 Actions to protect your home.



# 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



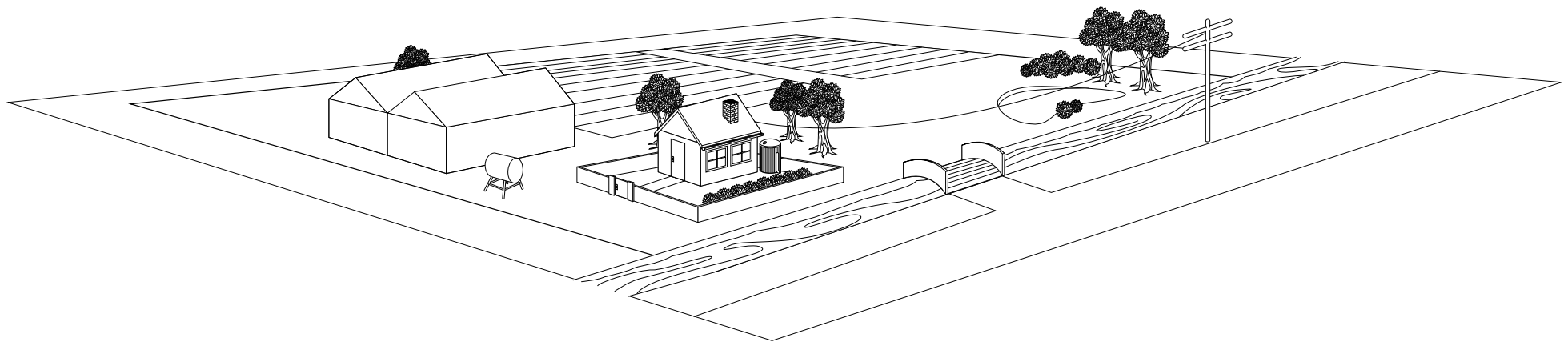
If you **live on a rural property** there are additional tasks to prepare your home on the next page. If you don't live on a rural property turn to Step 3 so you can learn the bush fire alert levels.



# PREPARE YOUR RURAL PROPERTY

**Tick as you complete**

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



A cleared area around your home can slow a fire spreading and give firefighters a safe area to work.



## STEP 3: KNOW THE BUSH FIRE ALERT LEVELS

If there is a fire in your area you will find its alert level on the NSW RFS website, on the radio and in the 'Fires Near Me' app.

You need to keep track of the alert level so you know what you should do.



### ADVICE

A fire has started.  
There is no immediate danger.  
Stay up to date in case  
the situation changes.



### WATCH AND ACT

There is a heightened level of threat.  
Conditions are changing and you  
need to start taking action to protect  
you and your family.



### EMERGENCY WARNING

An Emergency Warning is the highest level  
of Bush Fire Alert. You may be in danger  
and need to take action immediately.  
Any delay now puts your life at risk.

## STEP 3: KNOW THE BUSH FIRE ALERT LEVELS

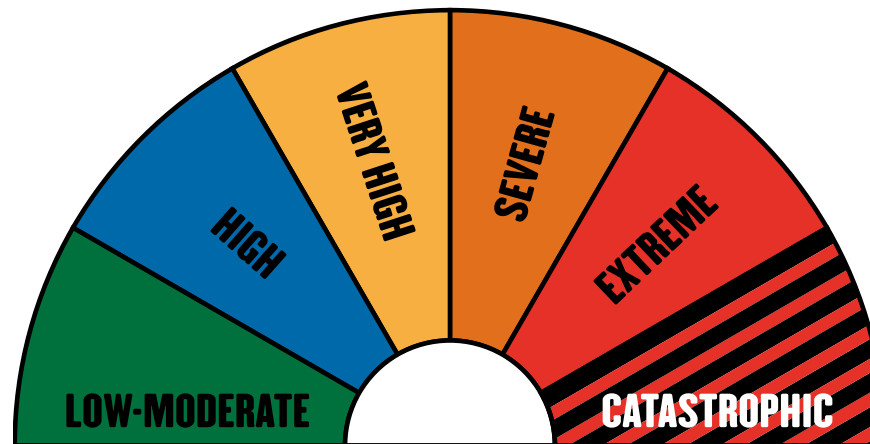
### FIRE DANGER RATINGS

Before a fire even starts, monitor the Fire Danger Ratings daily at [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fdr](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fdr). The higher the fire danger rating, the more dangerous a fire is likely to be. Under catastrophic conditions leaving early is the only safe option.

When it's **SEVERE** you should only stay if your home is well prepared and you're ready to defend it.

At **EXTREME**, only stay if your home is prepared to the very highest level and is specially built to survive a bush fire.

**CATASTROPHIC** is as bad as it gets – no homes are built to withstand a fire in these conditions. Leaving early is your only safe option.



## STEP 4: KEEP KEY INFORMATION

In a bush fire, it's important that you stay up to date on conditions in your area. The NSW Rural Fire Service strongly advises saving these numbers, links and apps now.



In an emergency call  
Triple Zero (000)  
For information on bush fire,  
call the Bush Fire Information Line  
**1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737)**



NSW Rural Fire  
Service Website:  
**rfs.nsw.gov.au**  
Fire Danger Ratings:  
**rfs.nsw.gov.au/fdr**



'Fires Near Me'  
Free smartphone app.



Local radio,  
local ABC/emergency  
broadcaster frequency,  
TV, newspapers



**facebook.com/nswrfs**  
**twitter.com/nswrfs**



During a bush fire, you could lose power and telecommunications.  
Do not rely on just one source of information.





It's a fact. If you and your home are well prepared, you stand a better chance of surviving a bush fire. Join with everyone else in ensuring that your home and family are protected by following the Four Simple Steps to getting ready for a bush fire.

**#MyFirePlan**



NSW Rural Fire Service

[www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)