

WILDFIRE

Be prepared

As wildfire season approaches, it is important that you make sure you have taken the necessary steps to protect yourself, your family and your property from danger. Well-prepared homes are better protected from bushfires.

Planning for a wildfire

The wildfire season in Australia is usually during summer and autumn, but in the north of Australia it is during the dry season, which is in winter. Before the wildfire season, it is important to take steps to protect your home.

Steps to take when planning for the bushfire season

- ▶ Store all flammable material clear of the house (wood, paint, chemicals, fuel, piles of newspaper/paper).
- ▶ Remove rubbish from the gutters, rake the dry leaves and dispose of them thoughtfully, and also trim hedges and mow all grass.
- ▶ Fit wire screens to doors, windows and vents.
 - uEnclose all gaps, roof eaves and under the house.
- ▶ Keep a ladder handy for roof access inside and outside.
- ▶ Create a household plan to leave early. Include this plan in your household emergency kit with emergency numbers.
- ▶ Check that you are insured for wildfire.
- ▶ Mark all water sources as this assists emergency services should they need them. Ensure all hoses reach the house and garden.
- ▶ Have a household emergency kit and make sure everyone can access it.
- ▶ Some local governments have regulations referring to the control of the planning and building of home and other buildings in wildfire prone areas. This includes having mandatory firebreaks around the house, installing water-pumps, the use of specific materials, and boundaries surrounding the buildings.

Household emergency kit

Creating an emergency survival kit is important for your survival during a bushfire. Find out what you should include in yours:

- ▶ http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/7727/Emergency-Kit-Checklist
- ▶ http://www.cairns.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/62283/Household-Emergency-Plan-final.pdf

When a fire approaches



Authorities may have ordered you and your family to leave the premises, or you may have decided to go early.

The precautions you should take are listed below:

- ▶ Notify the fire brigade of the fire. Do not assume that they know about it: call 000.
- ▶ Fill baths, sinks and buckets with reserve water and turn off the gas and electricity.
- ▶ Access your household emergency kit.
- ▶ Remove curtains and move furniture away from windows and entrance ways.
- ▶ Wear long woollen or heavy cotton clothing, solid shoes/boots, leather gloves, a hat or woollen balaclava.
- ▶ Plug pipes and fill gutters with water.
- ▶ Hose down the house and garden.
- ▶ Close all doors and windows to stop smoke from seeping in and block all gaps. If it is too late to leave and you are trapped at home, stay inside away from windows until the fire passes (usually 5 to 15 minutes).
- ▶ Quickly extinguish any fires which may have started in/on/under/around the house and check inside the roof as well.
- ▶ If the house is alight and the fire cannot be extinguished – move to safe burnt ground. Do not leave the area. Wait for help.
- ▶ Listen to your battery-operated radio for official information.

If caught in a wildfire while driving

- ▶ Do not drive into or near a wildfire.
- ▶ Do not drive through flames or smoke.
- ▶ Stop at a clearing or roadside with low vegetation.
- ▶ Switch off ignition and turn hazard lights and headlights on.
- ▶ Stay inside unless near safe shelter.
- ▶ Keep vents windows and doors closed.
- ▶ Lie down below window level under a woollen blanket until the fire front passes.

If caught in a wildfire on foot

- ▶ Cover exposed skin.
- ▶ If on a slope – move across it then down towards the rear of the fire and find a clearing or already burnt area.
- ▶ Do not attempt to outrun a fire, or go through low flames unless you can see a safe clearing.

If you cannot avoid the fire

- ▶ Protect yourself by lying face down in a rocky area, under an embankment or in a hollow.
- ▶ If possible get into a pool, pond, dam or stream – but not in a water tank.

Remember:

- ▶ Be prepared for a wildfire.
- ▶ Have an emergency plan and survival kit in the house and the car.
- ▶ You are safer in a house or car, rather than out in the open.
- ▶ Stay in a safe place until the fire front passes.
- ▶ Stay there unless advised by authorities
- ▶ A pure, heavy wool blanket and a flask of water are the basic requirements for surviving a bushfire and being protected against heat, dehydration and asphyxiation.

Curriculum links

3	Science	ACSHE050: Science as a Human Endeavour: Nature and development of science	Science involves making predictions and describing patterns and relationships
4	Science	ACSSU075: Earth and Space Sciences Nature and development of science	Science involves making predictions and describing patterns and relationships
		ACSHE062: Science as a Human Endeavour; Use and influence of science	Science knowledge helps people to understand the effect of their actions
5	Geography	ACHGK030: Geographical Knowledge and Understanding	The impact of wildfires or floods on environments and communities and how people can respond
6	Science	ACSSU096: Science Understanding; Earth and Space Sciences	Sudden geological changes or extreme weather conditions can affect Earth's surface
		ACSHE098: Science as a Human Endeavour; Nature and development of science	Science involves testing predictions by gathering data and using evidence to develop explanations or events and phenomena
		ASHE099: Science as a Human Endeavour; Nature and development of science	Important contributions to the advancement of science have been made by people from a range of cultures
		ACSHE100: Science as a Human Endeavour. Use and influence of science	Scientific understandings, discoveries and inventions are used to solve problems that directly affect peoples' lives

Source

Australian Government Attorney General's Department, Australian Emergency Management institute, Bushfires.

Available via: <https://schools.aemi.edu.au/bushfire/about-bushfires>