

CFS FACT SHEET

No: 1.5

Date: 19/09/2016

PLANNING TO STAY AND DEFEND

See CFS Fact Sheet 1.3 - 'Plan Now to Stay and Defend or Leave Early' for questions to ask yourself before deciding to stay and defend.

If you are planning to stay and defend your property, then you will need to prepare your property and yourself throughout the year. It is important that you consider the Fire Danger Rating when considering whether to stay and defend your property. Checking the daily Fire Danger Rating should be included in your Bushfire Survival Plan.

What to do during the year

- Prepare an 'Emergency Kit' (refer to CFS Fact Sheet 3.3- "Emergency Kits").
- Prepare a checklist of what you need to do before, during and after a bushfire.
- Clean up and manage fine ground fuels within 20 metres of your house.
- Address any long standing problems e.g. close underfloor space, seal gaps around house, purchase and install a water tank, landscape garden, etc.

See CFS Fact Sheets 4.1-4.12 for more information on preparing your property

What to do before and during the Fire Danger Season

- Check water supply and top up if necessary.
- Service pumps and check at regular intervals.
- Reduce fine ground fuels within 20 metres of your house.
- Clean gutters of any flammable debris.
- Move firewood away from house.
- Practice your 'Bushfire Survival Plan'.
- Check your 'Emergency Kit'.
- Check your pump(s) and run it for approximately 5 minutes and then refuel.

What to do on fire danger days

- Discuss the day's action with your family and/or neighbours.
- Keep pets in close proximity.
- Relocate livestock to a safer paddock.
- Listen to the radio, scanner or keep a regular look out for tell-tale smoke.
- Check pump. Run for approximately five minutes and refuel.
- Water your garden early in the morning, wet down any problem areas.

Get Physically and Emotionally Prepared

If you intend to stay and defend your property, you and at least one other person need to be physically and emotionally able. You will need to be alert, have a plan, and be prepared to act independently. The impact of a bushfire can be stressful, defending your home can be a long and exhausting process, and smoke and radiant heat can be hazardous to health.

It is important to understand that stress is normal and natural, but it needs to be recognised so it does not cause further problems.

Focus on staying as calm as you can, even as the emergency builds.

- Stick to your plan, unless there is a very good reason to change it.
- Monitor how other people in the household are feeling, and help them to stay calm.
- Tell them how you are feeling, and support each other.
- Use breathing techniques: breathe slowly and calmly.

Radiant Heat Protection

As the fire front approaches your property it is vital that you seek refuge from the radiant heat.

Your home may provide some protection provided:

- You have done all the essential preparatory work throughout the year.
- All people present have a good understanding of what to expect when the fire front arrives.
- You are vigilant in patrolling for sparks and embers and can observe the behaviour of the fire whilst inside.
- You have identified a room for the elderly or young to shelter in while others patrol the house for sparks and embers. This room should be away from the likely direction of the fire and have **at least two exits**.



Regularly test pumps

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Water tanks

Avoid elevated water tanks as a safe refuge. Once immersed in water, the body will quickly absorb heat. If the ambient air temperature is in the high thirties and a bushfire raises the temperature of the water a further ten degrees, the water or body temperature will be un-survivable.

Swimming Pools

The use of swimming pools as a safe refuge is also discouraged. Although pools may provide adequate protection to parts of the body below the water line, the most sensitive parts of your body (face, head, lungs) will be exposed to radiant heat, smoke and superheated air.

Contingency Plan

Even though your choice is to stay and defend, you must still have a contingency plan as a part of your Bushfire Survival Plan. A change in household circumstances, someone home alone, unexpected visitors, or a fire starting quickly in the local area may all require you to reconsider your Bushfire Survival Plan.

Remember:

Staying to actively defend your home involves the risk of psychological trauma, injury and death.

Your property must be well prepared if you intend to stay and defend. The better prepared your home, the more likely it will survive a bushfire.

Before and after the fire front, you are **actively defending** and **protecting** your home from the **outside**. As the fire front passes, you are **actively defending** and **being protected** by your home from **inside**.

On days where the Fire Danger Rating is forecast to be Catastrophic for you and your family's survival, leaving is the best option.



Clean gutters of leaves and other debris

On the day of a fire

Before the fire approaches:

- Make sure everyone is in adequate clothing to protect them from radiant heat, smoke and embers
- Remind everyone of the plan, and check that they understand their role
- Locate your Emergency Kit
- Tune your battery operated radio to your local ABC - or one of our other Emergency Broadcast Partners - and have spare batteries handy
- Ensure there is enough drinking water as it will be extremely hot
- Secure livestock in well cleared areas with sufficient drinking water
- Let family or friends know that you are staying at home
- Put tape across the inside of windows so they remain in place if broken
- Prepare water buckets, a torch and ladder ready to check the ceiling space
- Prepare for the possibility that no power and possibly no phone lines will be available
- Keep pets inside with sufficient drinking water and food.

How many of these tasks can you do the night before, when the Fire Danger Rating is announced?

As the fire approaches, stay calm and ensure that you:

- Remove flammable items from the exterior of the house (e.g. blinds, outdoor furniture, door mats etc)
- Block down pipes and fill gutters with water
- Wet vegetation near your house with a hose or sprinkler
- Shut all windows and doors and place wet blankets and towels around windows and door edges
- Prepare inside your house (e.g. remove curtains, move furniture away from windows, close doors & windows)
- Stay close to the house, drink water and check welfare of others
- Patrol the inside of the home as well as the outside for embers or small fires.

As the fire front arrives:

- Take all firefighting equipment inside such as hoses and pumps as they may melt during the fire
- Move inside the house until the fire front passes, ensuring you have two exits from the house
- Patrol the inside of the home - including the ceiling space - for embers or small fires.

After the fire front has passed:

- Go outside and extinguish small spot fires and burning embers
- Patrol the property inside and out, including the ceiling space, and extinguish any fires. Sparks and embers will continue to fall and smoulder, so keep checking for several hours
- Let everyone know that you are okay
- Monitor the radio for updates
- Stay with your home until you are sure the surrounding area is clear of fire.