

CFS FACT SHEET

FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT



Extinguishing spot fires

Because the easiest, most effective way to extinguish fire is to apply water, it is important to have adequate, accessible water storage and an effective way of distributing it.

If you are on a reticulated water supply, everyone in the area, including the CFS, will be using the mains water supply, causing a severe loss in water pressure.

How much water will you need?

This is a difficult question to answer. Some homes have been saved using bucketed water from a small gravity-fed tank, while others equipped with pools and pumps have been lost. However, the CFS recommends at least 5000 litres for firefighting (using a fire pump with hoses etc) or 22,000 litres if you have installed a sprinkler system.



Fill buckets with water when you first become aware of fire.

Ideas for water storage

- Fill your kitchen sink, bath and laundry trough when you first become aware of fire.
 - Place 200 litre drums and buckets in strategic locations and fill them at the start of the fire danger season.
 - Rubbish bins and stock-feed bins can be filled on fire danger days.
 - Your hot water service will always have water. Make sure you know how to access it safely.
 - Tanks vary in size from 1000 litres to 20,000 litres and materials include galvanised iron, concrete, fibreglass and polyethylene.
- A 64 mm London round thread (male) tap fitting will enable CFS to tap into your water supply.
 - If your house is on mains water you can run it through a storage tank making sure your tank is always full.
 - If you plan to install a tank, you may consider spending a little more on a swimming pool and enjoy the added benefits.



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Water distribution options

- Knapsacks - knapsack sprays are fairly heavy, but may be half-filled for greater portability.
- Hoses - use a large diameter garden hose (19mm) or specialised firefighting hose. Hoses should be fitted with an adjustable firefighting nozzle that is capable of withstanding the pump pressure.
- Firefighting pumps - a 5hp petrol or diesel-powered pump with manual or electric start is ideal for most situations. Test the pump regularly prior to and during the fire danger season.
- Sprinkler systems - specially designed plumbing systems of strategically placed taps and sprinklers are extremely useful in areas of extreme fire danger (more information in CFS Fact Sheet - 'Sprinkler systems' at www.cfs.sa.gov.au).
- Other options include a bucket and mop - they don't need fuel, can be relied on to function and will cope with most small fires.
- Pump and water supplies should be placed in an area that is protected from the impact of fire, but is still easily accessible.



Test the pump regularly prior to and during the fire danger season.

Shutters for windows and skylights

Another form of active protection is the use of metal shutters, which can be pulled down over exposed windows or placed over skylights in the event of a fire.

- Metal shutters provide protection from radiant heat and also prevent windborne debris from shattering glass, which can allow sparks and embers to enter the building.
- Shutters can be quite expensive so you may consider installing them on the windows facing the most likely direction of fire.
- Security mesh, metal flywire and security grade tinting are also suitable for protecting windows from windborne debris and may provide some protection from radiant heat.
- Be aware that although shutters increase your safety, they can prevent you from observing the progress of the fire once you have retreated inside the house.
- Ordinary blinds used to shade your windows may be an additional fire hazard as these are often made of flammable material and may actually trap sparks and embers.
- Place weather stripping around the inside of doors and windows to stop any sparks and embers entering your home.

What to wear to protect yourself

Despite the heat, it is important you do not wear summer clothes during a fire. In the event of fire everyone involved should wear:

- Natural fabrics such as cotton, denim or wool (synthetics can melt or burn).
- A long sleeved shirt to prevent burns to the upper body and arms.
- A pair of heavy cotton pants or overalls to shield your legs.
- Sturdy leather work boots and a pair of wool socks to prevent burns to the feet.
- A wide brimmed hat to stop embers from dropping on your head or down your back.
- Work gloves to protect your hands.
- A pair of goggles to safeguard your eyes against smoke, embers and debris in the air.
- A smoke mask or moist cloth to cover your nose and mouth to protect you from inhaling smoke and embers

You must also drink water regularly to avoid dehydration

See also fact sheet #3.3: Emergency Kits



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