

CFS FACT SHEET

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BUSHFIRE SAFETY – FOR ORGANISATIONS AND BUSINESS

Bushfires can occur anywhere, at any time in a regional or semi urban environment and there is no guarantee that the SA Country Fire Service (CFS) will be able to provide a fire appliance at every door. All businesses, organisations and individuals who work in or visit bushfire prone areas need to develop and implement their own Bushfire Safety policies, plans and procedures.

For businesses and organisations operating in bushfire prone areas, the risk of bushfire to life, assets and business continuity needs to be addressed in your risk assessment process. Bushfire safety plans and procedures should be integral components of your daily operations. They can be included in your Integrated Management System, Occupational Health & Safety (OHS) System and/or Emergency Management Systems.

Bushfire safety plans need to consider preparation for days of high fire danger and what to do in the event of a bushfire. They should be tailored to suit the business and include simple things that can be acted upon.

Before the plan is written it is critical to understand the level of bushfire risk of the location, the Fire Danger Rating, what type of fire could be expected and what actions are the most appropriate to suit the risk. You also need to understand how the Fire Danger Season and Total Fire Bans will impact on your operations through legislative requirements for operation of machinery and equipment and the use of fire for cooking, personal comfort, fuel reduction or burn offs.

The plan should reflect the needs of your individual business, personnel, volunteers and clients involved. Once a plan has been prepared it should be practiced to make sure it works and that all involved are familiar with their roles.

Prepare. Act. Survive. **The key to bushfire survival**

Follow the SIX KEY STEPS to start getting your organisation bushfire ready now.

Get Started

It is your responsibility to prepare yourself and your business to survive bushfires.

Decisions must be made before a bushfire threatens so you and your people are able to respond to the conditions and circumstances in the best possible way.

The **Six Key Steps** are designed to walk you through the decision making process, providing information and guidance towards developing a Bushfire Safety Plan which works for your business, organisation or service industry.

As you prepare your Bushfire Safety Policy, Plans and Procedures, consider the following Guiding Principles:

Recognise the Primacy of Life

Share Responsibility for Bushfire Safety

Make Decisions Based on Risk

Follow the **SIX KEY STEPS** to get started on your **Bushfire Safety Plan**.

1. Understand Bushfire Danger
2. Determine your Bushfire Risk
3. Prepare your Organisation
4. Prepare your People
5. Prepare your Worksite
6. Document & Practise your Plan

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This is an overview document, so referenced throughout are other places to get further information:



Your key reference is the **“Bushfire safety for business and organisations”** booklet downloadable in the brochure section of the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au



1. Understand Bushfire Danger

To help you assess your level of bushfire risk and action to take, it is important that you understand the potential threat of bushfire to your business and your people. An understanding of bushfire behaviour, fire restrictions and Fire Danger Ratings is essential for your bushfire safety planning.



Bushfire Behaviour

- Understand bushfire behaviour and how it may impact your people and your organisation.

Refer to:

-  Fact Sheet 2.1: Bushfire Behaviour in Detail
-  Fact Sheet 3.2: How People die or survive in bushfires


Fire Danger Ratings

- Understand the Fire Danger Rating System.
 -  Fact Sheet 2.3: Fire Danger Ratings
- Identify what Fire Ban District/s your business operates in.
 -  Fact Sheet 2.2: Fire Ban Districts and Fire Danger Season

Fire Danger Season

Be aware of the dates for the **Fire Danger Season**. This may vary between Fire Ban Districts and may vary each year depending on seasonal conditions.



Refer to

-  Fact Sheet 2.2 Fire Ban Districts and Fire Danger Season

 Fire Danger Season dates on the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au

- Understand how **Restrictions** may impact your business during the Fire Danger Season and during days of Total Fire Ban. **Permits** may be required for certain operations.

Refer to:

-  Fact Sheet 6.5: Permits
-  Fact Sheet 6.6: Restrictions (what can I do / what can't I do?)


 “What Can I Do / What Can't I Do?” on the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au

Total Fire Ban

- Understand how **Restrictions** may impact your business on days of **Total Fire Ban**. Total Fire Bans are declared when the Fire Danger Index is over 50 or at the discretion of the Chief Officer. This includes Fire Danger Ratings of Severe, Extreme and Catastrophic.

Total Fire Bans can be declared at any time of the year and may fall outside of the declared Fire Danger Season.

Refer to

-  Fact Sheet 6.6 Restrictions (what can I do / what can't I do?)

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2. Determine your Bushfire Risk

Determine the risk of bushfire to your operations considering the interactions of your locality, your business, your people and your partners with the threat of bushfire.

Your Locality

Clarify the level of bushfire risk of the location/s you, your personnel and/or volunteers are operating in.

Refer to the [CFS website](#) and specifically:

 Fact Sheet 6.6: Bushfire Safer Places (where to relocate on days of severe, extreme and catastrophic fire weather)


 Bushfire Safer Places on the CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au

 Planning SA's Bushfire Risk Level Online Search Tool -Bushfire Safer Places on the CFS website www.planning.sa.gov.au

Your Business

- Determine whether you consider your organisation's activities to be an **essential or critical service**. Can you change how, when and where you operate to mitigate the risk of bushfire on your operations, personnel, volunteers and/or clients? **Establish your priorities** and determine what could be sacrificed in dangerous fire conditions or in a bushfire
- Consider the **potential impact of a significant incident** on your organisation's viability. What is critical to continuing your business? Do you have adequate insurance? What are your legal obligations? Incorporate potential bushfire impacts in your **business continuity management** processes. Remember that your business continuity may not only be threatened by a direct crisis, it could be as a secondary effect such as school and childcare closures in dangerous fire conditions

Your People

- Consider whether your staff or organisation has a **role in emergency response, relief and/or recovery**. If so, ensure that your plan includes the necessary resourcing and staffing to carry out these essential duties.
- Consider whether your personnel or clients are **vulnerable or have special needs**. Detailed advice and resource materials are available at  Victorian Bushfire Support (<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/bushfire/>)
- Consider whether your personnel, volunteers and/or clients have **personal responsibilities** under their own Bushfire Survival Plan in the event of predicted high fire danger or an emergency event.
- Consider whether your personnel or clients are **emergency services volunteers** (e.g. CFS, SES, Red Cross), whose volunteer services may be required in the event of an incident.

Your Partners

- Determine the **potential impact of your policies and procedures on clients, other businesses and contractors**. Engage with your community and communicate changes in policies and procedures. Ensure that procedures are in place to communicate changes to normal operations at short notice or in emergencies.
- Check what policies or procedures are in already in place when **operating on sites subject to other organisational or agency management**. Align your procedures accordingly.

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3. Prepare your Organisation

Prepare your business or service considering your specific circumstances and requirements given the advice provided by the Country Fire Service and other Emergency Services. Even if your arrangements are to avoid being in high bushfire risk areas in dangerous fire weather, you need to have contingency plans. There are many scenarios to consider, such as what you will do if a fire starts quickly in your local area making roads impassable or travel particularly dangerous. You should have other options planned.

Your Planning

- Consider **your specific circumstances and requirements**. Ensure that you consider **different scenarios** when developing your Bushfire Safety plans. It is vital that your plan considers all levels of potential fire danger, not just *catastrophic*. Remember that bushfires can occur without warning in many different conditions and you need to be prepared to keep your business and your people safe. Have you worked out alternative actions, when things don't go to according to "Plan A"?
- Ensure that your **Emergency Management Plan** (on-site and off-site) addresses bushfire as a threat and that your plan is maintained, updated and tested regularly.

Your Procedures

- **Determine your bushfire safety procedures** with regard to the advice given for the various Fire Danger Ratings. Your procedures may vary according to the level of the Fire Danger Rating. For example, you may enact one procedure on days where the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be Severe and another when it is predicted to be *extreme* or *catastrophic*.
- Determine safety procedures for sites, personnel, volunteers and clients **in the event of a bushfire** and when there are CFS Watch & Act and/or Emergency Warnings.
Remember that **bushfires can occur without warning**.
You need to plan for such emergencies.
- Plan to restrict or avoid unnecessary **travel** on days of Total Fire Ban. Travelling in the country during the bushfire season needs to be done with extreme caution and vigilance. Be prepared. Remember that roads may be closed and access

disallowed during an emergency event. Refer to:



CFS Brochure: Bushfire traveller safety

- If your organisation cares for **animals or livestock**, ensure that provision is made for their care and transport as required during fire danger weather or prior to, during and after the passage of fire. Refer to:



Fact Sheet 5.1: Care of Pets and Livestock

Your Monitoring & Communication

- Consider how you will **track your staff movements** and maintain **communication channels**. Remember that some areas of the state have poor or no mobile, ABC radio and internet coverage and that power may be lost during an emergency event.
- Determine how your organisation will **monitor and communicate Fire Danger Ratings and Bushfire Warnings**. Incident alerts may be accessed through the public or private sector. Refer to:



Fact Sheet 2.5: Bushfire warning messages



Fact Sheet 2.6: Emergency broadcast partners

- Understand how the **Emergency Alert system** operates and communicate this to your staff, volunteers and clients. Refer to:



<http://www.emergencyalert.gov.au/>

- Understand and communicate relocation procedures. Refer to:



Fact Sheet 1.4: Planning to leave early



Fact Sheet 1.6: Bushfire Safer Places



Powers to direct an evacuation www.cfs.sa.gov.au

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4. Prepare your People

Your Bushfire Survival Plan needs to consider how you, your staff, your volunteers and your clients will act before, during and after a fire weather warning or bushfire event. Preparing your people emotionally to cope with the threat of bushfire is as important as the practical training in bushfire safety procedures and the physical preparations of your worksites, machinery and equipment.

Although every individual will cope differently with a frightening event, there are strategies that can be used to better prepare so that people can resist the natural reaction to panic. Practising the actions in your Bushfire Safety Plan will prepare you and your people to be able to respond automatically and appropriately to a fire weather warning and during a bushfire threat.

Your Communication

- **Engage with your staff** and **communicate** bushfire risks and safety policies.
- **Engage with your clients, business partners and contractors** and communicate bushfire safety policies and procedures.
- Ensure that procedures are in place to **communicate changes to normal operations** at short notice or in emergencies.

Your Training

- **Train your staff** in bushfire safety procedures. Practise your plan and ensure that individuals are familiar with bushfire survival actions.
- Incorporate bushfire safety policy and procedures into your **induction** processes for new personnel
- Refresh staff skills and knowledge each year prior to the Fire Danger Season. Your Training

Your Capability

- Consider the **physical and emotional capabilities** of yourself, your personnel, volunteers and clients to cope and respond to bushfire. If you plan to continue operating in dangerous fire conditions, or you plan to actively stay and defend your facilities, are you and your people physically fit?

Refer to:



Fact Sheet 3.1: Preparing Yourself for Bushfires

Your Emergency Kits

- Ensure that all staff have access to **personal protective clothing** and **equipment** when working in areas subject to bushfire risk.

Refer to:



Fact Sheet 3.3: Emergency kits


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5. Prepare your Worksite

The better prepared your buildings, facilities and surroundings, the more likely they will survive a bushfire. If your plan is to stay at your worksite during dangerous fire conditions, the better prepared your worksite, the more safety it will offer you and your people. In the event of a bushfire, a well prepared, well-constructed and actively defended property may offer safety during a fire when the Fire Danger Index is less than 100. However, on days where the Fire Danger Rating is predicted to be *catastrophic or extreme*, avoiding high bushfire risk areas or leaving early is the safest option.






Your Buildings and Facilities

- Ascertain whether your facilities are constructed to meet the latest regulations for buildings in bushfire prone areas (Australian Standard AS 3959-2009: Construction of buildings in bushfire –prone areas and Section F8, South Australian Housing Code – May 2009). Undertake an **audit of bushfire safety for your buildings and work sites**.

 **Fact Sheet 4.3:** Identifying hazards around your property

- **Prepare your worksite/s for bushfire.** Consider whether your worksite has a defensible space with at least 20 metres cleared of flammable materials and vegetation. Does your worksite have the resources, equipment and water supply to effectively fight a fire? Refer to:


 **Fact Sheets 4.1 – 4.13**, especially:

-  4.1: Preparing your property
-  4.3: Identifying Hazards around your Property
-  6.4: LP Gas Safety
-  4.6: Fuel Breaks
-  4.8: Firefighting equipment




Online resources

-  SafeWork SA for storage of dangerous materials: www.safework.sa.gov.au
-  Department of Natural Resources for native vegetation management: www.environment.sa.gov.au
-  CFS and MFS websites for building fire safety www.cfs.sa.gov.au ; www.mfs.sa.gov.au

Your Equipment

- Prepare and maintain **Emergency Kits** as appropriate to your operations and staffing levels. Refer to:  **Fact Sheet 3.3:** Emergency kits
- Prepare and maintain **communication equipment**. Keep mobile phones charged and operating.
- Maintain and regularly test **firefighting equipment**.

Your Vehicles & Machinery

- Prepare and maintain **vehicles and machinery**. Remember to keep fuel tanks filled. Refer to:
 -  CFS Brochure: Bushfire traveller safety
 -  **Fact Sheet 6.1:** Use of machinery
 -  **Fact Sheet 6.2:** Maintenance of machinery

6. Document & Practise your Plan

A written plan details what you need to help safeguard your people and your assets on fire risk days and if a fire threatens. It clarifies what actions each member of your team will take and how you will monitor and communicate fire risk and emergency warnings. Remember, if it's not written down, it's not a plan. Making a choice when a bushfire threatens is too late. The majority of people in bushfires die fleeing their locations at the last moment. They place themselves at greater risk of suffering smoke inhalation and being burnt by radiant heat. Lack of preparation and leaving late is a deadly combination.

Practising the actions in your Bushfire Survival Plan will prepare you to be able to respond automatically and appropriately during a bushfire threat.

- **Document and practice** your plans and procedures.
- Have a plan that will work in different situations and can **adapt to changing circumstances**. It is important to recognise that unexpected things are likely to occur in an emergency event.

Review policies, plans and procedures annually to reflect any changes that may have taken place. Keep links to CFS websites live to ensure that material is up-to-date.