

# PROPERTY ASSESSMENTS:

Property assessments are a key part of engaging with your community about bush fire safety. Many brigades are actively and regularly visiting homes to help residents to identify and mitigate potential risks to their home and to guide them in developing a personalised bush fire survival plan.

STEP  
BY  
STEP

#2

This *Bush Fire Bulletin* Liftout is the second in a series about Property Assessments designed for NSW RFS members.



## FIRE HAZARDS AND RISK

### STEP 1

#### BUSH FIRE THREAT

What is the threat from a bush or grass fire for the area and the particular property?

### STEP 2

#### FIRE HAZARDS AND RISK

Assisting residents to identify and mitigate fire hazards to reduce their risk.

### STEP 3

#### PREPARING A BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

Assist people to start discussions around preparing a Bush Fire Survival Plan specific to their family and property risk.

STEP 2  
OF 3 STEPS

### IDENTIFY AND MITIGATE HAZARDS AROUND THE HOME

#### THREE STEPS:

The role of NSW RFS members who conduct property assessments is to identify hazards, ensure the householder understands why it is a hazard and then assist them on ways to mitigate that hazard.

1. Identify potential hazards
2. Explain why it's a hazard and the level of risk associated with the hazard
3. Discuss how to mitigate the hazard

# IDENTIFY AND MANAGE HAZARDS AROUND THE HOME



## CASE STUDY

Westleigh Brigade members visited this house before the fire season to help the residents identify and mitigate potential hazards



# Identify HAZARDS

## HAZARD #1: LEAF LITTER. WHY IS THIS A HAZARD?



**Explanation** Either direct flame contact or embers can set this litter alight. Loose leaf litter is generally aerated and therefore easily flammable. Wind will cause a burning leaf to spread fire to other parts of the property.

**Management** Regularly rake up and remove leaves from wherever they accumulate.

## HAZARD #2: LEAF LITTER ON THE ROOF. WHY IS THIS A HAZARD?



**Explanation** Either direct flame contact or embers can set this litter alight. While the leaf litter is loose, it is aerated and easily flammable. Burning leaves can get under the tiles and into the roof space and spread fire to other parts of the building and property.

**Management** Regularly remove leaves from roof lines and gutters.

When there is the threat of fire nearby, wet down the roof prior to the fire approaching. Ensure that residents are aware it is important NOT to climb up onto the roof to complete this task.

## HAZARD #3: HANGING VINES/VEGETATION. WHY ARE THEY A HAZARD?



**Explanation** Direct flame contact or embers can ignite vines, shrubs and plants.

Radiant heat could also dry the moisture out in the plants, making them susceptible to fire.

**Management** Vines, shrubs and gardens should be kept away from building walls, verandas and posts wherever possible.

Plants that are well-maintained and have a high moisture content are less susceptible to fire.

## HAZARD #4: HEDGE: WHY IT COULD BE A HELP OR A HAZARD



**Explanation** Hedges that go right down to the bush, are dry and have fuel beneath, can act as a wick – drawing a fire from the bushland directly up to the house.

When hedges are thick, well-maintained and kept moist, they can act as an ember screen and protect the house.

**Management** Keep all gardens tidy and well maintained.

During the summer, watering plants regularly will help them maintain their moisture levels which will make them less susceptible to fire and more effective as ember screens.

# Identify HAZARDS

## HAZARD #5: GARAGE DOOR AND DOOR MAT



**Explanation Door mat:** Embers can be trapped by the mat causing it to catch fire. Flame and embers from the burning mat can penetrate under the door, introducing fire to the inside of the house.

**Garage door:** The gaps above, underneath and down the side of garage doors are susceptible to ember attack. The embers can penetrate the gaps in the door, introducing fire to the inside of the house.

**Management Door mat:** Take the door mat and other flammable items inside on days of high fire danger or when on away on holidays.

**Garage door:** Check that the rubber seal goes along the bottom of the door to ensure that embers cannot get in underneath. Fit a good quality ember seal to the sides and top to minimise the opportunity for embers to penetrate.

## HAZARD #6: OUTDOOR FURNITURE



**Explanation** It can catch on fire from embers.

Strong winds present ahead of a fire could result in it being blown up against the house or into window causing it to break.

**Management** On days of high fire danger, when away on holidays, or when fire is approaching, outdoor furniture should be put inside.

## HAZARD #7: WINDOWS AND GLASS DOORS



**Explanation** Sustained radiant heat can crack windows and glass doors, allowing flames or embers into the house.

**Management** Use a high quality duct tape to tape up the inside of glass windows and doors. This will help to prevent cracking, or in the event of cracking help stop parts of the glass dislodging and creating an opening for embers to enter the house.

If a fire is approaching close curtains or blinds to reduce the opportunity for embers to enter the home, if the glass breaks remove flammable objects from around windows and glass doors.

## COMING UP

In an upcoming issue of the *Bush Fire Bulletin* Liftout we will look at Step 3 on helping residents to have a discussion about making a Bush Fire Survival Plan