



BUSH FIRE ATTACK LEVEL (BAL) RATING

This Information Release clarifies the NSW RFS policy position in relation to the provision of BAL ratings for residential dwellings on bush fire prone land.

Since the introduction of the Australian Standard 3959 *Construction of buildings in bush fire prone areas* in 2009, Bush Fire Attack Levels or BALs have been used as the basis for establishing the requirements for construction to improve protection for building elements from the impacts of bush fires. [Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2019](#) (PBP) describes a BAL as a means of measuring the severity of a building's potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact. Appendix 1 of PBP 2019 details the methodology to undertake a site based bush fire attack assessment and provides assessment tables for calculating a BAL.

Further information regarding other bush fire protection measures for dwellings is available in the NSW RFS [Single Dwelling Application Kit](#) (SDAK), which can be used for BAL 29 and below. However, it should be noted that Councils reserve the right to accept or reject a SDAK in the submission of a development application.

The State Environmental Planning Policy ([Exempt and Complying development](#)), otherwise known as the Codes SEPP enables complying development on low bush fire risk land where the relevant development standards for bush fire prone land and all other relevant development standards have been met.

The Codes SEPP requires councils or an accredited bush fire consultant to certify that a development proposal complies with all other complying development standards that apply to the development through the provision of a BAL certificate. The most important element of a BAL certificate is the identification that the development is not assessed as BAL 40 or BAL FZ.

The NSW RFS does not issue BAL determinations and Councils should not refer homeowners to the NSW RFS.

The Codes SEPP was written to omit the NSW RFS from the BAL certificate process, so only Councils and an accredited bush fire consultant can issue a BAL certificate. This work has traditionally been the domain of private bush fire consultants. You can find them on the internet or the Fire Protection Association of Australia website <http://www.fpa.com.au/bpad.aspx>.

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For further information, please contact a NSW RFS Planning and Environment Services Centre on 1300 NSW RFS (1300 679 737) or email pes@rfs.nsw.gov.au