



Bush Fire Danger Rating	What does it mean?	What should I do?
<b>CATASTROPHIC</b>	<p>These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire.</p> <p>Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions.</p> <p>The safest place to be is away from bush fire prone areas.</p>	<p>Leaving bush fire prone areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option – do not wait and see.</p> <p>Avoid forested areas, thick bush or long, dry grass.</p> <p>Know your trigger – make a decision about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- when you will leave</li> <li>- where you will go</li> <li>- how you will get there</li> <li>- when you will return</li> <li>- what you will do if you cannot leave</li> </ul> <p>Consider staying with your property only if you are prepared to the highest level. This means your home needs to be situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bush fire, you are well prepared and you can actively defend your home if a fire starts.</p> <p>If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving bush fire prone areas early in the day is your safest option.</p> <p>Be aware of local conditions and seek information by listening to local radio, go to <a href="http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au">www.rfs.nsw.gov.au</a> or call the NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line on 1800 679 737.</p> <p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your Bush Fire Survival Plan.</p> <p>If you are not prepared, leaving bush fire prone areas early in the day is your safest option.</p> <p>Be aware of local conditions and seek information by listening to local radio, go to <a href="http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au">www.rfs.nsw.gov.au</a> or call the NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line on 1800 679 737.</p>
<b>EXTREME</b>	<p>Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions.</p> <p>If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and come from many directions.</p> <p>Homes that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bush fire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety.</p> <p>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend a property in these conditions.</p>	<p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your Bush Fire Survival Plan.</p> <p>If you are not prepared, leaving bush fire prone areas early in the day is your safest option.</p> <p>Be aware of local conditions and seek information by listening to local radio, go to <a href="http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au">www.rfs.nsw.gov.au</a> or call the NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line on 1800 679 737.</p>
<b>SEVERE</b>	<p>Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions.</p> <p>If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be uncontrollable.</p> <p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety.</p> <p>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.</p>	<p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your Bush Fire Survival Plan.</p> <p>If you are not prepared, leaving bush fire prone areas early in the day is your safest option.</p> <p>Be aware of local conditions and seek information by listening to local radio, go to <a href="http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au">www.rfs.nsw.gov.au</a> or call the NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line on 1800 679 737.</p>
<b>VERY HIGH</b>	<p>If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions and homes can provide safety.</p>	<p>Check your Bush Fire Survival Plan</p>
<b>HIGH</b>	<p>Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk.</p>	<p>Monitor conditions</p>
<b>LOW-MODERATE</b>	<p>Controlled burning off may occur in these conditions if it is safe – check to see if permits apply.</p>	<p>Action may be needed</p> <p>Leave if necessary</p>

**NSW RFS Website - [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line - 1800 679 737**

**PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.**

# WARNINGS, RATINGS AND MESSAGES IN THE FIRE SEASON

## A FACT SHEET

Bush fires are a part of the Australian environment and in recent years we have seen the devastating effect they can have on homes, families and communities.

Despite this, many people fail to prepare for bush fires – and in some cases, people leave it too late to make important decisions about their safety.

Recently, changes were made to the information provided to the community, before and during a fire. It's important all of us understand the changes – so we can help the community make informed decisions.

This Fact Sheet is for all NSW RFS members to help you provide information on preparing for bush fires and answers some of the questions you may get from the community.



### BEFORE THE FIRE

**What's the most important thing people can do to prepare for a bush fire?**

The most critical element in surviving a bush fire is preparation. This means preparing your Bush Fire Survival Plan, preparing yourself and your family and preparing your property for bush fires.

For this reason, every person living in an area where a bush fire can start should prepare a Bush Fire Survival Plan. The Bush Fire Survival Plan helps families make important decisions, such as whether to Leave Early or Stay and

Defend a well-prepared property. It also assists with decisions such as when to leave, what to take and what to do with animals. These decisions shouldn't be left until the last minute.

Sometimes, no matter how well prepared you are, things don't go according to plan. Regardless of whether you are planning to Leave Early or Stay and Defend, you need to have a back up plan.

Everyone's Bush Fire Survival Plan will be different, depending on their circumstances. Think about your family's situation when writing your Bush Fire Survival Plan.

You can download the NSW RFS Bush Fire Survival Plan from the RFS website or pick up a copy at your local Fire Control Centre.



# WARNINGS, RATINGS AND MESSAGES IN THE FIRE SEASON » A FACT SHEET

## What are the Fire Danger Ratings and why have they changed?

Fire Danger Ratings are used to give an indication of the consequences of a fire, if one was to start. Fire Danger Ratings tell you how a bush fire may act, what impacts there might be on the community and when to implement your Bush Fire Survival Plan.

The Fire Danger Ratings were changed following the 2009 Victorian bush fires to give the community clearer trigger points, and to help firefighters plan and prepare for the forecast conditions.

## How is the Bush Fire Danger Rating determined?

Fire Danger Ratings are based on the Fire Danger Index, which is a combination of factors including the forecast temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and the dryness of the landscape.

At Low-Moderate, fires will generally be easily controlled. At the highest level, Catastrophic, fires will burn so quickly that they will generally be uncontrollable. Just because the Fire Danger Rating is at the upper end of the scale, it doesn't mean there will be a fire but the rating gives an indication of how serious a fire would be if one started.

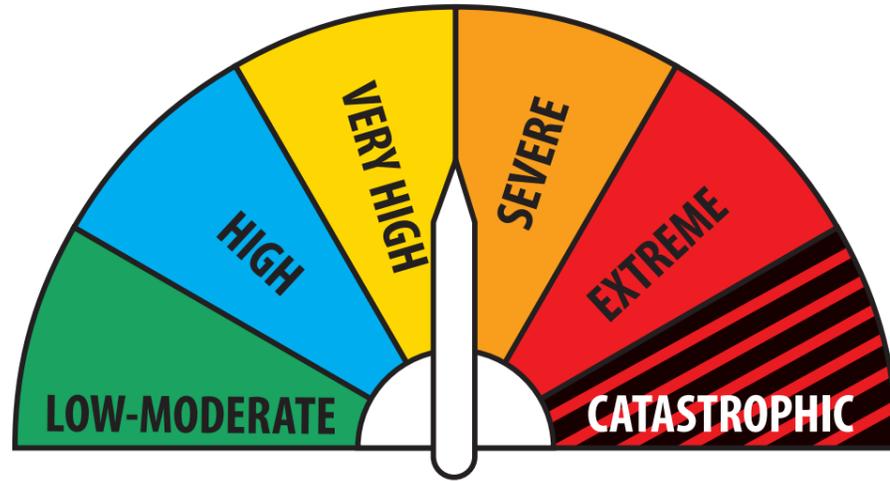
A Fire Danger Rating will apply to a Fire Weather Area, which is a group of local government areas. You can find out which area you're in by visiting the RFS website.

## What should I do on a Catastrophic day?

These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes aren't designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions.

The safest place to be on Catastrophic fire danger days is away from areas where a bush fire may start. Leaving the night before or early in the day is the safest option. You may not need to travel great distances to be safer. It may be as simple as going to a friend's house or into a well built-up area which is away from the bush.

Put your Bush Fire Survival Plan into action as soon as possible – do not just wait and see.



## DURING A FIRE

### When a fire starts, should I stay or go?

The NSW RFS recommends that you make the decision to Leave Early on days when:

- There is a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating or
- The Fire Danger Rating is Extreme, if your home has not been specially designed, constructed or modified to withstand a fire, or if you are not well prepared.

On any other day you should only Stay and Defend if you have a well maintained property and if you are physically and emotionally prepared to defend your home.

Not all homes are defendable, and not all people are able to cope with the ordeal of staying to defend their home. It is important that you consider your individual and family circumstances when making decisions about what you and your family should do.

In some situations, the choice to Leave Early is much more important, such as if there are children, elderly or disabled people in your home, or people who are vulnerable due to age, health or any other reason.

Leaving Early is always the safest option.

### Where do I find the latest information about fires?

It's important that people keep themselves informed and stay up to date when there are fires in their area.

During fires, you can get information through the radio and television, the NSW RFS website, the 1800 679 737 Bush Fire Information Line and by speaking with neighbours, friends and family.

Do not rely on a single source of emergency information.

### Will I get a text or voice message?

The NSW RFS uses the national Emergency Alert system.

Emergency Alert allows the NSW RFS to send warning messages by telephone. Landline telephones will receive a recorded message, providing important information and advice. Mobile phones will receive a short text message, if the billing address is within the warning area.

Some fires start and spread so quickly that there isn't time to give any warning. That's why it's important that people have a Bush Fire Survival Plan, so they know what to do if a fire starts.

If you receive a warning, you must take it seriously. Failure to take action could result in injury or death of you or your family members.

## What is the Bush Fire Alerts Matrix?

The Bush Fire Alerts Matrix is what the NSW RFS uses to issue warnings and advice to the public about the level of threat from a fire. It's based on two factors:

- The current Fire Danger Rating
- The fire's estimated time of impact.

## What are the different levels for Bush Fire Alert Messages?

- **Advice:** A fire has started. There is no immediate danger.
- **Watch & Act:** A heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing; you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.
- **Emergency Warning:** You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.

Emergency Warnings are updated every 30 minutes or as the situation changes.

Watch and Act messages are updated at least every two hours.

Advice messages are updated at least twice a day.



## What is the Standard Emergency Warning Signal?

The Standard Emergency Warning Signal is a distinctive siren which may be played on radio or television, to alert you to important information about a fire.

It will be followed by a scripted announcement, provided by the NSW RFS, providing information such as the location of the fire, where it's expected to impact and what people should do to protect themselves.

## What about if I'm travelling?

It's important that people stay up to date, especially when travelling in an unfamiliar area.

You should find out the local Fire Danger Rating by checking local media, the RFS website or calling the Bush Fire Information Line.

If there is a fire in the area, be sure to stay up to date on local conditions.

## What's a Neighbourhood Safer Place?

Neighbourhood Safer Places were introduced following an interim recommendation from the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission. So far, around 800 of these locations have been identified in NSW.

Neighbourhood Safer Places are buildings or open spaces that are away from bushland and can provide some protection from the immediate threat of a bush fire. They're not intended for pets and livestock.

They are a place where people can take short-term shelter during a bush fire and should only be used until the threat of a bush fire has passed. Water, toilets and food may not be available and emergency services personnel may not be present.

Neighbourhood Safer Places are not long-term options and should not be confused with Fire Refuges, Evacuation Centres, Welfare Centres or Assembly Points.

It's also important to remember that there may be some risk in using a Neighbourhood Safer Place. There may also be some risk in travelling to one.



Neighbourhood Safer Places do not guarantee your safety and should only be used as a Place of last Resort during a bush fire

A full list of approved Neighbourhood Safer Places is available on the NSW RFS website.

## What if there's no Neighbourhood Safer Place in my area?

Not every area will have a Neighbourhood Safer Place because they need to meet strict criteria before being approved.

Residents who don't have a local Neighbourhood Safer Place should identify other safer locations such as a nearby well-prepared home, the beach, a shopping centre or a sports oval that is away from the bush.

## What about fire bunkers?

Private Bush Fire Shelters (sometimes referred to as bunkers) should not be used as a substitute for proper preparation of yourself and your home.

Inadequately designed, badly located or poorly maintained private bush fire shelters are extremely dangerous.

Anyone who wants to build a private bush fire shelter in NSW must go through the development process and obtain approval from their Council. The shelter must comply with the Australian Standard introduced in April 2010.