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NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

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**bush
FIREWISE**

**DANGER SEASON
TOTAL FIRE BANS
BEFORE THE FIRE**

THE BUSH FIRE DANGER SEASON

1st OCTOBER TO 31st MARCH

(This may be varied by the Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service.)

During the Bush Fire Danger Season

During the Bush Fire Danger Season, fires in the open air are restricted. This means that barbecues and camp fires may only be used under certain conditions.

What are the Rules?

Barbecues and camp fires

- Only light fires in a permanently constructed fireplace surrounded by ground that is clear of all combustible matter for a distance of at least 2 metres,
- OR
- at a site surrounded by ground that is clear of all combustible matter for a distance of at least 3 metres.
 - make sure the fire is completely out before leaving the area.

Smoking

- Don't drop or throw down any lit cigarette, match or anything burning on any land, bridge, wharf, pontoon or similar.
- Don't light or carry a lit cigarette or match within 15m of stacked or standing crops.

Burning off in the open

- you require a permit from your local fire authority to burn off.
- notify your neighbours at least 24 hours before you light the fire.
- make sure an adult is present while the fire is alight.
- observe all conditions of the permit.

It is necessary to have sufficient water on hand in case of an emergency.

Total Fire Ban

WHEN IS A TOTAL FIRE BAN DECLARED?

On days of extreme fire danger caused by a combination of certain weather conditions and dry vegetation the Commissioner, NSW Rural Fire Service may declare a total fire ban.

HOW WILL YOU KNOW WHEN A TOTAL FIRE BAN IS ON?

If a Total Fire Ban is declared, a media release will be issued listing the weather forecast districts involved.

Total Fire Bans will also be announced through newspapers, radio and TV. If you are in doubt, ask your local Council, NSW Rural Fire Service, the Police, NSW Fire Brigade or dial 02 9898 1356 (Sydney Metropolitan only).

HOW LONG DOES A TOTAL FIRE BAN LAST?

Usually for 24 hours - from 12 midnight.

What are the Rules?

During Total Fire Ban:

Campfires, solid fuel barbecues, ovens & kettles are prohibited (ie those using wood, charcoal or briquettes).

Gas or electric barbecues may be used provided:

- it is on residential property,
- within 20m of the house or dwelling,
- or in an area with council approval,
- it is under the direct control of an adult,
- the ground within 3m of the barbecue is cleared of all materials which could burn,
- you have a continuous supply of water available.

AT HOME

Electric or gas-fired barbecues, within 20m of your permanent home, (or holiday dwelling) in a cleared safe place may be used.

AWAY FROM HOME

Electric or gas-fired barbecues may only be used with the approval of the local fire authority or the land management authority.

Remember, if you fail to comply with the fire regulations, you can be punished by up to: 12 months in jail and/or a \$5,500 fine.

PREPARE YOUR PROPERTY.

Is your property prepared against bush fires and grass fires?

- Are ground fuels cleared around the house (long, dry grass, dead leaves and branches, thick undergrowth)?
- Are your gutters cleared?
- Is the roofing firmly fixed (cleaned of dry leaf debris)?
- Are firebreaks prepared (a well watered lawn can act as a firebreak)?
- Have screens or shutters been installed and underfloor areas enclosed, if possible?
- Are vents into the roof space screened with fine wire mesh?
- Have flammable items been removed from around the house (eg. woodpile, and obvious flammable materials such as paper, boxes, crates, hanging baskets, wooden garden furniture etc)?
- Are LPG gas tanks vented away from the house?
- Has the emergency OOO telephone number been placed near the phone?

Prepare your house for a bush fire by organising sufficient Water Supplies and Fire Fighting Equipment. Prepare your house.

THINGS TO CONSIDER INCLUDE:

- Hoses long enough to reach all sides of house, attached to taps.
- Heavy duty hoses with wide-spray nozzles, if possible.
- Reserve water supplies from tank, dam, or swimming pool, if possible, since mains water will be in high demand. Try to store water during winter months.
- Gate valve fitted to water tank (a 38mm Storz coupling will assist the Rural Fire Brigade).
- Have gate valve to fit portable pump as well.
- Regularly check petrol or diesel portable pump, if you have one, to ensure it starts easily.
- Install a sprinkler system in your garden and on roofing, if affordable.
- Gather buckets (preferably metal), mops, spray backpack units, ladders, rakes and shovels in one place for ready access during a fire.
- Battery operated radio and torches in case of electricity failure.

Plan for your personal protection before a fire.

Plan for the safety of all family members: special plans should be made for young children, elderly persons, disabled persons and those unable to handle the trauma of bush fire.

IF YOU PLAN TO EVACUATE (re-locate)

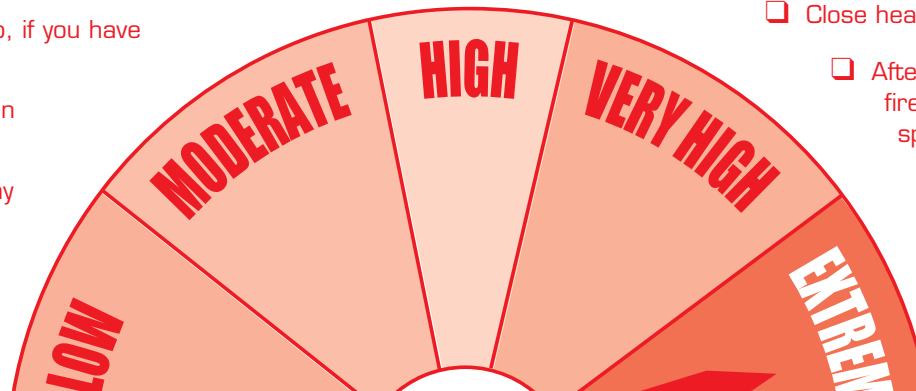
If you intend to evacuate (re-locate) any members of the family, plan well ahead of time where to stay, how to make the decision to leave, and how to travel (remember, leave well before the fire front arrives).

IF YOU INTEND TO STAY

For those who remain, ensure each person has suitable clothing, including sturdy leather footwear, long pants and a long sleeved shirt or jumper (pure wool or cotton offers the best protection from sparks and embers), a broad brimmed hat, goggles for eye protection, handkerchiefs to tie over nose and mouth, wet towels to drape over neck, and bottles for drinking water.

What to do when fire approaches

- Listen to the radio for news of the fire's progress, rather than calling emergency services for information.
- Dress in protective clothing, drink water frequently.
- Wet-down roof, house and garden, especially on the side of the approaching fire. Turn on sprinkler system, if you have one.
- Stop downpipes and fill gutters with water.
- As the fire approaches, go inside and remain inside until the fire has passed.
- Fill baths, sinks and buckets with water for extinguishing small fires and for drinking water.
 - Place wet towels and blankets against gaps under doors and windows.
 - Close heavy curtains, and shutters, if you have them.
 - After the fire has passed and for several hours after the fire front has passed, patrol your property and put out spot fires started by flying embers.
 - Check roof cavity frequently for spot fires.



In addition to traditional bush fire preparedness for your home there are also other protective measures you can employ for added safety when bush fires threaten. Remember that these are enhancements to good housekeeping strategies and not a substitute.

Sprinkler Systems

Sprinkler systems may be an expensive addition to your home but will add considerable protection to a well-prepared property.

Whilst computerised sprinkler systems are available, the majority rely on manual operation. Effective sprinkler systems must meet the following criteria.

- Metal butterfly type sprinklers that overlap and cover the total roof area and 10m from the walls of the house. Ground or fence mounted impact drive sprinklers may be needed to cover the 10m around the house.
- Sprinklers should be placed approximately 10m apart.
- Use metal pipes and sprinkler heads. Plastic pipe should be 40cm below the ground if used as it may melt in a fire.
- Place sprinkler heads along gutters, walls and ridge capping and under eaves, decks and flooring. Ridge cap sprinklers only may not be effective in the high winds associated with bad fire days.
- To ensure sufficient water pressure, roof mounted sprinklers need a 38mm output centrifugal pump, close coupled to a 2.6 kilowatt petrol or diesel motor which will run up to 10 sprinklers. For more sprinklers use a 3.7 kilowatt motor with the same pump.
- Protect pump from possible ignition from flying embers with a screen.
- Each sprinkler puts out approximately 15 litres of water per minute. A reserve water supply of 22000 - 25000 litres is needed to run a system for an average house for three hours. As mains water supply could be lost during a fire it is best to have an independent supply. This should protect the home from the beginning of ember attack until after the fire has passed.

Supplementary water supply

A supplementary water supply is needed not only for sprinkler systems but also for hoses when connected to petrol or diesel pumps.

During a fire, water pressure is likely to be lost and an independent water supply will be necessary to extinguish spot fires. Water tanks, dams or swimming pools are ideal for this purpose.

For optimum use of the independent water supply you will need a petrol or diesel pump. Start the pump regularly to ensure it is working when you need it. (Where pumps are used, a 38mm storz coupling will assist rural firefighters).

Gutters and Downpipes

If a bush fire is approaching your home, before the main fire front arrives there will be flying embers and debris thrown ahead of the fire (ember attack). Blocking downpipes and filling gutters with water will help to extinguish embers that land on the roof.

Blocking downpipes can be achieved using simple home made devices, however, there are also commercially available plugs and valves. Your local Fire Control Officer and hardware store may be able to assist with these products.

Care should be taken not to over fill gutters as this may lead to water damage to the house.

Document and Personal Records Safety

As part of your home fire plan, consideration should be given to the fireproof storage of important documents and personal effects. A decision should be made as to which documents need protecting.

Whilst this can be achieved in a number of ways, fireproof safes are commercially available and can provide protection for your documents from all types of structural fires.

Extinguishers and Fire Blankets

Fire extinguishers and fire blankets are useful for the incidence of all fire types. Care should be taken to ensure the extinguisher purchased can be used on different fire types. Advice on the most appropriate extinguisher for your needs can be obtained from the retailer or your local Fire Control Centre.

During bush fires, extinguishers are ideal for internal spot fires that have ignited furnishings.

Fire blankets can also be employed for extinguishing internal fires. They are also useful for clothing fires. Ensure all such equipment is readily available and all members of the household are familiar with their use. All fire protection equipment should be regularly checked.

For more information contact your local Fire Control Centre.