

GENERAL FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT FOR THE HOME OWNER

Assessing your bush fire risk will help you when preparing your property and planning for the safety of your family in the event of a bushfire.

If you live in any area considered “bushfire prone” you are at risk. The risk increases if your home is in bushland or on its fringe. Even houses several streets back from the edge of bushland are vulnerable. The risk of a particular house burning during a bushfire depends on the fire hazards surrounding it.

In addition to traditional bushfire 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**.

Supplementary Water Supply

A supplementary water supply is needed not only for sprinkler systems but also hoses when connected to petrol or diesel pumps. The supplementary water supply should be at least 22,000 litres.

During a fire, water pressure is likely to be lost and an independent water supply will be necessary to wet down exposed areas and if required to extinguish spot fires. Water tanks, dams and swimming pools are ideal for this purpose. If your supplementary water supply is a water tank it will need a 38mm male storz coupling (refer to couplings below) fitted to the tank, this will assist the supply of water to NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire Brigade tankers during a fire.

Pumps

As power is likely to be lost during bush fires do not use an electric pump, (unless you have backup power such as a generator) you will need a petrol or diesel powered pump. When purchasing your pump, ensure you advise the vendor that it will be used for fire protection of your property, they will advise you on the right pump for your needs. Draw a site plan of your property and include property boundary lines in metres, supplementary water supply location, asset locations to be protected, distance between vegetation and the assets in metres. This will assist the vendor. Regularly check petrol or diesel portable pump, if you have one, to ensure it starts easily

Hoses

Collapsible hose (lay flat hose) is the most common type to be found - it is used for the majority of fire suppression / water delivery tasks. This hose is made of either sealed synthetic canvas or fibre-reinforced plastic. These types of hose are available in percolating hose that sweats beads of water to prevent damage by hot earth under the hose or embers falling on the hose, where non –percolating does not bead water.

Rigid hose is also used for water delivery, but from locations where the hose is rolled up while in use (like a garden hose). This hose is rubber-based, and must be rigid so that water can pass through it while it is rolled up. The reels that these hoses are stored on are called “live reels”, because the reels can be used live (while delivering water)

Reinforced hose is also rigid, but the hose is reinforced with a wire helix (spiral), which is embedded in the length of the plastic-based hose. This hose type is used for drafting, (sucking) water from non-pressurised water sources, such as tanks, dams, and swimming pools. Simple rigid hose cannot be used for this purpose, as while it is stiff enough to withstand collapsing under the weight of other hoses rolled around it, it cannot withstand suction.

Common (typical) hose dimensions and materials

Hose	Collapsible hose
Internal Diameter	65 mm
Length	30 metres
Material	sealed canvas or fibre-reinforced plastic

Hose	Reinforced hose
Internal Diameter	38 mm
Length	30 metres
Material	plastic-based with wire helix reinforcing

Hose	Rigid hose
Internal Diameter	25 mm
Length	30 metres
Material	rubber-based

Hose Fittings (Storz)

Storz hose fittings are high quality, quick connect and dis-connect hose fittings used extensively on pumps and many commercial applications where frequent connect and dis-connect actions are required.

High quality alloy fittings with a “Push, Twist and Lock” action capable of both suction and delivery applications. When used on suction installations, make sure the “Suction and Delivery Washer” is in place.

The Storz fitting is a “symmetrical” fitting, which means that any Storz fitting of a given size will connect to any other Storz fitting of the same size. The Storz fitting size (eg 38 mm) refers to the internal diameter of the hose - the internal diameter of the Storz fitting is smaller than that of the hose size it is attached to.

Hose Fittings - There are a variety of couplings in common use:

Storz Couplings – these connect hose to hose or hose to appliance or outlet..

Reducers - these adapt between adjacent sizes of fitting, eg. 38 mm to 25 mm.

Y-branches - these split one 38mm hose line Storz inlet into two 38 mm hose line Storz outlets

Water thief - this is a T-shaped fitting that has a 38mm fitting at either side of the ‘T’, and a 25mm outlet at the base of the ‘T’ - they are used to run a 25mm hose line off a 38 mm line.

One-way valves - are a small, inline metal fitting that contains a ball, which only allows water to flow one way through it. One-way valves are good for drafting, as a stop gate that allows extra lengths of hose at the storz fitting to be added without going back to the main water source

For more information on bushfire safety, visit the Rural Fire Service website at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au or call the RFS Education Line on 1 800 654 443 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm).

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Storz Fittings

Storz 38mm x 38mm Hose Tail - designed to connect a hose to an appliance or outlet. This one connects to 1/2 inch hose.

Storz 38mm x 38mm Female BSP Thread - This fitting will attach to any 1 1/2 inch male BSP outlet or fitting.

Storz 38mm x 38mm Male BSP Thread - This Storz Male BSP Threaded adaptor attaches to any female 1 1/2 inch BSP outlet or fitting.

Firefighting Hose Nozzles

RFS live reels usually have a Dial-a-jet nozzle attached to them.

The DIAL-A-JET bush fire fighting nozzle provides an instant choice of four separate jet sizes in a lightweight and compact unit for maximum operating efficiency.

There is nothing to rust, the body is made from sturdy Aluminium Alloy, all other components are either Stainless Steel, Brass or Plastic. The smooth casing is completely snag free when dragged through the undergrowth on the end of a fire hose.

The head can be rotated to the off position by a simple quarter turn in either direction. Jet sizes range through 3mm, 5mm, 8mm and the fog/mist spray pattern by simply rotating the spray head. They are available with 25mm or 38 mm Storz fittings to connect directly layflat or rigid hose.

Knapsack

The knapsack is often regarded as the single most important item for "wet" firefighting. A knapsack utilises a backpack mounted tank, generally manufactured of polythene and contains around 16 litres of water. Water is sprayed onto the fire using a high pressure, double-action underarm pump normally constructed from brass. It is fitted with a fully adjustable nozzle that offers a straight or spray jet.

The knapsack is most often used for direct firefighting, particularly of smaller fires such as spot fires, or for mop-up work.

Remember that 1 litre of water = 1 kilogram, therefore a full knapsack unit will weigh over 16 kgs.

McLeod Tool & Brush Hook

The McLeod tool is specifically designed for firefighting and is generally used for construction of fire breaks and dry firefighting.

The McLeod tool is equipped with one serrated edge for raking and one sharpened edge for cutting, scraping and chipping. Its typical uses include chipping trails, raking litter and scraping bark from tree trunks.

Brush hooks are used for the initial clearing of scrub . The brush hook is a long slender steel cutting blade, attached to the end of a solid timber handle. The hooked nature of the cutting blade acts like a scythe through heavy bush.

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Other Equipment You Should Consider

During a fire, there are other household items that will assist you to protect your property in the event of a fire impacting on your property.

- Buckets (preferably metal)
- Mops
- Spray backpack units, (knapsacks)
- Ladders
- Rakes and Shovels
- Battery operated radio and torches in case of electricity failure

Personal Protective Equipment (Worn During A Fire)

For those who remain, ensure each person has suitable clothing including:

- Sturdy leather footwear
- Long pants and long sleeved shirt or jumper (pure wool or cotton offers the best protection from sparks or embers)
- Broad brimmed hat
- Goggles for eye protection
- Heavy duty gloves
- Handkerchiefs or cloth nappies to tie over nose and mouth
- Wet towels to drape over neck
- Bottled drinking water

Call 000...even for bushfires

Phoning 000 is the quickest way to get the right help for any type of emergency in rural areas.

The 000 emergency number is first answered by Telstra with the question “..which service do you require Police, Fire or Ambulance?”.

In the case of a fire or incident requiring a fire service, the call is put through to one of 4 control centres run by NSW Fire Brigades.

These call centres have direct lines not only to their own stations but to the 140 Rural Fire Service Districts across NSW as well.

Public calls for assistance should not be made directly to a NSW Rural Fire Service district office or Fire Control Centres or to rural fire brigades or their volunteer members.

This action could lead to a delayed response or inappropriate resource being sent.

The RFS asks the community to use the 000 number to contact the fire service if their assistance is required at an emergency.

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