Completing Your
Bush FireWise Action Plan
To survive a bush fire, you are going to need one of these.

What will you do, Stay and Defend or Leave Early?

The decision to stay and defend your home or leave early is the first decision you and your family need to make (well before the fire season). This decision affects your Bush FireWise™ Action Plan.

In order to make this decision you should consider the following:

• Who will be at home when a bush fire occurs? Does your family group include elderly relatives, young children, people with disabilities or illnesses? Can these family members be re-located, if not, who will care for them while the Bush FireWise™ Action Plan is implemented?

• Staying to defend your property is physically demanding, it is necessary to check for and extinguish spot fires for up to 10 hours after the fire front has passed. Are you physically prepared?

• Is your house adequately prepared? Or is it in a location that makes it difficult to defend (such as on a steep slope or very close to dense bushland).

How to draw up your Bush FireWise Action Plan.

Your Bush FireWise Action Plan must be prepared with all members of the household before the Bush Fire Danger Period (usually 1 October to 31 March).

Go to www.rfs.nsw.gov.au or look through the attached pages, this will help you to prepare either a "Stay and Defend" or "Leave Early" Bush FireWise™ Action Plan. Everyone’s Bush FireWise™ Action Plan will be different depending on their individual situation.

Once you have completed your plan, practise it regularly and keep it in a safe and easily accessible place for quick reference (e.g. on the fridge).
Research indicates that a well-prepared home is often the safest place to shelter from a fire-front. People who die in bush fires die as a result of last-minute unplanned evacuations.

If you are unsure, you should prepare a "Leave Early" Plan as well.

When completing your Bush FireWise Action Plan, the points below are some examples of what you need to consider.

Preparing your home before the Bush Fire Danger Period (1st October to 31 March)

- Remove dead branches, leaves and undergrowth from around your home.
- Prune any tree limbs less than two metres from the ground or overhanging your home.
- Cut long grass within 20 metres of your home.
- Remove bark, heavy mulch, wood piles and other flammable materials close to the home and shed.
- Ensure you have an independent adequate water supply (i.e a bore, rain water tank, dam etc).
- Ensure you have equipment to fight fires (a petrol/diesel powered pump, long hoses, buckets, bins, sprinklers).
- Keep gutters clean.


Your Safety

- Prepare a BUSH FIRE SURVIVAL KIT – see attached example. Fig. 2
- Dress in PROTECTIVE CLOTHING – see attached example. Fig. 3
- Prepare livestock & pets. Secure animals in well cleared areas with drinking water.

As the fire approaches: (your property)

- Dress in appropriate clothing (i.e. made from natural fibres) – see attached example. Fig. 3
- Patrol property for spot fires to extinguish.
- Wet vegetation near the house with a hose or sprinkler.
- Block drain pipes and fill gutters with water. Remove flammable items from the exterior of the house (e.g. blinds, outdoor furniture, door mats etc).
- Stay close to the house, drink water and check the welfare of others.
- Stay calm and report all fires on triple zero (000)

As the fire front arrives: (flames or ember attack visible) – see attached example. Fig. 4

- Move inside the house.
- Prepare inside of the house (e.g. remove curtains, move furniture away from windows, close doors & windows).
- Soak towels and place under external doors.
- Stay inside the house and be alert to extinguish any fires.
- Ensure you can exit the home should it catch alight.
- Monitor the fire, but keep away from windows.
- Continue to drink water.

After the fire has passed: (ember attack visible) see attach example Fig. 4

- Patrol the property inside and out (including roof space) to extinguish fires.
- Continue to drink water.

A properly prepared dwelling is more likely to survive the impact of a bush fire if able bodied people are in attendance to extinguish outbreaks of fire before, during and after the passage of the fire front.
**Leave Early**

**Travelling by car** – see attached example. Fig. 5

Leave early to avoid travelling in a fire affected area. If you do need to shelter in your car, get down low and cover up. Close all windows and doors and drink water frequently.

When to go:

**Do not drive through fire.**

People who die in bush fires die as a result of last minute, unplanned evacuations. If you decide to Leave Early, your home will have a better chance of survival without you if it is prepared before the fire season.

Refer to RFS Fact Sheets: Bushfire Evacuation /Relocation & Preparing your home for a bushfire.

Where to go and how to get there

Consider low fire risk areas (i.e. the local shopping centre, a well prepared neighbour’s house, etc).

How to get there safely:

Consider a number of travel routes that are clear of bushland and have adequate turning and refuge areas. Where will you go if the road is blocked? – see attached example. Fig. 6

What to take:

Prepare a relocation kit (blankets, water, first aid kit, medications, change of clothes, children’s toys) – see attached example. Fig. 6. Organise household members and make arrangements for pets. Prepare a valuables kit in advance, e.g. photo albums, important documents etc. Don’t wait until the fire is approaching as you may not have time.

**Relocation Kit**

Write a list of items your family will need, before, during and after your relocation.

- Battery operated radio and spare batteries
- Mobile phone
- Clothing
- Money
- Bottled water
- Family and friends phone number
- Emergency accommodation (friends, relatives, motels etc)
- Check on traffic and roads conditions
- RFS fire information line
- Items of high importance (e.g. family photos)
- Medications

**Bush Fire information** www.rfs.nsw.gov.au
You should have a bush fire survival kit stored in an area of the house that is safe to access.

**Survival Kit**

You should have a bush fire survival kit stored in an area of the house that is safe to access.

**THE KIT SHOULD CONTAIN:**

- Protective clothing for the whole family (e.g. boots or sturdy footwear, jeans, long sleeve shirt made from natural fibres or cotton drill overalls)

**Survival Kit**

- Drinking water
- Woollen blankets
- Fire extinguishers
- First aid kit
- Hoses
- Knapsack spray
- Towels
- Ladder

**Relocation Kit**

- You need to write a list of items your family will need, before, during and after your relocation.

- Buckets
- Mop
- Goggles
- Gloves
- Battery operated radio
- Torch
- Spare batteries
- Smoke mask (Respirator mask)
In the event of fire everyone involved should consider:

- Wear natural fabrics (e.g. cotton, denim or wool). Synthetic fabrics can melt or burn.
- A long-sleeved shirt made from thick cotton or wool is ideal to prevent burns to the upper body and arms (e.g. flannelette or cotton drill work shirt).
- Sturdy leather work boots along with a pair of woollen socks prevent burns to the feet.
- A pair of heavy cotton pants will shield your legs from the radiant heat emitted from the fire (e.g. denim jeans or oil-free overalls).
- By wearing a wide-brimmed hat you can stop embers from dropping onto your head or down the back of your shirt.
- Work gloves will protect your hands.
- A good pair of goggles will safeguard your eyes against any smoke, embers and debris that may be in the air.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a wet cloth (non-synthetic) to prevent inhalation of smoke and embers.
3 Stages of Bush Fire Impact

**As the fire approaches**

- Embers (sparks) are the main cause of houses catching alight during bush fires. Extreme fire weather days are accompanied by strong to gale force winds, which carry burning debris. Embers therefore gain entry to houses through broken windows or gaps in and around walls or roof cladding and ignite the contents. Embers also lodge on and ignite horizontal timber deck, guttering, steps and window sills. They can be blown up against and ignite timber used for supports, underfloor battens, posts and steps.

**As the fire front arrives**

- The hotter a fire the greater the amount of radiant heat and the faster the fire will spread by radiation.
- Direct flame impact usually occurs when something combustible is near the house. E.g. Shrubs, wood piles or out building.

**After the fire has passed**

- Ember attack is the biggest threat to houses. This can last for several hours after the fire front has passed. Unattended houses are very susceptible during this stage. People who have relocated can return during this stage. Experience shows that people and houses that are well prepared will survive the passage of a bush fire.

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**ACTION**

- Have a Bush FireWise Action Plan
- Have a portable AM/FM radio to receive information during the fire
- Don’t enter the bush if smoke or fire is in the area.
- Stay calm and report all fires on 000!
- Check if elderly neighbours need assistance.
- If possible, block your gutters and fill with water.
- Fill all sinks, baths etc with water to use on spot fires in case mains water supply or domestic electric water pumps fail.
- If you choose to self-evacuate, do so early.
- If ordered to evacuate by the police you must obey, so have pets and valuables packed and ready to go.
- Wear long sleeves and long pants, natural fibres and sturdy footwear.
- Close all windows and doors, block spaces beneath doors with towels or blankets.

**ACTION**

- Wear long sleeves and long pants made from natural fibres and sturdy footwear
- Have eye and breathing protection available for everyone.
- Keep a torch and portable AM/FM radio at hand in case power fails to monitor weather.
- Turn off gas and power.
- Hose down walls, gardens etc before the fire arrives.
- Block downpipes and fill gutters with water.
- Bring hoses/fitting and other fire suppression tools inside, so they can be used later.
- Close all doors and windows and block gaps with damp towels.
- Move flammable curtains and furniture away from windows.
- Shelter in a part of the house most distant from approaching fire front until fire has passed then actively put out spot fires.

**ACTION**

- It is the owner’s responsibility to secure the site following a fire.
- After the fire has passed and for several hours after the fire front has passed, patrol your property inside and out put out spot fires started by flying embers.
If you see smoke ahead
\textit{don’t risk getting caught, play it safe! find an alternate route}

Whether you are a rural worker, or a traveller, motorists and drivers should be aware of the potential dangers associated with vehicles and bush fires and the added protection vehicles can afford people trapped by such fires.

Do not leave the vehicle. Many people have lost their lives by exiting the vehicle only to be trapped on foot in the open. Your vehicle will help to protect you from radiant heat, the chief danger.

If you are planning a trip during the Bush Fire Danger Season, check to see what the weather conditions will be like in the area. Listen to local radio stations for news of any fires in the area. Avoid those areas where fires are occurring -

\textbf{DO NOT GO SIGHT SEEING!}
Your car or vehicle can provide protection when caught in a bush fire.

If caught by a bush fire \textbf{STOP} immediately.

Look for a clear area, preferably off the road. Areas clear of grass or bush will not sustain fires of high intensity.

If you do need to shelter in your car:

\begin{itemize}
  \item drive your car into a bare, clear area well away from surrounding trees
  \item leave your headlights on
  \item roll up the windows and shelter below window level
  \item cover over with woollen or cotton blankets to protect all passengers from radiant heat
  \item drink water frequently
  \item Close all vents or turn the vents to recycle
\end{itemize}