

Media Release

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TEN TIPS TO PREPARE YOUR HOME FOR A BUSHFIRE

If you live, or plan to build, in a bushfire prone area, there are many precautions you can take to help protect your home and maximise your safety.

When planning to build or renovate, key steps include ensuring an appropriate building site location, using suitable building materials, ensuring proximity to independent water resources and managing the vegetation surrounding the building. It is also important to ensure your property is accessible for emergency vehicles.

The following tips should help reduce the risk of damage to homes in bushfire prone areas:

1. Use building materials appropriate for the conditions and your Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) as required by the Australian Standard 3959-2009.
2. Build your home using non-combustible materials such as brick, concrete and steel.
3. If you prefer timber, there are a range of timber products available that offer various levels of fire resistance appropriate for most BALs. The following timbers can be used but must also have a thickness greater than 18mm: Blackbutt, Kwila, (Merbau), Red Ironbark, River Red Gum, Silver-top Ash, Spotted Gum and Turpentine.
4. As the main threat to the majority of homes is ember attack, it is suggested that you install screens with an opening of less than 2mm, draught excluders around doors and windows and ensure that any other gaps are less than 3 mm. This is particularly important around eaves and window frames.
5. Clear sub-floor spaces under decks and ensure that no debris or materials are stored under or near the home.
6. Remove any overhanging tree branches, take out shrubs over 1 metre next to or below windows, keep grass short and clean up other debris near your building site or home that could easily catch fire to help provide some defensible space
7. Follow the step-by-step guide to protecting your home from fire by downloading the Country Fire Authority (CFA) Fire Ready Kit from www.cfa.vic.gov.au or phoning the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 for a copy
8. Ensure you have a Bushfire Survival Plan in place and practise it regularly
9. Get involved in community meetings about fire preparedness in the neighbourhood. Go to the CFA website for meeting details
10. If you have a full rainwater tank near your home, ensure it is accessible and equipped to fight fires. You also might consider installing a fire sprinkler system.

For information on assessing your Bushfire Attack Level (BAL), contact your building surveyor, designer or the Building Commission on 1300 815 127.

For further information, please contact Anne Pavey Manager Marketing and Public Relations, Building Commission on 9618 9295 or 0414 394 561 or visit www.buildingcommission.com.au