

Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

Edition 6 - October 2020

CFA: Call to Action

Summer is just around the corner and the message from the CFA is clear. The time to start bushfire preparation is now. Cudgewa CFA Captain, Paul Carkeek (pictured) says the right preparation is the key to saving property and lives in the event of another major event.

"Do your preparation early and have a plan," Paul said. "Now is the time to clean up around your property and reduce your fuel load. Remember there is no guarantee the CFA will be able to defend your property in a large-scale bushfire event."

Good winter and spring rains, coupled with reduced stock numbers, mean there is plenty of grass. Rainfall has promoted vegetation growth, especially grass, and this can result in greater fuel loads in grassland areas. Victoria, along with Spain and California, is one of the most bushfire prone areas in the world and the CFA says it only takes two weeks of hot, dry and windy weather to create dangerous fire conditions.

Over the coming weeks, the CFA is producing a three-step fire plan for the upcoming season to help you prepare your property, your family, pets, stock, your community and vulnerable residents. It's a call to action, and it's time to get started.



Helping vulnerable people prepare for bushfires

People can be vulnerable for a range of reasons, including disability, language barriers, no internet access, age, illness or a lack of local knowledge. For those who work in bushfire prone areas or who care for vulnerable residents, the CFA has designed a program to help prepare vulnerable residents for the event of bushfire.

Bushfire Safety for Workers is designed for those who work in or travel through bush or grass fire prone areas. *Bushfire Planning – How to Support your Clients* is for those who work with clients or patients in their homes, supporting them to live independently.

Both modules take about 45 mins to complete and can be found on the CFA website under the Plan and Prepare tab.

Bushfire safety & planning courses for workers.

For your own safety and the safety of your clients.

cfa.vic.gov.au/workers



Seasonal Outlook

The seasonal outlook for the 2020/21 season shows that above average rainfall through winter has substantially reduced the risk of campaign bushfires in Victoria's east for the outlook period. Overall, a normal fire season is expected for most of the state.

Where do I start?

The first step is to know which fire weather district you are in (the Upper Murray is in North East Fire District 24), to check your fire danger rating daily and have a bushfire survival plan.

Your bushfire survival plan should answer the following questions:

1. **Which Fire Danger Rating is your trigger to leave?**
2. **Will you leave early that morning or the night before?**
3. **Where will you go?**
4. **What route will you take – and what is your alternative in the event that a fire is already in the area?**
5. **What will you take with you?**
6. **What do you need to organise for your pets or livestock?**
7. **Who do you need to keep informed of your movements?**
8. **Is there anyone outside your household who you need to help or check up on?**
9. **How will you stay informed about warnings and updates?**
10. **What will you do if there is a fire in the area and you cannot leave?**

Prepare your property

Captain Paul Carkeek has urged residents to prepare your property well in advance so that it can survive even without anyone there to protect it.

In the first instance, decide what buildings or assets you need to protect from grassfire and reduce the height and proximity of grass to buildings by slashing, mowing, grazing, spraying and/or creating fuel breaks. Breaks less than 3m wide are unlikely to stop a fire, but they may slow it down.

For more information go to www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare where there is detailed information to help you properly prepare your property, your farm and your family, and what to do before or during a fire.



Stay informed in an emergency

Radio / Television

ABC Local 99.7 FM
ABC Local 196.5 FM
Sky News

Useful websites

VicEmergency | emergency.vic.gov.au
Vic State Emergency Service (SES) | ses.vic.gov.au
Bureau of Meteorology | bom.vic.gov.au/vic/warnings
Country Fire Authority (CFA) | www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Helpful apps

VicEmergency
VicTraffic
BOM Weather
Better Health Channel

Understanding Fire Danger Ratings

The Fire Danger Rating tells you how dangerous a fire would be if one started. It helps you to know when conditions are dangerous enough to put your bushfire survival plan in to action.

Ratings are forecast using Bureau of Meteorology data for up to four days in advance, based on weather and other environmental conditions such as fuel load. The rating is your prompt to take action to stay safe.

Code Red - These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions. Leaving high risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option - do not wait and see.

During the Fire season, the Fire Danger Rating will feature in weather forecasts, be broadcast on radio and TV and appear in some newspapers. It can also be found on the of CFA and VicEmergency websites or by calling the VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226.

Please keep this information handy ahead of the upcoming fire season.

	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	WHAT SHOULD I DO?
CODE RED	<p>These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions.</p> <p>The safest place to be is away from high risk bushfire areas.</p>	<p>Leaving high risk bushfire 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 and long, dry grass.</p> <p>Know your trigger – make a decision about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – when you will leave – where you will go – how you will get there – when you will return – what you will do if you cannot leave
EXTREME	<p>Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and will come from many directions.</p> <p>Homes that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety.</p> <p>You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 bushfire, you are well prepared and you can actively defend your home if a fire starts. • If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high risk bushfire areas early in the day is your safest option. • Be aware of local conditions and get information by listening to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations or Sky News TV, going to cfa.vic.gov.au, emergency.vic.gov.au or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.
SEVERE	<p>Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions. If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be uncontrollable. 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>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your bushfire survival plan. • If you are not prepared, leaving bushfire prone areas early in the day is your safest option. • Be aware of local conditions and get information by listening to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations or Sky News TV, going to cfa.vic.gov.au, emergency.vic.gov.au or call the VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226.
VERY HIGH	<p>If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions and homes can provide safety.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check your bushfire survival plan.
HIGH	<p>Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor conditions. • Action may be needed.
LOW-MODERATE	<p>Controlled burning off may occur in these conditions if it is safe – check to see if permits apply.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave if necessary.

Emergency contacts

Emergency services

For a life threatening emergency dial 000. If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech impediment call 106.

Other support available

VicRoads | 13 11 70 - vicroads.vic.gov.au
 National Relay Service | relayservice.gov.au
 Nurse on Call | 1300 606 024
 Translating and Interpreting Service | 131 450 - tisnational.gov.au

Recovery Contacts

Support Hotlines and Websites

Speak to someone by calling:

Bushfire Counselling | 1300 514 811

Corryong Health | 02 6076 3200

Tallangatta Health | 02 6071 5200

Family Violence 1800 RESPECT 24/7 | 1800 737 732

Albury Wodonga Mental Health Triage

Line 24/7 | 1300 104 211

Lifeline Bushfire Helpline | 13 43 57

MensLine Australia | 1300 789 978

Beyond Blue | 1300 224 636

Standby, Support after Suicide 24/7 | 0439 173 310

Headspace | 1800 650 890

Or visit:

DHHS | www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/mental-health-resources-coronavirus-covid-19

Australian Red Cross | www.redcross.org.au/stories/covid-19

Beyond Blue | www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au

Phoenix Australia Centre for post-traumatic mental health | www.phoenixaustralia.org/coronavirus-covid-19/

Towong Shire Bushfire Recovery Team

Upper Murray Community Recovery Hub

Phone: 1800 518 222 (Monday to Friday 9am-4pm)

Email: recovery@towong.vic.gov.au

Website: www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery

Facebook: facebook.com/towong.shire.council

Local Area Recovery Officers

If you are yet to speak to your Local Area Recovery Officer, reach out directly:

Tanya Aramini – Thowgla, Towong, Biggara | 0428 950 739

Kaye Nankervis – Walwa, Mt Alfred, Guys Forest, Pine Mountain, Tintalra | 0436 445 187

Tony Irwin – Colac Colac, Cudgewa, Berringama/Lucyvale | 0427 869 019

Jai Edwards – Corryong, Nariel Valley, youth working group | 0438 762 442

Bushfire Recovery Victoria

Free Helpline: 1800 560 760

Email: connect@brv.vic.gov.au

Website: www.brv.vic.gov.au

About This Newsletter

This monthly newsletter brings together the latest updates and information to support Towong Shire residents and businesses through bushfire recovery. This newsletter is a joint initiative by Towong Shire Council and Bushfire Recovery Victoria, with thanks to community members and supporting agencies including DELWP, Agriculture Victoria, Environment Protection Authority Victoria, CFA, Regional Roads Victoria and Parks Victoria.

Get In Touch

We are continually reviewing and improving the recovery information we provide and how we provide it. If you have feedback, or have a story you would like to share, call **1800 518 222** or email recovery@towong.vic.gov.au.

Subscribe Today

To subscribe to the digital newsletter, email recovery@towong.vic.gov.au. For past editions of this newsletter go to www.towong.vic.gov.au/bushfirerecovery.

Please note: All photos in this newsletter were taken in compliance with COVID-19 regulations.