

Towong Shire Community Recovery Newsletter

Edition 7 - October 2020



Preventing haystack fires - It only takes one heating hay bale to ignite a whole haystack.

With the spring growth of pastures and crops, CFA has issued a warning to farmers to exercise caution with the cutting, baling and storage of hay and to keep an eye out for the tell tail signs of self-combustions.

CFA Acting Chief Officer Garry Cook said CFA crews responded to 86 haystack fires across the state last year, which was a significant drain on resources at the busiest time of the year.

CFA crews often need to monitor haystacks for several days after the main fire as stacks continue to smoulder over a long period with the potential to spread. Haystack fires can be caused by sparks from machinery and equipment, embers from nearby burn-offs, or bushfires and lightning strikes.

Hay can self-ignite when excessive heat builds up. Spontaneous combustion is the leading cause of haystack fires in Victoria. If hay is too 'green' or becomes damp before, during or after baling, biological and chemical processes may cause the hay to heat.

- Ensure hay is fully cured before baling. Bale and store each bale type at the correct moisture level.
- Know the history of hay that you purchase, particularly its moisture content.
- Protect hay from rain, leaking roofs and spouts, and cover stacks with tarp or hay caps.
- Store hay in different locations around your farm, away from key assets.
- Limit the size of stacks to reduce the risk of losing it all.
- Do not store vehicles, machinery and equipment in your hayshed.
- Be careful when operating vehicles, machinery and equipment near haystacks.
- Create and maintain fuel breaks around your haystacks.
- Regularly monitor stored hay for signs of heating using a temperature probe or crowbar.
- Other signs to look for include steam rising from haystacks, condensation or corrosion, mould growth in or on bales, unusual odours.

Fencing wire collection

The first stage of damaged fencing wire collection is complete and contractors will return when there is sufficient demand. To register contact the Recovery Hub on 1800 518 222.

Get to Know Your Local Recovery Team

Council's dedicated and passionate Recovery Team work together with Bushfire Recovery Victoria and supporting agencies to support you and your community. Get to know them.

Jai Edwards, Local Area Recovery Officer for Corryong, Nariel Valley, the business community and youth.

Tell us a little about yourself

I am a fourth generation descendant of the Upper Murray. I completed primary and secondary education in Corryong, before relocating to further my education and career in 2002. I've spent time working and studying in Melbourne, Sydney, United States, Fiji, Hong Kong and Fiji before moving back to Wodonga in 2014 to work in my own business and more recently back to the Upper Murray. My career has been in the education, hospitality and IT sectors. I'm a local who has been involved in the community for most of my life through football, netball and basketball clubs, community radio and as a board member of Corryong Health.



Tell us a little about your role

I work with the Corryong and Nariel Valley communities, through their Community Recovery Committees (CRC), as well as the business and youth community, to support them in developing priorities and key recovery initiatives, and to deliver on those activities.

What part of working in recovery are you most passionate about?

Supporting the rebuild of our community, connecting people to relevant grants, support or even just information.

When things get tough, what drives you to keep going?

The ability to be able to make a difference to the lives of local individuals, families, small businesses and primary producers who were impacted by the Upper Murray fires.

What have you learned so far?

How much we need to look out for each other. None of us knows exactly what other family members, friends, neighbours, etc were already dealing with in their lives, the additional emotional impact from the bush fires can be difficult for people to cope with in the short and long term.

I'm a great advocate for R U OK? Day – if someone you know is doing it tough, they won't always tell you. Sometimes the signs that they're not OK won't be obvious. It is up to us to trust our gut instinct and ask someone who may be struggling "are you ok?", and reassure yourself that its always better to ask than not ask.

Something you are proud of?

My honest, respectful and hard-working upbringing, which has given me the ability to speak up for others who otherwise might not have a voice.

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

Burning off - Is the fire you lit on the weekend fully extinguished before you leave for work on Monday?

Every year CFA crews are called to out of control burn offs. While burning off may be a regular and necessary aspect of your farming operations it is important to keep your burn off safe and legal by following some guidelines:

- All fires in the open air are banned during Total Fire Ban days and permits are suspended.
- You can't burn-off unless you have a written permit. Call 6071 5100 first to talk to the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer.
- Check the weather forecast for the day of your burn off as well as the next few days – if it is going to be windy you should postpone burning off.

Do you have an adequate water supply? Access to a hose or at least 10 litres of water for a small fire and for larger fires appropriate firefighting equipment. Have you registered your burn off by calling 1800 668 511?

Have you let your neighbours know? Have you put it out properly? Fully extinguish your burn off before you leave it.

Access for Fire Services

If you do end up in a situation where you have a fire, it is important to ensure that fire services can access your property. Make sure your property name or number is clearly visible so it can be easily identified by emergency services.

For smaller properties with limited access, consider whether access for fire trucks can be improved by clearing vegetation, signposting dead ends or creating turning circles. Ideally access tracks should allow for 4 metres high by 4 metres wide.

Make sure water supplies around your property are clearly marked in case emergency services need to access them. Water tanks should be fitted with CFA couplings, otherwise CFA appliances will be unable to use them. **For more information go to www.cfa.vic.gov.au (Source: CFA Victoria).**

BlazeAid on the border

A huge shoutout to all the volunteers set up in camps at Walwa and Jingellic. Wherever you came from and for however long you are here, Thank You! We could not do this without you and the hundreds of fencing volunteers working in Towong Shire since January.

In one month, 29 volunteers cleared 6.9kms of burnt fences and built almost 10kms of new fences, using 2,397 star pickets, with 69.5kms to go. Pictured is Camp Coordinator Natalie Trigwell with some of the first volunteers to arrive.



Local Economic Recovery projects to boost recovery in Towong Shire

Councils, community members and local business groups are shaping the long-term recovery of Victoria's bushfire-affected regions, with the Commonwealth and Victorian Government announcing a \$68.6 million fund to drive regional recovery and back key local community projects.

The projects include:

- \$190,000 to restore and expand the Cudgewa tennis facility.
- \$128,700 to re-establish a tree-lined avenue of honour in Tintaldra.

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, Tintaldra | 0436 445 187

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

Jai Edwards – Corryong, Nariel, business community | 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 fortnightly 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.