

# SURVIVE.

During a bushfire the safest place to be is away from the fire. You and your family's survival depend on the decisions you make and how you act. Be prepared and have a plan.

## TOTAL FIRE BANS

A Total Fire Ban (TFB) is declared because of extreme weather conditions or when widespread fires are seriously stretching firefighting resources.

It is illegal to do anything that could or is likely to start a fire when a TFB is declared. The ban includes all outdoor fires for the purpose of cooking or camping. It also includes incinerators, welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting.

When a TFB has been declared it will be:

- on the DFES website at [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)
- on the DFES information line on **13 DFES (13 3337)**
- broadcast on **ABC local radio** and other media outlets.

## BUSHFIRE WARNINGS

There are three levels of warning that change to reflect the increasing risk to your life and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives.

**ADVICE:** A fire has started but there is no immediate danger. You need to be aware and keep up to date.

**WATCH AND ACT:** A fire is approaching and conditions are changing. You need to leave or get ready to actively defend your property.

**EMERGENCY WARNING:** You are in danger and you need to take immediate action to survive. You will be impacted by the fire.

**ALL CLEAR:** The danger has passed and the fire is under control. Take care to avoid any dangers.

## YOU MAY GET AN EMERGENCY ALERT

Emergency Alert is one tool used to warn communities of an emergency and should not be relied on as your only source of information. It is an automated system that sends warnings to home phones and mobiles. It does not replace the need to look after your own safety by monitoring local conditions and taking preventative action where possible. There may be no warning for some bushfires, where it is moving too quickly or starts close to homes.

## WHERE TO FIND INFORMATION

- DFES website [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)
- DFES information line **13 DFES (13 3337)**
- For bushfires in national parks and State forests [www.dpaw.wa.gov.au](http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au)
- For current bushfire warnings **ABC radio and other media**

## EVACUATION AND ROAD CLOSURES

Firefighters will evacuate areas to save lives, as this is their highest priority.

Road blocks are managed by police who will not allow you to return home under any circumstance. It is important that you take everything you need with you when you leave. Make sure you take your bushfire survival kit, including important papers, medications and personal supplies. Once you have left your property you may not be allowed back for some hours or days.

For information about road closures contact Main Roads on **138 138** or contact your local government.

### Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is provided voluntarily as a public service by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES). This publication has been prepared in good faith and is derived from sources believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication. Nevertheless, the reliability and accuracy of the information cannot be guaranteed and DFES expressly disclaims liability or any act or omission done or not done in the reliance on the information and for any consequences whether direct or indirect, arising from such act or omission. The publication is intended to be a guide only and readers should obtain their own independent advice and make their own necessary inquiries.

### Front cover image

Based on information provided by and with permission of the Western Australian Land Information Authority (Landgate) 2011



# AM I AT RISK FROM BUSHFIRE?

## ARE YOU BUSHFIRE READY?

**PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.**



## AM I AT RISK FROM BUSHFIRE?

If you live near bushland, you are at risk of bushfire.

In a bushfire houses often catch on fire from embers. Embers are small bits of burning bark and leaves that can be carried long distances by strong wind. They can get into your house through gaps in the roof, walls, evaporative air conditioners, windows and doors.

Embers can travel many kilometres ahead of a fire, so even if you are not directly threatened by a bushfire you may be impacted by embers.

It is important to understand the bushfire risk to your home, even if you are renting. Firefighting resources, including water bombing aircraft, may not be there to defend your home. It is your responsibility to reduce the risks and take actions to survive a bushfire.

**REMEMBER:** Bushland does not just mean trees and forest, it also means areas of scrub and grassland.



## PREPARE.

The majority of houses can survive most bushfires with preparation and planning. There are many ways that you can improve the chance of your property surviving a bushfire even if you are not there to defend it.

### Starve the fire

If there is nothing to burn there will be no fire, so reduce fuel levels around your house.

- Maintain a minimum two metre gap between trees and the building, do not have trees overhanging your house or shed
- Keep the grass short, and prune shrubs and trees
- Rake up leaf litter and twigs under trees, and remove bark
- Make sure there is a gap between shrubs or trees, do not clump them together
- Place paths and the driveway next to your house, as they can provide a protective barrier
- Keep your gutters free of leaves
- Consider alternatives to mulch, such as paving, rocks, pebbles or brick chips.

### Fill the gaps

Prevent sparks from entering your house by blocking the gaps.

- Close in the eaves and other gaps that lead into the roof or under the house
- Install stainless steel open weave mesh cover over your evaporative air conditioner and metal fly screens on your windows and vents to keep sparks and embers out
- Close gaps in the roof with sarking (the use of board or sheet material laid under the roof tiles or iron to prevent embers entering the house and rated to the appropriate level of protection as described in the Australian Standard 3959).

### Fix the fire traps

- Remove or relocate fire traps such as wood heaps, fuel containers, rubbish, overhanging trees and grass/leaves from under decks
- Make sure the shed is not next to the house and that it is ember proofed by blocking all gaps around eaves, roof spaces and ledges
- Keep LP gas cylinders on the side of the house furthest away from the likely direction of a fire. Make sure the pressure release valve is directed away from the house and that there is no flammable material in front of the valve for at least six metres. Turn the valve off as the fire approaches
- Store gas cylinders upright and secure them with a metal chain to a secure non-combustible post to prevent cylinders from falling over.



**REMEMBER:** You may lose power and water supply. It is important to plan ahead. Without power you may not be able to open your garage door or operate your home telephone. Without water you cannot defend your home. If you plan to actively defend your property you will need to make sure your home is prepared to the highest level. For more information refer to *DFES Prepare. Act. Survive. guide.*



## ACT.

Bushfires can start suddenly so you need to be prepared to act even if you do not get a warning.

On hot dry days when bushfires are possible you need to stay alert and go outside regularly to check for signs of a bushfire.

Most people wait to be told what to do, expecting a firefighter to knock on their door to tell them to leave. This is highly unlikely to happen. Do not wait for a warning before acting. The decision to 'wait and see' can be deadly.