

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY



DEAF 
EMERGENCY
INFORMATION

www.deafemergencyinfo.com.au

PREPARE, RESPOND, RECOVER
BUSHFIRE, EXTREME HEAT,
FLOOD AND SEVERE STORM

Why natural hazard emergency information for deaf and hard of hearing people?.....	3
Preparing for natural hazard emergencies	3
Funding and support.....	4
Authorisation.....	4
Disclaimer	4
BUSHFIRE	6
Am I at risk?	6
How to stay informed, monitor conditions and leave early.....	7
Fire Danger Rating	8
Preparing for bushfire.....	10
How to leave early.....	12
Warnings and advice	13
If you cannot leave	13
Know your shelter options.....	13
Sheltering from fire.....	15
If you are caught in a car	16
Recovering from bushfire.....	16
HEAT	18
Am I at risk?	18
Preparing for extreme heat.....	19
Heat and your health.....	19
Symptoms of heat stress and what you should do	20
Responding to extreme heat	21
Recovering from extreme heat	22
FLOOD	24
Am I at risk?	24
How to stay informed, monitor conditions and leave early.....	25
Flood Watch and Flood Warnings	26
Preparing for flood	27
When you see a Flood Watch or Weather Warning.....	27
When you see a Flood Warning.....	28
During a flood: evacuation	28
During a flood: If you cannot leave.....	29
Recovering from flood.....	29
STORM	32
Am I at risk?	32
Severe storm warning systems	32
Preparing for severe storm	32
During a severe storm: Take shelter.....	32
During a severe storm: If you are caught outdoors.....	33
During a severe storm: Be alert to flash flooding.....	33
Recovering from severe storm	33
YOUR EMERGENCY KIT	35
EMERGENCY AND RECOVERY INFORMATION	36
Where to find warnings and information.....	36
Where to find recovery information	36



Why natural hazard emergency information for deaf and hard of hearing people?

Every year, bushfires, extreme heat, floods and severe storms affect thousands of Victorians in Melbourne, regional centres and rural areas. The Victorian emergency services work hard to educate the community about different natural hazard risks, how to decide when to leave early, and how to understand warning and evacuation systems. However, most of this information is in written or spoken English. This means that deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Victorians who cannot rely on spoken English or whose first language is Auslan are often the last to know. This language resource brings important information together in one place, in Auslan and in written English.

If you are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing, the Deaf Emergency Information booklet and website will help you to:

- Understand the different natural hazards experienced by Victorians every year
- Learn from the experiences of other people in the community
- Understand how to watch and act so you can take responsibility for your own safety
- Learn how to prepare, respond and recover from extreme events in your area
- Prepare your emergency kit
- Understand what you can expect from emergency services organisations

Preparing for natural hazard emergencies

Regardless of where you live in Victoria, you need to prepare yourself, family, home, work, and travel for natural hazard emergencies such as bushfire, extreme heat, flood and severe storm. You cannot rely on other people to tell you what to do in event of an emergency. Emergency warnings do not always reach people in the community in time for them to respond, because emergency events can happen quicker than emergency services can warn people. Sometimes it can take emergency services up to one hour to respond to an event. It is best to be prepared so you can respond confidently. If you are prepared, you and your family will be safer.

This website will help you to prepare for bushfires, extreme heat, floods and severe storms. It explains what you can do when there is a natural hazard emergency, and what you can expect afterwards. Information is available in Auslan videos presented by Trudy Fraser and Andrew Welshe, and in written English here.

THE FIRST THING YOU NEED TO DO IS IDENTIFY THE NATURAL HAZARD RISKS TO YOUR HOME, WORKPLACE, HOLIDAY LOCATIONS AND TRAVEL ROUTES.

Ask yourself:

1. What natural hazards might affect me?

- Is my home/work/holiday likely to be impacted by natural hazards such as bushfire, extreme heat, flood and severe storm? Think about where your property is located and the way it looks. Think broadly about the kinds of natural hazards that could impact you. Do not fall into the trap of focussing on one natural hazard at the expense of others.
- Is there a history of bushfire or flood in my area? What natural hazards have my neighbours experienced in my area?

2. What might make my home dangerous if there were a bushfire, extreme heat, flood or severe storm?

- Are there large trees with branches overhanging my roof?
- Do I have any damaged tiles on the roof or structural cracks in the walls of my home?
- Does my home have insulation to help keep it cool in summer?
- Do I need a fan or air conditioning?
- Does my fan or air conditioning need servicing?
- Is there only one road in or out of my area?

3. How might my family be personally impacted by bushfire, extreme heat, flood or severe storm?

- Does my family have any babies/young children, elderly people, pregnant women or ill members who may be impacted more by these natural hazards?
- Do I have friends or family who could help me to care for children or elderly relatives if I were cut off during an extreme weather event?
- Who should I include in my plan? Consider all members of your household including regular visitors, pets and people who may stay with you some of the time.
- Where will we go if we need to leave?
- Where will we meet if we are separated? Determine a safe meeting place in case you are separated. Make sure your family members, friends and neighbours are aware of the location.

4. What if I have additional needs?

- Will I need help to leave my home? Who will be able to help me leave?
- Will I need to take any support equipment with me? Will this equipment need an alternative power source?
- If you have a carer or council support, ask them how to help you prepare or check over your plan.
- Decide which triggers mean you will leave early and talk to your support person about them. Even if you only need help from a neighbour, talking about it now will ease your mind and ensure everything is in place before an emergency occurs.

Funding and support

This resource was developed by Vicdeaf with funding from the State Government of Victoria and support from Emergency Management Victoria, the Country Fire Authority, the Victoria State Emergency Service, the Department of Health & Human Services and the Vicdeaf Emergency Services Interpreting Team.

Grateful thanks to the Gippsland deaf community including Peter Adams, Louise Bartheyl, Jennifer Bradley Smith, Peter Busch, John Cole, Peter Harris, Jeanette Loftus, Frank Loftus, Julie Patterson, Keith Patterson, Jessica Payne, David Rice, Matthew Tantaro, and Sammy Tantaro.

Authorisation

Authorised by the State Government of Victoria, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

Disclaimer

This work has been compiled from a variety of sources including material generally available on the public record, reputable specialist sources and original material. Care has been taken to verify accuracy and reliability wherever possible. However, the material does not provide professional advice. Regional Development Victoria does not give any warranty or accept any liability concerning the contents of this work



BUSHFIRE

Am I at risk?

Bushfires are common across Victoria during summer, but you don't have to live in the country to be at risk of bushfire. Fires can occur where the suburbs meet the bush or in urban areas where houses have grass, bushland or parkland around them.

They can start anywhere there is enough heat, wind and fuel. If you live in one of these environments, you need to plan and prepare before the fire season.

Fires can occur where the suburbs meet the bush or in urban areas where houses have grass, bushland or parkland around them.

Generally the risk of fire is higher near dense or open bush.

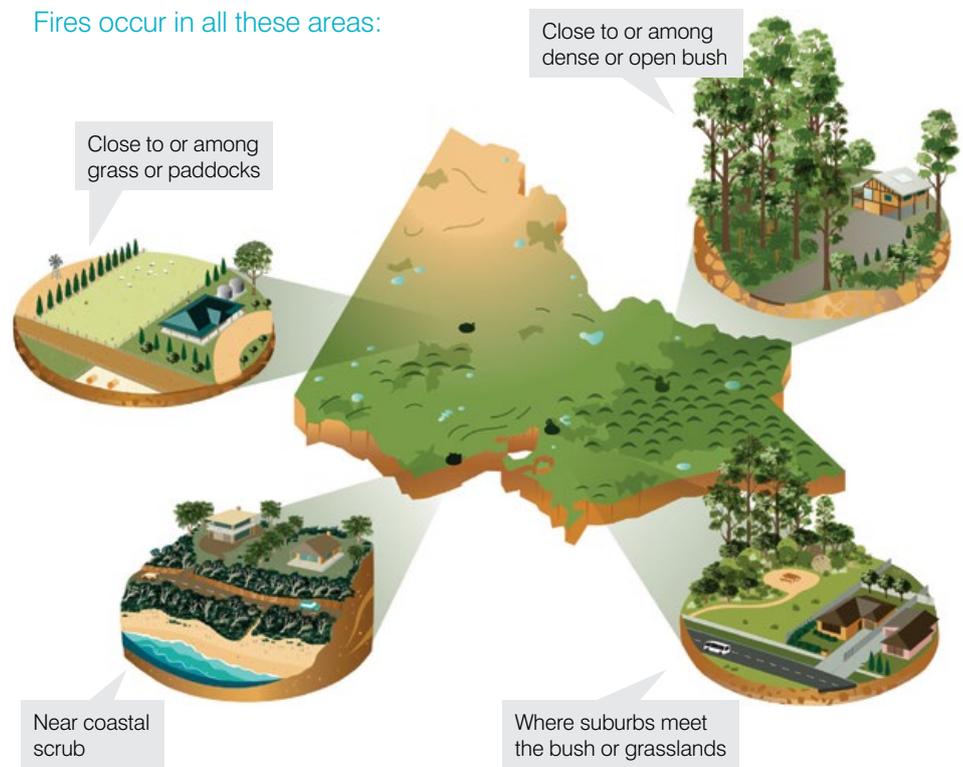
During the spring when there is plenty of rain, there is lots of new growth. Grass grows long and bark renews. When the weather becomes hotter and there is no rain, the bush and land becomes very dry.

Fires can be caused by many things including:

- Lightning
- Cigarettes carelessly thrown from a car
- Farm machinery causing a spark

All fires can cause serious injury and death. Ember attacks and radiant heat are the two major threats to your safety during bushfire.

Fires occur in all these areas:



What is an ember attack?

Ember attack:

- Embers are burning twigs, leaves and pieces of debris
- Ember attack occurs when twigs and leaves are carried by the wind and land on or around a building

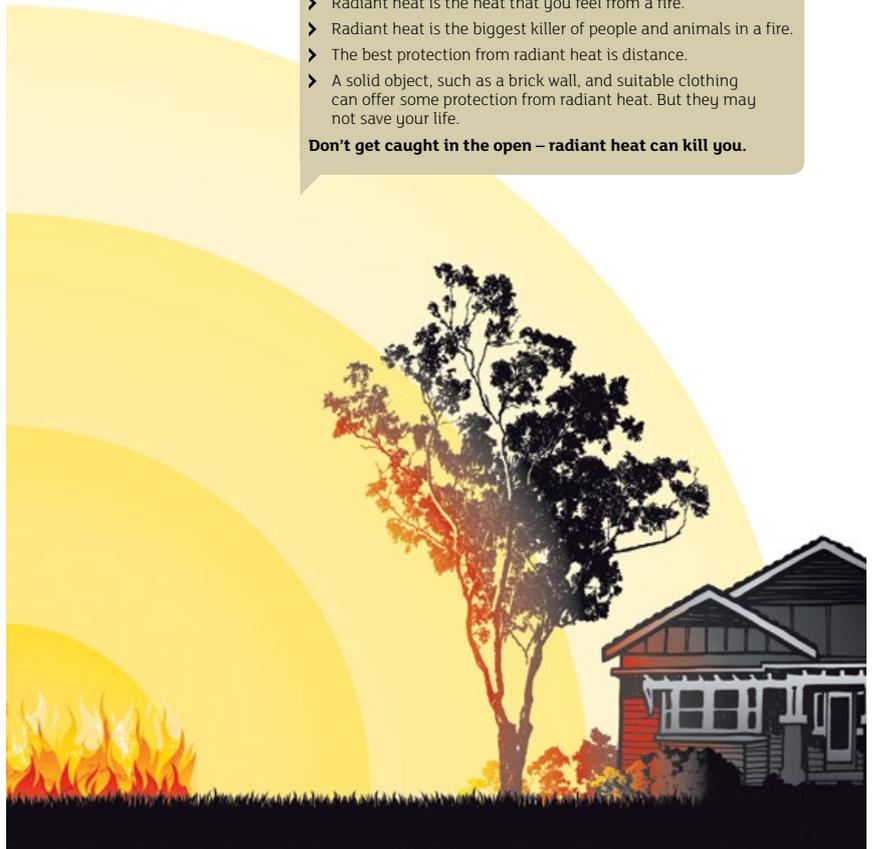
- Embers can land on top of debris in your gutters and set fire to your house
- Ember attack is the most common way houses catch fire during bushfires
- Ember attack can happen before, during and after the fire front passes your property



What is radiant heat?

Radiant heat:

- Radiant heat is the intense heat that radiates from a bushfire
- It is like the heat you feel from a campfire, but can be up to 50,000 times stronger
- The human body cannot absorb large amounts of radiant heat without its cooling system failing, leading to heat exhaustion and heart failure
- Radiant heat is the biggest killer of people and animals in a fire
- This heat travels in straight lines, radiating out from a bushfire ahead of the flames and will bounce off solid objects
- Radiant heat can be blocked by a solid object or barrier such as a concrete wall or building, but it will travel through glass
- The best protection from radiant heat is distance



WHAT IS RADIANT HEAT?

- › Radiant heat is the heat that you feel from a fire.
- › Radiant heat is the biggest killer of people and animals in a fire.
- › The best protection from radiant heat is distance.
- › A solid object, such as a brick wall, and suitable clothing can offer some protection from radiant heat. But they may not save your life.

Don't get caught in the open – radiant heat can kill you.

How to stay informed, monitor conditions and leave early

The safest place to be is away from high-risk bushfire areas. You can be safe by learning how to stay informed, monitor your conditions and leave early. This is especially important if there is only one way in or out of your area.

'Leaving early' means being away from high-risk areas before there are any signs of fire. It is a precaution you take just in case there is a fire – because in some conditions, any fire that starts is likely to be uncontrollable. Leaving early does not mean waiting for a warning or a siren. It does not mean waiting to see or smell smoke. And it certainly does not mean waiting for a knock on the door. Many people have died trying to leave their homes at the last minute.

The Fire Danger Rating is central to helping you decide when to leave early. Depending on your household's level of risk – such as being close to or among dense or open bush – the Fire Danger Rating should be your trigger to leave early.

If you are at risk from bushfire and tomorrow will be a Severe or Extreme rating, your safest option is to leave or first thing in the morning. If tomorrow will be a Code Red day, your safest option is to leave. If you live with older people, people with a physical or intellectual disability, or people under 16 years of age, your best option is to leave the night before.

If you are at risk from bushfire, stay informed and monitor your conditions using several sources of information – do not just rely on one source:

- Monitor your local weather forecast on the Bureau of Meteorology website
- Monitor your local warnings on the VicEmergency website
- Check the Fire Danger Rating every day – is there a Severe, Extreme or Code Red warning for tomorrow?
- Check your Fire Restrictions every day – is there a Total Fire Ban for your area?
- Download and check your FireReady phone app for alerts
- Download and check your OpenAccess Alerts phone app for traffic and other alerts
- Talk with your family and decide what will be your trigger to leave early before it becomes dangerous to be on the road
- Watch the news for announcements, such as your local ABC news channel and Sky news
- Use the National Relay Service to call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line and ask for updates for your area
- Check YouTube, Twitter and other social media for Auslan interpreted announcements

Monitoring conditions also means being aware of your surroundings at home, at work, on holiday and while travelling throughout Victoria. Being aware of your surroundings will also help you decide when to leave early.

- When you get up in the morning, step outside and take notice of what the air feels like. Is it windy, hot and dry outside? Are your plants and land dry and brown?
- What about when you hang your clean laundry on the line, does it dry before you finish?
- Does the cold water tap start hot and take a long time to run cold?
- Can you smell smoke in the air or see it rising into the sky? Is a severe thunderstorm forecast for the night, with lightning expected?

The decision about when to leave is the most important decision you will make. It is up to you to monitor conditions and stay aware of your surroundings right through the fire season.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Do not expect a fire truck at your property during a bushfire. Do not rely on an official warning to leave. Bushfires can start quickly and threaten homes and lives within minutes. It is your responsibility to know when to leave.

Personal Story from Trudy

I lost my home during the Black Saturday fires in 2009. I have since rebuilt, but my home is still in a high risk area surrounded by open bushland. Every summer, I keep a close eye on the weather and the local Fire Danger Ratings. I have my emergency kit packed and out in the hallway on hot days, ready to leave if necessary. If the CFA Fire Danger Rating hits Extreme, I pack up my car and head back to Melbourne with my dog to stay with friends – just in case. It's better to be safe than sorry. The risk for me is just too high.

Can I stay and defend?

Defending your home requires at least two fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally able to work in arduous and difficult conditions. It also requires at least 10,000 litres of water, protective clothing, and appropriate fire-fighting hoses and pumps. Your house must be built to specific building regulations that will help it to withstand some bushfire threats.

You must also be very clear about when you can stay and defend and when you should leave early. Only consider staying with your property on Severe or Extreme days if you are fully prepared and can actively defend your home. Do not stay and defend during Code Red conditions.

Defending your home is risky – you could be seriously injured, suffer psychological trauma or die. Even people who are extremely well prepared can die fighting fires at their home. The safest option is to be well away from the threat of bushfire. Do not expect a fire truck to help you defend your home. Download and read the CFA Fire Ready Kit for more information about deciding to stay and defend.

IMPORTANT NOTE: UNPREPARED PROPERTIES- Staying with an unprepared property is very dangerous and could cost you your life. If you have not prepared your property before the fire season you should leave before bushfire threatens.

Fire Danger Rating

The Fire Danger Rating is an important tool. It tells you how dangerous a fire would be if one started in your district: the higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions for that day. During the summer, check the Fire Danger Rating when you are at home, at work, on holiday and when you are travelling throughout Victoria. Your local CFA station may have a Fire Danger Rating sign, and these are also placed along many main roads.

You can also check online at the VicEmergency website or via the FireReady app on your smart phone. Learn about the different ratings and consider your home, work, holiday locations and travel routes. How high is the risk of bushfire in the areas you live in or visit? If you are at risk, decide which rating means you will leave early.

Know your daily Fire Danger Rating



The Fire Danger Rating predicts fire behaviour (should a fire start) and how dangerous it would be to put out. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

Fire Danger Ratings feature in weather forecasts during the fire season.

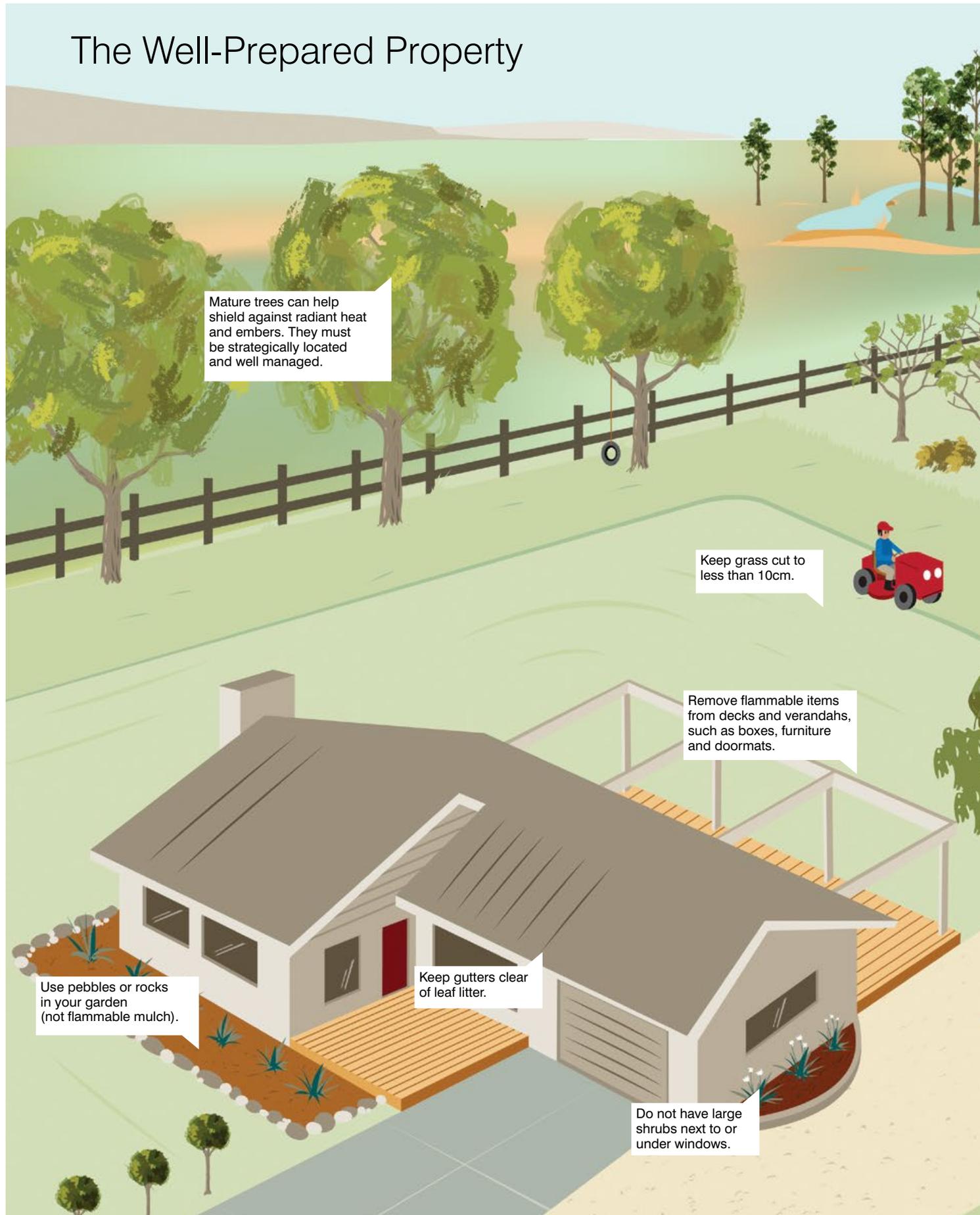
To check your district's daily Fire Danger Rating, visit emergency.vic.gov.au or call **1800 240 667**.

	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?	WHAT SHOULD I DO?
CODE RED	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > These are the worst conditions for a bush or grassfire. > Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions. > The safest place to be is away from high-risk bushfire areas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Leaving high-risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option – do not wait and see. > Avoid forested areas, thick bush or long, dry grass. > Know your trigger – make a decision about: <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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 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 come from many directions. > Homes that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety. > You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions. 	<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. Seek information by listening to ABC local radio, commercial and designated community radio stations, or watch Sky News TV, visit emergency.vic.gov.au, call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or via National Relay Service on 1800 555 677.
SEVERE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 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. > You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions. 	<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. Seek information by listening to ABC local radio, commercial and designated community radio stations, or watch Sky News TV, visit emergency.vic.gov.au, call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or via National Relay Service on 1800 555 677.
VERY HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Check your Bushfire Survival Plan.
HIGH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Monitor conditions. > Action may be needed.
LOW-MODERATE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Controlled burning off may occur in these conditions if it is safe – check to see if permits apply. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Leave if necessary.

Preparing for bushfire

As the weather starts to heat up in different parts of Victoria, bushfires can begin to threaten homes and lives.

The Well-Prepared Property



Mature trees can help shield against radiant heat and embers. They must be strategically located and well managed.

Keep grass cut to less than 10cm.

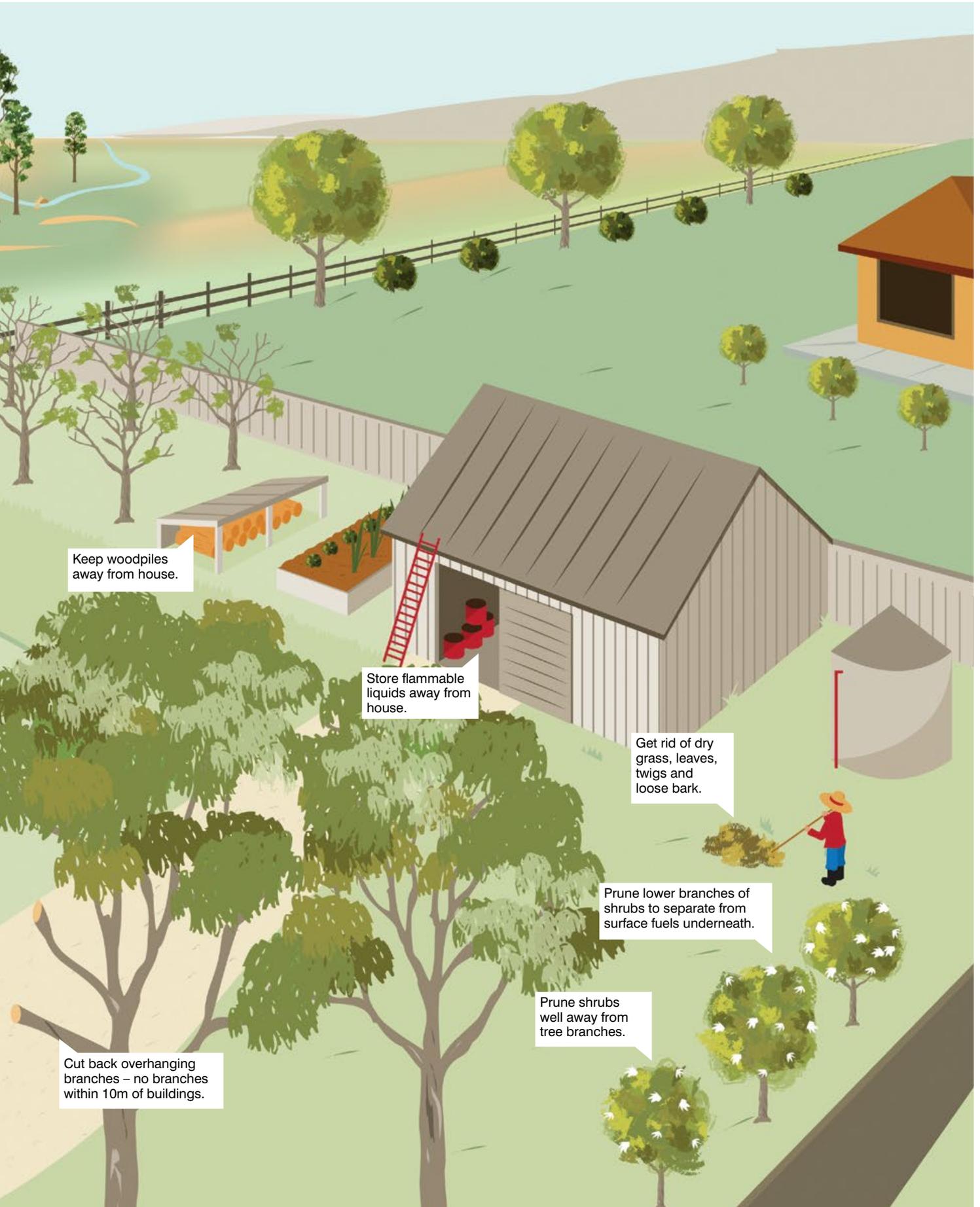
Remove flammable items from decks and verandahs, such as boxes, furniture and doormats.

Keep gutters clear of leaf litter.

Use pebbles or rocks in your garden (not flammable mulch).

Do not have large shrubs next to or under windows.

During the two months leading up to summer in your district, you need to prepare yourself and your family. Prepare your home, work, holiday locations and travel routes.



Keep woodpiles away from house.

Store flammable liquids away from house.

Get rid of dry grass, leaves, twigs and loose bark.

Prune lower branches of shrubs to separate from surface fuels underneath.

Prune shrubs well away from tree branches.

Cut back overhanging branches - no branches within 10m of buildings.

There are three things you need to do to prepare for bushfires:

1. Prepare your property

Even if you plan to leave early, you can reduce the impact of bushfire on your home by preparing your property. If your property is well-prepared, there will be less fuel available for fire to burn. For example, a bushfire fire that is 6km away from your home may seem unthreatening to your life but it might deliver an ember attack. If your home is not well-prepared, an ember attack can result in spot fires that burn your house down. If you are well-prepared, your property will have a better chance of withstanding an ember attack even if you are not there.

To ensure your property is well prepared:

- Remove flammable items (boxes, furniture, door mats) from decks and veranda as these can easily catch fire
- Store wood piles away from your house
- Store flammable liquids such as petrol, machine oil and kerosene away from house
- Clean leaf and other litter from your gutters
- Remove dry grass, leaves, twigs and loose bark from ground, but check with your local council about when you can burn off your green waste
- Cut grass shorter than 10cm to reduce fuel for potential fire
- Remove large shrubs next to or under windows
- Prune lower branches of shrubs to separate them from surface fuel underneath
- Cut back overhanging branches from buildings so there are no branches within 10m of buildings
- You can also use pebbles or rocks in your garden (not flammable mulch). Mature trees can help shield against radiant heat and embers. They must be strategically located and well managed, well away from the house.

2. Prepare your emergency kit

Prepare and check your emergency kit – use the Auslan video Your Emergency Kit and/or the English checklist at the end of this book to help you prepare your emergency kit. Set aside protective clothing for everyone in your family. Check your emergency kit at least once every year.

3. Talk with your family and prepare your exit routes

Talk with your family about the bushfire risk in your area and decide what triggers mean you will leave early. For example, if you know there will be a severe thunderstorm tomorrow after a week of high temperatures, will you leave tonight or first thing in the morning? Talk about what else you will take with you and where you will go.

Check your local CFA for information on Neighbourhood Safer Places (Place of Last Resort) and your local Community Information Guide. Note your exit routes on a hard copy map. Make sure you have more than one exit route in case it is blocked. It is best to have a hard copy map in case there is no mobile phone or GPS reception.

Practice leaving early and time yourself. Work out how long it takes you pack your car and secure your home so you know how much time it will take when you really do need to leave early.

How to leave early

Check the Fire Danger Rating for your location every day. When the Fire Danger Rating reaches your trigger point, your safest option is to leave early.

- Stay updated on fire information so you will know if a fire has started near you
- Check your petrol tank is full – you do not want to be stuck on the road with an empty tank
- Move livestock to a safe area and put your pets in a safe place ready for loading into your car
- Pack your emergency kit and any other important items, such as your computer and pets
- Position your car in the driveway facing out or on the side of the road
- Tell your neighbours and friends you are leaving
- Close your windows and lock doors
- Turn off your gas and electricity at the mains
- Leave the front or access gate open

IMPORTANT NOTE: DO NOT WAIT AND SEE You should never wait and see what happens during a bushfire. Leaving late means you will be on the road when conditions are at their most dangerous or you may not be able to get out at all. The longer you wait to leave, the greater the risk to your life.

Warnings and advice

CFA warnings and advisory updates are issued when a fire has started and you need to take action. It's your responsibility to understand the different types of warnings and how to access them. You should never wait to receive an official warning before you leave.

Advice: There is a fire in your local area. You need to get information and monitor conditions.

Watch and Act: Fire is heading toward you. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect yourself.

Emergency Warning: You are in immediate danger and need to act now. You will be impacted by fire.

If you cannot leave

You need to decide what you will do if there is a fire in your area and you cannot leave. Remember that bushfires and grassfires can travel extremely fast and strike without warning. Many people have been caught out thinking they had more time to act before the bushfire impacted.

A bushfire can be a terrifying situation. Strong gusty winds and intense heat will make you tired quickly. Thick, heavy smoke will sting your eyes. It will be difficult to see and breathe. The roaring sound of the wind and the fire approaching will make it hard to hear. Embers will rain down causing spot fires all around you.

Power and water may be cut off. You may be isolated. It will be dark, noisy and extremely physically and mentally exhausting.

Know your shelter options

The options below do not guarantee your safety but may offer enough protection from radiant heat to improve your chances of survival.

1. A well-prepared home – the preferred option if you cannot leave

- A well-prepared home (yours or a neighbour) that you can actively defend
- A private bunker (that meets current regulations)
- A designated community shelter or fire refuge

2. Last resort – when no other preferred options are available

- A Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort
- A stationary car in a cleared area
- A ploughed paddock or reserve
- A body of water (such as a beach, swimming pool, dam or river)

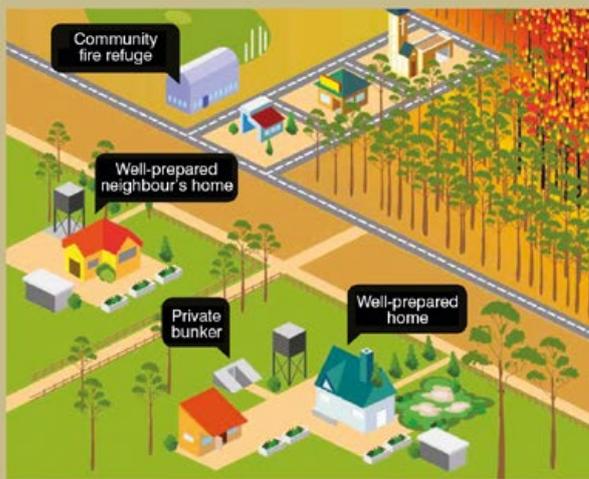
Neighbourhood Safer Places do not offer any food, drink, supplies or facilities and are not relief centres. Many are simply open reserves or sports fields. To find out if there is one in your town, visit www.saferplaces.cfa.vic.gov.au



Leave Early

- › When the Fire Danger Rating is **Code Red**, leaving early is always the safest option.
- › Leave early destinations could include homes of family and friends who live outside the risk area, a nearby town or other built-up area.

Always the safest option

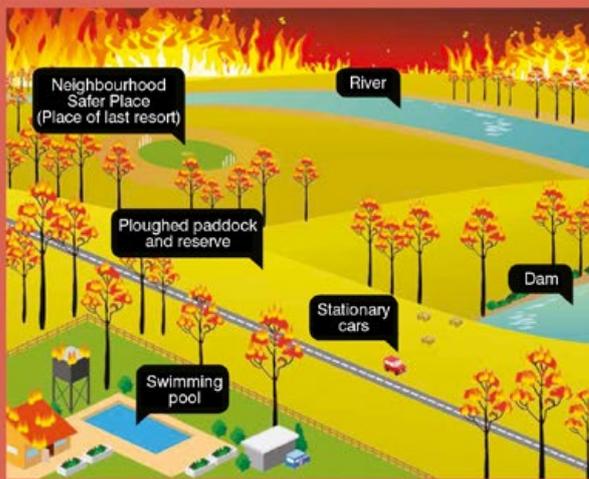


Well Prepared

If leaving the high-risk area is no longer an option, there may be options close to where you are that could protect you. These include:

- › a well-prepared home (yours or your neighbours) that you can actively defend on **Severe** and **Extreme** Fire Danger Rating days only
- › private bushfire shelter (bunker) that meets current regulations
- › designated community fire refuge.

Your safety is not guaranteed



Last Resort

In situations where no other options are available, taking shelter in one of the below may protect you from radiant heat:

- › Neighbourhood Safer Place (Place of Last Resort)
- › stationary car in a clear area
- › ploughed paddock or reserve
- › body of water (i.e. beach, swimming pool, dam, river etc).

High risk of trauma, injury or death.

IMPORTANT NOTE: DO NOT shelter in a dam, swimming pool or a water tank except as an absolute last resort. Dams, swimming pools and water tanks leave your face, head and lungs exposed to radiant heat and smoke.

If sheltering within a house or building, **DO NOT** get caught in an area with only one way out – for instance, a bathroom or toilet. Rooms with only one exit can make escape impossible if that exit is blocked by flames and heat.

If you are forced to shelter in a well-prepared home or Neighbourhood Safer Place, ensure you are dressed appropriately. Covering all exposed skin with clothing can offer some protection from radiant heat. Put your protective clothing on as soon as you are aware of a fire. Remember that wearing a t-shirt, shorts and thongs will expose you to dangerous radiant heat in a fire.

Your kit

- A** A wide-brimmed hat to protect your head.
- B** Eye protection such as smoke goggles to shield your eyes.
- C** A 'P2' type mask or cotton scarf /handkerchief for face protection and to filter smoke.
- D** A long-sleeved, collared shirt and pants made from cotton or some other natural fibre.
- E** Tough leather garden gloves – not rubber or synthetic.
- F** Sturdy boots and wool or cotton socks.



Sheltering from fire

If you are caught in a building:

- Make sure you have more than one point of exit in every room used as shelter
- Most bathrooms are unsuitable to shelter in because they typically only have one door which can make escape impossible if that exit is blocked by flames and heat
- Most bathrooms also have frosted windows that do not let you see outside – during a bushfire it is critical to look outside and know what is happening

If your house catches fire while you are inside, you will need to respond quickly:

- Close the door to the room that is on fire
- Move to the other end of the house, closing all the doors behind you
- Do not get trapped in a room without an alternative exit
- Move outside to burnt ground as soon as you can
- Wherever possible, try to put a solid object between you and the radiant heat from the fire
- Drink water to prevent dehydration

If you are caught in a car

Take the following actions if you encounter smoke or flames and are not able to turn around and drive to safety:

1. Position the car to minimise exposure to radiant heat:

- Park away from dense bush – try to find a clearing
- If possible, park behind a barrier such as a wall or rocky outcrop
- The car should ideally face towards the oncoming fire front
- Park off the roadway and turn hazard lights on – car crashes are common in bushfires due to poor visibility

2. To increase your chances of survival:

- Stay in the car and tightly close windows and doors
- Cover up with woollen blankets and get down below window level – you need to protect yourself from radiant heat which will pass through glass
- Drink water to prevent dehydration

3. As soon as you become aware that the fire front is close by:

- Shut all vents and turn the air conditioning off to limit the circulation of toxic fumes caused by burning plastic
- Turn off the engine

IMPORTANT NOTE: These options may increase your chances of survival. All options of last resort carry a high risk of trauma, injury or death.

Recovering from bushfire

During a bushfire, the Victorian emergency services will work together to control and extinguish the fire. You can return home only when it is safe to do so. Do not try and return home before you receive the all clear from emergency services – you could be endangering your life and those of others who will need to help you.

Once the roads open again, you may be able inspect your property. This can be a very difficult experience because you may not know what to expect. Will your home be standing? Or will everything be destroyed? You may see and hear bad news or hear stories from other people. You may be hit by the realisation that nothing is normal anymore. It may take a long time to recover.

Emergency Relief Centres may be established in response to bushfires. These centres may offer personal support, financial assistance, temporary accommodation, and referrals to government and other services. When you arrive at an Emergency Relief Centre, emergency services personnel and/or volunteers will assist you to access the right support for your situation. Be sure to ask for an Auslan interpreter or other communication service if you need it. Be aware that Emergency Relief Centres can be very busy and chaotic, although every effort is made to run them smoothly. More information on accessing emergency relief is available in Auslan and English at www.recovery.vic.gov.au

Personal Story from Trudy

When I returned home on the Tuesday after Black Saturday, my town looked like a war zone. Everything was black, all the trees were dead and fallen, many homes were burnt down, all the animals were gone or dead. I had to drive around burned cars and buildings. Some fires were still burning slowly. There was no mobile phone reception, no electricity, no water, no food. Neighbours filled each other in about who had survived and who had perished. Many hearing people commented on how quiet it was – they said it was pretty spooky. Everything was sad and awful.





HEAT

Am I at risk?



A period of extreme heat is abnormally uncomfortable hot weather that can impact on human health, communities, infrastructure and services. During extreme heat, the temperature is usually higher during the day than at night, but night may not bring any cool relief. Extreme heat is very uncomfortable for humans and animals. It can make existing medical conditions worse and cause a heat-related illness, which can be fatal. Extreme heat has caused more deaths in Australia than any other natural hazard. Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and intensity of extreme heat events. You can be affected by heat even if it is not a designated heatwave.

Extreme heat can be very damaging for people and the environment. It can affect our health and wellbeing, our energy access and infrastructure, public transport and agriculture. It can also contribute to increased bushfire risk and weakened environment that can threaten public safety. Both metropolitan and rural areas can be affected by periods of extreme heat. The impacts of heat may be greater in urban environments (particularly at night) than surrounding rural areas as many common construction materials absorb and retain more heat from the sun.

During the 2008–2009 Summer, many cities and towns experienced many consecutive days over 40°C. The hottest place was Mildura in north-western Victoria, where an all-time record of twelve consecutive days over 40°C was recorded. The heat generated an extremely dry landscape that increased the risk of bushfire and long-term environmental damage. Non-native trees suffered heat stress, dropping their leaves early and falling over suddenly as they lost strength in their roots. Lightning strikes from dry thunderstorms in north-eastern Victoria and south-eastern New South Wales started fires in the Australian Alps, and later again the Black Saturday bushfires in Central Victoria. Many smaller animals such as baby birds, possums, koalas, and bats could not cope in the extreme hot weather. Some were rescued by people and taken to animal shelters, but many more died. These conditions resulted in a 45% increase in the human death rate during this time. Many people were suspected to have died from heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke. The Chief Health Officer of Victoria estimated that 374 additional deaths occurred during this period of extreme heat in comparison to the previous five years.

Extreme heat can affect anyone, but some people are more vulnerable than others.

People who are at most risk during periods of extreme heat include:

- People aged over 65 years, especially those living alone
- People living alone or socially isolated
- People who have a medical condition such as diabetes, kidney disease or mental illness
- People taking medications that may affect the way the body reacts to heat such as:
 - allergy medicines (antihistamines)
 - blood pressure and heart medicines (beta-blockers)
 - seizure medicines (anticonvulsants)
 - water pills (diuretics)
 - antidepressants or antipsychotics
- People with problematic alcohol or other drug use
- People with a disability who may not be able to identify or communicate their discomfort or thirst
- People who have trouble moving around, such as those who are bed bound or in wheelchairs
- People who are overweight or obese
- Pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, babies and young children
- People who work or are physically active outdoors

Preparing for extreme heat

Before summer, you need to prepare yourself and your family for the impacts of extreme heat:

- Check that your fan or air-conditioner works well. Have your air conditioner serviced if necessary
- Stock up on food, water and medicines so you do not have to go out in the heat, e.g. fill up suitable containers or purchase bottled water
- Store medicine safely at the recommended temperature
- Connect with friends, family and neighbours
- If you at risk from bushfire, prepare your property and check your emergency kit
- Familiarise yourself (and others) with heat related illnesses, associated symptoms, how to protect yourself and management of symptoms
- Consider how your access to water will be affected if you lose power. Do you rely on an electric pump to access your water? How will you ensure there is enough water for you, your family and any pets or animals if you lose power and therefore access to your water supply?
- Look at things you can do to make your home cooler such as installing awnings, shade cloths or external blinds on the sides of the house facing the sun

Heat and your health

Heat stress occurs when the body becomes dehydrated and is unable to cool itself enough to maintain a healthy temperature. Heat stress poses a significant risk to people with pre-existing medical conditions, as heat can exacerbate their illness. Many people who go to hospital or die during periods of extreme heat have a pre-existing medical condition that was worsened by the heat. Even if you are relatively healthy, it is important to consider how heat can affect your health.

If heat stress is left untreated, it can lead to heat stroke, which is a life-threatening medical emergency. Heat stroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40.5°C and the body's internal systems start to shut down. This happens when heat causes your body to quickly lose water and salt. Your body is then unable to prevent its temperature rising rapidly. Heatstroke can cause severe and permanent damage to vital organs. If not treated immediately, heat stroke can result in permanent disability and even death. Prevention is the best way to avoid heat stroke. Make sure you and your family are aware of the symptoms of heat stress so you can act quickly if needed.

Symptoms of heat stress and what you should do

The following information on the symptoms of heat stress and what you should do is also available by visiting the Better Health Channel website or downloading the Better Health Channel app to your smartphone.

HEAT-RELATED DISORDER	SYMPTOMS	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
UNUSUAL DISCOMFORT AND HEAT CRAMPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sweating • Thirst, which can be a sign of dehydration • Fatigue, weakness and restlessness • Loss of appetite • Heat rash • Nausea • Muscle spasms, twitching • Moist, cool skin • Muscle pains (generally in the limbs and abdomen) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink more water • Have a cool shower or bath • Do not take salt • Drink glucose • Wear loose, light clothing • Massage/stretch muscles gently to ease spasms/cramps • Consider relocating to a cooler location, such as a cinema or shopping centre
HEAT EXHAUSTION	<p>Similar to symptoms of heat discomfort, but also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pale skin • Heavy sweating • Rapid pulse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drink more water • Lie in a cool place with legs supported and slightly elevated • Loosen and remove outer layers of clothing • Apply damp cloths to head and body • If vomiting continues, seek medical assistance immediately
HEAT STROKE	<p>Similar to symptoms of heat exhaustion, but also:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental condition worsens, confusion • Seizure • Stroke-like symptoms or collapsing • Unconsciousness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek medical assistance immediately by telephoning 000 • Lay person in cool place as above and remove outer clothing • Check airway and breathing (if unconscious) • Cool person quickly by applying damp cloths to head and body, fanning them continuously • Do not offer anything to drink • Wait with person until an ambulance arrives

Responding to extreme heat

The Bureau of Meteorology provides seven-day maximum and minimum temperature forecasts for Victoria. The Bureau of Meteorology's Heatwave Service shows the location and intensity of extreme heat for the current day and the following four days. This service only operates during summer.

The Department of Health and Human Services has identified heat health temperature thresholds for Victoria and may issue a heat health alert. The Department monitors the daily temperature forecasts and calculates the daily average temperature for each district in Victoria. A heat health alert is issued if the temperature is reached or exceeded.

IMPORTANT NOTE: NEVER leave children, adults or animals in parked vehicles. It can be fatal.

During periods of extreme heat, you need to:

- Stay informed and monitor conditions by checking the Bureau of Meteorology or by watching the news
- Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty. If your doctor normally limits your fluids, check how much to drink during hot weather. Avoid 'fizzy', alcoholic and caffeinated drinks and do not take salt tablets
- Encourage children to drink lots of water
- Avoid fizzy, alcoholic and caffeinated drinks such as tea, coffee and energy drinks
- Ensure pets have full water bowls at all times
- Wear lightweight, light coloured and loose-fitting clothing. It will reflect heat and sunlight and help your body keep cool
- Keep your windows closed, but open windows when there is a cool breeze
- Block out the sun by closing curtains, awnings and blinds if this does not affect your ability to monitor conditions for the risk of bushfire
- Avoid strenuous activity such as sport, home improvements and gardening
- Postpone or cancel outdoor activities such as picnics
- Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day from 11am until 3pm. Sunburn limits the body's ability to deal with heat
- If you must go outside, apply sunscreen and wear a hat. Plan your journey to avoid long stretches in the direct sun
- Look after yourself and keep in touch with sick or frail friends, neighbours and relatives
- Watch for signs of heat-related illness
- Keep cool by placing a damp towel around your shoulders, putting your feet in cool water and taking cool (not cold) showers
- If necessary, move to a cooler location with air conditioning, such as your local shops, art galleries, shopping centre or cinema
- If you are at risk from bushfire, check your emergency kit and prepare to action your bushfire plan if necessary
- Eat smaller meals more often and cold meals such as salads. Make sure food that needs refrigeration is stored properly. See here for more information on keeping food safe if there is a power outage
- Seek medical advice if necessary from your local GP. You can also use NURSE-ON-CALL (1300 60 60 24) for 24-hour expert health information and advice. For immediate medical assistance use the National Relay Service to telephone 000

Recovering from extreme heat

Once the cool change will arrive and temperatures inside and outside will drop:

- Keep drinking water, even if you are not thirsty.
- Open your windows and blinds to allow fresh air to circulate through your home.
- Visit your neighbours, family and friends to check if they are in good health. If you are uncertain about anyone's health following a period of extreme heat, seek medical assistance.
- Monitor your pets and animals to check if they are in good health too. Seek medical assistance from your vet if necessary.
- Check your home and garden for any other animals in distress and notify an animal or wildlife shelter if necessary.
- Check your cooling system for any faults. If necessary, organise an electrician to fix your cooling system as soon as possible, so you are ready for the next period of extreme heat.



FLOOD

Am I at risk?

If you live close to a creek, river, major storm water drain or in a low lying area, you may be at risk from floods. Even if your property is not inundated by floodwater during a flood, you could become isolated. Access to other areas and essential facilities such as hospitals might be cut and you could lose access to power and/or water. Floods can pose a risk to your life. The major cause of death during floods is by people driving, riding or walking through floodwater.



Flooding can happen anywhere, at any time. Floods may be caused by more than just rain. Even if you do not live near a river or creek, different types of flooding may still happen in your area from other causes. Flood waters may rise slowly or floods may occur very quickly, as in the case of flash flooding. Many cities and towns in Victoria were built on land prone to flooding, without sufficient consideration of local flood patterns. These places may be frequently affected by floods. Generally the risk of floods is higher near rivers or creeks overflowing from heavy rain or snow melt.

Floods can occur near:

- Rivers and creeks
- Storm water drains
- Coastal regions

Floods can be caused by:

- Steady rain building up over a few days or heavy rain in a short period of time.
- Overflowing drains, where water exceeds the drain capacity after heavy rain or if too much water is diverted from elsewhere.
- Heavy rain or ice and snow melt draining from the mountains to the lowlands.
- Dam breaks, where an earthquake or an error in design or structure causes dams to break and flood surrounding areas. Overflowing dams can also cause flooding downstream.
- Ocean tides, when sea levels are elevated above the usual tidal limit due to the action of intense low pressure systems over the open ocean. This type of flooding is not the same as a tsunami, which is a giant wave caused by an earthquake or volcanic eruption out in the ocean.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Flood water is toxic and poisonous to humans and animals. It is a combination of water, sewerage, rubbish, chemicals and dead animals. Flood water may also contain many hazards that you cannot see, such as live powerlines and sharp objects. Many people have died by walking or driving through flood water – people have drowned, been carried away by fast moving water, or have fallen into holes they could not see.

Personal Story from Andrew

I was looking after a friend's place while they went on holiday. I knew there would be steady rain for a few days but I wasn't too worried about it. One morning I got ready for work and drove down the mountain to the main road. Flood water completely covered the road but it looked calm and not too deep. I was running late but decided it wasn't worth the risk to make the crossing, so I turned around and found another route that was safer, although it took a lot longer. Later I found out a group of people were swept away in their car at that particular spot when they decided to drive across the flooded road. The water was actually much stronger than it looked and was really dangerous.

How to stay informed, monitor conditions and leave early

The safest place to be is away from flooding areas. You can be safe by learning how to stay informed, monitor your conditions and leave early. This is especially important if there is only one way in or out of your area. 'Leaving early' means being away from high-risk areas before there is a flood. It is a precaution you take just in case there is a flood. Leaving early does not mean waiting for a warning or a siren. It does not mean waiting to see water rising. And it certainly does not mean waiting for a knock on the door. Many people have died entering flood water while trying to leave at the last minute.

Flood Watch and the Flood Warning System is central to helping you decide how to avoid the risk of flood. Depending on your level of risk – such as being close to a river or located on low ground prone to flooding – Flood Watch and the Flood Warning System should be your trigger to leave early. Leaving early is especially important if you live with older people, people with a physical or intellectual disability, or people under 16 years of age.

If you are at risk from floods, stay informed and monitor your conditions using several sources of information – do not just rely on one source:

- Monitor your local weather forecast on the Bureau of Meteorology website
- Monitor your local warnings on the VicEmergency website
- Check the Victoria State Emergency Service website for flood warnings – is there a minor, moderate or major flood warning for your area?
- Download and check your Conexu OpenAccess Alerts phone app for traffic and other alerts
- Talk with your family and decide what will be your trigger to leave early before it becomes dangerous to be on the road
- Watch the news for announcements, such as your local ABC news channel and Sky news
- Check YouTube, FaceBook, Twitter and other social media for Auslan interpreted announcements

Monitoring conditions also means being aware of your surroundings at home, at work, on holiday and while travelling throughout Victoria. It is extremely important to know your area well. Knowing your area means that you understand what can happen if there is a flood. There are a number of ways you can learn about your area:

- Use the Victoria State Emergency Service online tool for learning about local flood information
- Contact your local council and ask them for local flood information
- Talk to your neighbours and other long-term residents in your area. Ask them about their experience of floods in your area. Were any roads and bridges blocked by flood water? Did any buildings need to be evacuated or were they flooded? How long did it take for the flood waters to subside? Where did people go if they had to evacuate?

Flood Watch and Flood Warnings

Flood warnings are issued by the Bureau of Meteorology to the Victoria State Emergency Service. The Victoria State Emergency Service then redistributes these warnings to emergency broadcasters, who work together to warn the community about flooding. Current flood warnings for Victoria can be found on the VICSES Current Emergency Information page or the Bureau of Meteorology website.

A Flood Watch notifies the community in specific regions of a potential flood threat from a developing weather situation. It is generally issued 24 to 36 hours before any likely flooding, and is aimed at giving the community a 'heads-up' that flooding is possible. If a Flood Watch is issued and you are living, camping or working along rivers or streams, you should regularly check weather forecasts, rainfall totals and river levels and be ready to take action.

A Flood Warning is issued when flooding is about to, or is already happening. Flood Warnings predict the flood size (minor, moderate or major) and estimate the time that the river height will reach certain river gauges. When Flood Warnings are issued, people in low-lying areas prone to flooding need to activate their flood emergency plan immediately. In major emergencies, the Emergency Alert telephone warning system (text message to mobile/recorded voice message to landline phones) may be used to alert high-risk communities.

Flood Warnings help you make decisions for your own safety. For example, if you are camping beside the river and a Moderate Flood Warning is announced, your safest option is to pack up your campsite and relocate to higher ground.



1. Minor flood

When a Minor Flood Warning is issued, the following may be expected:

- Water levels reach the top of the river banks
- Low lying areas along the waterway are inundated by flood water
- Minor roads may be closed and low level bridges submerged
- Livestock, stock feed and equipment along the waterways are moved to higher ground
- If you are camping or staying in a caravan near water, consider relocating to higher ground

2. Moderate flood

In addition to the above, the following may be expected when a Moderate Flood Warning is issued:

- Water levels overtop river banks and inundates low lying areas
- Flood water starts to approach buildings and infrastructure
- Some properties may be inundated by rising flood water, requiring evacuation
- Caravan parks on waterways may be inundated
- Main traffic routes may be closed by flood water
- As for Minor flooding, you need to relocate livestock, stock feed and equipment to higher location to protect from loss or damage

3. Major flooding

In addition to all of the above, the following may be expected when a Major Flood Warning is issued:

- Water levels overtop river banks and causes extensive inundation on the floodplain
- Farmland is inundated, stock and equipment losses may occur
- Residential and commercial properties are inundated
- Properties and towns may be isolated
- Major traffic routes may be close
- Evacuations may be required
- This is the same level as for the Victorian floods in 2010 – 2011 and the Queensland floods in 2011 and 2015

Learn about Flood Watch and the different Flood Warnings and consider your home, work, travel and holiday locations and travel routes. How high is the risk of flood in the areas you live in or visit? If you are at risk, decide which rating means that you will leave early.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Flood Warnings are not always a given. If you are at risk from a flood, you may or may not receive a Flood Warning. There are many parts of Victoria where there are no warning systems in place. In the event of flash flooding, a Flood Warning is also unlikely. Never wait for a Flood Warning to act.

Preparing for flood

Floods can happen anywhere at any time. If you are at risk from floods, there are three things you need to do to prepare your home, holiday locations and travel routes:

1. Prepare your property:

- Move outdoor furniture or toys to a secure place such as inside your home or garage
- Tie down loose items such as trampolines
- Raise electrical and valuable items onto benches and table. Remember water and electricity do not mix – any flood-damaged electrical goods will need to be replaced
- Raise toxic chemicals such as petrol, machine oil, kerosene off ground
- Always keep your gutters clean to ensure they will drain properly
- Block toilets and drains to prevent sewage backflow
- Create a safe and secure place indoors for your pets. Do not cage them outdoors where they may be in danger. Take them with you if you evacuate



2. Prepare your emergency kit

- Prepare and check your emergency kit. Use the Auslan video Your Emergency Kit and/or the English checklist at the end of this book to help you prepare your emergency kit. Set aside protective clothing for everyone in your family (see page 35). Check your emergency kit at least once every year.

3. Talk with your family and prepare your exit routes

- Once you have prepared your emergency kit, talk with your family about the flood risk in your area and decide what triggers mean you will leave early. Talk about what else you will take with you and where you will go. For example, if you are camping near a river and a moderate flood warning is announced, where will you relocate?
- Check the Victoria State Emergency Service website for information about how flooding affects your local area. Note your exit routes on a hard copy map. Make sure you have more than one exit route in case it is blocked. It is best to have a hard copy map in case there is no mobile phone or GPS reception.
- Practice leaving early and time yourself. Work out how long it takes you pack your car and secure your home so you know how much time it will take when you really do need to leave early.

When you see a Flood Watch or Weather Warning

If you see a Flood Watch or Weather Warning, you need to take action to make sure you and your family will be safe. Keep updated using different sources of information, e.g. television and online websites, and especially be alert to the risk of flash flooding. If you are currently in an area at risk of flooding, check your emergency kit and other essential items. Make sure it is ready to take with you if you need to evacuate.

When you see a Flood Warning

If you receive a Flood Warning, this means that a flood may happen soon or is already happening. You need to act quickly if your area is at risk from flood. Make sure your family members and neighbours are aware of what is happening and leave early if you are at risk from flooding.

- Monitor your conditions because they may change quickly
- Move livestock to a safe area and put your pets in a safe place ready for loading into your car
- Pack your emergency kit and any other important items, such as your computer and pets
- Position your car in the driveway facing out or on the side of the road with the front access gate open
- Tell your neighbours and friends you are leaving and where you will go
- Close your windows and lock doors
- Turn off your gas and electricity at the mains
- Leave via the safest exit plan you have prepared, avoiding low roads and bridges
- Remember that roads and escape routes may be covered or blocked
- Relocate to your community evacuation centre. If you decide to relocate to another location, let your community evacuation centre know where you are and that you are safe

IMPORTANT NOTE: Never drive, ride or walk through floodwater. Driving, riding or walking through floodwater is the main cause of death during floods. Never allow children to play in or near floodwater. This is the main cause of death during floods for children and teenagers. Stay away from drains, culverts and waterways. Water can flow quickly with strong currents. Stay clear of fallen trees, powerlines and damaged buildings.



During a flood: Evacuation

During a flood, Victoria Police, Victoria State Emergency Service and other emergency services may advise you to evacuate. There are two types of evacuation notices that may be issued during a flood:

Prepare to evacuate: You should act quickly as there is a threat to lives and property. Prepare to leave your property by following your plan to leave early.

Evacuate immediately: You must leave immediately as there is a risk to lives. There is no time to pack anything or follow any of the steps above. If your emergency kit is ready, you can take this with you.

During an evacuation, it is very important that you heed advice from emergency services for the safety of other people and yourself.

During a flood: If you cannot leave

You need to decide what to do if there is a flood in your area and you cannot leave. Remember to never drive, ride or walk through floodwater. Many people have died crossing a flooded road on foot or in their car. They have been swept away by the strong current or have been trapped by hidden objects in the water and drowned.

If you are caught at home or in a building:

- Use the National Relay Service to call 000 for life-threatening emergencies
- Use the National Relay Service to call the Victoria State Emergency Service 132 500 for emergency assistance
- Relocate to second floor or roof as your last resort
- It may be cold, wet and frightening. You may be there a long time before rescue

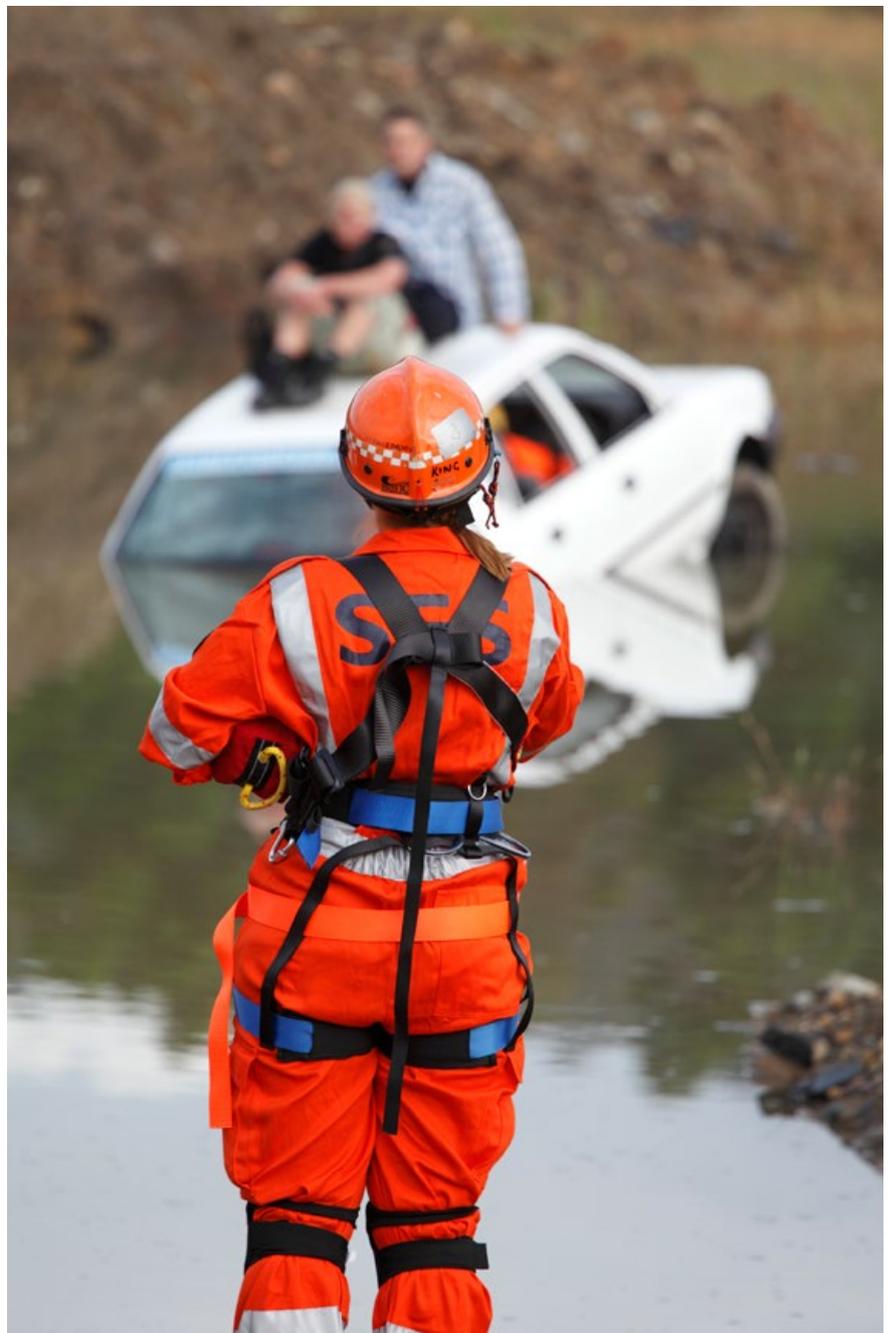
If you are caught in a car and you cannot turn back:

- Unbuckle your seat belt
- Wind your car windows down to ensure you can climb out if necessary – if the flood water rises to your window you will not be able to open it because the water pressure will be too great

Recovering from flood

During a flood, the Victorian emergency services will work together to issue warnings and advice, close roads and keep people safe. Do not try and return home before you receive the “all clear” from emergency services – you could be endangering your life and those of others who will need to help you. Conditions may still be dangerous. There may be mud slides and live powerlines blocking access. If you are unsure, check the Victoria State Emergency Service website to see if your route home is fully open. Do not leave your safe place until you know you can arrive home safely.

Once the roads open again, you may be able to inspect your property. This can be a very difficult experience because you may not know what to expect. Will your home be standing? Or will everything be destroyed? It is possible your home may be severely damaged.



When you first re-enter your property, you must be very careful:

- Wear suitable protective clothing, including face mask, sturdy boots and strong gloves (see page 35)
- Check the electricity and gas is turned off at the mains before re-entering your property
- Check the structural stability of your property before re-entering your property – do not enter if you suspect structural damage
- Use a torch to inspect the interior of your property, watching for any slip, trip or fall hazards
- Check for damage to windows, walls, roof and other internal structural elements
- Stay alert to potential hazards such as toxic chemicals, electricity and asbestos which may pose a risk to your health
- If you suspect you are risk to asbestos or other hazards, engage the services of a professional to inspect your property
- Take photos to document evidence of any flood damage at your property – you will need this for your insurance claims
- Power points, electrical equipment and appliances, electrical hot water systems exposed to flood water or damaged should be inspected by a qualified electrician to ensure they are safe for use
- Gas appliances and gas bottles exposed to flood water or damaged should be inspected by a qualified professional to ensure they are safe for use
- Discard all food and stock feed that has been exposed to floodwater – it is poisonous
- Use only new utensils and personal items, including soap and toothbrushes
- Ensure you have a good supply of bottled drinking water
- Do not assume your tap water is safe to drink until confirmed by emergency services

Cleaning up after a flood can take time. Your community may rally around and help each other. Emergency Relief Centres may be established in response to major floods. These centres may offer personal support, financial assistance, temporary accommodation, and referrals to government and other services. When you arrive at an Emergency Relief Centre, emergency services personnel and/or volunteers will assist you to access the right support for your situation. Be sure to ask for an Auslan interpreter or other communication service if you need it. Be aware that Emergency Relief Centres can be very busy and chaotic, although every effort is made to run them smoothly. More information on accessing emergency relief is available in Auslan and English at www.recovery.vic.gov.au.

Sometimes bad things happen after floods. Other people may come from out of town to sticky-beak at the damage or to loot what they can find. Be alert to this risk and keep an eye out for yourself and your neighbours.

It may be difficult to deal with insurance and other paperwork. The insurance company may come and inspect your property and you may need to talk to your bank. You may also have a lot of cleaning up to do. Be careful when you begin cleaning up as many building materials, such as asbestos, may be hazardous to your health. Request a professional to give you advice. Remember that everything takes time. Do not rush your decisions. Psychological support is available. Think and plan carefully. Ask for the support you need. Seek help if you need it from your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, doctor and from counsellors. Look after yourself, your family, neighbours and friends.



STORM

Am I at risk?

Severe storms can happen anywhere, at any time of year. They are often accompanied by strong winds, large hailstones and lightning. Storms cost Victorians an average of \$28 million each year, and can cause significant damage to homes, businesses and community infrastructure. This year already, emergency services have responded to more than 15,000 requests for assistance as a result of storms. Much of the damage has been the result of tree branches, trampolines, outdoor furniture or other loose items such as roof tiles becoming flying projectiles in strong winds. Flooding due to blocked drains, cars damaged while parked under trees and falling overhanging branches are some of the other major causes of preventable damage during a storm. It is important to be aware of the dangers of severe weather and learn some simple, useful ways you can take responsibility for your own safety and your property.



Severe storm warning system

Severe storm warnings are issued by the Bureau of Meteorology. Severe storm warnings generally cover a large area and are valid for up to three hours. They will often describe the type of events that could accompany a storm such as lightning, large hail, strong winds, tornadoes or flash flooding.

There are two types of severe storm warnings:

Severe Thunderstorm Warnings: Issued for extremely dangerous thunderstorms. While we experience many thunderstorms each year, some more intense thunderstorms are classified as severe thunderstorms, due to their potential to cause significant localised damage. Severe thunderstorms can cause damage through damaging wind gusts, large hail, tornadoes or flash flooding.

Severe Weather Warnings: Issued when severe weather is expected that is not directly related to severe thunderstorms, tropical cyclones or bushfires. Examples of severe weather include land gales, squalls, flash-flooding, dangerous surf or tides.

Preparing for severe storm

Severe storms can happen any time. When a storm warning is broadcast, you must act quickly:

- Get your emergency kit ready
- Check that your neighbours know about the warning and are prepared
- Bring children and pets indoors. Do not secure pets in outdoor cages because they may be impacted by flooding or debris carried by strong winds
- Move outdoor furniture or toys to a secure place such as inside your home or garage
- Tie down loose items such as trampolines
- Remember the heavy rain lightning experienced during severe storms often lead to bushfires or flooding emergencies, so you need to stay informed, monitor your conditions and be alert to these risks.

During a severe storm: Take shelter

If there is a severe storm warning, you need to make sure you, your family and your pets are safely indoors as soon as possible:

- Stay inside and keep away from windows
- Stay informed with the Bureau of Meteorology, VicEmergency and Victoria State Emergency Service websites
- If outdoors, find safe shelter away from trees, powerlines, waterways or metal structures
- Use a torch instead of candles if there is a blackout, to reduce the risk of fire
- Park your car under cover away from trees, powerlines, drains and waterways. DO NOT try to re-locate your car if the storm has already started. If you are in a flood-prone area, do not park your car in an underground car park
- Unplug electrical appliances during thunderstorms to avoid electric shock

During a severe storm: If you are caught outdoors

If you are driving:

- Slow down and turn headlights on
- Stay alert and watch for hazards such as powerlines, fast flowing water and tree branches
- If visibility is poor, pull off the road, put your hazard lights on, and park away from powerlines, gutters, waterways and trees

IMPORTANT NOTE: Never drive, ride or walk through floodwater. Stay clear of creeks, drains, causeways, gutters and streams – flash flooding may occur quickly and cause injury or death. Stay clear of fallen trees, powerlines and damaged buildings.

Be alert to flash flooding

Flash flooding usually results from heavy rainfall falling over a short period of time during a severe storm. They occur so quickly that it is often difficult to provide a detailed warning, or any warning at all. This is why it is important to keep away from waterways before, during and after a severe storm.

If you decide to evacuate, do so well before flooding begins. If you do not leave early enough and become trapped by rising floodwater inside your home or business, stay inside your building and seek the highest part. Stay there and use the National Relay Service to call 000 if your emergency is life-threatening.



Recovering from severe storm

When there is a severe storm, the Victorian emergency services will work together to issue warnings, close dangerous roads, and keep people safe. They will give the all clear to get back on the road only when it is safe to do so. Do not try and get on the road before they give the “all clear” – you could be endangering your life and those of others who will need to help you. Conditions may still be dangerous. There may be fallen trees and live powerlines blocking access. If you are unsure, check the Victoria State Emergency Service website to see if the roads you need to access are open. Do not leave your safe place until you know you can travel safely.

It is possible your home may have been damaged during the storm. When you first venture outside and inspect your property, you must be very careful:

- Wear suitable protective clothing, including face mask, sturdy boots and strong gloves (see page 35)
- Keep clear of damaged buildings, powerlines and trees
- Stay alert to any slip, trip or fall hazards, especially tree branches that may fall
- Use a torch to carry out inspections and check for damage to windows, walls and roof
- Stay alert to potential hazards such as toxic chemicals, electricity and asbestos which may pose a risk to your health
- Notify the Victoria State Emergency Service of any fallen trees, tree branches and other hazards
- If you suspect you are at risk to asbestos or other hazards, engage the services of a professional to inspect your property
- Take photos to document evidence of any flood damage at your property – you will need this for your insurance claims

Cleaning up after a severe storm can take time. Your community may rally around and help each other. Emergency Relief Centres may be established in response to severe storms. These centres may offer personal support, financial assistance, temporary accommodation, and referrals to government and other services. When you arrive at an Emergency Relief Centre, emergency services personnel and/or volunteers will assist you to access the right support for your situation. Be sure to ask for an Auslan interpreter or other communication service if you need it. Be aware that Emergency Relief Centres can be very busy and chaotic, although every effort is made to run them smoothly. More information on accessing emergency relief is available in Auslan and English at www.recovery.vic.gov.au



YOUR EMERGENCY KIT

WHERE TO FIND WARNINGS AND INFORMATION

Do not rely on one source for emergency information.

Listen to ABC Local Radio, commercial and designated community radio stations

Watch TV: Sky News | Local ABC News | ABC News 24

Websites: www.emergency.vic.gov.au | www.ses.vic.gov.au | www.cfa.vic.gov.au
www.delwp.vic.gov.au | www.mfb.vic.gov.au | www.bom.gov.au/australia
www.deafemergencyinfo.com.au

Facebook: www.facebook.com/cfavic | www.facebook.com/vicses

Twitter: @CFA_Updates | @vicseswarnings

YouTube: www.youtube.com/vicsestv

1800 240 667 The Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) is a freecall.

1800 555 677 Callers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have a speech/communication impairment can contact VBIL via the National Relay Service on this number.

131 450 If you do not speak English, call the Translating and Interpreting Service for translated information from VBIL. If you know someone who cannot speak English, provide them with this number.

IN SOME CIRCUMSTANCES

- You may receive an SMS to your mobile if it is switched on.
- You may receive a call to your landline if you have access to electricity.
- Emergency Alert is a system used by emergency services to send text messages to mobile phones and voice messages to landlines about emergencies. For more information, go to www.emergencyalert.gov.au
- Keep a hard copy map of your local area in your emergency kit. Use the map to locate where fires or floods may be in your surrounding area.
- If you are travelling through Victoria, you need to monitor conditions. Reconsider visiting high-risk bushfire areas on fire risk days and high-risk flood areas when there is a warning announced.

WHERE TO FIND RECOVERY INFORMATION

Victorian Emergency Recovery Information Line (1300 799 232)

Emergency Relief and Recovery Victoria website (www.recovery.vic.gov.au)

Nurse-on-Call (1300 60 60 24)

Websites www.redcross.org.au

www.asbestos.vic.gov.au

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.recovery.vic.gov.au/auslan



DEAF 
EMERGENCY
INFORMATION

www.deafemergencyinfo.com.au
www.vicdeaf.com.au



The Deaf Emergency Information resource kit was developed by Vicdeaf with thanks to:

