Leaving Early

Bushfire Survival Planning Template

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Your Bushfire Survival Plan

Use this guide to help you write your Bushfire Survival Plan. It is important to read the Fire Ready Kit in its entirety while developing and discussing your plan with your household. You will need to consider your personal circumstances and how they will affect your plan.

Not everyone thinks clearly in an emergency. A written and well-practised plan will help you remember what needs to be done during a crisis. It also lists the preparations you will need to do to help you become fire ready.

Your plan needs to outline:

- Actions before the bushfire season.
- Actions during the bushfire season.
- Actions leading up to fire risk days.
- Your back-up plan.

- Every year you will need to update your plan. What year is this plan for? _____
- Who is this plan for?

_____

_____

In high-risk areas, leaving early is the safest option on **Code Red** days. Do not wait and see. Know your trigger to leave – make a decision about when you will leave, where you will go, how you will get there, when you will return and what you will do if you cannot leave.

Only consider staying with your property on **Extreme** or **Severe** days if you are fully prepared and can actively defend your home. Defending a house requires at least two fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally prepared to work long and hard in arduous and difficult conditions. It also requires at least 10,000 litres of water, protective clothing, and appropriate firefighting hoses and pumps.

If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high-risk bushfire areas early is your safest option.

Children, the elderly, or people with special needs should be well away from the threat. The safest option is to leave early.

Attend a community meeting in your local area. Check **cfa.vic.gov.au** or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) on 1800 240 667 for meeting dates and locations.

If you – or someone you care for – will need help to prepare and leave early when there is high fire risk, get a Red Cross *Bushfires: Preparing to Leave Early* guide at **cfa.vic.gov.au** or request a copy by phoning VBIL on 1800 240 667.

Fill out this Template and keep it handy

Actions before the bushfire season

Preparing your property – house maintenance

This includes:

- ☑ Clearing gutters of leaves and rubbish.
- ☑ Ensuring underfloor areas are enclosed or screened.
- ☑ Sealing gaps, vents and roof spaces to prevent embers entering your house.
- ☑ Storing fuels and chemicals away from your house.
- ☑ Storing LPG gas tanks appropriately. They should be vented away from your house.
- ☑ Moving woodpiles away from the house.
- ☑ Removing flammable items such as boxes, doormats and furniture from decks and verandahs.

- ■ Who will do this? _____
- ■ What else will you do?

_____

_____

Preparing your property – vegetation management

This includes:

- ☑ Clearing fine fuels from around your home (fine fuels are those that are the same thickness or less than a pencil, such as grass, bark and leaves).
- ☑ Keeping grass areas well trimmed and watered. Grass should be no more than 10 centimetres high.
- ☑ Raking up and reducing leaf litter (dead leaves). Leaf litter must be no more than one centimetre high.
- ☑ Removing flammable mulch from around your house. It is extremely dangerous if used within a 10-metre radius of your home, especially under windows.
- ☑ Removing or trimming shrubs. There should be no shrubs over one metre next to or below windows.
- ☑ Trimming tree branches overhanging your house.

- ■ Who will do this? _____
- ■ What else will you do? _____

_____

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Actions during the bushfire season

List contact details of those who need to know about your plan.

Name	Relationship	Contact numbers

- How will you monitor weather conditions and know the daily Fire Danger Rating (FDR) in your area? _____

_____

Be vigilant in monitoring the weather forecasts to identify predicted days of high fire risk. Take note of the Fire Danger Rating forecasts for coming days, and whether a Total Fire Ban (TFB) has been declared. A TFB is a day where certain activities that may cause fire are banned, as fires are more likely to start. This needs to be taken into account with your planning.

Put together your Emergency Kit

This includes:

- ☑ Protective clothing.
- ☑ Food and water.
- ☑ Wool blankets.
- ☑ Medications and toiletries.
- ☑ A change of clothes.
- ☑ A list of the contact numbers for your doctor, dentist, local hospital, chemist, vet, municipal councils, gas, electricity and water providers.
- ☑ Important papers (e.g. passport, insurance policies, will).
- ☑ A First-Aid Kit.
- ☑ Pet food, water and bedding if needed.

- Where will you store your Emergency Kit? It must be stored in an easy-to-access location.

_____

_____

- What is your plan for the safety of pets during relocation? Pets need to be kept cool and hydrated.

- Do you have adequate home and contents insurance? Y ☐ N ☐
- List your irreplaceable family keepsakes and valuables. Identify a safe location to store these valuables. Where will you locate them? Consider moving these out of the area during summer.

Actions leading up to fire risk days

- **Who** will be at home – family or any visitors at the house?

Weekdays	Weekends/school holidays

- **Where** will you go? What is your planned destination? Can you stay there for a number of days?

- **How** will you get there?

- Know your local area – have a map. List the names of your surrounding towns and suburbs.

- Identify alternative routes out of the area.

Always consider the circumstances of the day.

- Do you have transport organised? Y ☐ N ☐
- Will you have enough petrol or fuel so you don't need to stop to fill up? Y ☐ N ☐

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Trigger to leave

Your trigger to leave is what prompts you to act. It could be the Fire Danger Rating of **Severe**, **Extreme** or **Code Red**.

- What is your trigger to leave?

_____

- When will you leave? _____
- Have you discussed the trigger with all household members?

_____

- Is this the same trigger for every household member?

_____

- If not, what does this mean for your planning?

_____

Getting ready to go

- ☑ Stay updated on fire information so you will know if a fire has started near you.
- ☑ Move livestock to a safe area and put your pets in a safe place ready for loading in the car.
- ☑ Pack personal items such as a change of clothing for each person and toys for children and pets and put them in the car.
- ☑ If your car is behind an electric garage door, take it out of the garage and position it in the driveway facing out or on the side of the road.
- ☑ Remove any material that could burn easily from around your house, on decks, verandahs and pergola areas. This includes mats, outdoor furniture and woodpiles.

Before you leave

- ☑ Add final items to your Emergency Kit such as medications, prescriptions, mobile phone chargers, pet food and water for everyone.
- ☑ Pack the car, remembering your most important items such as wallet, cards, keys, banking, medical and insurance documents (these should be easily accessible on a USB stick or in an expanding file).
- ☑ Turn off the gas supply.
- ☑ Block the downpipes and partially fill the gutters with water, if time permits.
- ☑ Make sure everyone is wearing protective clothing – long pants, long-sleeved shirts and sturdy shoes such as leather boots. Clothes should be loose fitting and made from natural fibres like pure wool, heavy cotton drill or denim. Do not wear synthetics.
- ☑ Tell people you are leaving.
- ☑ Close all doors and windows and lock doors.
- ☑ Leave the front or access gate open.

- Who will do this? _____
- What else will you do? _____

_____

CAUTION

Leaving early is a precaution you take just in case there is a fire. 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.

- Which radio station/s will you be tuned into? How will you monitor conditions?

- How will you know it is safe to return?

- Other things to consider:

  How will your plan be affected by several fire risk days in a row? Remember, it is important to minimise the disruption caused to your household by relocating. It is best to go to places where you can continue with normal activities as much as possible.

Your back-up plan

- Where do you plan to shelter if it is unsafe to leave your property or your area? This is an extremely dangerous situation. Shelter options may include a well-prepared property or home (yours or a neighbour), a private bunker (that meets current regulations) or a designated community shelter or refuge.

- Do you have a designated Neighbourhood Safer Place **(Place of Last Resort)** in your area? If so, note its address in your plan and keep that address handy should you need to access it as a last resort option.

- Other last resort options when fighting for your life may be a stationary car in a cleared area, a ploughed paddock or reserve, or a body of water, such as a dam or swimming pool.

Note: Last resort options do not guarantee survival. There is a high risk of trauma, injury or death.

For more information about bushfires visit cfa.vic.gov.au or
call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (VBIL) on 1800 240 667
or via National Relay Service on 1800 555 677

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