



PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.

Your Guide to Keeping Informed about
Bushfire Danger

Before a fire starts - Fire Danger Rating
After a fire starts - Alert Messages

16 September 2009

Introduction

In September 2009, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) adopted a new nationally developed and agreed framework for bushfire information and warnings

The following material is provided to assist you to understand the ACT community information and warning arrangements, what you can expect and what sort of information might be provided to you.

It is important that you carefully read the advice provided and familiarise yourself and your family with the content. It is important that you are well informed so that you can make appropriate safety choices when confronted with bushfire danger.



PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE. - These 3 words embody the key principles of the ACT Emergency Services Agency's Community Information and Warnings policy and approach.

If you live in bushfire risk areas, then you need to be as informed as possible so that you can make decisions to improve your safety and that of your family and friends.

PREPARE

What will you do if a bushfire threatens your family, your house or your business? Do you have a survival plan and have you discussed it with your family?

You must decide what you are going to do well before the fire season starts and make the necessary preparation.

What will you do to be safe?

- If you have no time to leave and a fire threatens you – what will you do, where will you shelter and how will you get there.
- If you are going to leave - prepare for where you are going to go, how you are going to get there and what you are going to take.
- If you are going to stay, prepare for a frightening experience. Have a plan for how you are going to survive and where you will shelter. Find out what equipment you need and determine what you will do if things don't go according to plan.
- Prepare your home and your property to survive the fire front. Even if your plan is to leave, the more you prepare your home, the better the odds it will survive the fire.
- Know where to find information:

Radio

666 ABC Canberra	AM 666
2CC Canberra	AM 1206
2CA Canberra	AM 1053
MIX 106.3 Canberra	FM 106.3
FM 104.7 Canberra	FM 104.7

Television

ABC TV Canberra
PRIME TV Canberra
SOUTHERN CROSS TEN Canberra
WIN TV Canberra

Press

The Canberra Times

Telephone

Canberra Connect 13 22 81

Websites

ACT Emergency Services Agency www.esa.act.gov.au



ACT

Fires can threaten suddenly and without warning; you should be prepared to act without receiving any emergency warning, so:

- Act decisively the moment you know there is danger
- Know what the fire danger rating is for your area
- Watch for signs of fire, especially smoke and flames
- Put your preparations into action; do not just 'wait and see'
- Look and listen for information on TV, radio, the internet, mobile phones and through speaking with neighbours

SURVIVE

The safest place is to be away from the fire.

Being involved in a fire may be one of the most traumatic experiences of your life.

Survival and safety depends on the decisions you make; are you bushfire ready?

You will hear and see
PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE.
a lot in the media and in education campaigns.

It is important that you understand what it means and know what to do.



Before a fire starts – the Fire Danger Rating

To help you assess your level of danger you need to understand the Fire Danger Rating.

The rating, which is a combination of words and numbers, acts as an expert assessment of the difficulty of controlling a fire and the possible impact on you.

The Fire Danger Rating is an early indicator to you about the potential danger, should a bushfire start. This rating is an important piece of information for your Bushfire Survival Plan.

When a Fire Danger Rating is advised, you need to take it seriously and be ready to act.

Fire Danger Rating	Potential Fire Behaviour and Impact
CATASTROPHIC (CODE RED) FDI 100+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving – flames will be higher than roof tops. • People will die and be injured. Thousands of homes and businesses will be destroyed. • Well prepared, well constructed and defended homes may not be safe during the fire. Construction standards do not go beyond a Fire Danger Index of 100. • Thousands of embers will be blown around. • Spot fires will move quickly and come from many directions, up to 20 km ahead of the fire. • Leaving is the best option.
EXTREME FDI 75-99	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving – flames will be higher than roof tops. • People will die and be injured. Hundreds of homes and businesses will be destroyed. • Only well prepared, well constructed and actively defended houses are likely to offer safety during a fire. • Thousands of embers will be blown around. • Spot fires will move quickly and come from many directions, up to 6 km ahead of the fire. • Leaving is the safest option for your survival.
SEVERE FDI 50-74	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires will be uncontrollable and move quickly– flames may be higher than roof tops. • There is a chance people may die and be injured. Some homes and businesses will be destroyed. • Well prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire. • Expect embers to be blown around. • Spot fires may occur up to 4 km ahead of the fire • Leaving is the safest option for your survival. Your home will only offer safety if it and you are well prepared and you can actively defend it during a fire.
VERY HIGH FDI 25-49	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires can be difficult to control – flames may burn into the tree tops. • There is a low chance people may die or be injured. Some homes and businesses may be damaged or destroyed. • Well prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire. • Embers may be blown ahead of the fire. • Spot fires may occur up to 2 km ahead of the fire. • Your home will only offer safety if it is and you are well prepared and you can



Fire Danger Rating	Potential Fire Behaviour and Impact
	actively defend it during a fire.
HIGH FDI 12-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires can be controlled • Loss of life is highly unlikely and damage to property will be limited • Well prepared and actively defended houses can offer safety during a fire. • Embers may be blown ahead of the fire. • Spot fires can occur close to the main fire. <p>• Know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes</p>
LOW-MODERATE FDI 0-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fires can be easily controlled • Little to no risk to life and property <p>• Know where to get more information and monitor the situation for any changes</p>



When a fire starts - Alert Messages

Fires can threaten suddenly and without warning, so you should always be ready to act on the basis you may not receive an official warning.

The ACT Emergency Services Agency will provide you with as much information as is possible through a wide range of mechanisms. Three levels of messages, each increasing in their importance will be used.

You need to understand the levels of messages and what they are for. They will alert you to danger so that you can take action.

It is important that you do not rely solely on receiving an official message and should always be aware of what is happening around you, as you could find yourself suddenly in danger.

There are three types of alert messages:

- **Emergency Warning** – *‘Bushfire Emergency Warning’* - you are in danger and need to take action immediately. You will be impacted by fire. This message will usually be preceded by an emergency warning signal (a siren sound).
- **Watch and Act** – *‘Bushfire Watch and Act’* message – a fire is approaching you, conditions are changing; you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.
- **Advice** – *‘Bushfire Advice’* message – a fire has started – there is no immediate danger; general information to keep you up to date with developments.

You should take these messages seriously and listen to or read carefully the information given.



An Emergency Warning

An emergency warning is the highest level of message to tell you of impending danger. It will usually be preceded in the broadcast media (radio and television) with the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (a loud whooping noise) to get your attention.

A Bushfire Emergency Warning means you are about to be impacted by a fire. The severity of the fire and time to impact will influence what you do.

What should you do?

- Act immediately. Do not 'wait and see'; That is a dangerous option.
- If the way is clear immediately leave to a safer place – take your Home Emergency Kit with you.
- Last minute evacuation in a vehicle or on foot ahead of a bushfire is dangerous.
- You must seek shelter; heat from the fire will kill you well before the flames reach you.
- Even the best designed, well constructed and defended house may not provide safety in catastrophic conditions.
- Only well prepared, well constructed and actively defended homes can provide places of safety when the fire danger conditions are extreme. Make sure you begin patrolling your property to extinguish spot fires from ember attack.
- Do not underestimate the effort required to maintain your house as a place of safety during a fire.
- If you haven't already prepared your home as a place of safety, it is too late to do it now.
- Be prepared to lose power, water pressure and most likely mobile and landline phones.



A Watch and Act Message

A watch and act message represents an escalating fire danger situation. A fire is approaching you and the situation around you is changing. Your life may come under threat. You need to act now to prepare for the approaching fire and to protect you, your family and your neighbours.

What should you do?

- Monitor radio, television and internet for information on where the fire is.

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- On Catastrophic or Extreme fire danger rated days you should leave to a safer place now! – take your Home Emergency Kit with you
- Last minute evacuation ahead of a bushfire is dangerous, so relocate early
- Monitor radio, television and internet for information on the fires progress towards you
- Speak to your neighbours, make sure they know a fire is coming
- Know the Fire Danger Rating for your area– it is an early indicator about the potential danger
- Children, people with mobility issues, the sick and the elderly should leave to a safer place regardless of whether someone is staying home
- If you plan to use your home as a place of safety, activate your defence plan now. Check pumps, generators, tanks and hoses are all working. Make final preparations to clear any combustible material from around the house. Make sure your Home Emergency Kit is prepared
- Get your battery operated radio ready, check it works. Use your car radio if you have to



An Advice Message

An advice message will provide information of fires that are currently posing no threat to life and property. This may be because:

- It is a small controllable fire
- It is a fuel reduction burn being conducted by a fire agency/agencies
- It is a fire burning in a remote area away from people, homes and structures

What should you do?

- Note the location of the fire and avoid the area where the fire is burning
- Monitor the situation for any changes; a watch and act message will be issued if the situation changes



Home Emergency Kit

Make sure your transport and Home Emergency Kit is ready whether you are going to leave or if you need to stay. Experience shows that power, water and telephones usually fail, so you need to have backups.

It is recommended that you prepare a relocation kit which contains the items below. It will also be valuable if you choose to stay as damage from the fire means you will be without power and mains water.

For the family:

- Battery powered AM/FM radio plus spare batteries
- A torch
- Woollen blankets
- First aid kit
- Insurance papers and personal documents such as wills, financial papers and passports
- Photos
- Snacks and water
- Can opener
- On the day - add money/credit cards, medications, drinking water and food for 24 hours

For your pets:

- Basket/cage/leash
- Dish for water
- Pet food
- On the day -add any medications and drinking water

Throughout an emergency situation it is important you stay fully informed. You can do this through the following outlets:

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**For more information:
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or

call Canberra Connect on

13 22 81

