

# My Personal Bushfire To-Do List

## Actions leading up to the bushfire season



### Preparing your property

#### House Maintenance

- Clear and maintain gutters of leaves, twigs and rubbish.
- Ensure underfloor areas are enclosed or screened.
- Seal all gaps, vents and roof spaces to prevent embers entering your house.
- Store fuels and chemicals away from your house.
- Store LPG gas tanks appropriately. They should be vented away from your house and secured with a chain.
- Move woodpiles away from the house.

#### Vegetation Maintenance

- Clear 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).
- Keep grass areas well trimmed and watered. Grass should be no more than 10 centimetres high within 30 metres of your home.
- Rake and clear leaf litter (dead leaves) regularly. Leaf litter must be no more than one centimetre in depth.
- Remove flammable mulch from around your house. It is extremely dangerous if used within 10 metres of your home, especially under windows.
- Remove or trim shrubs. There should be no shrubs over one metre next to or below windows.
- Trim tree branches overhanging your house.

\*Many of these actions should be ongoing leading up to and during the bushfire season. Depending on your circumstances, you may need to do them more than once.

#### Other

- Ensure you have adequate home and contents insurance.
- 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.

### Putting together your Emergency Kit

- Protective clothing.
- A change of clothes.
- Food and water.
- Identification papers (e.g. photo ID, passport, insurance policies, will).
- Pure woolen blankets.
- A first-aid kit.
- Medications and toiletries.
- Pet food, water and bedding if needed.
- A hard disk with all important documents, photos etc. on it.
- A list of the contact numbers for your doctor, dentist, local hospital, chemist, vet, municipal councils, gas, electricity and water providers.

### Before you leave actions

- 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 such as 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 unlocked.
- Decide on your primary destination.
- Decide on your back-up destination.

### Getting ready to go

- Stay updated on fire information so you will know if a fire has started near you.
- Move livestock to a large, safely fenced 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 and outdoor furniture.

### Caution

Leaving early is you taking action to protect your life and the lives of your family members. In extreme and catastrophic 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.

### Emotionally preparing for fire

You can prepare by understanding how you are likely to respond in stressful situations. Take some time to think and learn about the following three main areas:

**Anticipate** – that the bushfire season and the occurrence of bushfires will be stressful and will cause your body and mind to react in a very specific way. Recognise your body's stress response and think about how it may affect your ability to respond in the event of a bushfire. For example, you may find it difficult to think clearly and to make decisions.

**Identify** – the thoughts, feelings and physical sensations that a bushfire is likely to trigger for you.

**Manage** – the different aspects of your body's stress response. Learn strategies that help you to manage your stress. This can help you to function effectively when faced with a bushfire.