

SECTION 04

PLAN FOR SURVIVAL



NEED SOME HELP?

- Visit **cfa.vic.gov.au**
- Call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on **1800 240 667** or via National Relay Service on **1800 555 677**

In high-risk areas, leaving early is your only safe option on Code Red fire danger days.

Leaving early is also your best option on **Extreme** and **Severe** fire danger days. Fires are unpredictable and plans can fail. Having a backup plan can save your life if you are caught in a fire.

Know the Fire Danger Ratings at your location. The Fire Danger Rating is your trigger to act. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the situation if a fire starts. For more about Fire Danger Ratings, see page 14.

KNOW YOUR SURVIVAL OPTIONS

SHELTER CLOSE BY

If you cannot leave the area it is critical to consider what shelter options are close by.

Shelter options may include a:

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

If sheltering in a building during a bushfire, make sure you have a point of exit in every room used as a shelter.

Do not shelter in the bathroom as it typically has:

- only one door out
- a small window that is often frosted.

In a bushfire, it is critical to maintain visibility to know what is happening outside with the fire.



DON'T GET TRAPPED

- For your safety, you need to be active while sheltering. Know if you need to move to a safer position.
- If you are not able to see what is going on, you are placing yourself in a potentially life-threatening situation.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACE (PLACE OF LAST RESORT)

Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) are places of last resort when all other plans have failed.

They can provide some protection from direct flame and radiant heat during a fire.

Neighbourhood Safer Places:

- may still be subject to ember attack
- are not relief centres
- do not guarantee safety
- have limited facilities
- do not provide support or services
- are not places to relocate to when leaving early
- are listed at cfa.vic.gov.au
- are not in every town. You will need to identify other shelter options in your area.

SAFETY IN THE CAR

Cars are a very dangerous place to be during a bushfire. They offer very little protection from radiant heat. If you get caught on the road, this is a very dangerous situation.

To increase your protection from radiant heat:

- ✓ park behind a solid structure to block as much heat as you can. If this is not possible, then pull over to the side of the road into a clear area, well away from debris that may ignite
- ✓ wind up your car windows, close the vents, put on your hazard lights and headlights, leave the engine running and air-conditioning on recirculate
- ✓ get down as low as possible below window level
- ✓ cover up with a wool blanket until the fire front passes. If you have water, drink it
- ✓ get out of the car once the fire has gone.

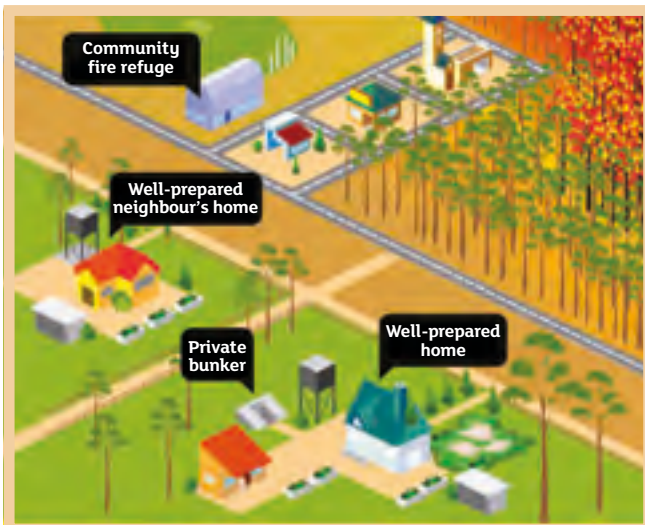
YOUR BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL: WHAT TO CONSIDER



Leave Early

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

Always the safest option

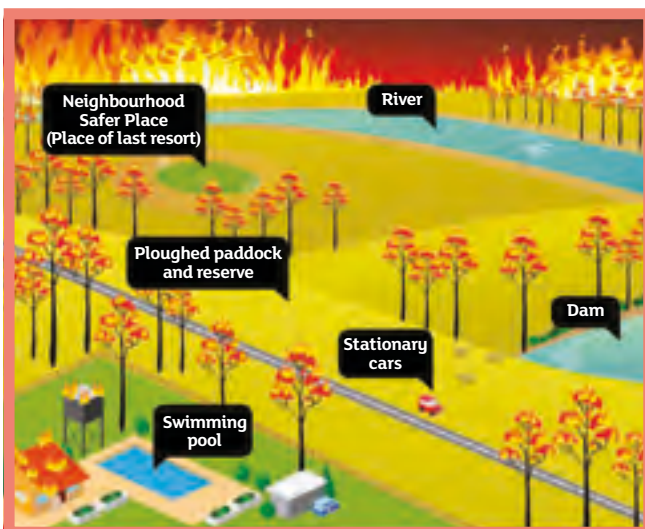


Well Prepared

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 a neighbour) that you can actively defend
- 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 to you, taking shelter in one of the below may protect from radiant heat:

- Neighbourhood Safer Place (place of last resort)
- stationary car in a clear area
- ploughed paddock or reserve
- body of water* (such as the beach, swimming pool, dam or river).

High risk of trauma, injury or death. These are last resort options and do not guarantee your survival.

* This does not include a water tank. Dams may not be reliable as their water levels fluctuate and they may be empty in summer.



PROTECT YOURSELF FROM RADIANT HEAT

Radiant heat is the biggest killer in a fire.

The following clothing can offer some protection from radiant heat but it may not save your life.

Keep a set ready for each member of the family:

- ✓ a long-sleeved, collared shirt and pants made from cotton or some other natural fibre.
- ✓ sturdy boots and woollen socks.
- ✓ tough leather garden gloves – not rubber or synthetic.

✓ a wide-brimmed hat to protect your head.

✓ a 'P2' type mask or cotton scarf/hankerchief for face protection and to filter smoke.

✓ eye protection such as smoke goggles to shield your eyes.

You need to make sure all your skin is covered. Cover up as soon as you are alerted to fire in your area. Read more about the destructive force of radiant heat on pages 7 and 26.

STAY AND DEFEND

- If you live in a high-risk bushfire area, your home will not be defensible on a **Code Red** day.
- Even people who are extremely well prepared can die fighting fires at home. The best way to survive a bushfire is to be away from the threat.
- Most homes in high-risk bushfire areas are not built to withstand bushfire.
- Many homes close to or surrounded by heavily forested land are extremely difficult to defend.
- Defending your home is very risky – you could be seriously injured or die.
- Survival must be your main priority.
- Defending a house requires at least two able-bodied, fit and determined adults who are physically and mentally prepared to work long and hard in arduous and difficult conditions.
- Only consider staying with your property on **Extreme** or **Severe** days if you are fully prepared and can actively defend your home. Visit cfa.vic.gov.au for more information and advice on Fire Danger Ratings (also page 14).
- Discuss your plan with all family members. Everyone should be aware that staying to defend may involve trauma, injury or possibly death.
- Children, the elderly, people with special needs or a disability should be well away from the threat.

If you are confident you are capable and prepared to actively defend your property, use the *Stay and Defend* kit and planning template. They are at the back of this section.