

# Community Disaster Preparation

## Moving to the country: What you need to know

[www.communitydisasterprep.com.au](http://www.communitydisasterprep.com.au)

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## It's not the same as the city

Well of course, that's why you're moving!

There are so many benefits of living in a rural area: room to move, nature on your doorstep, views, space for your horses/dogs/animals, supportive communities, peace and quiet...

Those same attractions can turn into risks in the event of an emergency like bushfire, storm or flood:

- No neighbours?  
No-one to hear a call for help.
- Nature on your doorstep?  
That lovely vegetation might bring the bushfire right up to your house.
- Space for your animals?  
What if you're away when a disaster strikes? Roads will be closed and you can't help them.
- Picturesque creek?  
It's likely to flood in a major rain event.
- Supportive communities?  
They have their own families to protect in a disaster.
- Peace and quiet?  
Your secluded road is likely to be blocked and you can't get out.
- Spectacular views?  
You might be on top of a hill: fire accelerates up slopes.

**We're not saying "Stay in the city".**

**We are saying "You're responsible for your own preparation and safety".**

## What you need to think about

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I'll be right, I'll ring 000

Good, ringing 000 will alert emergency services. BUT:

That doesn't mean a fire truck or ambulance can get to you.

In a major event those resources are going to be deployed to avert a larger disaster.

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I'll be right, there's a CFS unit in our town

Well ...

- CFS is staffed by volunteers who might not be available
- They don't necessarily have a choice about where they go
- If your house and property isn't well prepared, it might not be safe for them to defend it

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The SES or CFS will help to clean up my property ready for bushfire season

No, that's your responsibility. AND:

They won't risk their own safety, if your property is undefendable, they'll move on to one that can be defended.

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I'll drive through hell and high water to save my animals	Two things: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. At the risk of your life, or of harming someone else by driving through fire or flood? Really?</li><li>2. Sometimes you can't get through. Prepare ahead!</li></ol>
We'll be right, we've got plenty of water	What's powering your water supply? Chances are the electricity will go out. Do you have a mobile fire unit? Generator? Solar and battery?
We're getting out anytime there's a catastrophic fire danger	That's good. Make sure you're acquainted with Bushfire Safer Places at <a href="https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-a-fire-be-prepared/bushfire-safer-places/">https://www.cfs.sa.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-a-fire-be-prepared/bushfire-safer-places/</a> <b>Do not use a Bushfire Last Resort Refuge as your 'go to' location.</b> What if a fire starts near your home and you can't get out? You'll need to plan for that situation as well: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attend a CFS planning session so you know what to expect and what to do.</li><li>• Check out CFS bushfire preparation and planning tools at <a href="http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au">www.cfs.sa.gov.au</a></li></ul>
So who can help me?	Preparation is your responsibility. It's part of living in the country. If you can't do it yourself, you'll have to pay someone or ask friends and family to assist. Some councils provide lists of contractors who can slash or do house and garden maintenance in your area.
What about council?	Their job is to protect their assets and support emergency response agencies. They won't be checking that you're OK. If you're on a rural property, it's likely that you're responsible for mowing the grass between your property and the road. You must keep grass and vegetation under control on your own property too. Councils can issue hazard reduction notices if your property poses a fire risk.
There's a Total Fire Ban, time to start thinking about tidying up the property	OMG, really? Your mower or chainsaw or brush cutter are likely to start a fire and use may be restricted during the Fire Ban Season (check dates for your area). Bushfire prevention starts at the end of the fire season, not when an emergency is imminent. Do your preparation early. Have a look at the "26 Weeks to Preparedness" guide that's provided at the end of this resource.

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### Obligations of Landowners

Section 105F of the South Australian Fire and Emergency Services Act 2005, requires an owner of private land to take reasonable steps:

- (a) To prevent or inhibit the outbreak of fire on the land; and
- (b) To prevent or inhibit the spread of fire through the land; and
- (c) To protect property on the land from fire; and
- (d) To minimise the threat to human life from a fire on the land.

To reduce the risk of a fire during the Fire Danger Season, councils' Fire Prevention Officers can issue Bushfire Hazard Reduction Compliance notices (under the Act) which require land owners to reduce fuel loads on their property. Failure to comply may result in steep fines as well as council arranging for a contractor to carry out the work and charging the costs to you.

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CFS: 26 Weeks to Preparedness



### Twenty-six weeks to preparedness

### A guide to taking action

### Prepare. Act. Survive.

*(Adapted from British Columbia Emergency Management 2007)*

Each week it is suggested that you do at least one thing towards being bushfire ready. By 26 weeks (six months) you will be well on the way. By starting in winter, your plans should be complete by the start of the Bushfire Season. Remember opportunity shops and garage sales can help you save money on some items. The following weekly task list is a suggestion only, and your list will need to be adapted to suit your own personal circumstances.

#### **Weekly Tasks:**

**WEEK 1:** Get a large portable container with a lid to use as your survival kit. A plastic storage bin works well, particularly one with wheels. Choose an accessible location for the container near an exit and label the container. Make sure all family members know what it will be used for and where it is. You may want to pack items into individual wheeled containers to make them easier to carry by individual family members.

**WEEK 2:** Write down your bushfire survival plan with all the family present. Laminate it and put it near the phone, on the fridge, in your survival kit and take a copy to work.

**WEEK 3:** Add protective clothing for each family member to your kit. Be sure all items are made of natural fibres such as cotton and wool. Include goggles, face masks, broadbrim hat woollen socks, heavy leather work gloves, sturdy leather shoes and a woollen blanket for each family member.

**WEEK 4:** Get your emergency phone numbers and family contact lists up to date and keep this and other emergency phone numbers near each telephone. Teach

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family members these numbers. Consider setting up a telephone tree with your neighbours.

**WEEK 5:** Add family medications to your kit and a first aid kit.

**WEEK 6:** Get a portable battery-powered radio and extra batteries for your kit.

**WEEK 7:** Stock your kit with several varieties of packaged foods, drinks and dried fruit. If needed, include infant supplies including disposable nappies, disposable bottles, formula, etc.

**WEEK 8:** Identify hazards and vulnerable ember entry areas around your home. Make a to-do list. Allocate specific tasks.

**WEEK 9:** Create a defensible space. Remove, prune, slash, mow, weed, rake, and sweep in the garden and around the house.

**WEEK 10:** Practise your bushfire survival plan. Review and amend as necessary. Debrief with the whole family.

**WEEK 11:** Add personal items such as toilet paper, hand-wipes, soap, detergent, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, sanitary supplies, etc. to your survival kit.

**WEEK 12:** Add a torch and extra batteries to your kit.

**WEEK 13:** Add gutter bungs to your survival kit.

**WEEK 14:** Check your insurance policies and make records of your possessions. Update your insurance cover if necessary.

**WEEK 15:** Seal ember entry points.

**WEEK 16:** Maintain timber work by painting or sealing.

**WEEK 17:** Purchase or update fire fighting equipment.

**WEEK 18:** Enrol a family member in a first-aid course.

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**WEEK 19:** Assemble important documents like wills, insurance papers, medical records, credit card numbers, inventory of possessions, identification, etc. Make copies and store originals in a fireproof / waterproof container that will be accessible if your home is damaged.

**WEEK 20:** Move hazardous materials away from the house including wood heaps, fuel, paints and other flammable materials.

**WEEK 21:** Assemble and check your fire fighting equipment.

**WEEK 22:** Practise your bushfire survival plan.

**WEEK 23:** Remove, prune, slash, mow, weed, rake, and sweep around the house.

**WEEK 24:** Clean out the gutters.

**WEEK 25:** Add items such as CDs, books, toys and cards as well as a family photo album to your kit.

**WEEK 26:** Meet with neighbours to discuss emergency preparations and the possibility of sharing items such as generators and fire fighting equipment. Know how to operate each other's equipment. Now you and your family are personally prepared. Once your kit is assembled, your survival plan is in place, and your home is defensible, remember to practise your plan and update it as your family's needs change.

**Prepare.Act.Survive.**