



LIVING IN A BUSHFIRE PRONE LANDSCAPE

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

EMERGENCY TO REPORT ANY FIRE PHONE: 000

NSW RURAL FIRE SERVICE

The Hills District Office: 9654 1244

Fire updates: 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737)

FIRE AND RESCUE NSW

Castle Hill Station: 9680 1282

Kellyville Station: 9629 3222.

The Hills Shire is a wonderful mix of rural and urban areas but many of our urban residents may not realise that they may be threatened by bushfire from the vast tracts of bushland near their homes.

Both the NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS) and Fire & Rescue NSW provide assistance during a bushfire emergency but the primary responsibility for the safety of life and property lies with you. Here are some helpful tips which can help protect your home, family and the animals in your care.

ASSET PROTECTION ZONES (APZ)

You can reduce the level of hazard to your property by creating and maintaining an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) - a bushfire fuel-reduced area surrounding a built asset or structure and provides:

- an area of reduced bushfire fuel that allows the defence and suppression of fire
- a relatively safe area for fire fighters and home owners to defend their property, and
- a reduction in the risk of direct flame contact, excessive radiant heat and ember attack.

WHEN CREATING YOUR APZ CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- If clearing vegetation you may need a development application. Call the RFS and check first.
- Check the ownership of the property and seek authorisation.
- Manage ground fuels around the house including long and dry grass, thick undergrowth, dead leaves and branches.
- Clear gutters and ensure roofing is firmly fixed and clear of dry leaf debris. Screen vents into roof spaces with fine wire mesh.
- Install screens or shutters and enclose underfloor areas if possible.
- Remove or relocate combustible items which are close to the house. For example, woodpiles, paper, boxes, crates, hanging baskets, garden furniture.
- Ensure LPG gas tank relief valves are vented away from the house.
- Reserve water supplies from tanks, dams or swimming pools, if possible, as mains water will be in high demand. Try to store water during the winter months.
- Fit a gate valve to water tanks. A 38mm Storz coupling will assist the Fire Brigades.
- Install a sprinkler system in your garden and on your house to protect vulnerable areas such as windows, eaves and decks.
- Have a battery-operated radio and torches in case of electricity failure.
- Have a bushfire action plan, and remember special plans need to be made for children, the elderly and people with disabilities.
- Include your pets and animals in your plan - move them to safety wherever possible.

YOUR HOUSE IS THE BEST SHELTER

Bushfires can be chaotic, noisy and frightening experiences.

- If you decide to stay or go, plan for it before the bushfire danger period begins. When action is required, follow your plan – lives are most often lost during unplanned, last minute relocations.
- If you decide to leave do it early. Most fatalities occur outside or in cars when people are trying to flee the fire too late.
- If you choose to relocate, ensure that the route you have to take is not in the path of the fire. Pre-plan alternative routes if possible.
- Listen to the radio for news of the fire's progress or call 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737).
- If you choose to stay, dress in protective clothing made of natural fibres and drink water frequently.
- Wet the combustible parts of your house such as eaves, windows, doors, decks and the garden, especially on the side of the approaching fire. Turn on the sprinkler system if you have one.
- Block down pipes, fill gutters with water.
- Fill baths, sinks and buckets with water and use the water to put out small spot fires if required.
- Place wet towels and blankets against gaps under doors and windows to stop burning embers from entering the house.
- Close heavy curtains and shutters if you have them.
- As the fire approaches, go inside and shelter inside until the fire has passed.
- For several hours after the fire has passed you will need to patrol your property and put out any spot fires started by flying embers.
- Check the roof cavity frequently for spot fires.

BUILDING ON BUSHFIRE PRONE LAND

In order to make homes and families safer from bush fires, planning laws in NSW require new developments on bushfire-prone land to comply with the provisions of Planning for Bushfire Protection 2006 (available at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au). This document is a RFS publication outlining the bushfire protection measures to be included when planning subdivisions and constructing or modifying buildings on bushfire prone land.

BURNING REGULATIONS

If you wish to burn vegetation within The Hills Shire you will require an environmental approval to burn issued by the RFS. This is required 12 months of the year. Burning of any material other than vegetation is prohibited.

Fire permits are also required for open burning during the Bushfire Danger Period in the rural parts of the Shire. The Bushfire Danger Period runs from 1 October to 31 March, however, it can vary in different areas.

Fire permits are issued by your local Rural Fire Brigade or RFS. If you live within the Sydney Fire District (covered by Fire & Rescue NSW) you will require a fire permit 12 months of the year.

TOTAL FIRE BAN

During a Total Fire Ban, no fire may be lit in the open. Fire permits are suspended during a Total Fire Ban. The ban applies to barbecues which burn solid fuel, such as wood and charcoal.

- You may use a gas or electric barbecue, but only if:
- It is on a residential property within 20m of the house or dwelling.
- It is a picnic area and the appliance and area are approved by Council, National Parks or State Forests.
- It is under the direct control of an adult.
- The ground within 2 metres of the barbecue is cleared of all materials which could burn.
- You have an immediate and continuous supply of water available.

At all other times, a campfire or barbecue may be lit for cooking or warmth providing:

- The fire is in a permanently constructed fire place with at least 2 metres cleared of any combustible material, or it is at a site with at least 3 metres cleared of any combustible material.
- An adult is in attendance at all times.
- The fire is completely extinguished before leaving.
- If you would like more detailed information on this Factsheet or a safety check for your property, contact the RFS.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SAFER PLACES

The Hills Shire Council has a list of Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSPs) in the Shire - sites that can provide a higher level of protection from immediate life-threatening effects of a bushfire.

Locally sites include: Wisemans Ferry Park; South Maroota Community Centre; Maroota Public School; Les Shore Oval; Ellerman Park; Glenhaven Community Centre; The Hills Centenary Park; Bruce Purser Reserve; North Rocks Community Centre; Baulkham Hills Sports Club; Bernie Mullane Sporting Complex; George Thornton Reserve and Castle Hill Showground.

The Rural Fire Service states that NSPs are places to be used in an absolute emergency and still entail some risk, both in moving to them and while sheltering in them. While they are not to be considered completely safe, they may afford some protection from radiant heat.

An up-to-date listing of NSPs in The Hills Shire is available on the Rural Fire Service website (listed under Neighbourhood Safer Places - The Hills) – www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

