This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. You are free to re-use the work under that licence, on the condition that you credit the State of Victoria as author. The licence does not apply to any images, photographs or branding, including the Victorian Coat of Arms, the Victorian Government logo and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) logo. To view a copy of this licence, visit http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

Accessibility

If you would like to receive this publication in an alternative format, please telephone the DELWP Customer Service Centre on 136186, email customer.service@delwp.vic.gov.au (or relevant address), or via the National Relay Service on 133 677 www.relayservice.com.au. This document is also available on the internet at www.delwp.vic.gov.au

Disclaimer

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mapping the bushfire hazard in the planning and building systems</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your property</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting landowners to make their properties more fire-ready</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bushfire Prone Area</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bushfire Management Overlay</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A bushfire prone state

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone areas in the world. Major fire events such as the 2003 Alpine Fire, 2006 Grampians Fire, the 2006/07 Great Divide Fire and the devastating 2009 Black Saturday Fires demonstrate the fire risk Victorian communities face.

Bushfires are a natural part of the Victorian landscape, and can be caused by lightning strikes as well as by human activity.

The high bushfire risk is the result of a combination of factors including:

- large areas of highly flammable dry eucalypt forest and expanses of highly flammable grassland
- a climatic pattern of mild, moist winters followed by hot dry summers
- prolonged droughts
- agricultural practices that include the use of fire
- increasing population density in bushfire-prone areas, such as in the rural-urban fringe.

A history of planning and building for bushfire in Victoria

Victoria has long recognised the important role of the planning and building systems in strengthening community resilience to bushfire.

The Royal Commission into the 1939 bushfires recommended that sawmills be located away from extreme forested environments and into settlements. This recommendation was implemented. Victoria’s first bushfire specific planning tool was introduced following research undertaken after the 1983 Ash Wednesday bushfires.

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission (VBRC) reinforced the important role that the land use planning system plays in bushfire resilience. Nearly one third of the VBRC’s recommendations related to Victoria’s planning and building systems.

Changes have been made to these systems as a result, to ensure we continually improve the tools and techniques in use.

A strong state planning policy for bushfire

The State Planning Policy Framework (SPPF) requires all agencies to assess bushfire risk and ensure that the development of land prioritises the protection of human life above other policy considerations in planning and decision-making.

The SPPF was updated in 2011, and ensure that local planning schemes apply consistent bushfire management strategies and principles to strengthen community resilience to bushfire.
Bushfire planning strategies and principles

Objective

To assist to strengthen community resilience to bushfire.

Strategies

Overarching strategies

Prioritise the protection of human life over other policy considerations in planning and decision-making in areas at risk from bushfire.

Where appropriate, apply the precautionary principle to planning and decision-making when assessing the risk to life, property and community infrastructure from bushfire.

Bushfire hazard identification and risk assessment strategies

Apply the best available science to identify vegetation, topographic and climatic conditions that create a bushfire hazard.

Assess the risk to life, property and community infrastructure from bushfire at a regional, municipal and local scale.

Identify in planning schemes areas where the bushfire hazard requires that:

- Consideration needs to be given to the location, design and construction of new development and the implementation of bushfire protection measures.
- Development should not proceed unless the risk to life and property from bushfire can be reduced to an acceptable level.

Planning scheme implementation strategies

Specify in planning schemes the requirements and standards for assessing whether the risk to a proposed development from bushfire is acceptable and the conditions under which new development may be permitted.

Ensure that planning schemes, in particular the Municipal Strategic Statement, Local Planning Policies and zones applying to land, provide for use and development of land in a manner compatible with the risk from bushfire.

Ensure that planning schemes support bushfire management and prevention and emergency services actions and activities.

Ensure that planning schemes do not prevent the creation of required defendable space around existing development through the removal and management of vegetation.
A system based on the bushfire hazard

The Minister for Planning is responsible for mapping and designating bushfire hazards in the planning and building systems. The maps are regularly reviewed by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) in partnership with the relevant fire authorities and local councils.

The building systems mapping identifies all bushfire hazards and requires homes to be built to an appropriate bushfire construction standard.

The planning system mapping identifies extreme hazards where additional bushfire safety measures may be required.

The extent of the bushfire hazard is determined based on vegetation type, topography and local conditions.

Bushfire hazard identification is an ongoing and evidence-based process that assesses current vegetation and conditions. Future land uses and development are not relevant factors when determining the existing hazards.

Mapping for the Bushfire Prone Area – Building System

The Bushfire Prone Areas (BPA) map applies to all land at risk from bushfires in Victoria. Buildings in these areas are required to meet the relevant bushfire construction standards. Mapping of the Bushfire Prone Areas is the responsibility of the Minister for Planning, and forms part of the Victorian Building Regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA 1 – BPA Vegetation types and size</th>
<th>• Forest, woodland, scrub, shrubland, mallee, rainforest and grassland vegetation that is 2 hectares or more in size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CRITERIA 2 Ember buffer | • A 60m buffer is applied from the edge of vegetation identified in Criteria 1.  
• This buffer ensures buildings are protected from ember attack from surrounding vegetation. |

Mapping for the Bushfire Management Overlay – Planning System

The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) applies to Bushfire Prone Areas with the potential to be affected by extreme bushfire behaviour. These areas are required to consider bushfire safety measures to protect homes, families and the broader community.

Mapping for the BMO forms part of local council planning schemes, once it has been approved by the Minister for Planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRITERIA 1 – BMO Vegetation types and size</th>
<th>• Forest, woodland, scrub, shrubland, mallee and rainforest vegetation that is 4 hectares or more in size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CRITERIA 2 Ember buffer | • A 150m buffer is applied from the edge of vegetation identified in Criteria 1.  
• This buffer ensures buildings are protected from ember attack from surrounding vegetation. |
| CRITERIA 3 Extreme risk inclusions | • Area that fire authorities have advised may be subject to extreme landscape fire behaviour.  
• Factors such as slope, bushfire history and poor access may warrant inclusion |
The planning system contains several exemptions that allow landowners to better prepare their properties without requiring a planning permit.

The exemptions are detailed in Clause 52.48 of planning schemes (Bushfire Protection: Exemptions).

Creating a defendable space around an existing dwellings

Planning schemes allow landowners to remove or lop vegetation to reduce bushfire hazards around existing dwellings. The 10/30 or 10/50 rule exempts landowners from needing a planning permit.

The exemption only applies to dwellings that existed or were approved before 10 September 2009. The exemption does not apply in some council areas in metropolitan Melbourne. Landowners must check if either of these rules apply in their municipality before clearing any native vegetation.

If the 10/30 rule applies in a municipality, landowners do not need a planning permit to remove, destroy or lop:

1. Any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of a dwelling.
2. Any vegetation, excluding trees, within 30 metres of a dwelling.

If the 10/50 rule applies in a municipality, landowner will not need a permit to remove, destroy or lop:

1. Any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of a dwelling.
2. Any vegetation, excluding trees, within 50 metres of a dwelling.

Clearing vegetation along a fence line

Planning schemes allow the removal, destruction or lopping of any vegetation adjacent to fences on property boundaries. They apply for a maximum width of four metres either side of an existing fence.

The exemption from a planning permit only applies to a fence that was constructed before 10 September 2009 that is on the boundary between properties in different ownership. The exemption does not apply in some council areas in metropolitan Melbourne. Landowners must check if either of these rules apply in their municipality before clearing any native vegetation.

Building a private bushfire shelter

Planning schemes exempt the requirements for a planning permit to construct a private bushfire shelter (a Class 10c building within the meaning of the Building Regulations 2006). A private bushfire shelter is a building that may, as a last resort, provide shelter from the immediate life threatening effects of a bushfire event.

The exemption from a planning permit only applies where buildings and works do not exceed 30 square metres. Also, the exemption does not apply in the Shire of Yarra Ranges or in some other areas (for example, where land is subject to flooding). Landowners must check if this rules applies in their municipality before constructing a bushfire shelter.
You can find out your property's planning and building bushfire status by obtaining a free property report.

**Bushfire Management Overlay - property report**

The planning property report is a free report showing whether your property is included in the BMO.

The report includes:

- property details
- Bushfire Management Overlay status
- a map showing the extent of the BMO relative to the property boundary.

**Bushfire Prone Area - property report**

The BPA report is a free report showing whether your property is in a Bushfire Prone Area.

The report includes:

- property details
- Bushfire Prone Area status
- a map showing the extent of the designated Bushfire Prone Areas relative to the property boundary.

**Obtaining a property reports?**

You obtain property information at [http://services.land.vic.gov.au/landchannel/jsp/reports/Reportsintro.jsp](http://services.land.vic.gov.au/landchannel/jsp/reports/Reportsintro.jsp). There are a number of ways you can view the mapping:

- Obtaining a property report for a specific address.
- Viewing an interactive map for the whole of Victoria.

You can also view maps at the offices of your local council and the regional offices of the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning.
How does the Bushfire Prone Area affect existing development and properties?

There are no changes or requirements for existing development or properties.

It is recommended that landowners in Bushfire Prone Areas, where possible, consider retrofitting their home to improve its resilience to bushfire.

For existing homes, property owners should also ensure that their insurance policy will cover the cost of rebuilding to current bushfire construction standards.

Mapping Bushfire Prone Areas – Building System
The Bushfire Prone Area

The Bushfire Prone Area map applies to all land at risk from bushfires in Victoria.

What does it mean if my land is in a Bushfire Prone Area?

If land is in a designated BPA, it is susceptible to bushfire. The level of bushfire risk will depend on local vegetation, topography and climatic conditions.

How does the Bushfire Prone Area affect new development?

Developments in BPAs are required to assess local bushfire risk to ensure risk to life, property and community infrastructure can be reduced to an acceptable level.

New developments in these areas require a Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment which establishes the requirements for the construction of buildings in accordance with the Australian Standard (AS 3959-2009).

The BAL is an assessment of bushfire risk that measures the severity of a building’s potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact. The BAL is expressed in increments of radiant heat exposure, it provides the basis for establishing the requirements for construction to improve the protection of building elements from bushfire attack.

There are six different ‘risk’ levels in the BAL system ranging from ‘low’ to ‘flame zone.’ The level of risk depends on:

1. Vegetation, the primary source of fuel for a bushfire; and
2. Topography (or slope) which influences the rate of spread.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bushfire Attack Level</th>
<th>Predicted levels of exposure to radiant heat</th>
<th>Possible construction requirements include</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAL - LOW</td>
<td>- Residential construction in Bushfire Prone Areas must be built to a minimum of BAL 12.5 as ember attacks may occur</td>
<td>- No specific bushfire construction requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAL - 12.5</td>
<td>- Risk of exposure to radiant heat is low</td>
<td>- Use of fire resistant framing timbers/products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ember attack</td>
<td>- Enclosed non-combustible covering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAL - 19</td>
<td>- Risk of exposure to radiant heat is moderate</td>
<td>- As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ember attack and burning debris ignited by wind borne embers</td>
<td>- Enclosed non-combustible covering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- 5mm Grade A Toughened glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAL – 29</td>
<td>- Risk of exposure to radiant heat is high</td>
<td>- As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Ember attack and increased risk of burning debris ignited by wind borne embers</td>
<td>- External doors, bushfire screening or meshing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAL – 40</td>
<td>- Risk of exposure to radiant heat is very high</td>
<td>- As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Increasing levels of ember attack and burning debris ignited by wind borne embers</td>
<td>- Non-combustible decking and timber supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Some direct exposure to flames possible</td>
<td>- Non-combustible brick and concrete sheeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Fire retardant heat barriers (fire shutters)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAL – FZ Flame Zone</td>
<td>- Risk of exposure to radiant heat is extreme</td>
<td>- As above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Direct exposure to flame contact from fire front is likely</td>
<td>- Bushfire resistant roofing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Special barrier housing for gas cylinders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Specific building requirements will need to be discussed with an architect or qualified professional.
How does the Bushfire Prone Area affect existing development and properties?

There are no changes or requirements for existing development or properties.

It is recommended that landowners in the Bushfire Management Overlay, where possible, consider retrofitting their home to improve its resilience to bushfire.

For existing homes, property owners should also ensure that their insurance policy will cover the cost of rebuilding to current bushfire construction standards.

Mapping Bushfire Management Overlay - Planning System

Note: All homes in the Bushfire Management Overlay are also included in the Bushfire Prone Area. All dwellings in the BMO are therefore subject to the same construction requirements.
**The Bushfire Management Overlay**

The Bushfire Management Overlay applies to Bushfire Prone Areas with the potential to be affected by extreme bushfire. The BMO is applied to land to ensure that future development appropriately assesses and manages bushfire risk.

If the bushfire safety measures that form part of a proposed development reduces bushfire risk to an acceptable level, then development can proceed.

What does it mean if land is included in the Bushfire Management Overlay?

A planning permit is required for most new buildings and works (for example, a new home or to subdivide land).

Are there any planning permit exemptions?

There are several permit exemptions. If extending an existing home and the extension is less than 50% of the existing building, a planning permit is not required. A planning permit is also not required to build an outbuilding such as a shed or garage less than 150 sq m in size provided it is located more than 10m from most other buildings.

How does the Bushfire Management Overlay affect new development?

A new development needs to demonstrate that bushfire safety is properly considered and that the protection of future occupants has been given the highest priority. A planning application does this by considering the bushfire hazard in the area (for example, vegetation, slope, site access) and showing how bushfire safety measures will be implemented.

What are bushfire safety measures?

For new development, the bushfire safety measures required to be considered are:

- Where the development is sited on the land
- Defendable space around buildings (vegetation management)
- The construction standard of buildings (bushfire attack level)
- Fire-fighting water supply
- Site and emergency vehicle access

The wider area (for example, 2-10kms around the site) is also considered in non-urban areas where the bushfire hazard poses a serious risk and issues such as evacuation routes and the availability or safer places need to be considered.

Implementing a planning permit

Planning permits will include a mandatory condition that requires the homeowner to maintain the bushfire protection measures set out in the permit.
Construction measures in the Building System only (BPA)

Safety measures in the Planning and Building System (BMO)
A sample showing the bushfire safety measures in the Building and Planning System

Construction measures in the Building System only

- Buildings meet Bushfire Construction Standards
- Buildings sited away from hazard
- Vegetation and fuel loads managed
- Water tanks provided for firefighters
- Safe access provided for fire trucks

Safety measures in the Planning and Building System (BMO & BPA areas)

- Buildings meet Bushfire Construction Standards
- Buildings sited away from hazard
- Vegetation and fuel loads managed
- Water tanks provided for firefighters
- Safe access provided for fire trucks