

Frequently Asked Questions

For lot owners in a Bushfire Prone Area (BPA)

The bushfire requirements

What is the BPA and what is the BMO?

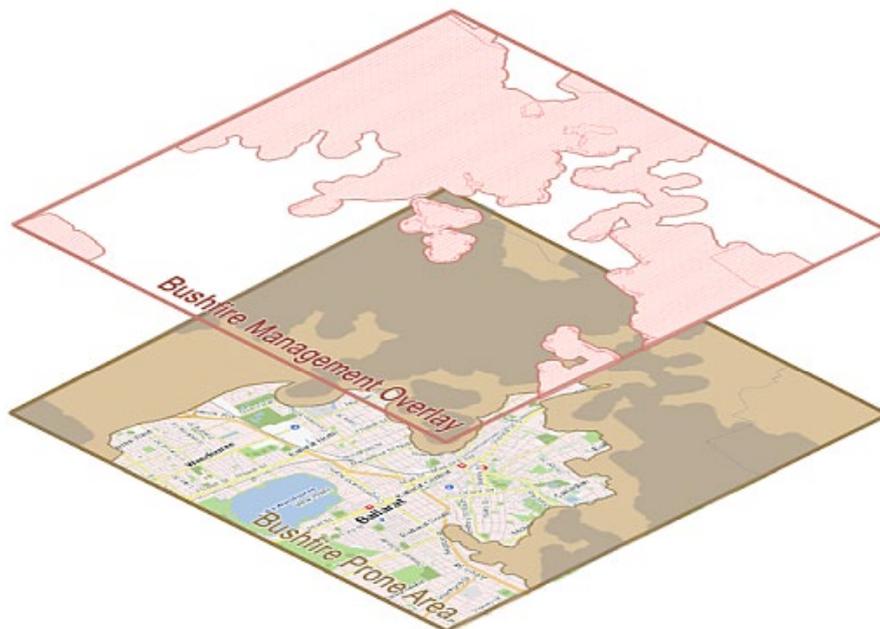
The **Bushfire Prone Area (BPA)** maps bushfire hazard, including grassland, for Victoria's building system. It includes all levels of bushfire hazard and covers most of Victoria.

In the BPA, a minimum construction standard applies to new residential buildings, schools, child care centres, hospitals, aged care facilities and associated buildings. If a building is to be constructed, altered or extended within the BPA, landowners must have a bushfire hazard assessment completed to determine the **Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)** for the site. Landowners then need to build to national bushfire construction standards based on the BAL determined for the site. However, a minimum BAL of 12.5 will be applied to certain buildings, such as dwellings.

The **Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)** maps areas of very high and extreme bushfire hazard, including wooded areas, for Victoria's planning system. The BMO applies in addition to the BPA so areas where the BMO applies, the BPA also applies. The BMO triggers additional planning permit requirements. This includes mandatory bushfire protection measures – such as defensible space and ongoing vegetation management – in addition to the BPA construction requirements.

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) undertakes all BPA and BMO mapping.

Bushfire Hazard Mapping



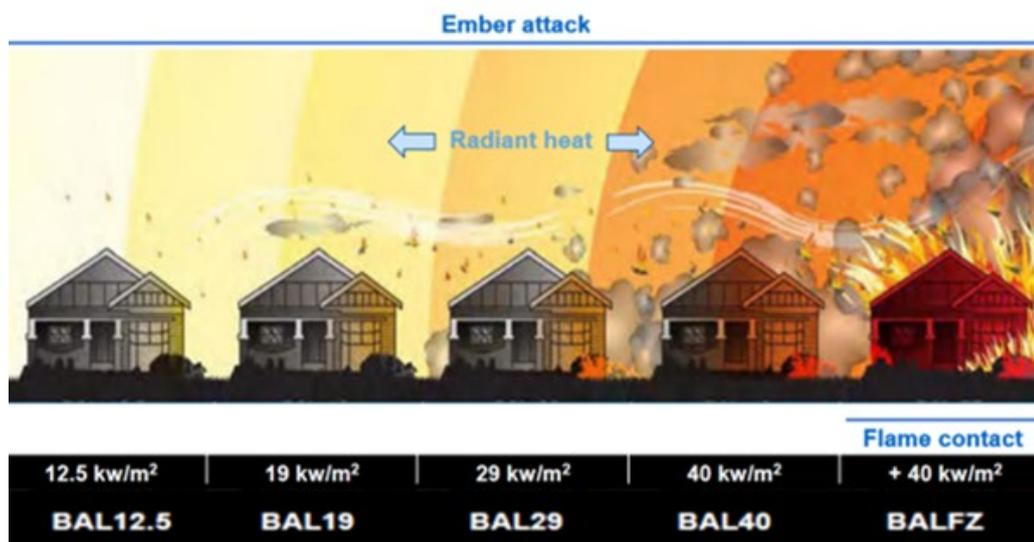
Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)?

A BAL is a way of measuring the severity of a building's potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact. It is the basis for establishing the construction requirements to better protect building elements from bushfire attack. To successfully meet the BAL the building must comply with the specified building standards for that BAL.

Six BALs form part of the Australian Standard – AS 3959:2018 *Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas* (AS 3959:2018):

BAL-LOW
BAL-12.5
BAL-19
BAL-29
BAL-40
BAL-FZ (Flame Zone).



Why do I need to know the BAL?

If your property is in the BPA, you will need to build to at least the minimum BAL standard for improved bushfire protection. The minimum standard for certain buildings such as dwellings is BAL 12.5, but if the BAL for your site is higher you will need to build to that higher standard.

How do I find out the BAL for my property?

To find out the BAL for your property, you will need to have a bushfire hazard assessment undertaken. Anyone can undertake a BAL assessment. However, the assessment must be acceptable to the building surveyor issuing your building permit.

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) website has guidance about undertaking a BAL assessment and given the technical nature of a BAL assessment, it is recommended that a suitably qualified person, with expertise in applying AS 3959:2018 undertake the assessment.

Fire Protection Association Australia (FPAA) is the national technical and educational fire safety organisation. FPAA provide training and accreditation and can provide you with a list of qualified people (<http://www.fpaa.com.au/>).

Your local council may be able to provide advice on having a BAL assessment done.

Neither DELWP nor the VBA provide BAL assessments.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is my building more expensive?

In the BPA, a minimum construction standard applies for improved bushfire protection. Your building may cost more due to additional materials and labour required to adequately address bushfire safety. This will vary depending on the builder, the size and build of your home, and the BAL level.

My property is partly within the BPA. Do I have to build to the BPA standard?

If no part of the building envelope or footprint falls within the BPA area, the BPA construction requirements do not apply.

If part of the building footprint falls within the BPA, construction of the whole building must meet the BPA requirements to build to the minimum standard for improved bushfire protection. You can check the measurements of where the BPA applies at VicPlan – see notes below about measuring.

I want to build a shed that is not attached to my dwelling and will not be used as part of a dwelling. Do I need to build the shed to the minimum standard for improved bushfire protection?

This will depend on the location of the shed and its proximity to the dwelling. If the shed is not attached to the dwelling or is located more than six metres away, you do not need to build it to the minimum standard for improved bushfire protection. (AS3959:2018, Clause 3.2.3).

Your local council or the Victorian Building Authority can help clarify these requirements.

Applying for a determination to modify the application of the bushfire construction standards

How do I apply for a modification determination?

An individual lot owner can apply to the Building Appeals Board to determine that the additional construction requirements for buildings located within a BPA do not apply to that allotment.

Use the [Section 160 Modification Application form](#) (you can find this under [Modification and compliance applications](#)). The fee is \$122.77 (for a dwelling) and can take up to 12 weeks to process. Most BPA applications for review will be for a residential building - Modifications Class 1 or 10 residential buildings.

Further information about the Building Appeals Board and processes, including a guide and examples of a completed form can be found at www.buildingappeals.vic.gov.au.

The Building Appeals Board can be contacted by phone 1300 421 082 or email: registry@buildingappeals.vic.gov.au.

BPA mapping

Why is only part of my property in the BPA?

The BPA only maps an existing bushfire hazard, including grassland. As it represents a bushfire hazard, it follows the hazard, not property boundaries.

Properties near me are not in the BPA but my property is. Why is this the case?

The BPA only maps an existing bushfire hazard, including grassland.

Criteria agreed with fire service agencies is applied to the mapping of the BPA. A 60-metre buffer from the edge of the identified bushfire hazard is included in the BPA. This provides some protection from ember attack. If the bushfire hazard has been removed enough to meet the criteria, the BPA can be removed. Often a subdivision is developed in stages and the BPA is removed once the hazard is cleared for the next stage of development.

Frequently Asked Questions

A title has been created for my property and I am about to enter a building contract and commence construction. Can the bushfire prone area control be removed from my property?

The BPA only maps an existing bushfire hazard, including grassland. A title being issued for a property or intentions to build do not affect the mapping of the BPA.

The BPA map is only changed if a review of the site and mapping has been undertaken, the bushfire hazard has been sufficiently removed to meet agreed criteria, and council and the relevant fire authority agree.

How is BPA mapping reviewed?

DELWP reviews the BPA mapping twice a year. Each review takes about six months to complete. Changes to the BPA mapping therefore occur at only two dates in the year, approximately six months apart.

A recommendation will be made to the Minister for Planning to remove the BPA from an area if the bushfire hazard has been removed to meet agreed criteria and is to the satisfaction of the relevant fire authority and council.

Why does it take six months to do a BPA review?

Various factors can affect the timing, however the process for a BPA review is as follows:

Stages in a review	Timing
As soon as a review finishes, prepare for the next one	one week
Developers and councils identify sites for review	three weeks
Prepare for site visits	one week
Undertake site visits	three weeks
Prepare draft maps for BPA removal from areas where the bushfire hazard has been removed	one to two weeks
Consult with councils and the relevant fire authority	four to six weeks (longer in fire season)
Prepare final maps and recommendations to the Minister for approval, gazettal, online map update, lodgement, notify affected parties	seven to nine weeks

My property was not removed from the BPA in the last review, but a lot of clearing has happened since then. The sites being assessed on your website does not show any assessment near my property. Why is my area not included?

The BPA covers most of Victoria. While the BPA mapping is reviewed every six months, it is not possible to review every BPA area in Victoria in that time. DELWP reviews sites as requested by developers and councils where development is about to commence.

Can I ask for a review of my property?

As DELWP reviews mapping of hundreds of subdivisions across the state twice a year, it is not possible to review individual properties. DELWP reviews sites as requested by developers and councils where development is about to commence.

If development is happening in your subdivision, you may alert us so that we can determine whether to visit and assess the site. We can be contacted by email: bpa@delwp.vic.gov.au.

If the timing of a review does not suit your building plans, and you believe that the bushfire hazard has been removed, you have the option of applying for a modification from the Building Appeals Board. See **Applying for a determination to modify the application of the bushfire construction standards** above.

Is my property in the BPA?

How can I look up if my property is affected by the BPA?

Go to [VicPlan](https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/) (<https://mapshare.vic.gov.au/vicplan/>)

Start to type in the address of the property and select the property from the suggestion list that appears. Choose the 'Create Planning Property Report' button from the Property Information panel on the left.

In the Planning Property Report scroll down to the 'Designated Bushfire Prone Area' page at the end to view the BPA information.

Alternatively, you can filter to view only the BPA map interactively rather than generating a property report.

- Enter the property address
- Select Layers at the bottom of the left panel

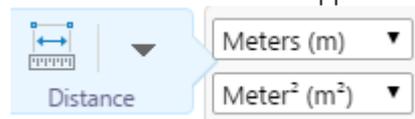


- Tick 'Bushfire' to see the BPA shown in brown

You can then zoom in and out, use the measuring tool to measure the extent of the BPA onto your property, and see where the BPA applies in your neighbourhood.

How can I measure the distance / area that the BPA applies in my property?

You can use the measuring tool in VicPlan <https://mapshare.maps.vic.gov.au/vicplan/> to measure the distance or the area where the BPA applies.



From the **Tools** tab in the main toolbar select the **Distance** button and the option(s) below that best suits your need.

- Measure – Place the cursor over the start point and click the mouse, then move to the end point and 'double' click to complete the distance measure.
- Multiple measurements - Place the cursor over the start point and click the mouse, move to the next point and use a 'single' click for each intermediate measure required, finally a 'double' click to complete the total distance.
- Accurate measure – Turn on the **Enable Snapping** button, this will change the cursor and allow measurements to snap to features on the map and be more accurate. Use the **Select Snapping Layers** button to choose specific layers for accurate measurements.

Why can't I create a Planning Property Report or find my lot on the interactive maps at VicPlan?

There is sometimes a delay in adding new subdivisions to the base map after a plan of subdivision has been registered or the subdivision may not yet have been registered. This can result in property searches in new subdivisions not providing a result and a property report not being able to be generated. In this case, try the following:

- Search for the Lot on the Plan of Subdivision. This could provide the lot but if not, it will at least provide the subdivision area and you may be able to identify where your lot is.
- Search for an established street near your lot. While this may not show your lot, it should show the area around your lot. You may be able to identify the location of your lot and see if your lot is in the BPA.
- Try again in a few weeks in case the subdivision details have been added to the base map.

New subdivisions that have not yet been registered are shown in VicPlan with black hatching.

Frequently Asked Questions

When will the interactive maps be updated to show the new subdivision?

We are unable to say when the map will be updated. However, subdivision plans should be available in VicPlan and other DELWP online map applications within ten days after registration at titles office. Depending on size of the subdivision and how it is submitted this timeframe could be longer.

My solicitor/conveyancer has sent me a letter saying that my property is in a BPA but the interactive map on the DELWP website says it is not. What can I do?

Your solicitor's letter may have been sent before the BPA map was updated. Check the interactive map again and run a new Planning Property Report. Ensure you have correctly identified the property.

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