

How to prepare your family for fire

Being prepared for a bushfire isn't just about cleaning up around your home, it's also about having a Bushfire Survival Plan. Coming into the bushfire season make sure you and every family member understand the bushfire risks living in the City of Cockburn. Make sure you know when the fire season begins, fire warnings, fire danger ratings, when total fire bans are in place, the weather conditions and where you can find out the latest fire information. It's best to sit down and work out a plan and the actions you and your family will take if a bushfire threatens your property. Leaving early is the safest choice. Make sure all family members know the steps of this plan like when you will leave. Will it be when there is smoke in the area or as soon as you find out there is a fire near you? Where will you go? Where is a meeting place that is safe and far away from a fire area? Is it a friend or relatives home or a safe place within the local community? How will you get there? What road will you take and what is your backup plan if the roads are blocked? What will you take? Make a list of what you will take and remember to include pets especially larger animals such as horses. Have an emergency kit prepared that includes a backup of necessary documents and photos as well as identification. Make sure your family knows how you will communicate during a bushfire and where you will meet if separated during the emergency. Figure out who you will call when you are leaving your home and when you have arrived at a safe location. Make sure you know your neighbours and contact them in an emergency. It's important to have a back-up plan in place. Consider if there is a safe place where you can go or a place of last resort, like your neighbours. If you decide to stay and defend your property it's important to ask every family member at that moment if the home is prepared and safe. Also check that no family member is at risk, especially if their children elderly or suffer with asthma. Make sure you have all the right firefighting equipment. A hose or hoses that can reach around the whole house, a water supply of 10,000 litres from a dam or a swimming pool, ensure the petrol or diesel water pump and fuel are in a safe and accessible place, that you have ladders to access the inside of the roof as well as buckets, mops, shovels and metal rakes. It's also important you're dressed in the appropriate clothing when fighting a fire, like heavy-duty cotton wool and fibres, appropriate footwear, safety glasses and gloves. It's crucial you know what the sign is to start defending your home. It could be when you first find out there is a fire nearby as waiting for an official warning could be too late. Bushfires move rapidly, so make sure each family member is given a specific role before defending your home. Also make sure everyone knows what to do before a fire, during the fire and after the fire. Depending on the day and the weather a bushfire can change quite dramatically in a short space of time. So it's essential that your family have a back-up plan. Especially if there is only one person home alone or if the fire moves faster than expected. Or phone lines and the electricity stopped working. Keep in mind if the fire danger is catastrophic or if there is an extreme fire danger rating and your home is not specifically designed or constructed for a bushfire or your property is not well maintained, it may be unsafe to stay and defend. Bush fires can be quite terrifying. The intense heat and flames can make you tired quite quickly and it could be difficult to see and breathe. Make sure you and your family are prepared physically, mentally and emotionally. If you have any doubts about your plan to cope for the bushfire, decide to leave early. For more information on preparing your family, go to cockburn.wa.gov.au you or you can visit the DFES website.