INDIVIDUALS > TFS > COMMUNITIES > < WE ALL PLAY A PART
BUSHFIRE READY NEIGHBOURHOODS

Working with Tasmanian communities to prevent, prepare and respond to bushfires.

Welcome to edition number 12 of the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods newsletter.

The theme for this edition is community engagement – what it is and what it can look like.

- What is community engagement?
- Volunteer community engagement – What does that mean to you?
- Caring essentials – Are you a parent or a carer?
- Community engagement training and tools.

What is community engagement?

Dr Crispin Butteriss from Bang the Table describes that there is no simple or single answer to the question, "*what is community engagement?*". It defies definition because everyone, it seems, has a different answer!

Bang the Table explores the issue from the perspective of several different disciplines in an attempt to come up with a unified, inclusive, definition that allows all professions to "own" community engagement collectively.

http://www.bangthetable.com/what-is-community-engagement/

For people working and volunteering in the community engagement space this is well worth a read.

The BRN program works to a Community Development Framework, which has four objectives

1. Raise community preparedness levels in relation to fire and other hazards in identified communities with risk groups

2. Consult, collaborate and engage internal/external stakeholders and communities to develop and implement local resilience strategies

3. Benchmark (best practice), innovation and continuous improvement, including document and evaluate community outcomes in behavioural change

4. Align with strategic organisational direction in emergency management

To view the TFS Community Development Framework visit:

www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/frameworks-plans-and-research-guides-what-we-do

Peter Middleton, Coordinator Community Development

Create your **bushfire survival plans** online.

Find out more
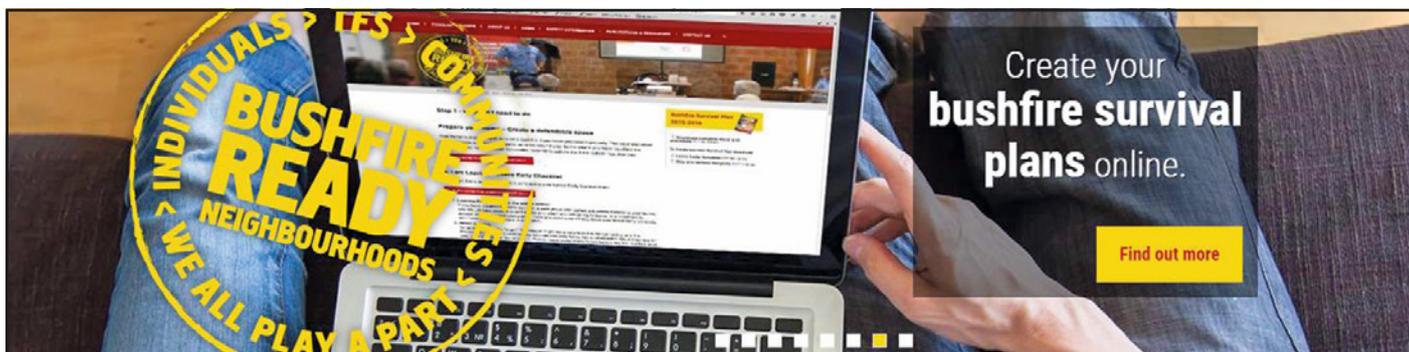
By following four simple steps, you can create your own Bushfire Survival Plan/s.

Click on the link below to get started:
www.bushfireready neighbourhoods.tas.gov.au/create-your-bushfire-survival-plans

Tasmania Fire Service   **fire.tas.gov.au/brn**

Hank Muller from Kelso Brigade discusses bushfire planning at Greens Beach workshop with Community Development Officer Dave Cleaver looking on.

Volunteer Community Engagement – What does that mean to you?

Community engagement is a fundamental part of preparing our communities to cope with the effects of bushfire and other natural hazards.

Within Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods (BRN), Community Development Officers undertake a community engagement role statewide and have shown it to be an effective method of building community resilience.

Volunteer brigades have proven they are an essential element in engaging with their communities. Brigades have existing relationships with the people in their communities, which is the basis of engagement. Not all engagement activities are simple and straightforward as many of you probably know.

BRN recognises the value of brigades engaging with their communities, and we look to brigades for guidance in achieving the best from any engagement activities. Local knowledge is an important factor towards achieving effective engagement.

There are opportunities for brigades to become more skilled in understanding how to engage with people in the field of disaster preparedness, particularly bushfire preparedness.

Particularly aimed at brigades in the BRN program, but not limited to those brigades, we would like to discuss opportunities for members to consider this important

role and further develop interest and skills in community engagement to enhance brigade capacity and get the most out of engagement activities.

Who might be interested? There is no set prerequisite for the role, however an understanding of bushfire behaviour will certainly help. Many brigades have dedicated members in community engagement roles. Some brigades have several members who share the role, and others have just one. BRN staff are available to assist you or answer questions.

Kelso Brigade members have embraced the engagement process, and have been actively involved with forums and workshops at Greens Beach as part of BRN and Tamar Natural Resource Management joint projects.

Kevin Cleaver, 2nd Officer, Kelso Brigade discusses bushfire planning with residents at Greens Beach workshop with Milton Wright, 4th Officer, Kelso Brigade looking on.

Tasmania Fire Service   **fire.tas.gov.au/brn**

Caring essentials – Are you a parent or a carer?

Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods is there to work with communities to provide bushfire safety guidance for those who are frail, injured, and elderly, socially isolated or have some level of cognitive and/or physical impairment. This means working with parents, carers, National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) services, home care providers, family, neighbours and/or friends caring for people in their homes.

Bushfires are a part of Tasmania's natural landscape and some areas of Tasmania are at higher risk than others. Some bushfires will be easy to put out but on severe weather days, bushfires can be unpredictable, fast moving and hard to extinguish.

Some people are more vulnerable to the threat of bushfire, either because they live isolated in high risk areas and do not understand their level of risk, or because they are less able to physically or mentally withstand a fire and associated hazards. This includes those individuals who are frail, injured, and elderly, socially isolated or have some level of cognitive and/or physical impairment.

Many of these people live independently at home and manage well with their day-to-day needs. However, if they live in an isolated and bushfire prone area, their capacity to survive a bushfire may be limited by their cognitive decision-making, mobility, transport options and/or health. These people are unlikely to have the skills or capacity to prepare and defend their home. They may also lack an understanding of the need for a leave early plan and an emergency backup plan.

A well-written plan should identify the actions and arrangements for when a bushfire threatens. This will not only give clear instructions of when and what to do, but may help to alleviate any anxiety and stress before, during and after a bushfire event. Many people have pets as their companions and a well thought out and practised Bushfire Survival Plan should include the crating, transport and relocation of pets to safer places with their owner. The safest survival consideration for those individuals who are frail, injured, elderly, socially isolated or have some level of cognitive and/or physical impairment is to leave early.

Leaving early is always the safest option when a bushfire threatens. Many people have died in bushfires because they have tried to relocate too late, and have been trapped in their cars or on foot. Fewer lives will be lost if people who choose to leave do so well before a bushfire threatens their home.

" I lived through the London Blitz during the war but it wasn't as frightening as this. "

PHOTO COURTESY OF MRS MARJORY WOOLFORD

WATCH THE '67 BUSHFIRE STORIES ON THE STORYMAP AT fire.tas.gov.au/brn/67fires

Tasmania Fire Service

'67 BUSHFIRES SHARE YOUR STORY

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I identify bushfire risk?

Check the level of bushfire risk:

- The area has a history of bushfire

- Living in a rural setting

- Living within a couple of streets of bushland including scrub, grassland, farmland, heath, marram grass and button grass (100 metres from bushland)

- There are trees and shrubs around the home.

If any of these apply, then you and/or the person you care for is at risk of a bushfire.

### What is a 'Leave Early' Bushfire Survival Plan?

A written and well-practised plan helps you prepare for and respond to a bushfire threat. Having a plan that will work for an individual or a family in a range of situations is important. In an emergency, unexpected events are likely to occur so plans may need to be quickly adapted in changing circumstances. This is why it is so important that a Bushfire Survival Plan, including a backup plan, is written, well-practised and kept in a known and easily accessible place for emergencies.

A 'Leave Early' Bushfire Survival Plan should include:

- When to go: the trigger that is your decision point to leave early. This might include that day's Fire Danger Rating or an Alert message of a local fire.

- Where to go: this might include going to friends, family or an evacuation centre. Make sure pets can be relocated safely with you.

- How to get there: plan the various routes away from a bushfire and consider modes of transport such as buses, taxi, or being picked up by a care provider, friend/neighbour, or family. Ask them – can my pet come along too?

- A place of last resort contingency such as a local Nearby Safer Place in case you have left it too late to leave.

- What to take: you should plan to be away from home for at least 24 hours. Create a list of important medications, documents, other valuable items, clothes, food and memorabilia.

- Who to tell: let your family, friends, neighbours, carers and/or visitors know where you are. Use the *Red Cross Register.Find.Reunite* (https://register.redcross.org.au/)
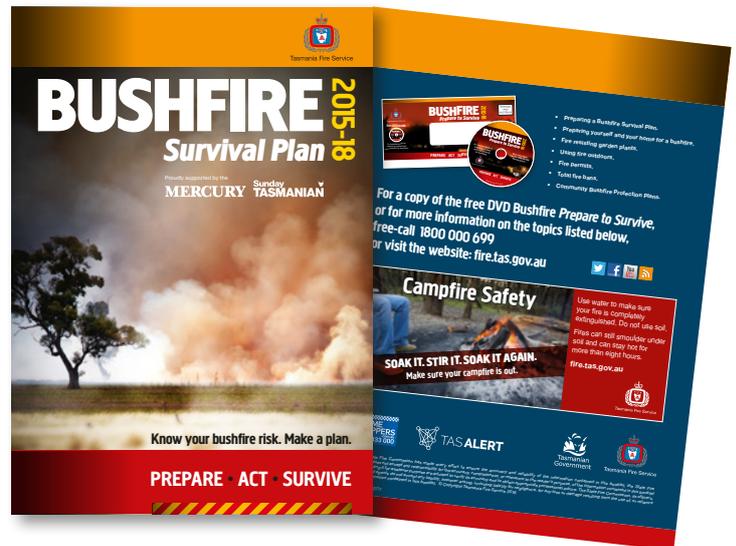
A template for you to write your leave early bushfire survival plan is included in the TFS Bushfire Survival Plan booklet (http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/Show?pageId=colbushfire PrepareActSurvive).
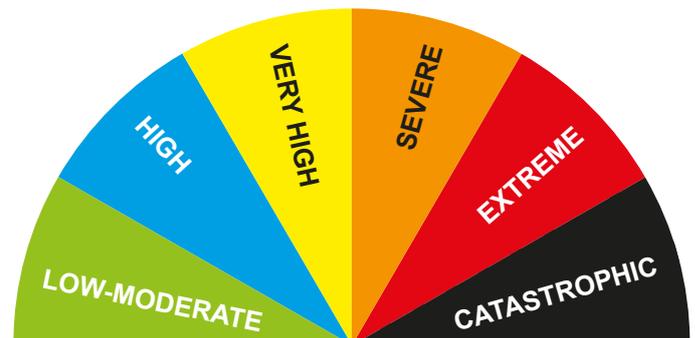
What is a Fire Danger Rating?

Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) help you understand how dangerous a fire would be if one started on a given day due to forecast weather. The higher the rating, the more dangerous the conditions. FDRs are included in weather forecasts during the fire danger period (October to March).

Use FDRs as a trigger to decide the actions you will take in preparation for and on the day. The daily FDR will appear in newspapers and on TFS's website and broadcasted on ABC radio. Make sure you check these every day during the fire danger period (October to March).

Will a fire truck come to my house during a major bushfire?

During a major fire, you must not rely on a fire truck coming to your home.

How will I know if there is a fire in my area?

Bushfire alerts are issued by TFS when a fire has started and provide information for you to take action. It is your responsibility to understand the different types of alerts and how to access them. You should never wait to receive an official warning before you leave. Bushfires can start, spread and become uncontrollable quickly. If you receive a warning, you must take it seriously. Information about fires can be found on the Alerts List and Map on fire.tas.gov.au and by listening to ABC radio emergency broadcasts.

Will I be evacuated or told when to leave?

You should NOT rely on being told to evacuate. Evacuation is the planned relocation of people from a dangerous area to a safer place. A recommendation to evacuate is issued in some situations.

What is a Nearby Safer Place (NSP)?

If people leave it too late to leave, then an NSP such as a building or space may give them some protection from the life-threatening effects of radiant heat during a bushfire. Nearby safer places may include town centres, ground level water (e.g. rivers, in-ground pools, dams), or large open areas (e.g. beaches, ploughed or green fields, golf courses, well-maintained sports fields or parks). An NSP may not be the safest choice, as it most likely will be out in the open and may not have disability access. There are risks getting to a NSP and sheltering there. People will most likely be exposed to embers and smoke.

How do I access resources to help with preparedness?

TFS produces a range of resources to help you prepare for bushfire such as the *Bushfire Survival Plan* booklet, various fact sheets and brochures. You can order free printed copies of these by calling TFS on 1800 000 699 or download electronic copies from TFS website at fire.tas.gov.au at the publications tab.

The Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods (BRN) program provides residents with the opportunity to engage directly with Community Development Officers who can assist you in writing a clear Bushfire Survival Plan. BRN events are held mostly in the lead up and during the bushfire danger period (October to March) in identified high risk areas, and include localised information of what to include in your leave early Bushfire Survival Plan. You can attend BRN meetings and workshops to learn about bushfire risk and how to manage your risk. TFS staff can also provide support for residents in high risk areas who are unable to attend meetings due to limited transport or mobility issues. Information about BRN upcoming community events and the regional Community Development Officer contact numbers are available at: fire.tas.gov.au/brn at 'About Us' or by phoning 1800 000 699.

So parents, carers, NDIS services home care providers, family, neighbours and/or friends caring for people in their homes should make time to sit together and write a plan. Survival of a bushfire event may depend on family, friends or a care provider having a basic understanding of bushfire survival planning, to assist in writing a Bushfire Survival Plan and helping to practise the plan.

Lesley King,
Community Development Officer, South

There are three bushfire alert levels:

ALERT LEVEL	ALERT INFORMATION	WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?
ADVICE- A bushfire has started and general information is provided to keep in-dividuals, households and communities up-to-date with developments. **BE AWARE AND KEEP UP TO DATE**	This will advise you that a fire has started but there is no immediate danger, and includes general information to keep you up to date with developments.	**STAY ALERT AND MONITOR YOUR SURROUNDINGS BY WATCHING FOR SIGNS OF A BUSHFIRE** • Check the Fire Danger Rating for your area • Close all doors and windows • Check you are up-to-date with your bushfire survival plan • **REGULARLY CHECK ALERT**
WATCH AND ACT- A bushfire is approaching and conditions are changing. Individuals, households and communities need to monitor their development and start taking action to ensure safety should the threat escalate. **PUT YOUR PREPARATIONS INTO ACTION**	This represents a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.	**YOU NEED TO LEAVE OR GET READY TO DEFEND** • Put your plan into action • If you have decided to leave for an evacuation centre leave now and take your emergency kit with you • **LEAVE WELL BEFORE ROADS ARE CLOSED AND FULL OF SMOKE**
EMERGENCY WARNING – Individuals, households and communities will be impacted and are in imminent danger. **ACTION MUST BE TAKEN IMMEDIATELY**	This will indicate that people in specific locations are in danger and need to take action immediately as they will be impacted by fire. This message may be preceded by an emergency warning signal (a siren sound).	**YOU NEED TO ACT IMMEDIATELY TO SURVIVE** • If you have not prepared your home, it is too late to do it now • Your safest option is to seek refuge in your home or a nearby safer place as the fire front passes your property • Do not relocate at the last minute in your vehicle as this is deadly **YOU SHOULD NOT WAIT FOR AN OFFICIAL EMERGENCY WARNING IF YOU ARE THREATENED BY A BUSHFIRE**

Community Engagement training and tools

It's often difficult to find a way to describe what community engagement is all about and how we do it. It really is the grey matter of community development work and very much reflects the needs of the communities we connect with. When first beginning work with BRN, all of us at one point or another gained our Certificate in Engagement through the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). This training really assisted in developing an underpinning approach to engagement that is influenced by the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. There are many different levels to engagement and when to apply them, based on both community and organisational response capacity. Units covered in this training included: Engagement Essentials, Engagement Methods, Engagement Design and Conflict in Engagement. All staff had varying levels of expertise in the area of community development and this training really refined and influenced our focus. It also provided us with a range of resources, strategies and tools for engaging with Tasmanian at-risk communities.

A couple of examples of community engagement tools identified included:

- **Card Storming** – Participants individually write their ideas, concerns, issues on cards. These are shared in small groups, then categorised by the whole group.

- **Dialogue** – A form of discussion where participants agree to suspend judgments to fully explore a question and seek shared meaning. Participants are asked to reflect on what the group is saying and what they are individually feeling.

- **Newsletters** – Can be designed to inform, to seek feedback, to gather ideas, and to update the community on an engagement project and how community input / feedback has been taken into consideration. Can include feedback mechanisms.

- **Open House** – A public information session incorporating a series of displays or stations staffed by technical experts, engagement professionals or the project team. More informal than public meetings.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION →

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Community Engagement training and tools

Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhood Property Assessment Field Day at Eaglehawk Neck.

Can incorporate presentations, tours, interactive displays, and gathering spaces.

- **Public Meeting** – A meeting organised by either the organisation or community with presentations and questions asked by the crowd.

- **World Café** – A structured process where participants discuss a question or series of questions at a group of small tables. Each table has a host who facilitates the same conversation during a series of "rounds". At the end of each round, participants disperse and move to new tables to continue the discussion. This is designed so participants share ideas, concerns, fears, experiences or feedback with a broad range of people.

Some examples of tools we as a team have developed and utilise include:

- **Community-based forums and information sessions** – Opportunities to connect with TFS staff and volunteers, and to hear from other stakeholders such as Parks and Wildlife, council, SES, Red Cross, DPIPWE and more.

- **Workshops** – Help you develop your Bushfire Survival Plan. Workshops can be tailored to specific groups such as women, people with a disability, elderly people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, shack owners.

- **Property Assessment Field Days** – These are interactive ways to join your community and to learn practical tips for your home in the 8 key areas of defendability.

- **BRN groups** – Focussed action groups that work on projects and activities that benefit the broader community.

- **Phone Tree** – This is a community-run early warning system that is developed, owned and operated by community volunteers.

- **Community mapping** – This allows BRN staff to connect with pre-existing groups, and support and add to community activities.

- **A4 information pamphlets** – Information for you to take home and share with your circle of influence.

- **Interactive photo boards** – Visually exploring defendable spaces and risk areas.

- **Hoses and Ladders** – A life size board game that connects the players with issues such as Fire Danger Ratings and their impact, alert levels, preparation activities and more.

- **Volunteer community engagement** – workshops (watch this space).

- **Volunteer kit** – This kit supports the volunteers who are organising information activities for their local communities.

As you can see we invest quite a lot in the development of our 'tool kits' and are working hard to have a diverse range of resources. This is critical to our work as community engagement is all about the community we connect with. All communities are unique and so what works in one area, won't necessarily work in another. If you're curious about what tools and support are available, contact the Community Development Officer in your region for more information.

Suzette Harrison,
Community Development Officer (North/North West)

TFS Volunteer Brigade Engagement Kits – Available Now!

Based on feedback from some of our volunteer brigades, the Bushfire-Ready Neighbourhoods program now has three regional volunteer brigade engagement kits available to borrow for your community engagement events.

Included in the engagement kits is a 'Bushfire ready event here today' sign, and Community Protection Planning and Fire Danger Rating pull-up banners.

Brigades are encouraged to contact Community Development and Education through the details below to arrange to borrow a kit, or to talk with their regional Community Development Officer.

communityed@fire.tas.gov.au or 1800 000 699

Peter Middleton
Coordinator Community Development

1800 000 699

fire.tas.gov.au/brn

communityed@fire.tas.gov.au

Tasmania Fire Service

alert.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Government