



WILDFIRE

SAFETY GUIDANCE

This safety guide offers practical tips to prepare for and survive a wildfire. For more advice or if you have any questions, **contact us**. We're here to help!

Wildfires are a significant and unpredictable threat, capable of spreading rapidly across vast areas and destroying homes, forests, and entire communities. They can ignite suddenly from natural causes like lightning or human activities such as unattended campfires or discarded cigarettes.

Wildfires are particularly dangerous during periods of prolonged dry weather, high winds, and extreme heat, when vegetation becomes tinder-dry and highly flammable. Understanding when wildfires are most likely to occur and being prepared is crucial to minimise their impact.

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WILDFIRE PREPARED HOMES

Preparedness for wildfires begins with creating adequate defensible space around your property and hardening your home with fire-resistant building materials and construction techniques.

Defensible Space

- ✔ Remove dead plants, grass and weeds to create a buffer between flames, embers and your home.
- ✔ Maintain lawn and plants with regular watering and trimming. Prune tree branches that hang over the roof or within 3 metres of your home.
- ✔ Space out trees and shrubs, ensuring there's adequate separation between them.
- ✔ Use non-combustible materials like gravel or stone for landscaping close to the house.
- ✔ Remove back-to-back fencing if possible.
- ✔ Relocate firewood piles, propane tanks, and other flammable materials away from your home.

Harden Your Home

- ✔ **Roof:** Choose a Class A fire-rated roof like metal, clay tiles, or asphalt shingles. Keep it clear of debris.
- ✔ **Eaves and Vents:** Cover eaves and soffits with fire-resistant materials. Install ember- and flame-resistant vents and 1/8-inch metal mesh over vents to prevent embers from entering.
- ✔ **Windows:** Install dual-pane or tempered glass windows, which are less likely to break in high heat.
- ✔ **Walls:** Use non-combustible or fire-resistant materials such as stucco, brick, or fibres cement siding.
- ✔ **Decks and Porches:** Use fire-resistant materials like metal or composite decking. Enclose the undersides to prevent debris buildup.
- ✔ **Gutters:** Install gutter guards to prevent debris accumulation and clean them regularly.

Review the **insurance policy** to make sure it offers sufficient coverage in the event of a wildfire.

PREPARE

If you live in a wildfire-prone area, you should prepare yourself and your family for the possibility of having to evacuate.

- ✔ **Create an Evacuation Plan:** Identify multiple exit routes from your home and neighbourhood. Establish emergency communication protocols and designate a meeting location outside the fire or hazard area.
- ✔ **Stay Informed:** Register for local emergency alerts and stay aware of fire level warnings (e.g. high, severe, catastrophic). Familiarise yourself with the local evacuation procedures.
- ✔ **Prepare an Emergency Kit:** Assemble a supply kit in advance and keep it in your evacuation vehicle. Ensure your vehicle is fuelled, equipped with a fully charged fire extinguisher, and ready to go.
- ✔ **Protect Your Home:** Designate a room that can be sealed off from outside air. Store important documents in a safe, fireproof place so that they can be accessed in the event of a wildfire.
- ✔ **Outdoor Activity Awareness:** Understand your exposure to wildfire risks when planning outdoor activities. Follow local restrictions, avoid closed or impacted areas, and stay clear of active wildfires.
- ✔ **Maintain Situational Awareness:** Report any signs of smoke or fire immediately and stay vigilant at all times.

Grab and Go Bag



WATER

(12 litres per person, water filter)



FOOD

(3-day supply, non-perishable)



PHYSICAL MAP

(with 2 evacuation routes)



FIRST AID KIT

(incl. prescriptions, sanitation supplies)



RADIO

(battery-powered, hand crank)



POWER SUPPLY

(batteries, charger, solar)



RESPIRATOR,
DUST MASK



FLASHLIGHT



CLOTHING, SPARE
GLASSES/LENSES



WHISTLE



CASH, DOCUMENT
COPIES

CAUGHT IN A WILDFIRE

Never underestimate the speed, power and destructive nature of a wildfire. Even small fires can rapidly escalate and spread due to dry conditions, high temperatures and prevailing winds. Note that fires typically progress in the direction of the ambient wind, so always pay attention to wind direction and reposition accordingly.

Basic Safety Tips

- ▶ Maintain constant situational awareness. Stay alert to the fire's location, movement, and wind direction, as fires can change direction rapidly, and new ones can ignite from circulating debris.
- ▶ Avoid positioning yourself uphill from a fire, as fires move quickly uphill due to rising heat and smoke preheating the land higher up.
- ▶ Keep a safe distance from gas supplies, electrical posts, cables, combustible materials, batteries and fuel/oil storage containers.
- ▶ Be cautious of poor air quality near wildfires, noting the risk of harmful contaminants like asbestos circulating in the air, which can have severe long-term health effects.
- ▶ Inform authorities of your exact location and stay hydrated.

Clothing

When there is a wildfire, it's essential to wear the right clothing to minimise exposure to heat, smoke, and flying embers.

- ▶ Long-Sleeved Shirt and Pants: Wear natural fibres like cotton or wool, as these materials are less likely to catch fire than synthetic fabrics. Ensure they cover as much skin as possible.
- ▶ Sturdy Footwear: Opt for closed-toe shoes or boots, ideally made of leather, to protect your feet from hot debris and sharp objects.
- ▶ Protective Mask: Use an N95 respirator mask or, in a pinch, cover your nose and mouth with a piece of cloth or bandana.
- ▶ Goggles or Glasses: Wear protective eyewear to shield your eyes from smoke, ash, and debris.
- ▶ Head Protection: Wear a wide-brimmed hat or helmet to protect against embers and heat.
- ▶ Gloves: Wear leather or heavy-duty gloves to protect your hands from burns and cuts.

Surviving on Foot

- ✓ If possible, move to a large water body or seek shelter in an area clear of vegetation, a ditch or rocky spot. Avoid ravines, as they can funnel fire.
- ✓ With reduced visibility from smoke, exercise caution when walking and watch for hazards on the ground.
- ✓ If possible, place a large rock or large tree trunk between you and the fire.
- ✓ Lie face down, cover your body as much as possible, using anything that may help deflect or absorb heat (such as soil).
- ✓ Breathe air closest to the ground.

Surviving in Your Vehicle

- ✓ Always drive defensively with headlights on.
- ✓ Stay alert for debris and escaping animals on the road.
- ✓ Park your vehicle in a vegetation-free area or behind a solid object like a brick building. Keep a safe distance from abandoned vehicles that could catch fire and explode. Never block emergency vehicles or escape routes.
- ✓ Close all vents, windows and doors to keep smoke out. Know how to clean your car's air filter, as it may clog with ash, and consider carrying a spare filter.
- ✓ Cover yourself with a wool blanket or jacket and shelter below window level in the car.

Surviving in Your Home

- ✓ Stay inside the house and stay together in a group.
- ✓ Close all doors, windows, vents and fire screens. Be sure to keep the doors unlocked.
- ✓ Move all curtains away from the windows and sliding glass doors. Curtains are highly flammable and removing them reduces fuel for the fire.
- ✓ Fill sinks, tubs and buckets with cold water to put out any embers.
- ✓ Have fire extinguishers out and ready to use.
- ✓ Stay away from outside walls and windows.

Google has developed a real-time **wildfire boundary tracker** that uses AI and satellite imagery to map the boundaries of large wildfires and displays them on Google Maps and Google Search.

AFTER A WILDFIRE

- ✓ Follow guidance from local authorities to determine when it is safe to return.
- ✓ Confirm with local officials whether the water is safe to drink, as wildfires can carry sediments and debris into reservoirs and water treatment facilities.
- ✓ Douse your roof and gutters with water to ensure that any remaining sparks or embers are fully extinguished.
- ✓ Stay vigilant. Be on the lookout for smoke, and avoid hot, charred, or smoldering debris, as well as live embers, which can cause burns or reignite fires.
- ✓ Watch out for ash pits, which are holes in the ground filled with hot ashes from burned tree roots.
- ✓ Steer clear of damaged power poles and power lines.
- ✓ Wear leather gloves and thick-soled boots for protection.
- ✓ Stay connected to alert systems, radio, and other information sources.

ELEVATE YOUR RISK MANAGEMENT PROCESSES

At RiskPal, we make safety simple and compliance straightforward by helping you create, manage, and retain your risk assessments.

The RiskPal platform gives you access to customisable risk assessment templates and provides best practice safety guidance for hundreds of scenarios, including wildfires, reporting on wildfires and extreme weather events.

Our platform and team of experienced health and safety professionals can help you elevate your risk management processes to the next level and safeguard your team and operations.

Visit [RiskPal.com](https://www.riskpal.com) to find out more or *get in touch* to talk to someone on the team.

