



# PLAN FOR AN EMERGENCY

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leaving Home</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Prepare an Emergency Kit</b>	<b>3</b>
Food and Water	3
First Aid Kit	3
Communications	3
Important Documents and Items	4
Clothing	4
Tools and Supplies	4
Items to help you evacuate quickly	4
People with medical conditions	4
Reunite with your family	4
<b>Flood</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Before a Flood</b>	<b>5</b>
Prepare your home	5
What should you do when you hear a flood warning	5
What to do if you need to evacuate	5
<b>During a Flood</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>After a Flood</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Bush Fire</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Know Your Risk</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Four Simple Steps</b>	<b>7</b>
Discuss what to do if a bush fire threatens your home	7
Prepare your home and get ready	8
Know the Bushfire Alert levels and Fire Danger ratings	9
Keep key information	10
<b>Protection for your Home</b>	<b>10</b>
Top 5 actions to make your home safer	10
More permanent protection for your home	10
<b>How to Prepare your Pets for an Emergency</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>NBN Tips to Stay Connected</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Checklists – Fire Emergency</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Decide to Stay Checklist</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Action Checklist</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>My “To Do” List</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>My “Important Items” List</b>	<b>13</b>

# Plan for an Emergency



This document has been prepared in response to feedback received from the community after the Black Summer 2020 Bushfires on the south coast of NSW. The document brings together information on what to do in an emergency, and has been sourced from the NSW Rural Fire Service, NSW State Emergency Service, and the Eurobodalla Shire Council. While it is hoped there will never be such a situation again, this document will assist members of the community to better prepare for future emergency situations.

Types of emergencies can include fire, severe weather, flood, extended power loss, falling tree/limbs or structure damage.

**Please read this document, assess what applies to your household and then MAKE YOUR OWN PLAN**

Make sure you follow these important steps to prepare ahead of emergencies:

- **Keep your emergency kit** in a safe and accessible place.
- **Check emergency kit** on a regular basis and replace expired or out-of-date items.
- **Discuss what to do** in an emergency with household members so everyone knows the plan in advance.
- **Record important details** such as emergency numbers, two meeting spots (in case you're unable to get to the first spot), medications, pet details, household mobile numbers, insurance providers and family contact details.
- **Make sure your home and contents insurance is up-to-date** and in particular the sum insured amount is enough. It's also a good idea to make sure you have your insurer's details handy and know how to contact them should you need to leave in a hurry.

**If the situation is life threatening call 000**

# Leaving Home

Whether you decide to leave home because you're feeling anxious, or are told to relocate, your first choice should be to go to family or friends who live in a town centre. If family or friends in a safe area isn't an option, head for your nearest evacuation centre. Sometimes communities organise their own unofficial places to seek shelter, like a local licensed club.

## Prepare an Emergency Kit

### Food and Water

During and after an emergency you may need to stay in your home and there may be power outages and road closures. As a minimum, you should have the following supplies preferably in a waterproof box:

- 3 litres of bottled water for each person
- non-perishable food, such as canned food
- can opener
- any prescriptions and medications you or your family need to take
- items for babies (e.g. formula, food, nappies)
- items for elderly members of your household (e.g. mobility aids, hearing aids)
- items for members of your household with special needs (e.g. mobility aids, insulin pumps)
- items for pets (e.g. food, water, litter or newspapers, lead, carry cage, blanket, medications)
- camping plates, cups and cutlery
- camping stove or gas cooking equipment
- hand sanitisers
- toilet paper
- insect repellent
- toothbrush and toothpaste
- soap/shampoo
- sunscreen

### First Aid Kit

You should be able to buy a first aid kit with what you need from your local pharmacy. It should include:

- plasters in a variety of sizes
- gauze dressings
- sterile eye dressings
- antiseptic spray
- safety pins
- tweezers
- disposable gloves

### Communications

Items to include:

- battery operated radio + extra batteries
- battery operated torch + extra batteries
- copy of your emergency plan
- fully charged mobile phone and charger or phone card
- list of emergency contact numbers
- pen and paper

## Important Documents and Items

Keep all important documents in a sealed waterproof bag in a safe place which you can easily access.

- passport, birth and marriage certificates
- house, life, health, car, boat, caravan and trailer insurances
- land titles, mortgage papers, lease or rental agreements
- copies of Medicare, pension or personal identification cards
- wills
- inventory of valuable household goods
- back-up copy of important computer files i.e. external hard drive
- important documents scanned on USB memory stick or external hard drive

## Clothing

Store in sealed plastic bags:

- strong closed toe shoes or boots
- warm protective clothing such as jumper, waterproof jacket and hat
- garden and rubber gloves
- safety glasses and sun glasses

## Tools and Supplies

Items to include:

- plastic garbage bags
- utility knife
- masking or duct tape for windows
- basic tool kit such as a wrench to turn off all utilities
- wool or thermal blankets and bedding
- whistle
- tent or a tarpaulin
- books and games for children

## Items to help you evacuate quickly

You may need to leave your home quickly if you are in a flood-prone or bushfire area. In this situation you will want to have your emergency kit ready in advance and have access to your:

- car and car keys. Make sure car is removed from garage before power outage, as the garage door may not be able to be opened
- car has a full tank of fuel
- cash, credit and or debit cards – wallet/purse
- mobile phone and charger

## People with medical conditions

When emergencies threaten, people with medical conditions should move to an official evacuation centre immediately. Please take your required medication and copies of prescriptions. Do not present to the hospital unless you require immediate medical attention. The evacuation centres offer food, water, safety, company and St John's Ambulance personnel.

## Reunite with your family

In case you become separated from loved ones during an emergency, Red Cross manages [Register.Find.Reunite](#), a national registration and enquiry service. When the service is activated, people can register at [redcross.org.au](http://redcross.org.au) or in person at an evacuation or relief centre.

You can also use [the website](#) if you are unable to contact a loved one who may have been affected.

# Flood

**If you need assistance during a flood event, call your local State Emergency Service (SES) on 132 500 or 000 in a life-threatening situation**

The NSW State Emergency Service (SES) is the lead combat agency for flood, coastal inundation, tsunami and storms.



## Before a Flood

### Prepare your home

- Obtain a copy of your local council's flood plan; it will show the location of problem areas, evacuation routes and relief centres.
- If you could be cut off by floodwaters, make preparations.
- Work out what the safest route to leave your property will be.
- Organise sandbags and sand; your local council is the best place to start.
- Put sandbags in the toilet bowl and over all drains; this will stop sewage back-flow.
- Tune in to your ABC Radio station ABC South East radio on 103.5 FM or 810 AM and keep listening for advice and warnings. You can find your local station on the ABC Radio frequency finder as well as listen online or via the ABC Radio app.

### What should you do when you hear a flood warning?

- Identify the safest route to your nearest evacuation centre; leave well before roads are closed by water.
- Get ready to move vehicles, outdoor equipment, garbage, chemicals and poisons to higher locations.
- Work out which indoor items you want to put in a higher spot.
- Think about what you will do with the contents of your fridge and freezer.
- Check your emergency kit (see pages 3 & 4) and make plans to keep your pets safe.
- Let friends, family and neighbours know what your plans are.

### What to do if you need to evacuate?

- Pack your emergency kit (see pages 3 & 4).
- If you can't take your pets with you, decide how you will look after them.
- Raise furniture, clothing and other valuables onto beds, tables and into roof spaces.
- Empty freezers and refrigerators, leaving doors open.
- Turn off power, water and gas.
- Lock your home and take the safest evacuation route out of the area.
- Don't drive in water of unknown depth and current. "If it's flooded – forget it!"

**Remember walking through floodwater is very dangerous!**

## During a Flood

- Avoid driving, walking, swimming or playing in floodwater. “If it’s flooded – forget it!”
- If you are caught in floodwater, call for help immediately.
- If you have to walk through floodwater, do so very carefully and wear solid shoes and use a stick to check depth and current.
- Avoid drains, culverts and water that is knee-deep or higher.
- Stay well away from fallen powerlines as electrical current passes easily through water.
- Floodwater may contain sewage, so take precautions.
- Identify your nearest relief centre and the safest route to get there, but only go if you are sure it is safe.
- Let family and friends know where you are and where you are going.
- Keep listening to your ABC Radio station on a battery-powered radio, listen online or via the ABC Radio app for updates and instructions.
- Got information that could help others? Get in contact with your ABC Local Radio station and tell them what you can see; reliable first-hand knowledge can help others in the community.

## After a Flood

- Stay tuned to your ABC Radio station ABC South East radio on 103.5 FM or 810 AM on a battery-powered radio, listen online or via the ABC Radio app for official advice and warnings.
- Don't return home until authorities have said it is safe to do so.
- Don't allow children to play in or near floodwater.
- Avoid entering floodwater — it is dangerous. “If it’s flooded – forget it!”
- If you must enter floodwaters, wear solid shoes and use a stick to check depth and current.
- Stay away from drains, culverts and water that is knee-deep or higher.
- Don't turn on your gas or electricity until it has been checked by a professional; the same goes for appliances.
- Don't eat food which has been in floodwater.
- Boil tap water until supplies have been declared safe.
- Watch for trapped animals.
- Beware of fallen powerlines.
- Take lots of photos of all damage for insurance claims.
- Let your family and friends know where you are.



# Bush Fire

To report a fire emergency or life- threatening situation call 000



## Know Your Risk

**Coastal** – If you live along the coast near scrub, you are at risk. Fires in coastal scrub can be hot and move fast.

**On a hill** – If you live at the top of a hill, you are at risk. Fires travel faster uphill. For every 10 degrees of slope, the fire speed can double.

**Bush** – If you live in an area close to bush or surrounded by bush, you're at risk. Bush fires can be hot, intense and throw burning embers towards your home.

## Four Simple Steps

### 1. Discuss what to do if a bush fire threatens your home

#### Leave Early – your safest choice

- What will be your sign to leave? It could be smoke in your area or as soon as you find out there's a fire near you.
- Where will we go? Where's a meeting place that's safe and away from a fire area? It might be a friend or relative's place, a shopping centre or club, or an emergency evacuation centre.
- How will we get there? What road will we take? What's the backup plan if the road is blocked?
- What will we take? Pack your Emergency Kit - refer "Prepare an Emergency Kit" on pages 3-4.
- Who will we call and advise we are leaving and that we have arrived safely? Make a list.
- What is our backup plan? What if things don't go to plan? Identify a safer location nearby such as a neighbour's home that is well prepared or a place of last resort. Is there a neighbourhood safer place nearby such as a sports ground/park, club or beach?

**OR**

#### Stay only if you are well prepared

- Is your home prepared well enough to make it as safe as possible during a bushfire? Are we putting anyone at risk by staying? Will we cope in an emergency situation which will be hot, smoky and physically draining? If not – leave early.
- Do we have all the equipment we need? Go through all the items on the "Decide to Stay" checklist (refer page 12) and make sure you have all that you need.
- When should we start to defend our home? Do not wait for an official warning. Get ready as soon as you find out there's a fire near you.



- Do you know what to do before, during and after a fire? Study the “Action” checklist (refer page 12).
- Do all members of the household know what to do in all situations? Give specific roles to each person.
- What is the backup plan? Consider unexpected events such as being at home alone, if no-one is home, if the fire moves faster than expected, if the phone and power go out.

***It is not safe to stay with your property:***

- **if the fire danger rating is catastrophic**
- **there is an extreme fire danger rating and your home is not specifically designed or constructed to withstand bushfires**
- **your property is not well maintained, or**
- **you and the people in your home are not physically and mentally fit and ready.**

## **2. Prepare your home and get ready**

A well prepared home is more likely to survive a bush fire. Even if your plan is to leave early, the more you prepare your home, the more likely it will survive a bush fire or ember attack. A well prepared home can also be easier for you or firefighters to defend, and is less likely to put your neighbours' homes at risk. A well prepared home will also give you more protection if a fire threatens suddenly and you cannot leave.

Here are some basic maintenance tips to prepare your property:

- Clean your gutters of leaves and twigs
- Install metal gutter guards
- Repair damaged or missing tiles on the roof
- Install fine metal mesh screens on windows and doors
- Fit seals around doors and windows to eliminate gaps
- Enclose the areas under the house
- Repair or cover gaps in external walls
- Attach a fire sprinkler system to gutters
- Keep lawns short and gardens well maintained
- Cut back trees and shrubs overhanging buildings
- Clean up fallen leaves, twigs and debris around the property
- Have hoses long enough to reach around your house
- If you have a pool, tank or dam, put a Static Water Supply (SWS) sign on your property entrance, so firefighters know where they can get water
- Check and maintain adequate levels of home and contents insurance. Ensure it is up to date.



### 3. Know the Bushfire Alert levels and Fire Danger Ratings

FIRE DANGER RATING	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
CATASTROPHIC	<p><b>For your survival, leave bush fire risk areas.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire.</li><li>• Your life may depend on the decisions you make, even before there is a fire.</li><li>• Stay safe by going to a safer location early in the morning or the night before.</li><li>• Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions.</li><li>• You may not be able to leave and help may not be available.</li></ul>
EXTREME	<p><b>Take action now to protect your life and property.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These are dangerous fire conditions.</li><li>• Check your bush fire plan and ensure that your property is fire ready.</li><li>• If a fire starts, take immediate action.</li><li>• If you and your property are not prepared to the highest level, go to a safer location well before the fire impacts.</li><li>• Reconsider travel through bush fire risk areas.</li></ul>
HIGH	<p><b>Be ready to act.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There's a heightened risk. Be alert for fires in your area.</li><li>• Decide what you will do if a fire starts.</li><li>• If a fire starts, your life and property may be at risk. The safest option is to avoid bush fire risk areas.</li></ul>
MODERATE	<p><b>Plan and prepare.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire.</li></ul>

#### There are three levels of Bush Fire Alerts:



##### Advice

A fire has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.



##### Watch and Act

There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.



##### Emergency Warning

An Emergency Warning is the highest level of Bush Fire Alert. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.

For some fires, you may hear a warning message over your radio or television, such as a siren, or you may receive an [Emergency Alert text message or phone call](#). Other fires may start so quickly that there will be no time for any warning at all.

**Remember – don't wait for a warning. Take action quickly and don't delay.**

## 4. Keep key information

In a bushfire it's important that you stay up to date on conditions in your area. The NSW Rural Fire Service strongly advises saving these numbers, links and apps now. Remember not all services will be available in a fire emergency so having more than one option is advisable.

- In an emergency call 000
- Bushfire information call 1800 679 737
- Live Traffic Updates call 132 701
- Websites:  
NSW Rural Fire Service: [rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://rfs.nsw.gov.au)  
Fire danger ratings: [rfs.nsw.gov.au/fdr](http://rfs.nsw.gov.au/fdr)
- Free smartphone apps:  
Fires Near Me  
Live Traffic
- Local ABC/emergency broadcaster frequency  
ABC TV  
ABC South East radio on 103.5 FM or 810 AM
- Social Media  
[Facebook.com/nswrfs](https://www.facebook.com/nswrfs)  
[twitter.com/nswrfs](https://twitter.com/nswrfs)
- NSW Disaster Assistance call 1800 018 444
- To report electrical power line hazards phone Essential Energy immediately on 13 20 80

## Protection for your Home

### Top 5 actions to make your home safer.

- Trim overhanging trees and shrubs
- Mow grass and remove cuttings. Having a cleared area around your home will give firefighters a safe area to work.
- Remove material that can burn around your home. This includes things such as door mats, wood piles, mulch, leaves, outdoor furniture.
- Clear and remove all the debris and leaves from the gutters surrounding your home. Burning embers can set your home on fire.
- Prepare a sturdy hose/hoses that will reach all round your home. Make sure you have a reliable source of water (pool, tank, dam) and a diesel/petrol pump available.

### More permanent protection for your home

- Block up areas where embers can enter the house (external walls, windows, doors, under house).
- Install metal flyscreens on all windows and vents.
- Install metal gutter guards.
- Position gas cylinders on side of house and away from trees and gardens and direct any pressure valves away from house.
- Install a fire sprinkler system to gutters.
- Move garden beds away from house.
- Replace wood fences with metal fences.
- Use stones instead of mulch.
- Repair or replace damaged or missing roof tiles.
- Remove overhanging branches from power lines and over the house.
- Store flammable items like petrol, gas and paint away from the house.
- Make sure hoses have spray nozzles.

# HOW TO PREPARE YOUR PETS FOR AN EMERGENCY



**1**

**PACK SUPPLIES**

Include pet supplies in your emergency kit - food, water, toys, bedding, medication, vet info, leashes and transport cages.



**2**

**PLAN**

Plan where they can stay in an evacuation, and during the cleanup/rebuilding. Introduce your pets to your neighbours - they could help if something went wrong while you're away.

**IDENTIFICATION**

**3**

Animals might run or hide, so you need ways to identify them. Have collars, tags, a microchip and photos. Pets can look alike, particularly if dirty or singed.



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## NBN Tips to Stay Connected

Disaster season provides an opportunity to refresh contingency plans and make sure family members are aware of what to do, and **nbn** has offered the following tips to households:

### **Stay mobile**

- *Keep a charged mobile phone and portable mobile battery pack ready to use in a power outage, or if your nbn™ connection is disrupted in an emergency event. Consider turning off cellular data on unnecessary apps to save battery.*

### **Stay updated**

- *Local radio is a good source of information during an emergency, so include a battery powered radio in your emergency communications kit. Also follow emergency services, including your state Fire and Rescue and Police Services, as well as utility companies and nbn (@NBN\_Australia) on social media for updates.*

### **Back up**

- *To make sure you can access important information and essential documents from anywhere, including insurance policies and financial documents, consider creating a digital back up on a USB or in the cloud.*

### **Alternative power**

- *If there is a [power outage](#), equipment connected to nbn™ services will not work. For home needs during these times, you might want to consider investing in an alternative power source, like a generator. Unfortunately though, alternative options like generators will not bring back home internet if the nbn™ network is also experiencing a power loss.*

# CHECKLISTS - Fire Emergency

## ***“Decide to Stay” Checklist***

### **Equipment**

- [ ] Hose or hoses that can reach all around the house
- [ ] Water supply of 10,000 litres e.g. water tank, dam or pool
- [ ] Petrol/diesel water pump and fuel in a safe accessible place
- [ ] Ladders to access inside the roof
- [ ] Buckets, mops and scoops
- [ ] Shovels and metal rakes

### **Protective Clothing**

- [ ] Wide brimmed hat
- [ ] Eye protection goggles
- [ ] Facemask or moistened cloth
- [ ] Loose long sleeved cotton shirt
- [ ] Gloves
- [ ] Long cotton pants or jeans
- [ ] Sturdy leather shoes or boots

## ***“Action” Checklist***

### **Before – well before the fire has arrived**

- [ ] Turn off gas mains and/or bottle
- [ ] Move outdoor furniture items away from house
- [ ] Block drainpipes with socks full of sand and fill gutters with water
- [ ] Close doors, vents and windows
- [ ] Fill baths, sinks, buckets and bins with water
- [ ] Move animals to a safe location or confine to one room
- [ ] Place ladder next to roof access hole to allow you to check for spot fires in roof
- [ ] Soak towels and rugs and lay them across external doorways
- [ ] Move indoor furniture away from windows
- [ ] Patrol the house to put out any embers or spot fires

### **During – as the fire is upon you**

- [ ] If the flames are on top of you or the heat becomes unbearable, move inside until the fire front has passed (usually 5-50 minutes). Do not shelter in an inner room with no clear egress. Take shelter in a room on the opposite side to the approaching fire. Ensure you have clear access to an exit
- [ ] Patrol inside the house, including roof space, for sparks and embers

### **After – immediately after the fire has passed**

- [ ] Check the house inside and out for fires, including roof cavity, under the house, deck, stairs, windowsills etc
- [ ] If possible check your neighbours are safe and OK, if safe to do so
- [ ] Contact relatives/friends to tell them you are safe
- [ ] Continue to patrol your home for several hours looking for small fires or embers

## My “To Do List”

√	Action	Notes
	e.g. Turn off power & water	Meter box key on hook near back door

## My “Important Items” List

√	Item	Location
	e.g. Medication	On kitchen bench