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## Seasonal Outlook

The warmer and drier than average weather over recent months, combined with the forecasts for spring, suggest that the fire season is likely to commence earlier than usual and be more active than normal.

## Primary Key Messages

- On hot, dry, windy days, fires can start and spread quickly. If the Fire Danger Rating is Severe, Extreme or Code Red, leaving early before a fire has started is the only option that guarantees your safety.
- If you wait and decide to leave after a fire has started, you risk driving your family through thick smoke, fallen trees and power lines, and face the danger of collisions, being trapped, serious injury or death.
- Understand your risk and plan ahead. Know what to do on hot, dry, windy days and plan for all situations. Talk to your family and friends about how you'll know when to leave, where you'll go and how you will get there.
- Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire would be if one started. As the ratings increase, so does the risk of an uncontrollable and fast moving fire igniting. A severe fire danger rating or higher should be your trigger to leave.
- Never wait for an official warning before you leave, as you may not get one. Fires can start quickly and threaten homes and lives within minutes. Make sure you have a plan.
- People have died trying to save their animals. To keep them safe, decide now what you will do with your pets and horses on hot, dry, windy days.
- If you're travelling through bush or grasslands this summer, check the Fire Danger Rating for your destination before you go, listen to local radio for warnings and advice while you're on the road, and check conditions regularly throughout your stay. Download the VicEmergency app, visit [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au), and save the VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226) into your mobile phone. Never travel into bush or grassland areas where a Code Red has been forecast.
- Preparing your property means you can minimise the chance of property damage during a fire; even if you plan to leave early. Find more information about property preparation at [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au).
- People have lost their homes due to simple things like embers landing on their doormat. Make sure before you leave, anything that can burn is moved away from your house.
- Defending your home requires at least two fit and determined adults, at least 10,000 litres of water, protective clothing, and appropriate firefighting hoses and pumps. Most homes in high risk bushfire areas are not defendable on Code Red days. Defending your home is very risky – you could die or be seriously injured

## Supporting messages

### Warnings and information

- Don't rely on getting a warning; it's your responsibility to know when to leave so stay aware of your surroundings over summer. For example, check for smoke in the air and listen for sirens.
- Always use more than one source of information for warnings. Tune in to ABC local radio, commercial and designated community radio stations or Sky News TV, phone the VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226), visit [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au), and download the VicEmergency App. Warnings are also available on VicEmergency's Twitter (@vicemergency) and Facebook ([facebook.com/vicemergency](https://facebook.com/vicemergency)), and CFA's Twitter (@CFA\_Updates) and Facebook ([facebook.com/cfavic](https://facebook.com/cfavic)).
- Make sure you understand the three levels of warnings and what they mean:
  - The ADVICE warning is general information to keep you up to date with developments.
  - The WATCH & ACT informs you an emergency is developing nearby. You need to take action now to protect yourself and others
  - The EMERGENCY WARNING advises you are in imminent danger and need to take action immediately. You will be impacted.

### Pets and horses

- When preparing for fire, also remember your pets; have bedding, food and water ready to go and make sure you have safe transport when leaving early. Always put your own safety before the safety of your pets.
- Make sure your pets can be identified easily; microchip them and include your details such as your phone number on their collars. Have a plan for horses and livestock. A large, well-grazed area where they can move freely, with a supply of water is the safest. Remove all gear from horses and always keep them contained on your property, only open internal gates, they are at serious risk on roads where visibility will be poor.

### Planning and preparation

- Do you have family, friends or neighbours who may need help preparing for fires? Talk to them about when they will leave, where they will go and how you can help.
- Have a plan, make sure your family knows it, and stick to it, don't hesitate when it's time to leave. You could get trapped by fire if you leave too late.
- Plan for all scenarios – what will you do if your car won't start, the wind changes direction, roads are blocked, someone is hurt or people aren't where you expect them to be?
- When planning with kids, make sure you know your local school policy for fire risk days. Some schools close on Code Red days, it's important to know so you can plan for all situations.



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## Rural grassfires

- Reduce your grassfire risk on days when it's safe to do so. Slash, mow, graze and spray grass near your home and assets, and create fuel breaks.
- If you're caught in a grassfire, move to somewhere with minimal vegetation, such as a ploughed or well-grazed paddock and monitor conditions.

## Urban grassland

- If you live or work close to grassland, parks or paddocks (on the outskirts of Melbourne or regional towns), you could be at risk of fire this summer.
- If you live right next to grassland and a grassfire starts, walk at least two streets back from the fire to stay safe and monitor conditions.

## Travellers

- Grassfires can move at speeds of up to 25 km/h and jump highways. Be aware of grassfires when you're travelling. All fires are dangerous.
- You may not get phone reception across regional Victoria, always check weather conditions and your fire risk before you leave home.