

FARM FIRE SAFETY

Safety tips from
FESA Fire Services

F E S A

Fire & Emergency Services
Authority of Western Australia



Dial 000 to report fire emergencies

Keep this brochure in a prominent position and be fire safe

IS YOUR FARM SAFE FROM BUSH FIRE?

We only have to think of the large bush fires in recent years (Tenterden 2003, Bridgetown 2003, Dumbleyung 2004 and Fraser Range 2005) to realise that rural bush fires in Western Australia are inevitable. Aside from the tragic loss of life, these and other fires have caused significant losses to fencing, crops, livestock, machinery, buildings and the environment.

Because of our climate and vegetation as well as natural events such as lightning, we can never totally prevent fire in our rural landscape.

However, you can take effective prevention measures around your home and property to reduce the devastation of fires.

FARM FIRE SAFETY

FESA Fire Services urges the farming community to be prepared for the threat of fires.

Prevention and preparedness activities can help save lives, property and the environment by:

- minimising the chance of a fire starting
- controlling the spread of bush fires
- reducing the damage done by fires
- knowing what to do in the event of a bush fire.

Take action now and put appropriate precautions in place.



BE PREPARED AND HAVE A PLAN

Every rural resident needs to know what to do when a bush fire threatens. In the event of a bush fire, a predetermined plan can provide people with a clear focus to make fast and sound decisions, preventing avoidable injury, death and loss of property.

Every family member (including children) should be aware of the bush fire plan. It is advisable to have a predetermined indoor meeting point, where the whole family would go when a fire is approaching.

Undertaking the following steps will improve your chances of preventing the devastating effects of fire on you, your family and your farm:

- Create a 20-metre fuel free zone by clearing away timber, vegetation and rubbish from around your house, sheds and outbuildings.
- Keep grass around the house short and green.
- Remove branches which overhang the roof.
- Clean out gutters to remove leaves and litter.
- Spark-proof your home – fit wire screens to windows and doors; and enclose eaves and any space under the house.
- Keep timber surfaces on the outside of all structures well maintained.
- Store flammable liquids safely away from the house and clearly label the containers.
- Check appropriate firefighting equipment and make it available in the home and with harvesting machinery.
- Plough a fire break around the home paddock.
- Keep paddocks near buildings well grazed.
- Access to water supplies must be clear and well signposted.
- Get a qualified contractor to clear scrub and other growth away from power lines (minimum clearance 2.5m) and poles. Contact Western Power for advice or if vegetation is getting too close to the lines.
- Keep farm machinery clean of dust and vegetation. Fit spark arresters to machinery exhausts.
- Check the underside of farm vehicles for build up of straw and vegetation, particularly around exhaust system and catalytic converters.
- Carry appropriate fire extinguishers that meet the requirements of the *Bush Fire Regulations 1954*.
- Ensure you comply with local government fire break orders and vehicle movement and harvesting bans.



If you plan to go away on holidays, make sure your neighbour knows how to contact you and is aware of your fire plan. Tell your neighbour the whereabouts of your firefighting equipment.

FARM TOOLS

The use of circular saws, angle grinders, welding apparatus, stationary pumps and other farm machinery should, at all times, be conducted under strictly monitored conditions and in an area free from leaf litter or other debris which may fuel a fire.

A number of major fires in high fire-risk areas have occurred as a result of the use of angle grinders and welding apparatus in the open. The *Bush Fires Regulations 1954* state it is necessary to have a five-metre area cleared of fuel and have a fire extinguisher present when using angle grinders and welding apparatus in the open.

FIRE BREAKS AND FUEL BREAKS

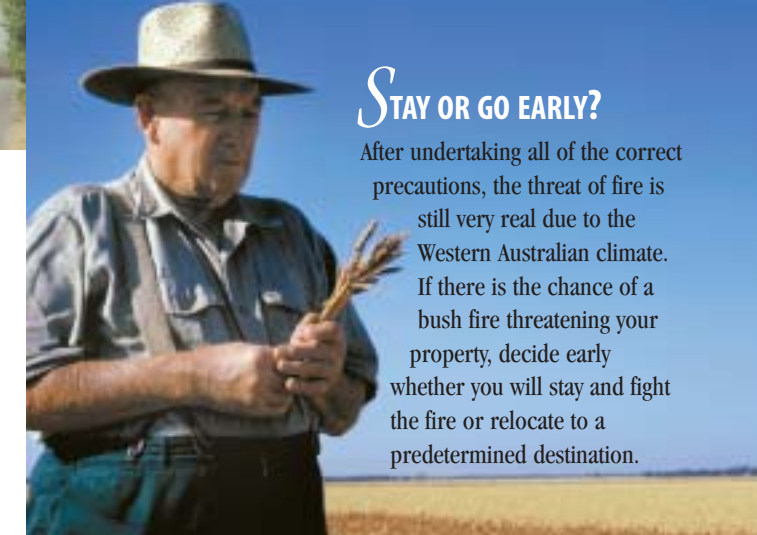
Fire breaks and fuel breaks form an important part of Western Australia's bush fire protection strategy.

- Where required, create fire breaks which comply with your local government's fire break orders before the summer months.
- Your property, including sheds and outbuildings, should have a 20-metre zone around it which is free from fuel, such as long grass, rubbish and branches. Plough a fire break around the home paddock to prevent grass fire damage.



STAY OR GO EARLY?

After undertaking all of the correct precautions, the threat of fire is still very real due to the Western Australian climate. If there is the chance of a bush fire threatening your property, decide early whether you will stay and fight the fire or relocate to a predetermined destination.



Either way, it is imperative that all members of the family wear protective clothing. If you stay, you may have a good chance of saving your home.

Staying with the house could also be safer than trying to get away on roads blocked by fire and smoke. You may prefer to stay if you are confident your home is well prepared for fire. Do you have sufficient emergency water supplies? Do you think you and your family can deal with the stress and tension of battling the fire?

You may prefer to go early if: you are not confident about the fire safety of your house; you are worried about young children, elderly people or someone who is sick; you think you could not cope with the stress of fighting the fire; or if you know it is safe to leave and you have a safe destination in mind.

If you decide to leave, make sure you leave early, while it is safe. Also, be aware that the road may be affected by smoke. For your safety and the safety of firefighters, special care should be taken when driving on roads affected by smoke:

- inform your local government or police of your intention
- turn car headlights on
- slow down – there could be people, vehicles, large trucks and livestock on the road
- follow directions given by police and firefighters
- if you cannot see clearly, pull over to the side of the road, stop your vehicle, keep the headlights and hazard lights on and wait until the smoke clears.

If a bush fire approaches when you are in your vehicle:

- remain calm
- park your vehicle in a fuel-free or already burnt area – off the road and out of the way of emergency service vehicles and personnel
- stay in your vehicle and keep the engine running and turn on the hazard lights
- close the doors, windows, vents and put the air-conditioner on recycle
- lie on the floor and cover exposed parts of your body with blankets or cloth (preferably made from natural fibres).

It will become uncomfortably hot inside your vehicle, but your chances of survival are infinitely greater because of the physical barrier it provides between you and the radiant heat. After the fire has passed, get out of the vehicle and move to ground which has already been burnt.

If you decide to stay, take the following precautions:

- inform your local government or police of your intention
- check that you have adequate water and a means to access it should the power supply fail
- close all windows and doors and if present, shutters or screens
- wet down the exterior of your house
- ensure children and family pets are protected inside
- move animals and livestock into an open, fuel reduced space, do not shut them into a stable or small yard
- block all gaps and cracks under doors and around windows with wet blankets or towels
- close blinds and curtains
- fill buckets, basins, baths and sinks with water
- use a ladder to access and check that no embers have entered the roof space
- stay inside until the main fire has passed
- immediately after the fire has passed inspect the interior and exterior of your home and put out any spot fires. Continue to wet down your home until the area is safe from the threat of spot fires

- if you have an evaporative air-conditioner, run the unit to wet down the filter pads. When smoke or embers start appearing around the house, turn the fan off. Check the unit periodically to ensure no fires have started.

SURVIVAL KIT

You should have a bush fire survival kit stored in the laundry, or an area of the house that is deemed safest.

The bush fire survival kit should contain:

- protective clothing for the whole family
- drinking water
- fire extinguishers
- torch with spare batteries
- knapsack spray
- ladder
- buckets
- goggles and gloves
- a battery-operated radio
- a reliable means of communication during power failure (non-mains powered telephone and a fully charged mobile phone).
- woollen blankets
- first aid kit
- hoses
- shovel
- towels
- mop

When fighting a fire, protective clothing must be worn to minimise the likelihood of burn injuries. As a minimum, wear sturdy boots, cotton or woollen long trousers and a long-sleeved shirt, together with goggles, gloves and some head protection.

Clothing should be made from natural fabrics like cotton, not synthetics which burn readily and do not allow a flow of air. Radiant heat from fires can severely injure or even kill those exposed to it, so it is imperative that protective clothing is worn at all times when fighting a fire.

SMOKE ALARMS SAVE LIVES

Every occupied dwelling should be fitted with a smoke alarm. They are inexpensive, easily installed, and greatly increase your chance of survival in the event of a house fire.

When asleep, our sense of smell shuts down. The high-pitched sound of a smoke alarm alerts us to the presence of smoke and provides precious time for an early escape from toxic smoke and fumes.

**For all emergencies,
including fire call:**

000

**For further fire safety
information, contact your
nearest FESA office or visit
www.fesa.wa.gov.au**



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