

North Arm Cove Community Association Worimi Country

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A BUSH FIRE THIS SEASON?

Bush fire season is now upon us and recent news events warn us of the local potential for a high risk season this spring/summer as a result of heavy fuel loads following two very wet years and an expected hot and dry summer due to the now-arrived El Nino weather event.

- a fire can start anywhere and then spread very quickly depending on wind conditions, topography and vegetation cover.
- North Arm Cove is a vulnerable village:
 - there is thick vegetation cover on the northern and western sides
 - bush creates fires that are hot, intense and throw burning embers
 - there are many campers in the non-urban area during weekends and holiday periods
- the RFS advises that around 90% of homes destroyed in a bush fire are due to burning embers
- the village could be quickly cut off with only one road in and out
- power and communications could also be cut off quickly
- our local RFS brigade may NOT be available to assist if there are a number of fire fronts in the area
- North Arm Cove comprises a diverse demographic:
 - full-time residents
 - weekend residents and visitors
 - absent owners
 - holiday lettings
 - active building sites
 - urban and non-urban residents

with homes and properties in various states of readiness and vulnerability

Bushfire planning and preparedness:

- is the personal responsibility of each household for the safety of self, family, visitors, pets and property
- is a process, not a last minute event.

WHAT'S YOUR BUSHFIRE PLAN IF NORTH ARM COVE IS UNDER THREAT FROM A BUSHFIRE?

Make your BUSHFIRE PLANNING decisions NOW in the cool light of day rather than being forced to make them in the panic of a bushfire event.

THE RFS LISTS FOUR SIMPLE STEPS FOR MAKING YOUR PERSONAL BUSHFIRE SURVIVAL PLAN

STEP 1: DISCUSS and develop a plan now. One of the most important things to do before a bushfire is to decide to stay or leave early

Leave early? – your safest choice

- What will be the trigger for you leaving? Where will you go? How will you get there?
- What will you take? Do you have pets?
- Who will you call to advise that you're leaving and that you have arrived safely?
- What is your backup plan if things don't go to plan?
- What do you need to do to prepare your property in your absence
- Are there neighbours that you need to consider? What are their needs?

Stay? – only if you are well prepared

- If you stay, you should be psychologically prepared for a stressful and difficult period
- Depending on your preparations, you may have no power or water to fight the fire
- Communication services may fail
- There may be no firefighters to help you
- Radiant heat from a big fire can be felt as much as 2 kms away
- Is your home sufficiently well prepared to make it as safe as possible during a fire?
- Are you putting anyone in your household at risk?
- If you have pets, will you evacuate them or try to keep them safe with you?
- Where would be the safest place for you to shelter in the event that a fire is threatening your property?
- What do you need to do to prepare your property for a bushfire?
- Do you have all the equipment that you need?
- When there is a fire, what is your sign to start defending your home?
- Do you know what to do before, during and after a fire?
- Do all members of your household know what to do in all situations?
- Do you have arrangements in place to let family and/or friends know of your decision?
- What is your backup plan if things don't go to plan?

STEP 2: PREPARE your home and get ready to leave or stay. Remember it's just as important to prepare your home for your absence



1. TRIM

Trim overhanging trees and shrubs. This can stop the fire spreading to your home.



2. MOW

Mow grass and remove the cuttings. Have a cleared area around your home.



3. REMOVE

Remove material that can burn around your home (e.g. Door mats, wood piles, mulch, leaves, paint, outdoor furniture).



4. CLEAR

Clear and remove all the debris and leaves from the gutters surrounding your home. Burning embers can set your home on fire.



5. PREPARE

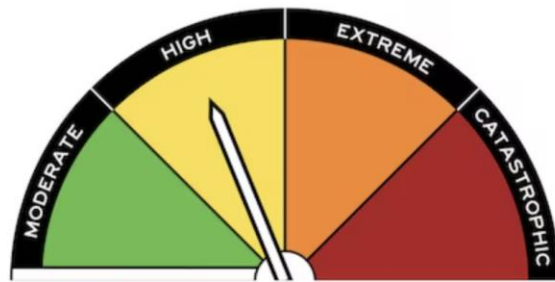
Prepare a sturdy hose or hoses that will reach all around your home. Make sure you've got a reliable source of water.

- Pack your **GO BOX** and put it in the car – ready to go. This should include the items and documents that you need to take with you.
- Consider how you best manage in a highly stressful situation and be ready to implement those strategies in an emergency situation e.g. breathing exercises
- Consider likely obstacles in your emergency planning and incorporate options for these e.g. what if you are by yourself or away from your household when you need to implement your emergency plan?
- If you plan to stay make sure you are properly equipped with all of the firefighting equipment and the personal protective clothing that you will need

STEP 3: KNOW THE BUSHFIRE ALERT LEVELS

You need to know the fire danger ratings and the bushfire alert levels and be ready to act on them.

The Australian Fire Danger Ratings (AFDRS) levels are:



MODERATE

Plan and prepare

HIGH

Be ready to act

EXTREME

Take action now to protect life and property

CATASTROPHIC

For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas

Bush Fire Alert Levels – there are three levels for bushfire alerts:



Advice



Watch and act



Emergency warning

STEP 4: MONITOR THE CONDITIONS

It's important that you stay up to date on the conditions in your area. Useful sources of fire information include:



Hazards near me smartphone app. You can set up a distance for automatic emergency notifications.



NSW Rural Fire Service: their website <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au> has a map showing incidents across NSW including fires. For updates call **Bush Fire Information Line 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737)**

Nearby incidents are also listed on the home page of the North Arm Cove website <https://www.northarmcove.nsw.au>

Stay abreast of the forward forecasts for Extreme and Catastrophic fire conditions at <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans>



ABC Radio Newcastle: 1233 AM frequency or listen online at <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/live/newcastle>



Live Traffic NSW smartphone app or view <https://www.livetraffic.com>. This app and website allows you to check safe driving destinations.



It's time to act with urgency if:

- the fire danger rating is **CATASTROPHIC** - the RFS recommends leaving bushfire risk areas
- there is an **EXTREME** fire danger rating and your home is not designed or constructed for bush fires - the RFS recommends taking action to protect life and property
- your property is not well maintained
- you or members of your household are not mentally and/or physically fit and ready.

WHAT WILL YOU DO IF YOU HAVEN'T LEFT EARLY AND THE ROAD TO THE HIGHWAY IS CUT AND YOU CAN'T DRIVE OUT OF NORTH ARM COVE?

The North Arm Cove Community Centre has been set up as a place of last resort with off-grid power and water. You can shelter there if the road to the highway has been cut off and you don't wish to remain in your home. **If the centre is not open contact details for people to open it are posted near the coffee shop door.**

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR SAFETY CALL TRIPLE ZERO (000) OR USE THE *EMERGENCY PLUS* APP ON YOUR SMARTPHONE TO SEEK HELP

Important: if there is no mobile coverage on any network, you will not be able to reach the Emergency Call Service via a mobile telephone



The [emergencyplus](#) app is an excellent resource to put on your Apple or Android smartphone. It enables you to easily call 000, Police or the SES, and it provides details of your location so you can tell the emergency service exactly where you are.



This information booklet has been prepared by a volunteer subcommittee of the North Arm Cove Community Association Inc to help improve the bushfire awareness and safety of the North Arm Cove community. It utilises the following sources of information:

- The *Bushfire Preparedness Workshop* held at North Arm Cove in August 2023 in conjunction with MidCoast Council, NSW Local Land Services, NSW Reconstruction Authority and the North Arm Cove RFS brigade.
- Rural Fire Service (RFS) advice gleaned from [rfs.nsw.gov.au](https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au) and various hard copy RFS documents available for public distribution.
- Discussions with and information from NSW Local Land Services and NSW Reconstruction Authority.

The North Arm Cove Community Association Inc stresses that bushfire awareness and safety is a personal responsibility and North Arm Cove residents must ensure that they are aware of bushfire conditions and develop plans and prepare for the safety of themselves, their families, their visitors and their properties in bushfire events.

For further information on bush fires and recommendations for planning and preparation:



My Fire Plan Visit <https://www.myfireplan.com.au>



Get Prepared app



RFS Bush fire survival plan
<https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/resouces/bush-fire-survival-plan>