



Newsletter

KALAMUNDA BUSHFIRE READY GROUPS



Hi Everybody,

To start with the 1st of April as we have mentioned in the last newsletter, was an ideal time to check that your fire detectors (Smoke Alarms) are operational, by doing a quick test usually by pressing the button on the unit, some of you may do this on a regular basis like when you burn the toast. Even though most alarms are hard wired they will also have a backup battery, these should be replaced as a precaution, a small price to pay.

**WHEN
10 YEARS
IS
TOO OLD**

**THE LIVES OF YOUR FAMILY
MAY BE AT RISK IF
YOUR SMOKE ALARMS ARE
MORE THAN 10 YEARS OLD**

**REPLACE YOUR SMOKE ALARMS
EVERY TEN YEARS**

 www.dfes.wa.gov.au 

Every year more than 1000 home fires cause around \$10 million in damage and the loss of many irreplaceable personal possessions.

In the past six years, fifteen people over the age of 60 have died in home fires, many were overcome by smoke and toxic fumes.

You are at a higher risk from fires starting in your home as:

- You may not be able to move as quickly
- Your sight or hearing may be impaired. Some medications you are taking may impact on your reaction time
- You may live alone and there is a lack of immediate assistance
- You can improve your safety by taking a few simple steps.



1 Install Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms can save lives and limit damage to homes. Every home should have a working smoke alarm.

- The Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) recommends installation of a photo-electric smoke alarm, preferably 240 volt mains powered
- Choosing the correct smoke alarms and installing them properly means house fires can be detected earlier and provide you more time to escape safely
- A 240 volt, mains powered, photo-electric smoke alarm is the best with a rechargeable battery backup that does not need to be changed for the life of the smoke alarm. This type of alarm can detect smoke faster compared to older models. These must be installed by a licensed electrician
- You should choose smoke alarms that carry the Australian Standards mark

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New smoke alarm legislation requires homes and rental properties have mains powered smoke alarms professionally installed before they can be sold or tenanted.

- A range of smoke alarms are available for those with hearing impairments
- The best level of protection can be gained by installing smoke alarms in each bedroom, in corridors and hallways that lead to exits and the living area
- Smoke alarms should be interconnected so when one alarm goes off, the other alarms will sound too, providing a warning throughout the home. This means you will be alerted to a fire no matter where it starts and where you are in the home.
- Check the use by date of your smoke alarm and replace it on or before that date
- Test your smoke alarm every month
- Check your smoke alarm by pressing the test button
- Use a broom handle if you cannot reach
- Hold down the button until you hear the loud alert tone, then release. You may need to press the button again to turn off the alarm.

The key smoke alarm maintenance routines are:

Maintain Your Smoke Alarms

2 For smoke alarms to remain effective they must be tested and maintained regularly.

- Mains powered smoke alarms and battery powered smoke alarms with a 9 volt battery should be replaced every year. You can replace these batteries yourself
- Long life lithium battery powered smoke alarms cannot be opened and the smoke alarm must be replaced every 10 years
- All smoke alarms have a use by date (usually 10 years from date of manufacture)

- Check your smoke alarm for a build up of dust and cobwebs and clean with a vacuum cleaner at least every six months
- Vacuum with a soft brush attachment around the smoke alarm vents
- Use a surface insect spray around the smoke alarm to prevent insects nesting inside it
- Never paint over or cover your smoke alarm.



3 Take Care When Cooking

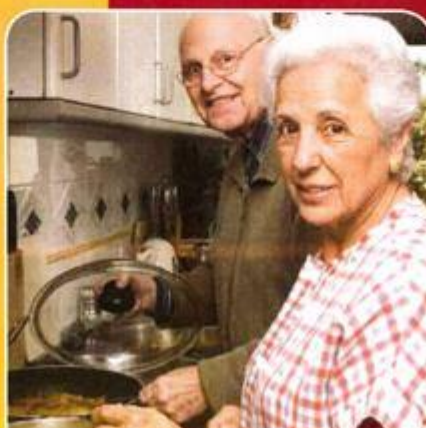
Many house fires start in the kitchen, so be extra careful when cooking.

- If you must leave the kitchen while cooking, turn off the elements or burners on your stove
- Keep tea towels away from heating elements or burners
- Avoid wearing clothes with loose dangling sleeves when cooking as these can easily catch fire
- If your kitchen floor has a slippery surface, place a non slip mat in front of the stove to prevent accidents
- Avoid burns from spattering fats by heating oils gradually and taking extra care when preparing deep fried food
- Turn all saucepan handles inward
- Place a suitable metal tray or a wooden chopping board away from the stove so if a fire starts it can be used to smother the fire by placing it carefully over the pot. Alternatively, consider buying a fire blanket
- Never throw water on burning fat or oil as it will explode and cause the fire to spread.

4 Take Care With Heating

Home heating is also a major cause of fires in the home.

- Heaters should be checked once a year to make certain they are in good working order
- Worn electrical cords and plugs should be replaced immediately
- Never overload power points. The safest rule is one point – one plug
- Chimneys and flues should be cleaned before their first use at the start of winter
- Open fires should be guarded by a fine mesh screen whenever they are lit. Make sure the fire is completely out before going to bed
- It is advisable to put a screen in front of other heating devices
- All flammable material should be at least one metre away from heaters and open fires
- Some heaters like bar radiators are best fixed to the wall in a suitable location.



5 Take Care When Smoking

After kitchen fires, the next biggest cause of house fires is from smoking materials.

- If you feel drowsy while reading or watching television, put out your cigarette. Be particularly careful if you are taking medication which may make you drowsy
- Use large deep ashtrays with wide rims and avoid resting them on the arms of sofas or chairs
- Be sure that the contents of ashtrays are extinguished before disposing of them, if necessary dampen the contents.



6 Take Care With Electric Blankets

Electric blankets keep us nice and warm during cold winter nights, but they need to be used correctly so they do not become a fire hazard.

- Use and maintain electric blankets in accordance with manufacturer's instructions
- Make sure your electric blanket is turned off when you leave the house
- Never place heavy objects on top of the bed when the blanket is switched on
- Always store electric blankets hanging up or rolled. Folding the blanket can damage the heating wires and cause a fire
- Turn the blanket on prior to going to bed and turn it off when retiring for the night
- Electric blankets are not suitable for persons suffering incontinence
- Replace the blankets after ten years or if you find excessive wear.

7 Getting Out of Your Home in an Emergency

If a fire does start in your home you need to be able to escape as quickly as possible. Spend a few minutes thinking about how you would leave your home.

- Identify more than one way out of your house and every room (including windows)
- Practice the best way to get out. Try crawling with your eyes closed to your nearest exit as this is what it will be like in a fire
- Make sure that all windows, doors and security screens can be easily opened from inside. Keep keys close to locks (but out of sight from being seen through windows)
- If you need to use a wheel chair or walking aid, make sure you can easily get to exits. Always keep passages clear
- Discuss your escape plans with all household members and in multi-accommodation buildings with the building manager and your neighbours. If other people stay overnight, especially children, make sure they all know what to do in case of fire
- Keep your glasses and telephone by your bedside.

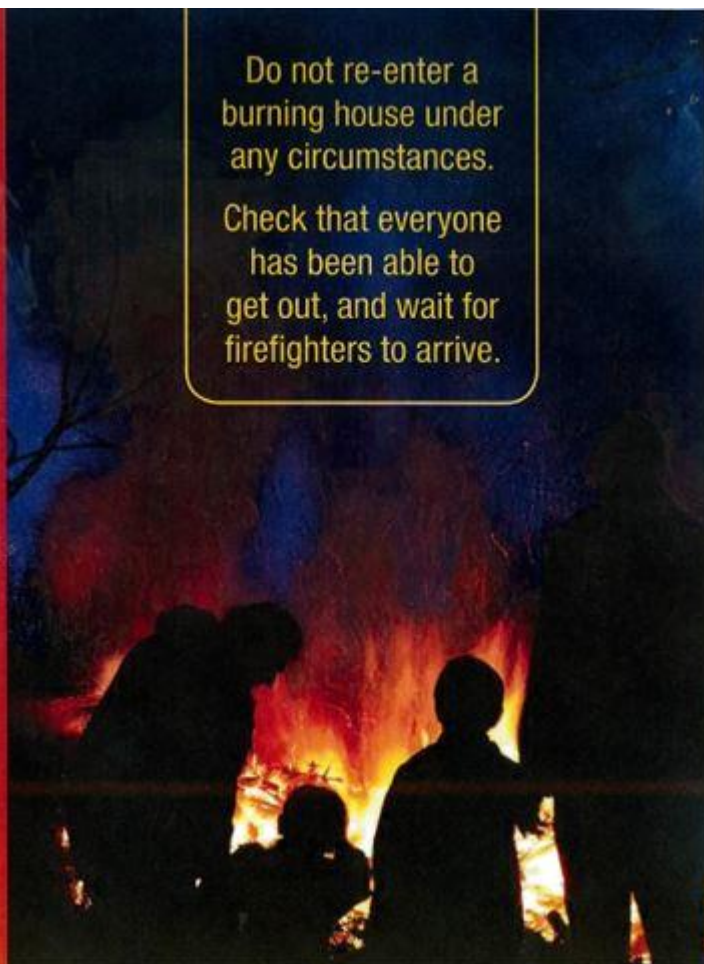
8 Dealing With a Fire in Your Home

If a fire does start in your home:

- Alert other people in the house, but only if safe to do so
- If you are unable to easily put out the fire, close the door to contain it to one room and slow it from spreading
- Keep down low, the cleanest air to breathe is close to the floor because smoke rises. Crawl if necessary when moving to the nearest safe exit, staying below one metre
- If you need to pass through a closed door, feel it with the back of your hand before opening. If it is hot use another way to get out
- Leave your home and call triple zero (000) immediately.
Give the following details of your address:
 1. Property Number
 2. Street Name
 3. Suburb
 4. Nearest intersection
 5. Any other relevant details
 6. Hang up last
- Alert neighbours as necessary.

Do not re-enter a burning house under any circumstances.

Check that everyone has been able to get out, and wait for firefighters to arrive.



For more information on smoke alarms click on the link [Smoke Alarms \(dfes.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au).

With winter just around the corner we will look at fire safety in your home especially for seniors. Here are 8 steps to look at that will help improve fire safety in your home.

As we have mentioned before with winter not too far away preparation of your property /residence is similar to pre bush fire season such as:

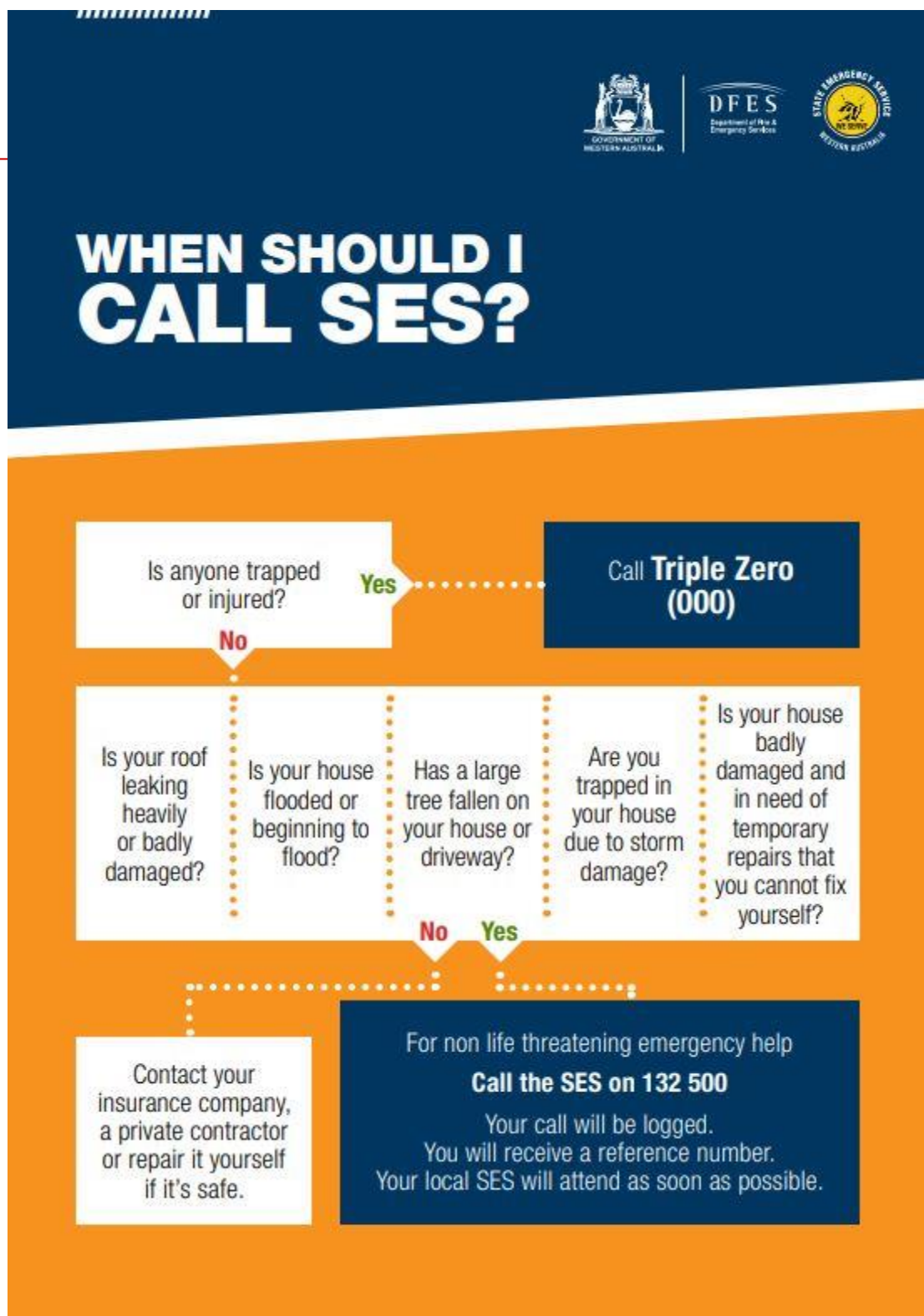
- Gutters and valleys need to be kept clear of leaves.
- Downpipes need to be checked that they're not blocked which can cause water to back up and overflow into the eaves and encroach on the interior of the house.
- In turn the drainage pipes from the downpipes are also clear of leaves and debris.



Click here for more information.

[DFE36586_A5 STORM BROCHURE INTERACTIVE \(dfes.wa.gov.au\)](https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au)

- Trees close to the residence may have overhanging branches in this case winter storms may drop a branch or two causing damage to your roof.
- Make sure that the power line to the house has the necessary clearance from bushes and trees.
- Make sure any drains in the garden especially on the high side are free, we have at times been called to assist the SES where low points are flooded.





BURNING MOMENTS:

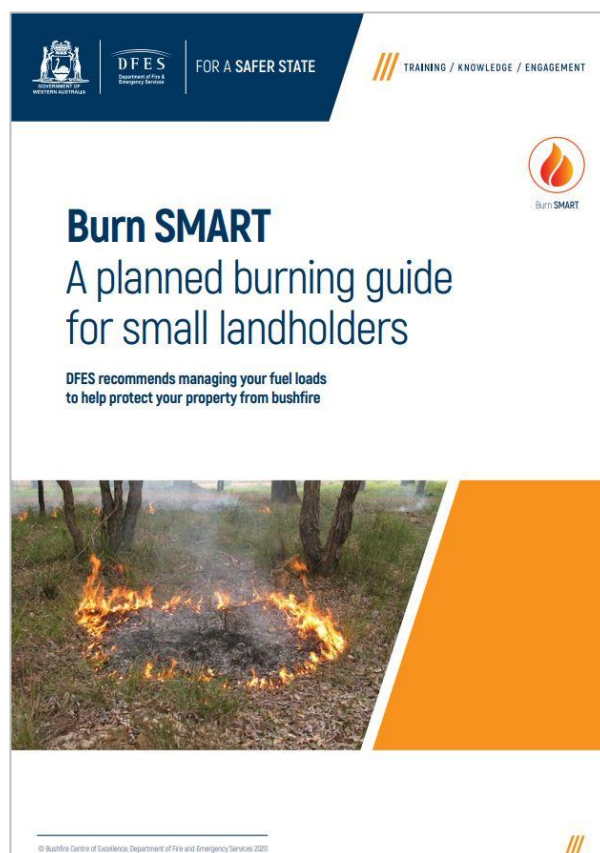
On the 1st April we entered the Restricted Burning stage of the season, which means if you intend on undertaking any burning you will need a permit to burn which is available from the City of Kalamunda. However, at the time of writing this newsletter permits were not being issued due to the unseasonal dryness. More rain is needed to ensure it is safe to burn, even our brigade can't start burning until we receive more rainfall.

However, you are permitted to burn the 1 metre x 1 metre x 1 metre pile between 6pm and 11pm, there are certain rules that need to be followed to undertake this.

Because we are still experiencing reasonably high daytime temperatures it is necessary to keep an eye on the Fire Danger Ratings, these are displayed around the City of Kalamunda and also the rating for the day can be checked on Emergency WA, if it is Very High or above then no burning is permitted that includes the 1x1x1 heap.

Basic requirements for burning your 1x1x1 metre pile:

- Make sure the wind speed is at a minimum, at 6pm the wind has usually dropped away.
- If your heap/s are damp consider putting the burn off until everything dries out. There is a good chance you will create a lot of smoke. Best to let your neighbours know that you are going to burn.
- Make sure the area where your heap/s are located have a cleared area of bare earth around the heap at a minimum of 3 metres.
- Make sure that you have someone in attendance at **all times**. This is important as this is usually when the brigade is called out.
- The fire must be fully extinguished by midnight and make sure that the remains are well and truly saturated with water. Best also to wet the ground around the burnt-out area.
- As we do work in closely with Kanyana can you rake your pile before burning to ensure that any small creatures have a chance to leave before they are burnt, Goannas especially.



Click here for more information [Planning Burning - Department of Fire and Emergency Services \(dfes.wa.gov.au\)](https://dfes.wa.gov.au)

BUSHFIRE WARNING SYSTEM



DURING A BUSHFIRE, EMERGENCY SERVICES WILL PROVIDE YOU AS MUCH INFORMATION AS POSSIBLE

THROUGH A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT METHODS. Your surroundings could be your best information source.

Stay alert to what is happening around you. *If you believe you may be in danger, act immediately to stay safe.*

There are four levels of warning. These change to reflect the increasing risk to your life or property, and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives.

ADVICE



A fire has started but there is no immediate threat to lives or homes.

Be aware and keep up to date.

WATCH AND ACT



There is a possible threat to lives or homes.

You need to leave or get ready to defend – do not wait and see.

EMERGENCY WARNING



There is a threat to lives or homes.

You are in danger and need to take immediate action to survive.

ALL CLEAR



The danger has passed and the fire is under control.

Take care and remain vigilant in case the situation changes.



FIRE DANGER RATINGS

Use this tool daily during bushfire season to monitor conditions in your area.



CATASTROPHIC

Homes are not built to withstand a fire in these conditions. The safest place to be is away from high risk bushfire areas. Do not stay and defend your property if the fire danger rating is catastrophic.

EXTREME SEVERE VERY HIGH

Seek out information and be ready to leave or stay and actively defend your property if a fire starts. Only stay if you are 100% prepared.

HIGH LOW-MODERATE

Be vigilant. Check your fire plan and continue to monitor conditions as they can change quickly.



WHERE TO FIND ALERTS AND WARNINGS?

Emergency WA emergency.wa.gov.au

DFES Public Information 13 DFES (13 3337)

ABC Radio or 6PR Your local radio frequency



For more information visit
dfes.wa.gov.au/bushfire

or contact DFES Community Preparedness:
Community.Preparedness@dfes.wa.gov.au

or 9395 9816

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September 2020/10/18



DFES
Department of Fire and
Emergency Services

**HOW FIREPROOF
IS YOUR PLAN?**

Take care and don't hesitate to call us if you have any queries or email us.
Have a safe April and until May stay safe.

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