



Newsletter

KALAMUNDA BUSHFIRE READY GROUPS



Hi Everybody,

No doubt you are enjoying the cool change we are going through at the moment, just a reminder if anyone is contemplating a little burn, we are still in the no burn period as such:

BURNING PROHIBITED

1 December 2020 - 31 March 2021:

- NO Burning allowed.
- This includes the 1 x1 x 1 metre piles.
- Report all signs of smoke to 000.

In the recent Wooroloo Fire your Kalamunda Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade was fully involved working 24 hour a day shifts from the moment the fire started until it was contained and almost extinguished. Our members both male and female come from all walks of life and most have the full help from their employers in being able to perform this important duty. They are all highly trained and work together as a team so apart from these duties, there is weekly training on Sundays and all our vehicles are maintained to the highest level.

Tanks:

If you have a large property and are contemplating fitting a water storage tank, it's advisable to do a bit of research into what type to install, bearing in mind if you have opted to stay and defend that the tank needs to be robust and stand a certain amount of heat immersion.

One of the items during this recent fire was the resident's water tanks, as most of this area is not connected to mains water, residents rely on stored water, dams, and bores.

Unfortunately, many of the tanks seen were constructed of polyethylene and as this material can be heated and molded into any shape, any intense heat will result in a meltdown of the tank.



As seen above with the tanks in the background being steel and the foreground are poly tanks suffering total meltdown. In the past a trial was performed on three commonly used water tanks:

- 1) The conventional corrugated steel tank.
- 2) A steel construction tank with a bladder liner.
- 3) A polystyrene constructed tank.

Each tank was subjected to 3 levels of flame exposure:

- 1) Leaf litter sited around each tank and ignited to observe its effect.
- 2) Litter ignited plus radiant heat from flames in proximity of the tanks but not making contact.
- 3) 30 minutes of total flame immersion to simulate a worst-case scenario.

Results cited:

- 1) The corrugated steel tank suffered no effects from the 1st two exposures with the 3rd exposure the tank was scorched but retained the water with minor leaks.
- 2) The steel tank with bladder insert resulted in the tank maintaining structural integrity in all 3 levels of exposure, there was a small loss of water over the top of the bladder and the bladder melted above the water level, but the tank held the water for emergency use afterwards.
- 3) The poly tank fared the worst, 1st level with litter there was a small meltdown at the base but no loss of water, 2nd Level with radiation and litter the tank melted down to the level of the water, but the tank still retained the water. 3rd Level with full flame contact the tank split and all water was lost and the tank melted to the ground.

In an absolute emergency any brigade firefighting unit may need to access a resident's water tank to obtain water and defend the residence. Many water tanks around the City of Kalamunda have varying sized connections where the fire truck on many occasions cannot connect up to the tank to draw water. We carry limited size reducer and converter connections which may mean we have to access water through the top of the tank. This is a time-consuming exercise so what we are asking is if you have a large tank, to have a compatible connection that our trucks can connect directly to the tank. If you have a **2" Male Kamlock** fitting on your tank that would satisfy our vehicles connections.

As you can see by the look ahead forecasts fire weather conditions have not gone away because of the last 3 or so days of rain, not a time to become complacent. You may have noticed that the gum trees are slowing down with the leaf & bark shedding as well. In the "5-minute fire chat" pack there is a checklist for ongoing long-term projects.



SIMPLE AND ONGOING PROPERTY UPKEEP

Set calendar reminders to complete these preparations monthly during fire season

	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR
Cut the grass around your property to 10cm or less	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prune shrubs so they are not dense	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clean gutters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Check gas release valves face away from property	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐



MORE LASTING PROTECTION

Set calendar reminders to complete these preparations annually

- ☐ Remove any shrubs from against the home
- ☐ Keep gas cylinders away from likely direction of fire (i.e. where bush is) and turn release valves outwards
- ☐ Remove wood, mulch or any flammable material against or near the house
- ☐ Create a minimum two metre gap between your house and tree branches
- ☐ Install metal fly wire mesh on all windows, vents and install a protective screen on evaporative air conditioner
- ☐ Block any gaps under floor, in the roof spaces, under eaves, external vents, skylights, chimneys and wall claddings
- ☐ Install a fire or heat radiant shield such as a solid fence

ADDITIONAL RURAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

- ☐ Make sure fire trucks can access and turn on your property
- ☐ Check bridge loading and cattle grid loading for fire truck access
- ☐ Create fire breaks along paddock boundaries
- ☐ Store petrol and gas safely away in a shed
- ☐ Install underground water pumps that lead from dams to the house
- ☐ If a fire threatens move livestock to a well grazed paddock
- ☐ Create a mineral earth firebreak along the boundary of your property

As many homes are lost through ember attacks a long-term plan should take this into account and try and concentrate on what can be done in reducing the entry of embers into the home.

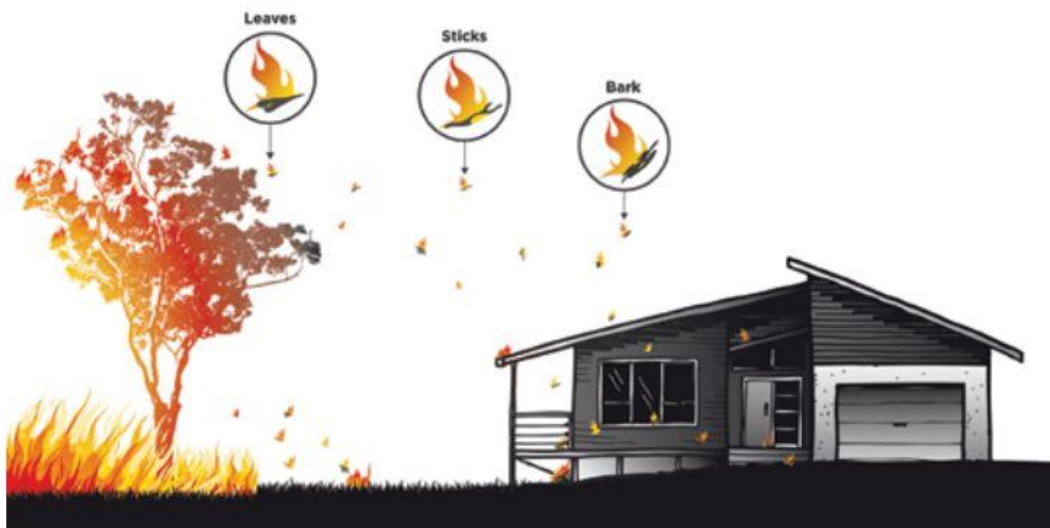


Photo credit: Bushfire Foundation

First of all, some information on embers: Ember attack is the most common way for buildings to ignite in a bushfire. An ember is a small particle of burning material that is moved around in the strong winds that accompany a bushfire.

- Embers often accumulate in or around vulnerable parts of the house, such as on rooftops, gutters, and in and around doors, vents, windows and against re-entrant corners where they can ignite the house.
- Burning debris can ignite surface materials such as walls, timber decks and verandas.

- Embers can also enter through gaps in the building's envelope to reach the house's interior, such as wall cavities, roof spaces, subfloor spaces and the occupied regions within the house. Scientific experiments have shown that embers smaller than two millimetres are not effective at igniting combustible materials. So, the use of fine metal mesh with openings of two millimetres or less is an effective way to address ember entry.

Embers can attack buildings at any time before, during or after a bushfire has passed, so it is Important to be vigilant to ember attack.



Photo credit: DFES

Asset Protection Zones (APZ) are designed to reduce the threat of ember attack along with other bushfire risks to properties. A prepared APZ will support the reduction of ember attack.

So, some areas you could look at in your home that may help in, making your home more bushfire ready:

- 1) Immediate areas that can be maintained and that is clean gutters and valleys. Stainless steel gutter guard could be considered.
- 2) If you have an evaporative air conditioner retrofitting screens around the unit with maximum 2 mm mesh.
- 3) Gaps in the eaves, many houses have open eaves allowing embers to easily enter the roof space, so consider sealing off these gaps with 2mm mesh or if the gaps are small such as corrugated roofing overhang, high expansion foam or inserts that can be purchased to fit into the profile of the corrugations.
- 4) Windows will fail under extreme heat and allow flames entry to the house, consider double glazed windows or shutters on the vulnerable side/s of the house to start with.
- 5) If you have a verandah around the house then look at the possibility if you already have a fire- fighting pump to fit small sprinklers around the edge of the verandah facing in towards a window, many bush fire ready groups in the City of Kalamunda have these fitted.
- 6) If you have decking is it enclosed below? If not make sure that leaf litter doesn't accumulate under the decking.

These are some of the items to think about that may help to improve the bush fire readiness of your residence.



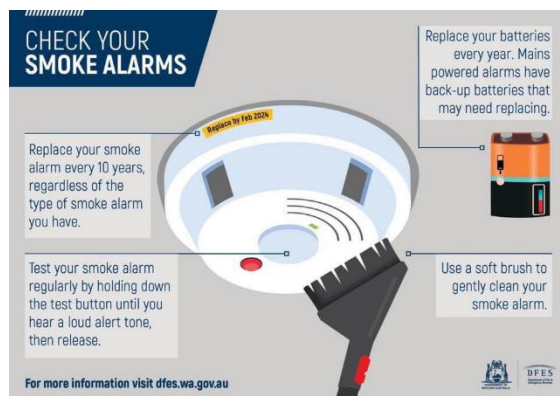
Red Cross:

You may not be aware, but the Red Cross has been doing some great work in helping those residents that lost their homes from the recent Wooroloo/Gidgegannup fire.

As you know we have regularly talked about the importance of a plan and the situation you can find yourself in mentally when faced with a danger that is well outside your comfort zone, so if you are interested then see the flyer attached and make a booking and learn more about how to mentally prepare yourself and the problems you will experience after a fire has impacted your area.

Smoke Detectors:

It is usually encouraged that on the 1st of April you check out your smoke detectors and replace the battery, although it is a requirement to have your detectors hard wired, there will no doubt be some residences that still have standalone units fitted. The hard-wired units have a standby battery, and these should be inspected and replaced, it's a small price to pay where life is involved. Use a texter or pen to place the date on the battery when it was replaced.



Smoke Alarm

Changing Your Smoke Alarm Battery

Factsheet 02

Only working smoke alarms save lives

Whether you need to change your smoke alarm battery will depend on the type of smoke alarm you have.

Is it time to change your battery?

Smoke alarms powered by 9V ALKALINE BATTERY require you to replace the battery every year. DFES recommends you change your battery on April 1st. Smoke alarms powered by a 10 YEAR NON-REMOVABLE LITHIUM BATTERY do not require you to change the battery every year. Do not try to remove these batteries.

MAINS POWERED (HARD WIRED) SMOKE ALARMS are powered by an external power source. These alarms also have a battery back-up for periods of mains power outage. Many models have a rechargeable (non-removable) battery and do not need replacement. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions to see if you need to change the battery. DFES recommends you do this on April 1st.

You should know...

- ☐ Smoke alarms will make a 'beep' or 'chirping' sound when they have a low battery or are faulty.
- ☐ Mains powered smoke alarms may also make this low battery warning after periods of extended mains power outage. If this happens and your smoke alarm has a replaceable battery, you will need to change your battery.
- ☐ Not all smoke alarms need their battery replaced. Smoke alarms with a non-replaceable battery may have a warning that the battery is not replaceable. Always check the manufacturer's instructions before replacing the battery.
- ☐ Mains powered smoke alarms are required to have a green "Power ON" LED indicator. This will light up when the alarm is connected to mains power.
- ☐ All smoke alarms also have a red light that flashes momentarily every 40-60 seconds to visually indicate they are operating. This same red light flashes continuously when the Smoke Alarm has been activated. If there are interconnected smoke alarms the fast flashing red light will indicate which smoke alarm initiated the alarm.
- ☐ Always test that your smoke alarm is operating after replacing the battery by holding down the test button until you hear a loud alert tone. All smoke alarms require regular maintenance. Refer to Fact sheet 4 – Smoke Alarm Maintenance for further information.
- ☐ All smoke alarms require replacement every 10 years.

In the event of a fire

- ☐ Crawl low under smoke.
- ☐ Assist or alert any people in danger, but only if it is safe to do so.
- ☐ Go to your safe meeting place, such as your letter box.
- ☐ Call 000 (triple zero).
- ☐ Wait for firefighters to arrive.
- ☐ Do not re-enter a burning house under any circumstances.

For more information visit www.dfes.wa.gov.au or contact DFES Community Engagement 9395 9816

Smoke Alarm

Maintaining Your Smoke Alarms

Factsheet 04

Only working smoke alarms save lives

Smoke alarms require regular testing and cleaning to provide effective protection.

DFES recommends the following key smoke alarm maintenance routine:

- Test your smoke alarm every month to ensure the battery and the alarm sounder are operating. Hold down the test button until you hear a loud alert tone, then release. Use a broom handle if you cannot reach, but be careful you do not damage the smoke alarm. You may need to press the button again to turn off the alarm.
- Vacuum your smoke alarm with a soft brush attachment around the smoke alarm vents every 6 months. This will remove any build-up of dust and cobwebs.
- Use a surface insect spray around the smoke alarm to prevent insects from nesting inside it. Ensure you cover the smoke alarm while you spray to ensure you do not spray inside the smoke alarm.
- Never paint over or cover your smoke alarms.
- Your smoke alarm battery may need to be replaced every year. Smoke alarms with a non-replaceable battery may carry a warning that the battery is not replaceable. Always check the manufacturer's instructions before replacing the battery.
- Replace your smoke alarms every 10 years.

Did you know...

- ☐ Smoke alarms make a warning 'beep' or 'chirp' when there is a fault or when the battery is low. Before changing the battery, check with the manufacturer's instructions. The chirp may also indicate the smoke alarm has become contaminated.
- ☐ If after changing the battery the smoke alarm continues to sound a warning 'beep' or 'chirp', the smoke alarm may be faulty and require replacement.
- ☐ A licensed electrical contractor is required to disconnect or install mains powered smoke alarms. All other smoke alarm maintenance can be done by an adult.
- ☐ Mains powered smoke alarms may give a low battery warning after periods of extended mains power outage. You should be aware that rechargeable batteries may need a few days to recharge after the mains power is restored. If your smoke alarm does not have a rechargeable battery you will need to replace the battery. Check with your manufacturer if you need to replace the battery or if the unit will recharge.

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This coming few months we plan to have a least 3 street meets and various other events to promote bush fire readiness including another Burn Smart demonstration, hopefully a drier one in comparison to the last one, we will let you know when dates are set.

Finally, if you haven't already downloaded the app try it 'My Bushfire Plan'. It's free and as said previously once registered you can use it off-line and have your bush fire plan in your pocket for immediate reference.



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

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