

Obligations

Fire Management

As a landholder within the Latrobe City Council, you have certain obligations to manage the risk of fire on your property by taking action to prevent fires from starting and knowing how to reduce the impact of fire should one break out. Managing the risk on your property will also support the protection of your community.

Equally, under the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* and the *Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958*, Council has a legal obligation to ensure the community's risk associated with bushfire is reduced.

Clean up your property

It is every landholder's responsibility to manage the bushfire hazards on their property.

Bushfire hazards are any materials which can fuel a fire, such as leaf litter, grass, garden mulch and woodpiles. They can also be made up of solid combustibles or flammable liquids and gases such as petrol, kerosene, alcohol, LPG, natural gas, and acetylene.

All of these can be especially dangerous if they're close to your home or other buildings, or are spread over large areas which may increase the intensity of a fire.

Fuel, i.e. combustible material, is a major factor in influencing the intensity and spread of bush fires. It stands to reason that if the fuel on your property is reduced and well maintained before and during the fire danger period, the risk of damage caused by bushfire is reduced.

Unkempt gardens are more likely to lead to a damaged or destroyed house.

Remove low level branches to avoid fire spread up trees. Slash, mow or graze animals on grasses around the home, trim bushes, remove branches overhanging structures and, if possible, keep gardens around the house moist and green which should reduce their flammability.

Each year Council issues two free waste coupons which can be used for either hard waste / or green waste disposal throughout the year. Commencing November 2022 - 'no fee' green waste disposal services are available from Latrobe City designated facilities.

Fire Prevention Notices

Fire Prevention Notices are issued to residents where Council has identified a bushfire risk. The Notice will outline works which are required to be completed within a set time frame to reduce a property's fire risk. Fire prevention works generally include slashing, mowing and clearing your property of combustible fuel which will reduce your risk from bushfire. More information on Fire Prevention Notices can be obtained from Council's website.

10/30 & 10/50 Rules and fence line clearing

10/30 Rule and Fence line clearing allows residents on their own property to clear any vegetation, including trees, within 10 metres of a house and any vegetation except for trees within 30 metres of a building used for accommodation 'as of right' (without a permit). Residents are also allowed to clear all vegetation, including trees, for a combined maximum width of four metres either side of the property boundary fence.

If your area is identified as an area of high bushfire risk, it is most likely that the 10/50 Rule applies to you. The same conditions as above apply but the clearance zones for non-tree vegetation is 50 metres instead of 30. The fence line clearance of 4 metres also applies. To check if 10/30 or 10/50 applies in your municipality check the CFA website or contact Latrobe City Council.

More information is available in Latrobe City Council Information Sheet: *Vegetation Management 10/30 and 10/50 Rules Explained*.

Fire danger ratings & fire danger period

Fire Danger Ratings give you an indication of the possible consequences of a fire, if one was to start. They are based on predicted conditions such as temperature, humidity, wind and the dryness of the vegetation. The higher the fire danger rating, the more dangerous the conditions.

The Fire Danger Period is when CFA restricts the use of fire in the community. This is to help prevent fires from starting. CFA declares the Fire Danger Period for each municipality (shire or council) at different times in the lead up to the fire season. It depends on the amount of rain, grassland curing rate and other local conditions. The Fire Danger Period may be declared as early as October in some municipalities, and typically remains in place until the fire danger lessens, which could be as late as May.

Landowner Bushfire Prevention Obligations

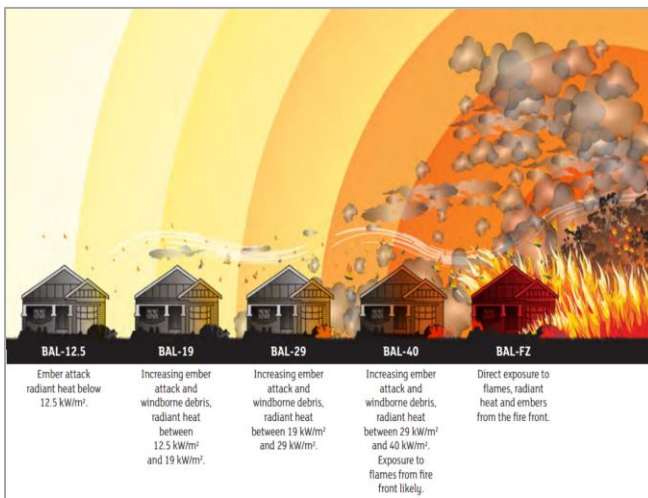
Using fire on your property/burning off

Permits are required to carry out fuel reduction burning on private land in a residential area during and outside of the Fire Danger Period/Total Fire Ban days.

Permits are not required where the property is located in a rural area and the burn off takes place outside of the fire danger period or a total fire ban. A permit is required for all burning activities inside the Fire Danger Period.

Permits for burning are issued by the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer or by the CFA Regional office. Councils may have their own laws in relation to lighting fires, so it is always best to contact the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer at Latrobe City Council to check.

Forms of bushfire attack



Generally, bushfires attack in three ways: ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact.

- Ember attack is the most common way houses catch fire during bushfires. Fuel such as burning twigs, leaves and pieces of debris are carried by the wind and land on or around houses.
- Radiant heat, the heat you feel when standing near a fire, is the biggest killer in bush fires. The best protection from radiant heat is distance.
- Direct flame contact occurs when conditions such as fuel, wind and topography enable fire to approach and impact your home.

It is important to choose plants, vegetation and placements that will not enhance the methods of bush fire attack.

Garden design, plant selection and fire smart buffers

When designing your garden and preparing for bush fire, plant selection, placement and maintenance, along with the type and application of materials used in your landscape can significantly reduce a house's vulnerability to the impacts of fire.

You can control the amount of fuel near your home by carefully designing your garden and choosing the right

plant species. However, although your house will be at less risk if you remove most of the flammable material from around it, it is possible to reduce risk whilst maintaining aesthetics and providing shade and shelter.

When designing your garden, it is important to create spaces within the landscape that will slow or reduce a fire's intensity, provide protection and distance from radiant heat, and reduce the wind's ability to blow embers direct onto your house. Although these trees may provide a buffer from radiant heat, it is important they are fire-wise species.

For more information on Planting Smart for Bushfires contact Council. The CFA website has a handy tool called a Plant Selection Key to help gardeners choose fire-wise plants.

Roadside vegetation management & firewood collection

Local councils and VicRoads reduce fuel on roadside reserves through maintenance works and fuel reduction burns conducted by the CFA. Unless being maintained by Council, property owners are expected to (and will be required to) mow, maintain and edge their nature strips and roadside verges.

Under Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation in all Victorian Planning Schemes, a planning permit is usually needed to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. The terms remove, destroy or lop include grazing of stock, mowing, slashing, spraying with herbicide, pruning, digging out, raking, burning or the removal of timber. Permits to collect firewood from some forest reserves may be obtained from the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning by calling 136 186.

More information is available in Latrobe City Council Information Sheet: *Roadside Vegetation* and *Latrobe City Council Local Law No. 2 (Division 4 – Livestock on Roads)*.

Hazards on somebody else's property

If you're concerned about a potential hazard on somebody else's property, please contact the Council. They will inspect the property and provide the owner with a Fire Prevention Notice if required.

Further information

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) publishes information in relation to Agricultural Fire Management Guidelines, Landscaping in Fire Prone Areas and Preparing Your Property for Fire: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/>

Contacting Council

If you require any further information, contact the Latrobe City Council Municipal Fire Prevention Officer: 1300 367 700, <https://www.latrobe.vic.gov.au/Community/Emergencies/Fire>

See Latrobe City Council Information Sheets:

Vegetation Management - 10/30 and 10/50 Rules Explained
Roadside Vegetation Management & Firewood Collection
Fire Prevention Notices
Bushfires & Designing Your Garden