

## STRATHBOGIE TABLELAND BUSHFIRE INFORMATION

Strathbogie Tablelands community website contains more information on the emergency page at: [Emergency Information for the Tableland](#)

### **The Strathbogie Tablelands: covered by both Northern Country & North East Fire Districts**

This document, from the Strathbogie Tableland Action Group (STAG) is to inform local residents/property owners about bushfire preparation and responses specifically related to the particular features and hazards on the Tablelands. We are providing information, not advice – whether or not you act on this information is your responsibility.

One very useful resource is the CFA Fire Ready Kit (2022), that takes you through the steps to maximise your chances of surviving (and protecting your property).

**Go to the CFA web page via the link below:**

[CFA Fire Ready Kit](#)

### **KEY POINTS**

- **The CFA strongly recommends that everyone has, and practises, their fire plan**

It is essential that you have a **written** fire plan, whether you intend to leave early or stay and defend, or if things go wrong (trees blocking roads, unexpected accidents, major equipment failure, etc).

- **In preparation for fire, assess your environment & understand your own bushfire risk**

Properties on the Tableland range from substantial farms to lifestyle bush blocks to semi-urban properties in and around the township. Each will have different levels of risk due to their location and land management. You need to work out the individual hazards associated with your own property to make a rational assessment of how well it can be defended, if at all, in a major fire event. Many Tablelanders will have already decided to leave early (preferably the night before) if conditions are predicted to be, or are rated as, extreme or catastrophic - their property may be too difficult to defend, their resources too limited, and/or their physical ability or health are not adequate for a long, hard fight. You still need a fire plan, even though your primary plan is to **leave early**. You also need to **organise and prepare for how you will manage livestock, pets etc.**

**Read the CFA website under the heading “*Plan and Prepare*”**

[CFA - Plan & Prepare](#)

If you do leave early, your fire plan should include where to go, what options you have for travelling, what you will take, who you will tell and what you'll do about livestock and pets.

**Read the CFA website under the heading “*Before and During a Fire*”:**

[CFA - Before and During a Fire](#)

- **Take notice of ratings and warnings**

Recently, some fires were virtually impossible to defend against, even on the best prepared properties. Thus, it is essential that you are aware of the rating levels and warnings on fire danger. However, you cannot always rely on receiving a warning, thus every individual should take responsibility of situational awareness.

## 1. Ratings:



Use the Fire Danger Indicator above (that gives a rating, with suggested actions, based on the likelihood that the CFA could successfully control a fire) as the trigger to activate your plan.

If the ratings are for **Extreme** or **Catastrophic** fire days, then you must consider leaving early, even if you had planned to stay and defend. A **High** fire day rating should also be considered as a day to leave. A **Catastrophic** rated day requires a different response to a **High** rated day.

## 2. Warnings (there are three levels):

**Warnings** indicate that a fire has already started. **Do not rely on an official warning to leave.** If you receive a warning, take it seriously, failure to act can be fatal.



**Advice:** An incident is occurring or has occurred in the area. Access information and monitor conditions. Can also be used as a notification that the situation has subsided.



**Warning (Watch and Act):** An emergency is developing nearby. You need to take action now to protect yourself and others.



**Emergency Warning:** You are in imminent danger and need to take action immediately. You will be impacted.

### ▪ How to keep up to date with bushfire information

#### Radio:

- \* ABC local radio Shepparton/Goulburn Murray 97.7 FM;
- \* Albury 106.5 FM;

- \* ABC Melbourne 774 AM
- \* Mansfield 103.7 FM;

The Vic Emergency Hotline number is a free call 24 hrs: 1800 226 226

#### Website links:

[www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au)

[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

[www.ses.vic.gov.au](http://www.ses.vic.gov.au)

[www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

[www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/services/emergency-preparedness/prepare-and-plan/](http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/services/emergency-preparedness/prepare-and-plan/)



The CFA strongly recommends that everyone has the **Vic Emergency App** on their phone with the phone **location turned on** and a Watch Zone set, with a 50 km radius of home. This will give you the most up to date information on the status and movement of a fire.

The Tableland is covered by Fire Danger Ratings issued for the North East and Northern County Fire Districts.

The government has introduced a new telephone warning system to deliver emergency messages via mobile phone text messages (**Note:** these may not always work on the Tableland, due to our poor local reception) and landline phones.

You can also ring the **Vic Emergency** line: **1800 226 226** **Free call 24 hrs a day in the fire season**

Remember, an older style **land line phone** will continue to work if the mains power is lost (cordless phones won't function). **Remember that mobile phone coverage is often lost during fires.**

- **Preparation for leaving before a fire**

Make sure that you use, and rely on, official information. Keep in contact with neighbours if you can.

Keep your car keys in a designated spot where they can be easily found, and keep your car fuel tank topped up.

**“E” on your fuel gauge means “EMPTY” NOT “Enough”.**

Have a **Relocation Kit** already packed and ready to go (see below or click on this link)

**What to take with you:**

Have your wallet, mobile phone & charger, and keys, plus water in an obvious place to add to your kit at the last minute. Also pack medications, prescriptions, a change of clothes, basic toiletries, glasses - anything that you might need over the next few days. Don't forget your pets: have a carry crate or box, and their water & food ready.

**In preparation before the fire season:** Take photos of your house and contents, plus photos/copies of important documents - insurance papers, licences, bank statements, rates notices - these will help enormously if the originals are lost. Store photos of these on your phone, or on a USB drive in your relocation kit. Don't forget precious personal items.

**There is no Strathbogie Tableland Bushfire Place of Last Resort**

- **Where can we go if we relocate off the Tableland in the event of a fire/emergency?**

If you're intending to leave for the day or until the danger has passed, organise ahead (as part of your fire plan) to go and stay with friends or relatives or go to a nearby township such as Euroa, Benalla and Wangaratta. These are likely to be considerably safer than the Tablelands during a major bushfire. On very hot days, a library or shopping centre will be airconditioned. Let someone local know (e.g. a neighbour and/or your local Fireguard Group if you have one) that you are leaving.

- **Risks of travelling on and off the Tableland in emergencies**

We are dependent on private vehicles to move around the Tableland and travel to nearby areas. While our roads are fit for general purpose they can be heavily impacted by fire and storms. Twelve of the seventeen roads in the municipality that are designated as “High Bushfire Risk” roads, are on the Tableland.

The hazards include:

- fallen trees, which can block a road both in front of and behind you
- dense smoke, which reduces visibility to a few metres and can cause disorientation
- exposure to fire in roadside vegetation
- driving into a new area of fire (caused by a fire “*spotting*”) when attempting to escape
- collision with other vehicles, including fire-fighting units.

**Sheltering in a car is extremely dangerous and can result in severe injury or death.**

**However, even with the best-laid plans, you could be unavoidably caught on the road.**

You should be prepared for how to improve your chances of survival and have essential items such as woollen blankets, first aid kit and water in the car at all times. The headlights and hazard lights should be on, the motor running and aircon on (set on **recirculating air**).

**Our clear message is that, when major fire is threatening the Tablelands, NO road here can be considered safe for travel, and all roads on and off the Tablelands may be closed quite early during a fire. If you plan to leave, the safest option is leaving the night before, or at the latest, early in the morning. It is simply too dangerous to be on the road during fire, and it is essential to leave our roads for emergency vehicles.**

**Read: CFA “*Your Guide to Survival*”**

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-and-during-a-fire/your-guide-to-survival>

- **Staying and defending**

If you intend to stay and defend (which the CFA very strongly advises against), you must be very well-prepared and believe that the risk is manageable. **BUT**, it is essential to have a written, comprehensive plan, be well-equipped, well rehearsed, physically and mentally fit, and have reduced the hazards on your property as much as possible, in line with CFA guidelines. It is essential that you have read the references provided above very carefully, before the fire season.

**Never** should children or the elderly be part of your plan to stay and defend.

**If you are in any doubt about what to do, it is always far safer to leave well before a fire. It is a huge decision to leave your own property, but the increasing severity of bushfires make leaving early the safest response. Property can be replaced, lives cannot.**

- **Looking after each other**

Because we are such a scattered community, we necessarily rely on each other, especially during emergencies. **Stay in touch with neighbours**, alert them when you've got information (such as a warning you've heard) or ask them if they've heard any news. **Check on elderly or unwell neighbours** and make sure that they have plans for leaving early. **Tell**

**each other if you are leaving** and indicate how you can be contacted. This is really important when authorities/locals are trying to account for everyone after a fire/emergency.

One excellent way of organising neighbourly support is to form a Community Fireguard Group.

- **Community Fireguard Groups on the Tableland**

**Community Fireguard** is a CFA-facilitated program that helps neighbourhood groups work together to plan for fire and manage their own fire risk. Members are trained by the CFA – you will learn how to develop your personal fire plans and swap helpful information about preparing your properties. Consider joining an existing group or setting up a new one.

An important group activity is to establish a communication tree. Members check on each other on fire danger days. Most groups use email or phone, however remember, power can be lost and phone landlines cannot be relied on in an emergency situation. Some groups/members buy battery-operated UHF handsets, with each group using their own CB channel for talking to each other. Help is available with technical radio issues.

**It's OK to listen in to Channel 13 but you should NEVER use it to talk on – it is an extremely important fire resource for the CFA.**

**Community Fireguard Groups** are being seen as the best form of community education and support in relation to bushfires. Contact the Strathbogie Tablelands Emergency Subcommittee or Emily Guthrie (CFA) Emily Guthrie [Emily.Guthrie@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:Emily.Guthrie@cfa.vic.gov.au) if you wish to learn more.

- **When a major fire strikes the Tableland**

1. **CFA response**

**Don't expect a fire truck!** There are only four tanker units based on the Tableland. There is no guarantee that any of them will be able to come to your aid. They may be deployed elsewhere or unable to reach your property. A major fire would see additional resources - tankers and their crews, helicopters and fixed wing aircraft, professional CFA and DEECA firefighters, earthmoving equipment - deployed. There may be a communications centre set up in the Strathbogie Memorial Hall, and the Recreation Ground may be used as a CFA staging area for tankers and crews.

2. **Strathbogie Shire response**

If the situation is deteriorating and has reached a certain pre-determined level of threat, there will be a 'trigger point' at which the:

**Strathbogie Shire Municipal Emergency Management Plan:**

[www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/20230504-Strathbogie-Shire-Council-MEMP-2023-2026.pdf](http://www.strathbogie.vic.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/20230504-Strathbogie-Shire-Council-MEMP-2023-2026.pdf)

or the **Strathbogie Shire Municipal Fire Management Plan:**

will be activated. These are designed to deal with major local disasters such as fire, flood or storm, and non-natural disasters. The plans involve mobilisation of **Shire resources** (such as water tankers and road clearing equipment), a **Victoria Police** response (road control, looking out for vulnerable people, finding campers at risk etc) with the **SES** assisting with all of these activities. Other emergency services will be involved as appropriate.

After the event, there are equally important activities - restoring water supplies, power and phones, animal welfare, and if needed setting up a Red Cross relief centre in Euroa to help fire/emergency-affected families.

- **Road closures and access after fires**

Road closures may be implemented after a fire/emergency. These may include total closure for all vehicles, except for exemptions for emergency vehicles. Depending on circumstances, safety assessment personnel, residents and reconstruction workers may subsequently be allowed into the area. Police and other officials will have a supply of ID wrist bands that would be issued to residents wishing to leave or enter a restricted area. You will need some personal ID to prove that you are a resident of the Tableland.

- **Check our local community web site:**

<https://strathbogie.org/> The Emergency Tab contains more very local information and resources including the Strathbogie Township Protection Plan.

**FIRE EMERGENCY: RING TRIPLE ZERO (000) OR**

**VIC EMERGENCY HOTLINE - 1800 226 226)**

**Our address:**

Rural road address, including #:

Nearest road intersection:

GPS Location:

**Listen to ABC 774 AM radio**

**State CFA areas: Northern Country & North East Fire Districts**

**Emergency numbers:**

**Other contacts:**

**Our COMMUNITY FIREGUARD GUARD GROUP members:**

**Please fill in this form and put it somewhere accessible, e.g. on the fridge**