



INFO SHEET

AUSTRALIA BUSHFIRE RISKS

Bushfires, an ever-present risk in Australia, have the potential to cause immense property damage. According to the Insurance Council of Australia, the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-2020 destroyed over 3,000 buildings resulting in nearly 39,000 claims filed totaling over \$2.3 billion dollars. Since then, insurers have paid out more than \$16.8 billion in natural disaster claims.

To help businesses minimise the risk of property damage and business interruption, we have prepared some information on what to do before, during and after a bushfire.

Before Bushfire Season

Taking action in the months leading up to bushfire season can help enhance the safety of your property and a safer and more efficient return to operations if loss occurs.

- **Emergency plan and kit:** Develop a bushfire emergency plan for your business in line with the official authorities' recommendations. This can include assembling a bushfire emergency kit with essential items such as non-perishable food, water, a first aid kit, flashlights, protective clothing, essential documents and back-up power supply for critical assets. Consider scheduling an annual review to assess stocked items and replace them as expiry dates approach.
- **Reduce the fuel zone:** Regular inspection and cleaning of the roof and gutters of buildings can help reduce the accumulation of tree and leaf debris. Subject to local government restrictions, consider also removing or pruning any overhanging, dead and low-hanging tree branches from 2-3 metres above the ground. Landlords can consider including this task as an annual maintenance action on the lease agreement.
- **Inventory:** Maintain a comprehensive asset register of all equipment and assets at your property. This can be a part of the site's Business Continuity Plan, and include key suppliers, repairers and emergency staff contact details. For a manufacturing business, consider holding physical "critical spares" at an offsite location.



- **Fire water supply:** Check whether a sufficient water supply is available to meet the local fire authority needs. Where appropriate, consider also installing exterior sprinklers for added protection around high-value assets. Inspect, test and maintain all site fire water supplies in accordance with the applicable standards.
- **Defensible zone:** Create and maintain "Bushfire-Ready Zones" around your property. For instance, a parking lot can be made into a secure Bushfire-Ready Zone if all combustible materials, including parked vehicles, are removed before a bushfire occurs.
- **Insurance coverage:** Review your insurance policies in conjunction with your broker and check the coverage, particularly in areas of higher bushfire risk. Consider whether coverage for bushfire mitigation is available.

When a Bushfire Threatens

In the event of a bushfire, remain calm and listen to the instructions given by your local fire authority. Activate your bushfire emergency plan and consider these steps in the implementation process:

- **General building protection:** Close all building doors, windows, and roof vents, along with the main gas valves to prevent gas leakage and potential explosions. Keep in mind that air conditioning systems can pose different risks during a bushfire, so seek prior guidance from your local fire authority on how to act.
- **Keep alert:** Tune in to local radio/TV stations to monitor fire situation and warnings, maintain a fire watch centre, monitor emergency channels for instructions, and prepare to evacuate the area when instructed by your fire authority.
- **Nonessential equipment:** Switch off all noncritical and nonessential electrical and fuel-fired equipment. If safe to do so, consider moving combustible storage outside (but not into Bushfire-Ready Zones) or inside buildings away from windows and light metal walls.
- **Fire worker access:** Keep lights on in the building to support fire authority internal access and response if needed. Set up sturdy non-combustible ladders for roof access and charged water hoses at building perimeters where possible and safe to do so.
- **In case of fire:** Notify the fire and emergency authority if fire reaches your property. Evacuate when instructed by those authorities.

Actions After a Bushfire

After a bushfire, assess the situation and determine the extent of damage and these actions immediately after the event:

- **Notify broker and AIG:** If damage has occurred, contact the broker and the AIG's claims team for immediate support. In case of minor damages, please use [Express Claims Portal](#) to speed up the claims process.
- **Assess the damage:** To facilitate the claims process, conduct a property survey and document any damage incurred. Take photos and videos of the affected areas to include in the claim lodgment.



- **Plan initial repairs:** Contact suppliers and repairers to ensure that property protection systems and equipment safety devices can be returned to fully functioning service and repair any damaged/impaired automatic sprinkler systems or other fire protection systems as soon as possible. Contact your broker and the AIG' claims team to check coverage for repairs.
- **Communicate updates:** Contact customers, suppliers, and business partners to inform them about the reopening and any property or operational changes resulting from fire damage, including road closures and changes in access to the property.
- **Seek community support:** Experiencing a natural disaster can be traumatic and the recovery process can be challenging both physically and emotionally for you and your staff. Most states offer a range of support centres to help individuals deal with the aftermath of a natural disaster. If you are in NSW, you can find more information about the available support [here](#).

Contacts:

To report a fire emergency, call Triple Zero (000).

For further bushfire information in your area – [NSW Rural Service](#) or call 1800 679 737 | [QLD Fire and Emergency Services](#) | [VIC Country Fire Authority](#) or call 1800 240 667

For other insurance related information - [Insurance Council of Australia](#)

Additional Information:

For more information about AIG's coverage, please get in touch with your broker and our team.



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About the Info Sheet

This Info Sheet contains general information and is a general guide only. Please seek further information and advice, including from your local fire authority, on your own particular bushfire risks and precautions.

The general information also does not take into account your objectives, financial situation or needs. Because of that, you should consider the appropriateness of the information having regard to your own objectives, financial situation or needs.

The precise scope and breadth of policy coverage is subject to the specific terms and conditions of the policy wording. Availability and terms and conditions of coverage are subject to underwriting and application criteria.

Information shown is as at February 2024 and subject to change.

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