

# Outback bushfire safety

TRAVELLING THROUGH THE  
OUTBACK THIS BUSHFIRE SEASON?



## **Bushfire Information Hotline**

1800 362 361 (TTY 133 677)

[cfs.sa.gov.au](http://cfs.sa.gov.au)



Government  
of South Australia



# Know your risk in the outback

## Bushfires in the SA outback

Bushfire is a part of the landscape in the South Australian outback and is often started by natural events such as lightning strikes. How big and hot a bushfire is depends on the type of vegetation and how much is available to burn. Fires may start in the mid-year period (May to August) but from September onwards bushfires tend to be hotter because the grass and plant litter is drier and burns more readily.

Dry lightning storms are common from September to December and the fires they cause can be very hot and fast moving.

Because of the sparse landscapes, most fires in the outback happen in remote inaccessible areas where it is difficult for firefighters to put out fires.

You may come across an unattended fire burning over a large area which may block your journey.

You will need to be alert, prepared and self-sufficient if you do come across an unattended bushfire. There is no radio or phone coverage in many remote areas.

Be well-prepared and equipped to cope with unexpected delays and emergency situations. Recognise the warning signs and learn what to do to stay safe.

## Fire Ban Districts

South Australia is divided into 15 Fire Ban Districts. Each district has its own Fire Danger Season dates, so it is important to know which district you are travelling in and which restrictions apply.

## Fire Danger Ratings

The Fire Danger Rating is an indicator of how dangerous a bushfire could be if it occurs, not the likelihood of it happening. Understand the Fire Danger Rating to assess your level of bushfire risk and decide what actions to take.

The CFS may declare Total Fire Bans in some Fire Ban Districts or even across the whole state on days when severe weather conditions could cause fires to become uncontrollable. Barbecues and camp fires are banned on these days.

## Be aware of the Fire Danger Rating and know what to do



| Fire Danger Rating                    | What should I do?   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>CATASTROPHIC</b><br>TOTAL FIRE BAN | Leaving high risk bushfire areas the night before or early in the day is your safest option – do not wait and see. Avoid forested areas, thick bush and long, dry grass.  |
| <b>EXTREME</b><br>TOTAL FIRE BAN      | If you are not prepared to the highest level, leaving high risk bushfire areas early in the day is your safest option. Be aware of local conditions and get information.  |
| <b>SEVERE</b><br>TOTAL FIRE BAN       | Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – check your Bushfire Survival Plan. If you are not prepared, leaving bushfire risk areas early in the day is your safest option. Be aware of local conditions and stay informed. |
| <b>VERY HIGH</b>                      | Check your Bushfire Survival Plan.  |
| <b>HIGH</b>                           | Monitor conditions.   |
| <b>LOW-MODERATE</b>                   | Leave if necessary.   |

# Bushfire safety in outback SA

## Before you go

- Seek information on outback travel and bushfire safety
- Check the CFS website; follow CFS on Facebook and Twitter **BUT you may not always have a phone signal with internet access**
- Check the road conditions, Fire Danger Ratings and the long range weather forecast
- Postpone or modify your travel plans when dangerous fire weather is forecast
- Carry woollen blankets, a good first aid kit, protective clothing (not synthetic), and sturdy boots in your car
- Always carry extra supplies of food and plenty of water
- Carry some other form of communication equipment – satellite phone, UHF and/or VHF radio, a signal device or personal locator beacon (PLB)
- Plan your route and take hard copies of maps
- Let someone know your plans, and if they change
- Understand the distances and remote conditions between roadhouses and townships

## Do not light a fire on a Total Fire Ban day

**On a Total Fire Ban day, you can only use a gas or electric barbecue if:**

- The barbecue is within 15 metres of a domestic premises, or on a coastal foreshore
- It is clear of all flammable material to a distance of at least four metres
- A person who is able to control the fire is present at the site of the fire until it is extinguished
- An appropriate extinguisher is at hand



**When the Fire Danger Rating is low-moderate or high, you can only light a campfire for cooking purposes when:**

- The fire is in a 30 cm deep trench and no more than one square metre in area
- You have a four metre cleared space around and above the fire
- A responsible person is in attendance at all times with water and/or an extinguisher

**Fires can be started accidentally when people are not careful with cars, campfires and cigarette butts.**

**Obey the rules – stay safe – avoid fines**

### **While you're travelling in the outback**

- Avoid travelling in areas where bushfires are burning
- Stay alert and use your senses: What's the weather like? Can you smell smoke?
- You are unlikely to have radio or phone coverage if you have left a township area

- If you have coverage, stay tuned to one of the emergency broadcasters listed or call the Bushfire Information Hotline on 1800 362 361 (TTY 133 677) for information on bushfires in the area. Do not expect an official warning or help from Emergency Services in the outback
- Don't rely solely on electronic mapping devices like GPS and mobile phones, as they may be out of range or affected by smoke and local conditions
- Know the Fire Ban District you are in and check the Fire Danger Ratings every day. Enjoy bushfire safe activities on dangerous days
- Check the regulations and find out if there is a Total Fire Ban in place before starting a campfire or using your barbecue or cooking stove
- Don't throw a cigarette butt from a car or where it will come into contact with flammable material. Do not smoke within 2 metres of flammable bush or grass outside a township. You could start a bushfire and endanger yourselves and others. You could be liable for a \$5,000 fine
- Only park in cleared areas. Never drive your car over long grass or vegetation. You could start a bushfire when your hot car exhaust comes into contact with flammable plant matter

### **If you see smoke**

- Slow down and be aware that there could be people, vehicles and animals on the road
- Pull over to the side of the road and stop your vehicle in a clear area
- Turn your car headlights on and close windows and outside vents
- Ensure you are not in the path of the fire
- Keep your headlights and hazard lights on and wait until the smoke clears

## **If you can't escape the path of the fire**

- Stay inside your vehicle – it offers better protection than being in the open
- Pull off the road to avoid collisions in poor visibility
- Park in a clear area, preferably behind a solid structure to block some of the heat
- Face your car towards the fire
- Turn the engine and air-conditioning off
- Tightly close the doors, windows and air vents
- Lie on the floor and shelter under woollen blankets to protect yourself from radiant heat
- Avoid dehydration: drink lots of water
- Heat and smoke from the fire and fumes from the car may make breathing difficult – stay under the blankets and cover your mouth with a moist cloth or P2 mask
- Stay down until the sound of the fire has passed, carefully leave the car (it will be hot)
- Move to a safe area such as a strip of land that has already burnt

## **If you encounter a bushfire on foot or bike**

- Do not try to outrun the flames
- Head for a natural fire break, e.g. clearings or rocky outcrops
- Keep away from high ground in the path of the fire
- Cover exposed skin with natural fibres (100% cotton or wool) or shelter behind a solid object such as a rock or building

**Bushfires are unpredictable –  
be prepared for the unexpected**

# In case of emergency

## Where to find information

### Police, fire, ambulance

(for life threatening emergencies)  
000 (TTY 106)

Note: If you are unable to speak English you can call Triple Zero (000), say "fire" and leave the phone off the hook. The call will be recorded and traced.

**Bushfire Information Hotline** 1800 362 361  
(TTY 133 677)

**Bureau of Meteorology**  
bom.gov.au

**For current outback roads information**  
dpti.sa.gov.au/  
OutbackRoads

**Emergency Broadcast Partners for North and West SA:** ABC Local Radio, Sky News Television, ABC News 24



cfs.sa.gov.au



@Countryfireservice



@CFSalerts



@SA\_CountryFireService



www.alert.sa.gov.au



**Call 000 to report a fire**

|                       |                          |                   |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|
| Andamooka             | ABC Radio North & West   | 105.9 FM          |
| Ceduna                | ABC Radio Eyre Peninsula | 693 AM            |
| Ceduna                | Flow FM                  | 106.1 FM          |
| Clare/Mid North       | ABC Radio North & West   | 639 AM            |
| Clare/Mid North       | ABC Radio Adelaide       | 891 AM            |
| Clare/Mid North       | Flow FM                  | 107.5 FM          |
| Coober Pedy           | ABC North & West         | 106.1 FM          |
| Coober Pedy           | Flow FM                  | 99.7 FM           |
| Glendambo             | ABC Radio North & West   | 106.1 FM          |
| Leigh Creek Coalfield | ABC Radio North & West   | 99.3 FM           |
| Leigh Creek Coalfield | ABC Radio North & West   | 103.3 FM          |
| Leigh Creek South     | ABC Radio North & West   | 1602 AM           |
| Leigh Creek South     | ABC Radio North & West   | 103.3 FM          |
| Marree                | ABC Radio North & West   | 105.7 FM          |
| Mintabie              | ABC Radio North & West   | 88.7 FM           |
| Port Augusta          | ABC Radio North & West   | 639 AM            |
| Port Augusta          | 5AU                      | 1242 AM           |
| Port Lincoln          | ABC Radio Eyre Peninsula | 1485 AM           |
| Port Lincoln          | 5CC                      | 765 AM            |
| Port Lincoln          | Magic 899                | 89.9 FM           |
| Port Pirie            | ABC Radio North & West   | 639 AM            |
| Prominent Hill        | Flow FM                  | 91.3 FM           |
| Roxby Downs           | Flow FM                  | 97.9 FM           |
| Roxby Downs           | ABC Radio North & West   | 102.7 FM          |
| Streaky Bay           | ABC Radio Eyre Peninsula | 693 AM / 102.7 FM |
| Streaky Bay           | Flow FM                  | 99.3 FM           |
| Woomera               | ABC Radio North & West   | 1584 AM           |
| Woomera               | Flow FM                  | 101.7 FM          |
| Wudinna               | ABC Radio North & West   | 639 AM / 693 AM   |
| Wudinna               | 5CC                      | 765 AM            |
| Wudinna               | Flow FM                  | 106.9 FM          |
| Yalata                | ABC Radio North & West   | 105.9 FM          |