



Bushfire risk

What can I do to protect my home and family from the threat of bushfire

There are many things you can do in around your property to prepare for bushfire. Here are some basic maintenance tips:

- Clean your gutters of leaves and twigs
- Keep lawns short and gardens well maintained
- Remove fallen leaves, twigs and debris around the property
- Have hoses long enough to reach around your house
- Check and maintain adequate levels of home and contents insurance. Ensure it is up to date.

Visit the [Rural Fire Service website](#) for comprehensive advice and information.

You can also contact the Shoalhaven District office of the Rural Fire Service on 4424 4424 or use the Bushfire Information Line on 1800NSW RFS (1800679737) for more information.

What is an Asset Protection Zone (APZ) and does the 10/50 Vegetation Clearing Scheme apply to my property?

An Asset Protection Zone (APZ) is an area surrounding a building or structure (asset) where bushfire fuels are reduced/removed. A well designed and maintained Asset Protection Zone provides space between the fire and the asset which reduces damage from radiant heat and provides a relatively safer area to defend the asset.

See the Rural Fire Service document [Standards for Asset Protection Zones](#) for detailed information about how to construct and maintain an APZ.

The conditions of consent for developments on [Bushfire Prone Land](#) approved after 2002 generally include bushfire protection measures such as APZs. Check your development consent for any APZ consent conditions and maintain your property in accordance with those conditions. No further approvals are required.

For properties approved prior to 2002, the 10/50 vegetation clearing rule may apply. The [10/50 rule](#) gives people living near the bush an additional way to prepare their property for bush fires. Follow the link to the [on-line assessment tool](#).

If you are going to create an APZ you will need to check whether you need any environmental approvals as well, and learn what is acceptable within an APZ. The district office of the RFS can help. Call them on 4424 4424 for advice.

I think my neighbour's property could be a bushfire risk? What should I do?

The RFS investigates all reported bushfire hazards, whether the land is public or private. You can lodge a formal bushfire hazard complaint by either ringing the district Fire Control Centre on 4424 4424 or report it on-line at [Reporting-a-bush-fire-hazard](#).

I believe that a tree on my property is a fire hazard. Can I remove it?

It's always best to check before removing significant vegetation such as a tree. Trees can sometimes offer a degree of protection from ember attack. There is more information available about trees and tree removal at this link [Trees on my land](#). The [RFS website](#) also has information tree management and removal.

I live next to a Council reserve and believe it is a bushfire hazard. What should I do?

Contact Council's Fire Mitigation Officer on 4429 3380 to discuss your concerns or you can lodge a formal bushfire hazard complaint by ringing the district Fire Control Centre on 4424 4424 or report it on-line at [Reporting-a-bush-fire-hazard](#).

Why are there APZs in some reserves but not others?

The location and size of Asset Protection Zones is determined on a case-by-case basis using [a number of RFS assessment tools](#). For example, if the building on the private property is set back from the boundary with the reserve, the whole APZ needed for that building may be within the private property and there would be little need for extra work on the Council land for that building's APZ.

Leaves and twigs from the trees in the Council reserve are constantly littering my yard and filling up my gutters. Will Council remove the trees to stop this happening?

Leaves and twigs falling from trees is a normal process and is not a justification for tree removal however sometimes specific circumstances may warrant removal of branches that overhang a house. If you consider that any tree on Council land is unsafe then you should contact Council's Tree Management Officer on 4429 3208.

What is Council doing about bushfire prevention?

Council undertakes a variety of activities on land that it manages, including;

- Maintaining over 130 Asset Protection Zones and fire breaks. Follow this link to see maps of the [locations of sites maintained for bushfire mitigation](#).
- Maintaining strategic fire trails for emergency vehicle access.
- Planning and implementing prescribed burns, which are undertaken by NSW Fire and Rescue or the NSW Rural Fire Service.
- Proactive inspections of council land to ensure bushfire hazards do not develop.

Council is also involved in:

- Development controls - implementing legal standards for the safe construction of buildings in bushfire prone areas- see [Development in bushfire prone areas](#).
- Participation in the Shoalhaven District Bush Fire Management Committee along with representatives of other land management and emergency service organisations. This committee is responsible for developing and coordinating fire management strategies for the whole of the City. See the [Shoalhaven-Bush-Fire-Risk-Management-Plan-2018](#).

- Raising community awareness of bushfire risks and actions residents can take to protect life and property.

Can I collect firewood from the bushland reserve to assist in hazard reduction?

No. Fallen timber provides habitat for many native species and is a sign of healthy bushland. The decomposition of branches and leaf material puts organic matter and nutrients back into the soil, which is then available to feed and support local plant species.

Can I burn off garden waste in my back yard as a way to reduce bushfire fuels?

Burning of vegetation should be a last resort, used only when the material cannot be mulched, composted or taken to a green-waste disposal facility.

There are restrictions on when, what and where you can burn off: see [Guidelines for open burning / incinerators](#) for more information. Make sure you follow any notification requirements to avoid significant penalties.

I am planning to build a house on a block of land that's next to a Council reserve. Will Council clear the reserve and make a new APZ for me so I can get building approval?

All **new** development on Bush Fire Prone Land must meet the aims and objectives of the RFS document [Planning for Bush Fire Protection 2006 \(PBP\)](#). This generally means that the Asset Protection Zone for a building is to be located wholly within the property that the building is being built on.

See Council's policy '[Creation of an Asset Protection Zone \(APZ\) over Council Owned or Managed Land](#)' for more information.

More LINKS and FACT SHEETS

[Bush fire survival plan](#)

[Bush fire and your home](#)

[Leaving early](#)

[Staying and defending](#)

[Bush fire myths](#)

[AIDER Program](#) Assistance for infirm, disabled and elderly residents

[Lighting a fire – Quick Facts](#)

[10/50 Vegetation Clearing, Code of Practice for NSW](#)