



FIREBREAK

Sassafras-Ferny Creek Fire Brigade

No.28, Summer 2005-06

Bushfires: So many questions ...

Q – If there is a fire can I expect a fire truck to help me?

A – CFA will always attend a fire, but cannot guarantee to provide a truck at your home during a bushfire. People **should not expect** to have a fire truck respond to their home in the case of a bushfire. All available resources will be concentrating on controlling the fire not necessarily on protecting individual homes.

Q – What is the best type of water tank? Will plastic tanks melt?

A – The selection of the right type of water tank will depend on the site of the tank. An assessment should be made as to the fire or heat risk to the tank at that site. Concrete tanks if exposed to large amounts of heat can crack or spall. Metal tanks are often placed on a frame made of wood and this frame could burn and collapse. Plastic tanks will melt but evidence shows that in the majority of cases the melting will only occur to the level of the water in the tank. The plumbing from the tanks need to be considered with plastic pipes also susceptible when above ground to melting if adequate heat is present.

Q – Should I tape my windows to prevent them from breaking during a bushfire?

A – Research on homes affected by bushfire shows that by taping windows you create stresses in the glass when it is heated, these stresses can cause glass to shatter sooner than if it was left un-taped.

Q – Should I have my curtains open or closed during a bushfire?

A – Closing curtains causes two problems. Firstly, it is vital that you monitor what a fire is doing, and with the curtains closed this will be difficult. Secondly, by closing your curtains you in effect cause a temperature difference in the glass pane between the inside of the glass and the outside of the glass pane when exposed to heat, this may cause the glass to shatter.

Q – I have shade blind on my windows. Should I keep these up or down when preparing for a bushfire?

A – While closing these blinds will hamper you in monitoring what the fire is doing, there is a reasonable

case to suggest that keeping shade blinds down will help protect windows during a bushfire. There also needs to be thought given to the possibility of direct flame contact with the blinds and possibly how radiant heat might affect them.

Q – I have done a lot around my home but my neighbour has done nothing. Their place is a dump, what should I do?

A – In the first instance, talking with them may help. They might not be aware or even may not be able to clean up their block. You might be able to help them, possibly with your other neighbours. If their block is truly a fire hazard then the Municipal Fire Prevention Officer should be contacted about this. While the surrounding “fuel loads” will impact on you, the only thing you have any real control over is your own property. So you need to develop a strategy that you can implement, your preparations, your equipment and your plan on the day need to take into account every factor, even if it is a badly prepared neighbour.

Q – How much water will I need to defend my home from a bushfire?

A – CFA’s building in Wildfire Management Overlay kit recommends a minimum of 10,000 litres on-site static storage. The amount of water you will need will ultimately be determined by the level of bushfire risk that is present, on and around your property.

Do you have other questions?

■ **Local public meetings on bushfire safety will be held at:**

- ❖ Village Green, Mt Dandenong Tourist Rd, Sassafras on Saturday, 21 January 2006 at 3pm
- ❖ Fire Station, 21 Clarkmont Road, Ferny Creek on Saturday, 28 January 2006 at 3pm

Consider joining a local Community Fireguard Group or starting one in your street. Call 9735 0511 for details.

IN CASE OF FIRE: DIAL 000

Global warming and bushfires ... what does it all mean?

What will be the impact of global warming in bushfire terms? The signs are that south-eastern Australia is experiencing hotter temperatures. High temperatures are one of the factors that increase the likelihood of bushfires, especially when combined with low relative humidity and high winds.

According to a recent report in *The Age*, the past decade had unusually hot years, with climatologists watching 2005 closely. The record year, 1998, had the "El Nino of the century", significantly raising temperatures. This year could exceed that benchmark without an El Nino, a warming of the Pacific Ocean that affects Australia's climate.

The Bureau of Meteorology says the first 10 months of 2005 were the warmest equivalent period since monthly records began in 1950, and it probably would be the hottest year since annual records began in 1910. Climate scientists are picking up a similar trend globally.

The record-breaking temperatures were, the bureau said, an indicator of climate change.

"This really emphasises how pervasive global warming actually is," said Dr David Jones, head of climate analysis at the bureau's National Climate Centre.

The Bureau of Meteorology figures show that from January to October, temperatures were 1.03 degrees above the 30-year average. That may sound slight, but small jumps in average temperatures have big impacts, *The Age* reported. This year did not feature major heatwaves, rather the warmth crept up almost without people noticing, said the bureau's Dr Jones.

What climate change means for those living in bushfire-prone areas such as the Dandenongs is the prospect of an increased fire risk over the coming years. An increase in temperature by as little as a degree will extend the number of days on which fire conditions prevail.

In the short term, meteorologists have predicted this summer will be hotter than usual. In the medium term, people living in areas such as ours will need to be even more vigilant and make plans that take into consideration the greater risk of fires in the future.

BRIGADE CONTACTS

Captain: **Alan Potts 9755 1687**

Secretary: **Debbie Leticq 9751 2918**

Fire Station (answering service): **9755 1078:**

E-mail: **sfcfb@pacific.net.au**

IN CASE OF FIRE, DIAL 000

BRIEFLY

CAROLS ON THE MOUNTAIN

The brigade is proud to act as host to the inaugural Carols on the Mountain to be held at the **Ferny Creek Recreation Reserve on Saturday, 17 December 2005**. The event begins at 7pm, with a program of traditional Christmas songs and entertainment for all the family. Come along and join in the celebration. Free entry.

OPEN GARDEN

The Brigade was delighted to receive the support of Marisha and Richard Jackson, who opened their magnificent garden at 'Mimosa' in The Crescent, Sassafras on 8 & 9 October as part of the Australian Open Garden Scheme. Brigade members attended throughout the weekend and plied visitors with refreshments. While the weather was certainly against the event, it still raised an impressive \$800, which has been put towards the purchase of new equipment.

BURN OFFS ...

The brigade was involved in a number of local autumn burn-offs conducted by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria. These were aimed at reducing fuel levels in strategic areas of public land where high impact upon private property could be expected in the event of a bushfire. The burns were conducted successfully and without incident, a tribute to the professionalism of DSE and Parks Victoria staff.

FIRE READY VICTORIA

A program of street corner and public meetings providing basic bushfire safety information is being conducted throughout the Dandenongs this summer. In addition to the two meetings in our own brigade area, check the local papers for other meetings in nearby townships in case these are more convenient for you. Fire Ready is a joint initiative involving CFA, MFB and DSE. A listing of public meetings is also available via the internet at **www.cfa.vic.gov.au** where you can also find a range of other useful bushfire information and up-to-the-minute information on current incidents.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS...

"The fire brigade will save us if a bushfire comes ..."

■ **We'd sure like to, but chances are you will be largely on your own. There are simply not enough fire trucks or fire fighters to attend every property. Our objectives are strategic rather than specific. You must plan how best to defend your property.**

- VICTORIAN BUSHFIRE INFORMATION LINE 1800 240 667