

## The worst summer since ... well, last summer!

There's been a fair bit of "tea leaf reading" going on lately about what sort of summer we're going to have in Victoria. But there have already been some significant clues ...

The climatic conditions in the lead up to summer have been a little perplexing. On the one hand, a strong El Nino pattern has pushed in. This has been compared to similar events in 1997-98 and 1982-83. But the unforeseen impacts of weather patterns from the Indian Ocean have produced uncharacteristic impacts into early spring.

Parts of the state are very dry and we have already seen some bushfire impacts in October.

Locally, however, we have had average rainfall right up to the

end of September. Rain in October, however, was less than 50 per cent of the average. The climate modeling suggests warmer conditions over summer and the potential for runs of above average temperatures.

What does this mean? It means that the time to get ready is now! After a couple of relatively benign summers, it's too easy to forget that here in the hills we need to prepare for fire every year.

Earlier fire restrictions are another signal that we need to get our properties prepared and our plans in place earlier too.

Bushfire is part of the life cycle of living in the Dandenongs. Worrying about it shouldn't dominate our daily lives. But we need to accept it as a possibility every year and plan and prepare around that.

If you want to stay safe from bushfire, you need to plan, prepare and act.

Don't wait for sirens to go off or for "someone" to tell you what



to do. Take charge; make decisions now about how you intend to protect yourself and your family in the event of a fire. Have a plan ... and a backup one.

The good news is that there are plenty of people ready to help and plenty of information on how to plan and prepare! So come along to the next community meeting or just drop in at the brigade on Wednesday evening or Sunday morning.

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

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

[www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)

<http://www.facebook.com/SassafrasFernyCreekFireBrigade>



## Warning ... Warning ... don't wait for a warning!

You really don't want to be waiting for someone else to tell you what to do in a bushfire. A warning may never come.

It's up to you to stay informed. Keeping aware, especially on days of high fire danger, is absolutely critical and you need a way of being involved. Make it your business to:

- Check the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) every day during the fire season
- Know if it is a Total Fire Ban day
- Check for warnings, especially on hot, dry windy days

Check the **FireReady App**, visit the **VicEmergency website** [www.emergency.vic.gov.au](http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au) or CFA Twitter

account, or call the **Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667** for up-to-date information about current fires and warnings, as well as FDR and Total Fire Ban information. CFA's website [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) is also a great resource.

Warnings are issued when a fire has started and you need to take action. Understand the different types of warnings and how to access them. Warnings give information about fires that have already started.

There are three different levels of warnings - **Advice, Watch and Act** and **Emergency Warning**. Don't expect warnings to be issued in any particular order. The first warning issued could be an Emergency Warning.

## Come along and learn some more!

Again, there is a range of community events and other ways to learn more about bushfire survival in this part of the world.

### Olinda Pool re-opening

The Sassafras-Ferny Creek and Olinda fire brigades will be on deck (but hopefully not in budgie smugglers!) at the re-opening of the Olinda public swimming pool in Olinda-Monbulk Rd on Saturday, 5 December 2015. Come along and have a chat about fire safety this summer ...

### Community Meetings

There are two *Fire Ready community meetings* scheduled in the brigade area this summer:

- Wednesday, 13 January 2016 at 7.30pm  
Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras
- Saturday, 16 January 2016 at 2pm  
Fire Station, Clarkmont Rd, Sassafras

Depending on conditions, additional meetings may be called as required.

### Community Fireguard

Has it been a while since your Community Fireguard group has met? This year might be a good one to resuscitate it and reconnect with your immediate neighbours. Fireguard is a great way to update your preparedness, learn the latest and plan around what to do. If you have a dormant group, want to start a new one or connect in with an existing group, contact CFA District 13 Community Safety on 8739 1388 or email [d13commed@cfa.vic.gov.au](mailto:d13commed@cfa.vic.gov.au)

## Brigade & CFA contacts

John Schurink, Captain 9755 1872

Sarah Krumins, Secretary 9755 1981

Fire Station (answering service): 9755 1078

E-mail: [secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au](mailto:secretary@sassafrascfa.org.au)

CFA Region 13 HQ: 8739 1300

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

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

Brigade website: [www.sassafrascfa.org.au](http://www.sassafrascfa.org.au)

Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/SassafrasFernyCreekFireBrigade>



## Briefly ... Briefly ... Briefly ...

### 20 Years of *Firebreak*

This marks the 20<sup>th</sup> year of publication of our occasional *Firebreak* newsletter, which appears once, twice or three times a year! Back then, of course, there was no Internet and no Facebook ... so a newsletter dropped in your letterbox was the only way to get local information to you. We think it's still a simple and important way to get important information to our community, so here's to the next 20!

### The Ferny Creek Community Fire Refuge

The Ferny Creek Primary School is one of four sites in Victoria that doubles as a Community Fire Refuge (the others at are East Warburton, Blackwood and Millgrove).

The provision of community fire refuges is one of the bushfire shelter options recommended by the 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

Here are some things you must know:

- The refuge is a place of last resort. It should never be your primary plan to go there during a bushfire emergency.
- It will best serve residents in the School Rd and One Tree Hill areas. Travelling to the refuge from further away will be risky during a fire.
- The refuge may not provide a greater level of safety than the location you are leaving.
- The refuge has a limited capacity.
- It is not a "drop in" centre. There will be no capacity for people to hang around the refuge on high-risk days. It will only be opened during an emergency.

For more information about refuges and other shelter options across Victoria, [www.emv.vic.gov.au](http://www.emv.vic.gov.au)

## I hear sirens ... what does that mean?

Fire sirens have long been part of life in the Hills. These days, the sirens are a back up alert for members, who also rely on pager messaging. But sirens play a very important role in alerting the community that "something's going on".

Our brigade sirens are normally tested on Wednesday nights between 7.20pm and 7.30pm.

Sirens are used all year round whenever the brigade is called out to a fire or incident. In those circumstances, the sound will last for no longer than 90 seconds.

When the sirens sound continuously for 5 minutes, it means there is a Watch and Act message or Emergency Warning in effect for this area. You need to find out more information and act upon it. In addition to the CFA sirens in Clarkmont Rd, Birds Rd and Hethersett Rd, there are three additional sirens in the One Tree Hill area that are activated only during the summer months as part of the Ferny Creek Bushfire Alert System. You may also hear sirens from neighbouring communities, such as Belgrave, Upwey, Kallista, Upper Ferntree Gully, Olinda and beyond.

Especially in summer, when you hear sirens, it is NOT a signal to evacuate. It is a signal to seek more information urgently