

Horticulture Bushfire Toolkit



AGRICULTURE VICTORIA



Fire planning for farmers

The characteristics of every farm and farming business are different, and each farm requires a unique approach to fire preparedness. Fire can affect properties rapidly and cause devastating impacts.

Developing a fire plan and undertaking the tasks identified within it, can assist you to be better prepared and recover faster, should your property be affected by fire.



Pear orchard impacted by fires (pear trees on a vertical trellis system)

Contents

	Emergency contacts	2
	Know your fire danger ratings	4
	Annual bushfire preparation checklist	5
	Bushfire survival plan	10
	Preparing for high-risk bushfire periods	14
	Extreme/catastrophic bushfire warning issued	15
	Emergency kit checklist	16
	Recovery contacts	17
	Post bushfire checklist	18
	Ongoing support services	24
	Dealing with stress	26
	Property maps	29

Emergency contacts

Phone

Emergency	000
VicEmergency Hotline	1800 226 226 Callers who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech/communication impairment can contact the translation service for VicEmergency on 131 450 or via the National Relay Service number 1800 555 677.
Energy Distributors	• AusNet Services 13 17 99 (Map: AusNet) • CitiPower 13 12 80 (Map: CitiPower & Powercor) • Jemena 13 16 26 (Map: Jemena) • Powercor 13 24 12 (Map: CitiPower & Powercor) • United Energy Distribution 13 20 99 (Map: United Energy) Note: Distributors are companies that own and maintain the poles, wires, and pipes that bring energy to your property. You buy electricity through providers, also called retailers.
Municipal Emergency Management Centres (MEMCs)	Contact your local council.
VicTraffic	13 11 70
Australian Red Cross	1800 733 276

Key contacts

Local police station	
Local doctor	
Local hospital	
Local council	
Local vet	
Neighbours	



Tune in

Radio for emergency broadcasters in Victoria	Find your radio station for <u>Emergency Broadcasters in Victoria</u> • ABC Local Radio • Commercial radio networks • Select community stations	
Community Two-Way Emergency Channel	UHF – Two-way: Channel 5 (or 35 – a repeater output channel) for emergency only	

Online

Weather	<u>BOM</u>	
Traffic	<u>VicTraffic</u>	
Incidents and Warnings	<u>Vic Emergency</u>	
Electrical emergencies	<u>Energy Safe Victoria</u>	
Victorian Farmers Federation	<u>vff.org.au</u>	
Agriculture Victoria	Farmers seeking agriculture recovery assistance: <u>Agriculture Victoria</u>	
Worksafe Victoria	<u>worksafe.vic.gov.au/bushfires</u>	

Know your fire danger ratings

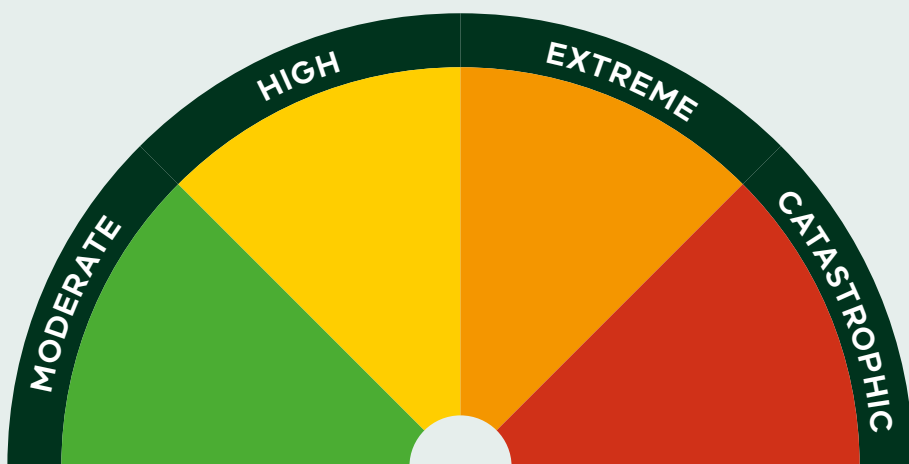
The Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) are based on forecasts using Bureau of Meteorology data for up to four days in advance, including both weather and other environmental conditions such as vegetation.

Fire Danger Ratings will be issued on days when there is a fire risk. The FDR should act as your first trigger for action.

Each fire danger rating will have a clear set of messages including the actions the community can take to reduce their risk.

There are four levels of fire danger:

- **Moderate** – Plan and prepare
- **High** – Be ready to act
- **Extreme** – Take action now to protect your life and property
- **Catastrophic** – For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas



MODERATE

Plan and prepare

HIGH

Be ready to act

EXTREME

Take action now to protect your life and property

CATASTROPHIC

For your survival, **leave bushfire risk areas**

Annual bushfire preparation checklist



To be completed/checked annually:

- ☐ **House or lot number** displayed prominently in case it is required in an emergency
- ☐ Create or update a **Farm Map** (pages 29-32), including items like roads/tracks, key buildings, water sources and hazards
- ☐ **Adequate access** for fire trucks; 4 metres wide by 4 metres high and a turn-around area is needed
- ☐ Identified at least one **secondary escape route**
- ☐ Sufficient **personal protective equipment** (PPE) easily accessible – including protective eyewear and clothing with natural fibres such as cotton and sturdy footwear such as leather boots
- ☐ Stocktake on **firefighting equipment** undertaken including these checks:
 - good working order
 - service equipment if needed
 - identify and purchase new equipment if needed
 - know how to operate equipment
- ☐ **Bushfire Survival Plan completed**, reviewed and updated, and communicated to staff and family.

Your **Bushfire Plan** is available from the Victorian State Government online (fireplanner.vic.gov.au).

Important:

You cannot rely on emergency services to protect crops, sheds or other farm assets. The fire brigade will focus on homes, houses and preservation of life. If your bushfire survival strategy involves staying to protect the property, you will need vital firefighting skills and equipment such as a slip-on firefighting unit available for vehicles that can be competently operated by a single person.



'Defending a home under Extreme conditions carries a high risk of death, serious injury or trauma. Homes should not be defended on Catastrophic days.' – CFA

Visit [CFA – defending your property](#)

Annual bushfire preparation checklist

Personal safety & skills preparedness

- ☐ I have private **firefighting equipment** and have run a refresher session with family and employees, so everyone knows how to use it.
- ☐ I know my **neighbours** and their plans in case of a bushfire.
- ☐ **Neighbour contact details** are available so information can be shared before and after an event.
- ☐ We have agreed to **communicate** our whereabouts during a bushfire, especially if evacuating with family or nominated contacts.
- ☐ I know **travel routes** in the area for emergency evacuation; I have a plan for unexpected, locked gates.
- ☐ I have a **two-way radio**; it will take pressure off mobile phone networks and reduce the risk of losing communication.
- ☐ I have multiple options to receive emergency warnings including access to a **battery powered radio**.
- ☐ I have an agreed **two-way channel** with neighbours and close community.
- ☐ I have considered **back-up plans** for picking up kids at school, looking after dependents and other essential tasks.
- ☐ There are enough **food stocks and medicines** to last us for at least one week (including pet food).
- ☐ There is sufficient **stored water**; tanks, troughs, dams, swimming pool.

Resources:



Be prepared by developing a bushfire plan. The Victorian State Government have an [online fire plan](#) available.

Consider joining a local fire brigade for training, experience and networking.



Orchard & shed preparedness

- ☐ I have **identified areas** where vehicles, machinery, fuel tanks and containers will be relatively safe during a bushfire.
- ☐ I have **reduced fuel loads** around assets (house blocks, sheds and fences) and created strategic fuel breaks.
- ☐ I have **mown and slashed along roads, paths and other access routes** to reduce fuel loads before it gets too dry (to avoid inadvertent sparks from starting a fire).
- ☐ I have **moved vehicles and equipment** to cleared areas or a cultivated paddock.
- ☐ I have identified underground **poly pipe** that needs to be monitored; fire can spread along poly pipe, even underground. Poly pipe should be at minimum 30cm underground to minimise risk of damage from fires.
- ☐ I have considered splitting my **irrigation and watering systems** so areas that are damaged can be isolated. This will lower the risk of losing all water if there is damage to the system. I have considered the possibility of **having gravity fed water in case of power outages** or limited fuel available.
- ☐ Debris such as leaves, timber stakes, old poly pipe, pallets and packaging; are **cleaned out** from shed, under low set houses, gutters etc.
- ☐ A **generator/alternative power source and chainsaw** are available and in working order.
- ☐ Emergency **fuel, diesel, chainsaw oil, tarps, woollen blankets, jockey straps, ropes**, etc. stored in an accessible place; available if needed.
- ☐ I have taken 'before' **photos** around the farm in case I need them for insurance.
- ☐ I have a secure copy of my **Agricultural Chemical Register** for local CFA and/or SES to help reduce their exposure risks while on site.
- ☐ I have water tanks with **sufficient water and dedicated fittings for CFA Truck hose connections**. See details below in green box.

CFA water tank special fitting requirements:



There needs to be at least one 64 mm, 3 thread/25 mm x 50 British Standard Pipe round male coupling (CFA Male End, Pt. No. SE.03.074). Consider using a 'tee' to allow the CFA fitting on one side of the branch and personal firefighting fittings on the other side of the pipe. For more information, download [Tank Connections Explained, Bushfire Management Overlay](#). CFA fittings are now required for any new water tank over 10,000 L.

Annual bushfire preparation checklist

Communications & business preparedness

-
- ☐ **Emergency kits** have been prepared for work and home – see page 16 for a list of kit essentials.
-
- ☐ I have registered for **weather alerts and warnings** from the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) app. For the BoM app, go to [Google Play](#) or [Apple app store](#)
-
- ☐ I have a list of **emergency contacts** available, including the closest disaster/emergency centre – see page 2 for local council contact.
- (Relief centres can be activated in a number of locations depending on the emergency situation. Details are provided to the community through emergency channels such as [VicEmergency](#) and [official emergency broadcasters](#)).
-
- ☐ I have **registered for alerts and warnings** from [Vic Emergency](#) ([emergency.vic.gov.au](#)). For the Vic Emergency phone app, go to [Google Play](#) or [Apple app store](#)
-
- ☐ Consider following your local council, local SES, or Emergency Management Victoria on **social media to stay informed**.
-
- ☐ **Essential business information and records are backed up** to a cloud, external hard drive or USB – personal photos, deeds, legal agreements, identification documents. Hard copies should be stored offsite in a safe location.
-
- ☐ I have reviewed our **insurance** policy, and a copy of this information is included in our emergency kit.
-
- ☐ I have **communicated** our bushfire plan with employees and have designated an alternative leader if I am off farm.
-
- ☐ I understand the **risks** of bushfires in a **workplace**. For more information search 'bushfires' at [Worksafe Victoria](#) ([worksafe.vic.gov.au](#)).
-
- ☐ I have **cash available** in case of long power outages and loss of internet.
-
- ☐ I have completed an **inventory** of stock and assets to ensure quick insurance claims.
-

Resources:

- [Seasonal forecasts](#) ([bom.gov.au/climate/ahead](#))
- [Climate projections](#) ([myclimateview.com.au](#))
- [CSIRO climate tool for risks and projections](#) ([climatechangeinaustralia.gov.au](#))
- Search 'Climate and Weather' on the [Agriculture Victoria website](#) ([agriculture.vic.gov.au](#))



Additional pre-event checklist items

☐

☐

☐

☐

Bushfire survival plan

A Bushfire Survival Plan should be filled out well before a bushfire event and revised annually. It is a document that must be communicated to the entire household, workforce and next of kin.

When preparing your Bushfire Survival Plan it is important to consider the following:

- In catastrophic conditions no back-up should be expected, you are likely to be on your own.
- You need a safe place to shelter if things do not go to plan.
- Each disaster is different and you can always reconsider your 'stay to defend' plan until last call is made to leave safely.
- Any changes to your plan must be communicated to key people.
- Consider a way to communicate if you have left the property, for example some sort of sign on letterbox/gate.

Action:

- [Start your fire plan](https://fireplanner.vic.gov.au) (fireplanner.vic.gov.au)
- Search '[Your Guide to Survival](https://cfa.vic.gov.au)' on the CFA website (cfa.vic.gov.au)

Impacts of fire on an
apple tree branch





Consider the following when developing your bushfire plan:

Leaving?

Who will leave early?

What are the triggers for leaving?

Where will you/they go?

How will you/they get there? Including alternative routes

What is the plan for pets?

Bushfire survival plan

Staying?

Who will stay?

How will you prepare yourself and your farm? (Clothing, PPE)

What steps will you take so you and your home can withstand the fire?

Where will you safely seek cover inside your home?



After the fire has passed, what area of your property will you check for spot fires and burning embers?

What is the plan for pets, livestock?

Resources:



If you have animals, a bushfire can result in carcasses (bodies of deceased animals) that need to be disposed of. [Agriculture Victoria](#) outlines several options for removal and burial of carcasses required of livestock producers.



Agriculture Victoria has a [Bushfire Toolkit](#) for broadacre and animal farming systems.

Preparing for high-risk bushfire periods

To be completed at the start of a high-risk bushfire period.

- ☐ I have **pruned** and **removed dead wood** from around the farm including in orchards.
- ☐ I have **cleared** and/or **maintained all fire breaks**.
- ☐ I have **removed debris and rubbish** around the shed and other infrastructure on-farm (such as pump sheds).
- ☐ I have double checked my **firefighting gear** and made sure it is in good working order.
- ☐ I have prepared an **identified safe area** for storage of vehicles, machinery, gas/fuel containers .
- ☐ I have sufficient **fuel** on the farm to run generators, machinery and vehicles for at least a week.
- ☐ I have sufficient **supplies** to last for at least a week, taking into consideration that roadblocks might hinder return access to the farm.
- ☐ I have identified one **key person**, that I will keep updated during the bushfire on my wellbeing; this person will inform others to keep my mobile free for emergency communication.
- ☐ I have shared my **bushfire survival plan** with next of kin and will keep them updated on any changes.
- ☐ I have considered **alternative care** for kids/family/dependants in case we are isolated by fire.
- ☐ I stay updated by using **more than one source of information** so I will know if a fire has started near me.



Find your
[Fire Weather
District](#)



Find your
[Local Fire
Restrictions](#)

Extreme/catastrophic bushfire warning issued



-
- ☐ I am tuning into **emergency warnings**.
-
- ☐ I am drinking plenty of water and eating regularly to **stay fuelled and hydrated**.
-
- ☐ I am irrigating crops to ensure the soil moisture profile is full and the **crop/farm** area is **moist**.
-
- ☐ I have **disconnected gas bottles** and secured fuels and agricultural chemicals.
-
- ☐ I will make sure everyone is wearing **protective clothing** – long pants, long-sleeved shirts and sturdy shoes such as leather boots (not sandals or runners). Clothes should be loose fitting and made from **natural fibres** like pure wool, heavy cotton drill or denim. Do not wear synthetics or elasticised fabrics.
-
- ☐ I have relocated **tractors, harvesters, equipment, fuel supplies** to cultivated or cleared paddock areas.
-
- ☐ I have **tools** (pliers, bolt cutters, battery operated angle grinder etc.) in my vehicle for emergency opening of locked gates/fences.
-
- ☐ I have **moved furniture and curtains** away from walls in my home, office and farm buildings.
-
- ☐ I have been through my **emergency plan** and **evacuation strategy**.
-
- ☐ I have reviewed my **evacuation route**, using current warnings being issued and have identified an alternative route if needed.
-
- ☐ I keep my **key contacts** updated to avoid worry and unnecessarily being listed as a 'missing person'.
-
- ☐ We have a process in place for any **staff** who remain **on-site**, and they are aware of the bushfire plan.
-
- ☐ Leave the front or access **gate open**.
-



Emergency kit checklist

Home

- | | |
|--|--|
| ☐ First Aid kit | ☐ Recovery contact list – see page 17 |
| ☐ Toilet paper | ☐ Toiletries including personal needs |
| ☐ Soap | ☐ Medication, including prescriptions |
| ☐ Camera | ☐ Light (torches, lanterns, extra batteries) |
| ☐ Duct tape | ☐ Communications (phone, chargers, battery operated radio, two-way radio, battery pack to charge phone on the go) |
| ☐ Knife | ☐ Original or certified copies of important personal documents (marriage certificate, birth certificates, passports, will) |
| ☐ Garbage bags | ☐ Protective clothes in natural fibres - long sleeve shirt, jeans, hat, boots, raincoat. Personal protective equipment (gloves, masks and safety glasses that are closed in to avoid embers). |
| ☐ Spare keys | ☐ Tools for emergency opening of locked gates on evacuation route/necessary movements between properties |
| ☐ Cash | ☐ Supplies for pets (Check your local emergency relief centres for specific pet requirements) |
| ☐ Fire blankets (wool) | |
| ☐ Sunscreen/insect repellent | |
| ☐ Toys for children | |
| ☐ Snacks and water | |
| ☐ Fuel in all vehicles and equipment | |
| ☐ Warm clothing/spare clothing | |
| ☐ Copies of your insurance policies | |
| ☐ Emergency contact list – see page 2-3 | |

Office

- | | |
|---|--|
| ☐ Critical data, records saved to external hard drives/USB/cloud | ☐ Business contact list |
| ☐ Emergency Plan | ☐ Laptop/charger |

Recovery contacts



Agriculture Victoria for recovery information	136 186
Insurance	
Victorian Farmers Federation	1300 882 833
Rural Financial Counselling Service (RFCS) national information line	1300 771 741 – to connect to nearest RFCS office
Telephone/Internet Provider	
Bank	

Suppliers

Accountant	
Legal	
Employees	
Vet	

List of customers / agents

Post bushfire checklist

Safety is paramount; stay indoors or at an evacuation point until bushfires have passed. Listen to the radio for warning and updates.

Communicate that you are safe to local emergency services and next of kin.

Ember attacks and spot fire checks; 85% of houses burn down from ember attack. Check roof spaces, under house/veranda, garden beds, mulches, gutters etc. Spot fires may occur for many days after the fire.

Assessment; wear covered shoes, appropriate clothing and PPE.

Take photos of damage and check on the following:

☐ Damaged or fallen powerlines (Energy Safe Victoria – 1800 800 158)

- AusNet Services – 13 17 99.
- CitiPower – 13 12 80
- Jemena – 13 16 26
- Powercor – 13 24 12
- United Energy Distribution – 13 20 99

Do not approach downed or damaged powerlines.

☐ Potential dangers such as buildings, trees, netting at risk of collapsing. Mark areas to avoid incidents.

☐ Gas, fuels, agricultural chemicals and other dangerous materials.

- Always wear appropriate PPE when dealing with agricultural chemicals.
- For major pollution emergencies that pose an **immediate threat to human health** or the environment (e.g. toxic fumes, large chemical spills, fires, significant fuel leaks or contaminated runoff entering waterways), **call 000 immediately.**

☐ Damaged and burnt trees around culverts, bridges, roads etc. Burnt tree roots can cause delayed collapse of tree and earth around it

☐ Any animals

☐ Impact on water supply on your property

☐ Impact on irrigation equipment and accessibility to water for orchards and crops

☐ Road access on to and off the farm

☐ Equipment (tractors, plant and machinery, cold rooms)



Damage assessment notes

Post bushfire checklist

Contact your neighbour to ensure their safety. This also gives you an opportunity to share your experience (a vital part of recovery).

Contact **staff** to check on their well-being. Allow staff time to ensure their home and families are safe. Arrange for staff to come back onto the farm once it is deemed safe.

Contact your **insurance** company, you should now have an idea of damage and photos to share.

Farmers seeking information on agriculture recovery assistance should contact Agriculture Victoria on 136 186 or email recovery@agriculture.vic.gov.au

You may also like to contact your relevant industry groups to update them. These groups represent and speak on behalf of growers during the aftermath of disasters. Grower information can also be used in making assessments regarding disaster assistance and categories. Any **media enquiries** can be forwarded to industry groups.

Contact nurseries/agents/customers/transport companies and other business stakeholders to **update** them on your situation.

Spend some time to **prioritise** what needs to be done around the farm and make a list of jobs. **Communicate** this with any staff/family who are there.

Further information



Scan the QR code for a resource directory, or search 'recovery support' at agriculture.vic.gov.au

During a declared emergency, the [Agriculture Victoria home page](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au) (agriculture.vic.gov.au) will direct you to important information.

For all animal health and welfare support contact Agriculture Victoria on 136 186.



Useful EPA resources

Some fire-affected materials may require special handling and disposal. Check EPA Victoria's guidance on managing waste from fires.



[Waste from fires](#)



Report pollution via the EPA [online reporting portal](#) or call the 24-hour pollution hotline on 1300 372 842.



[Fire retardants and health factsheet](#)



[Check air and water quality](#)

Priorities

Post bushfire checklist

Clean up

Some key things to remember:

- Fatigue is a huge issue post natural disasters; make sure staff, family and yourself have **enough rest**
- **Drink plenty of water** and limit alcohol intake
- Always remember to wear **personal protective equipment** (PPE)
- Make sure anyone using equipment is experienced and have the **correct licences** for the equipment (for example, trucks, forklifts, and telehandlers)
- Volunteers are covered by the Workplace Health and Safety Act 2011; be aware of **risks and hazards to personal safety** and communicate these to volunteers
- Establish a **sign-in and sign-out sheet** for visitors/volunteers and staff; this will assist you in calculating wages and hours incurred through the clean-up
- Remember it's a **stressful time for everyone** and everybody responds differently. Keep an eye on people around you and yourself, seek professional help if needed
- Attend any **de-brief sessions** held in the area, to aid recovery and learn from the disaster
- **Check in** with **neighbours and people in the community**
- If there are disaster grants available, check conditions and requirements to qualify for this.

Did you know?

Ongoing business and financial supports are available for farmers who are facing tough times because of natural disasters. Check the VicEmergency website for funding support relating to specific emergency events.

Rural Financial Counselling Services can assist with applications for many government programs and grants. Contact Rural Financial Counselling Services for support and advice on 1300 771 741 to connect to your nearest RFCS office.

The Farm Household Allowance is intended for primary producers to assist with household cash flow. Check to see if you are eligible to receive this payment on the Farmer Assistance Hotline 132 316.

The Regional Investment Corporation offers low interest loans to eligible farm businesses to manage through, recover and prepare when faced with significant financial impacts from unforeseen events.



Assessment of fields

Assess	Check damage to orchard trees by cutting into bark, stems and meristem. Bushfire factors including fire duration, wind, intensity, speed and direction will determine damage. Checking damage under the bark with a small 'window' may not give sufficient insight into the damage sustained to the plant. It might be worth sacrificing a few trees in strategic areas to fully assess and understand damage.	
Inspect	Organise soil testing to be taken when practicable. Ash can have an alkaline effect on soil, and bushfire can be highly detrimental to soil microbial activity, bacteria, fungi and seed banks.	
Test	Test water sources for contamination from ash or fire suppressants or chemicals. See Water Quality Testing factsheet	
	Grapes, juice and wine can all be tested for the level of smoke taint markers. Laboratories can test grapes and juice and provide advice on the likely effect on the wine made from them.	
	The Australian Wine Research Institute has information on grapevines exposed to smoke taint	
	The Fresh Produce Safety Centre has a fact sheet: effects of bushfires on fresh produce safety	
Check	If a tree has sustained severe damage to the phloem – 'ring-barked' around the trunk, for example – it will be unable to transport carbohydrates to the roots. Even if the heat or flames have not reached the xylem (which carries water and nutrients to the canopy) the tree may initially look healthy and fill fruit, but long-term its health will likely decline.	



For information on preparing and recovering from horticulture extreme events, visit the [Horticulture Industry Networks website](#)

Ongoing support services

Financial support

In case of damage from natural disasters to farm businesses and homes, financial support might become available.

- **Rural Financial Counselling Service** – Call 1300 771 741
The Rural Financial Counselling Service (agriculture.vic.gov.au/farm-management/business-management/rural-financial-counselling-service) provides free and independent financial information, options, decision-making support and referral services to farmers and small related rural businesses that are in, or at risk of experiencing, financial hardship.
- **Regional Investment Corporation** – Call 1800 875 675 between 8:30am to 4:30pm AEST/AEDT, Monday to Friday.
 - **Concessional loans** – Farmers may be able to access low-interest loans through the Australian Government's Regional Investment Corporation (RIC) (ric.gov.au). A RIC loan is a partnership between the farm business, a commercial lender and the Regional Investment Corporation.
- **Farmer Assistance Hotline** – Call 132 316 between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.
- **Farm Household Allowance** – Farmers in financial hardship may be eligible for the Australian Government's Farm Household Allowance (FHA) (servicesaustralia.gov.au/farm-household-allowance), a fortnightly payment available for up to 4 years in a specific 10-year period.
- Contact your **local grower** or **industry group** to enquire about available financial support.
- **Local council rates** – hardship assistance
If you are having difficulty paying your rates, contact your local council to see what hardship assistance they can offer. The sooner you contact them the better. When speaking to your local council officer, find out about:
 - available hardship assistance
 - if you are eligible for any rate concessions
 - what type of assistance is best for you.

Further information: Visit the National Debt Helpline website (ndh.org.au/debt-problems/council-rates) or call 1800 007 007.

Check with Agriculture Victoria for event specific support and resources. Remember, even if you do not have damage, indirect impacts might make you eligible.



Non-financial support

- **Agriculture Victoria** – The [resource directory](https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/resources/resource-directory) (agriculture.vic.gov.au/support-and-resources/resources/resource-directory) on the Agriculture Victoria website lists available financial, social and technical supports.
- **National Centre for Farmer Health** – Call (03) 5551 8533
The [National Centre for Farmer Health](https://farmerhealth.org.au) (farmerhealth.org.au) supports primary producers through the delivery of initiatives to boost farmer mental health and wellbeing, including distribution of mental health resources and support information and [Managing Stress on the Farm book](https://farmerhealth.org.au/managing-stress-book) (farmerhealth.org.au/managing-stress-book), which explores the common causes of stressors on farms and offers practical ways to deal with them.

Resources



[Download valuable lessons](#) learned by apple growers in NSW who experienced devastating bushfire impacts in 2019-2020 in a publication prepared by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, NSW Government.

Farm Business Resilience Program



The Farm Business Resilience Program is supporting farmers to develop knowledge and skills to improve their farm business and be better equipped to manage the impacts of drought and a changing climate. The program is delivered through short courses, workshops, webinars, field days or farms walks, tailored to suit the needs of farmers and community groups. The Farm Business Resilience Program is jointly funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund and the Victorian Government.

Further information: Visit the [Farm Business Resilience Program](#) website.

Dealing with stress

Common reactions experienced following a major traumatic event include:

- feelings of fear, sadness or anger
- feeling overwhelmed
- feeling numb, detached or withdrawn
- difficulty with focusing attention and concentration
- difficulty planning ahead
- tearfulness
- unwanted and recurring memories or bad dreams related to the event
- sleep problems
- constant questioning – ‘What if I had done x, y or z, instead?’ and ‘What will happen now?’
- ‘replaying’ the event and inventing different outcomes in order to be prepared should it happen again.

It is recommended that you relay this information to your staff and make sure they are aware of the support services available. Sometimes local industry groups and councils can provide or have access to additional support.

These reactions can be quite strong and are often at their worst in the first week. They are not signs of weakness. In most cases, they fade over the following weeks, although the person may experience them from time to time for a much longer period.

Warning signs

If you or someone you know experiences any of the following symptoms at any time, seek professional help:

- If the distress feels extreme or interferes with the person’s ability to participate in day-to-day activities
- Feeling overwhelming fear for no obvious reason
- Panic symptoms: increased heart rate, breathlessness, shakiness, dizziness and a sudden urge to go to the toilet
- Avoiding things that bring back memories of what happened to the point where day-to-day tasks cannot be carried out
- Excessive guilt about things that were or were not said or done
- Loss of hope or interest in the future
- Thoughts of ending one’s life or self-harming.



As a general rule, it is a good idea to seek help if you think that you are not coping. You should speak to a health professional if:

- your problems seem too severe
- the emotional reactions are lasting too long
- you are finding it difficult to engage in day-to-day activities or get along with family and friends.

Most people who have experienced a disaster will go through times when they find things difficult or challenging and it is important to understand the benefits of professional assistance. Do not think you need to be struggling or suffering severely to access help.

You may find it useful to talk to someone who is not a friend or family member. Many people find that one or more visits to a counsellor, chaplain, GP or psychologist greatly assists their recovery.

Making the decision to access professional assistance if you need it is a wise choice that can often help you to regain emotional strength and resilience.



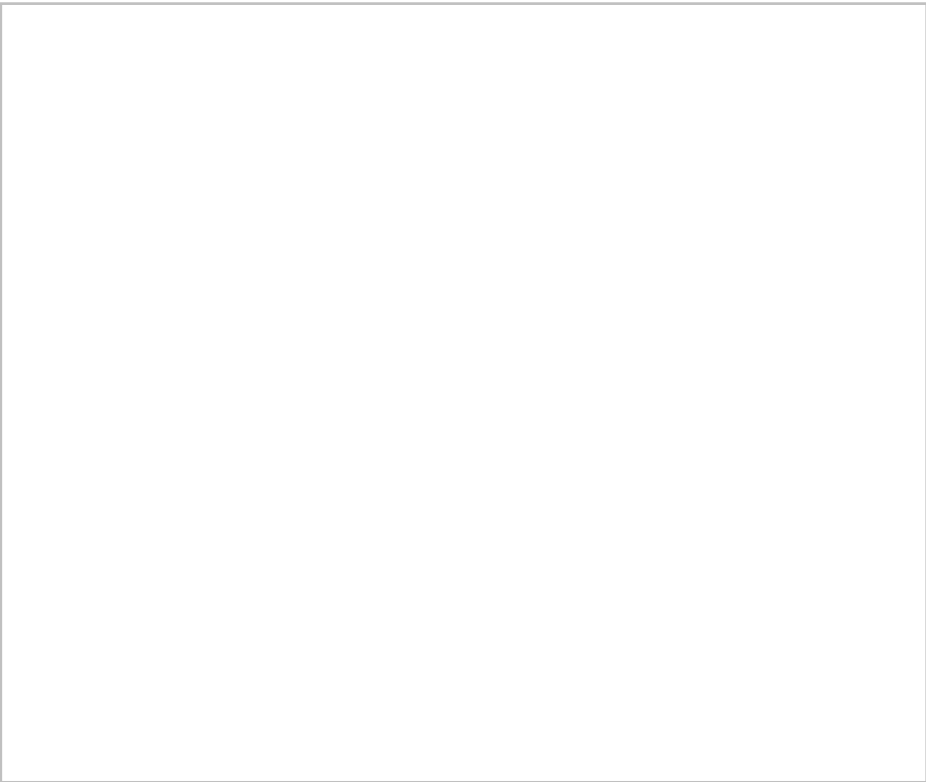
Taken from *Looking after yourself and your family after a disaster* which can be found in full at Australian Red Cross.



Dealing with stress

Phone list

Beyond Blue Support Service	1300 22 4636
Lifeline	13 11 14 or text 0477 13 11 14
MensLine Australia	1300 78 99 78
Kids Helpline	1800 55 1800
Relationships Australia	1300 364 277
Suicide Call Back Service	1300 659 467
CatholicCare	1800 123 228 Support for people of all ages and backgrounds, to find and maintain long-term, safe and affordable accommodation.
Australian Psychological Society	1800 333 497 psychology.org.au Find a psychologist service and a wide range of information resources.
Local doctor	



Consider getting a Property Identification Code (PIC). It is used for locating properties, tracing and controlling disease and residue problems and contacting owners and industry representatives. It can also help Agriculture Victoria contact owners during natural disasters (fires, floods) or disease outbreaks.

If you grow 0.5 hectares or more of grapevines or 20 or more chestnut trees within Victoria, you are required, under the *Plant Biosecurity Act 2010*, to apply for a Property Identification Code (PIC).



[About Property Identification Codes](#)
[Apply for a PIC](#)

Property maps





Property maps



Photo credits:

Agriculture Victoria bushfire library

© The State of Victoria
Department of Energy, Environment and
Climate Action October 2026

ISBN 978-1-86520-040-8 (Print)

**ISBN 978-1-86520-041-5 (pdf/online/MS
word)**

Disclaimer:

This publication may be of assistance to you but the State of Victoria and its employees do not guarantee that the publication is without flaw of any kind or is wholly appropriate for your particular purposes and therefore disclaims all liability for any error, loss or other consequence which may arise from you relying on any information in this publication.

Accessibility:

To receive this document in an alternative format, phone the Customer Contact Centre on 136 186, email customer.service@deeca.vic.gov.au, or contact [National Relay Service](#) (www.accesshub.gov.au) on 133 677. Available at [DEECA website](#) (www.deeca.vic.gov.au).



Agriculture Victoria
136 186
agriculture.vic.gov.au



We acknowledge the Queensland Fruit and Vegetable Growers association for their assistance in supporting the development of this bushfire toolkit.



The Victorian Farm Business Resilience program is jointly funded by the Victorian Government and the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

The background of the page is a dark green color with a large, light green, semi-transparent triangular graphic element on the right side. This triangle contains a faint image of a vineyard with rows of grapevines and a fence in the background. The text 'agriculture.vic.gov.au' is located in the bottom left corner of the page.

agriculture.vic.gov.au