

Identifying and assessing the risks of bushfires at work - using fire danger ratings and warnings

Australia has implemented nationally consistent systems for fire danger ratings and warnings for emergencies, such as bushfires. This information sheet will help persons conducting a business or undertaking (PCBUs) and workers to use these systems to identify and assess the risk of bushfires at work.

If you are a PCBU, you must eliminate risks in the workplace, or if that is not reasonably practicable, minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable. This includes the risks of bushfires. Bushfires can occur at any time of the year but are more likely during warmer weather and the local bushfire season.

Conducting a [risk assessment](#) will assist you in:

- identifying any hazards that could have an impact on your workers and others in the workplace
- assessing the risks, and
- determining the most effective control measures to manage the risks.

All states and territories have now implemented the:

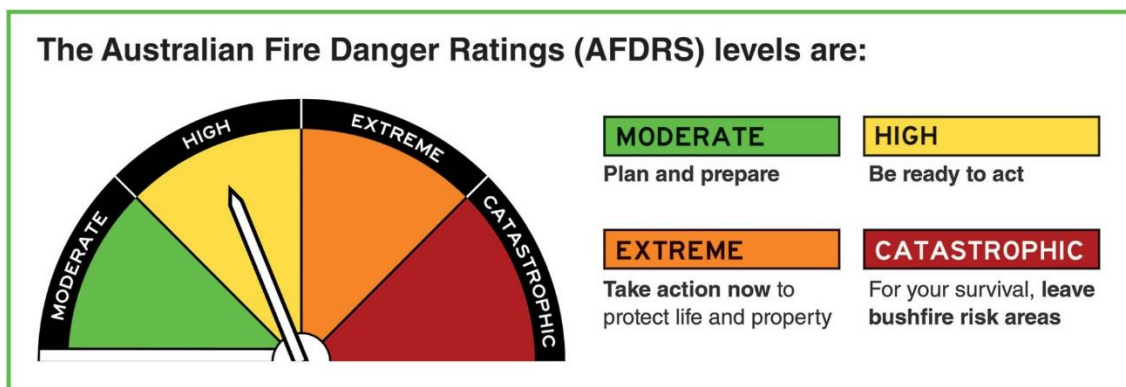
- Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS), which provides information about the risks of bushfires in the local area, and
- Australian Warning System (AWS), which provides warnings during emergencies such as bushfires.

The AFDRS and AWS can be useful resources when conducting your risk assessment for bushfires.

Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS)

What is the AFDRS?

The AFDRS uses four easy to recognise rating levels. Each level is accompanied by certain actions to alert the public of the risk of potential bushfires for that day.



The white bar under Moderate indicates ‘No rating’ for days where the bushfire risk is sufficiently low that no actions are required. This does not mean that fires cannot happen, but that if any fires were to occur, they are not likely to move or act in a way that threatens the safety of the community.

For further information on the Australian Fire Danger Rating System, see the [AFDRS website](#).

Where do I find the fire danger rating for my workplace?

The fire danger ratings are published and updated by the [Bureau of Meteorology](#).

You can also find the fire danger rating on your state or territory’s emergency or local fire authority’s website:

- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [South Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Victoria](#)
- [Western Australia](#)

When should I check the fire danger rating?

You should check the fire danger rating ahead of time to plan your work activities. Fire danger ratings are provided for the day and the 3 days ahead.

During warmer weather and the bushfire season, you should also check the fire danger rating at the start of each day and throughout the day, as conditions may change.

You can monitor fire danger ratings throughout the day by checking your local fire authority’s website and social media accounts, roadside signs, or news outlets like [the ABC](#) or [your local ABC radio station](#).

What should I do at each fire danger rating?

Fire danger ratings let you know how dangerous a fire would be in your workplace, to help you plan what to do **before a fire starts**.

Each fire danger rating has a specific ‘call to action’, which is the recommended action to take that day. You should follow the ‘call to action’ and other any advice that is issued by your state or territory’s fire authority.

If there is a total fire ban in place for the local area, you may need to adjust your work activities to ensure you are not in breach any fire ban restrictions enforced by your state or territory. You can find more information on total fire bans on your state or territory’s fire authority website.

The table below has suggested actions that have been adapted from [guidance developed to complement the AFDRS](#) for each fire danger rating. You should consider these when undertaking your risk assessment, taking into account your workers and their specific work activities.

If a fire starts near you, take action immediately to protect your life and your workers’ lives. Do not wait for a warning.

Fire Danger Rating Level	What does this mean?	What should I do?
Moderate	Plan and Prepare Most fires can be controlled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire.

Fire Danger Rating Level	What does this mean?	What should I do?
High	<p>Be ready to act Fires can be dangerous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review any control measures that you have implemented in your workplace to manage the risk of bushfires. If your workers work outside, remotely or are isolated, make sure they know how to monitor for fires and what to do in the case of one. Be alert for fires in your area. Monitor and assess the situation, especially if there is a fire nearby or if a fire starts.
Extreme	<p>Take action now to protect your life and property.</p> <p>Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review any control measures that you have implemented in your workplace to manage the risk of bushfires. If your workers work outside, remotely or are isolated, make sure they know how to monitor for fires and what to do in the case of one. Reconsider any worker travel through bushfire risk areas or areas with this fire danger rating. Relocate your workers away from bushfire risk areas if they work outside, remotely or are isolated. If a fire starts, take immediate action and evacuate the workplace to a safe location.
Catastrophic	<p>For your survival, leave bushfire areas.</p> <p>If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If your workplace is in a bushfire area with a catastrophic rating, you should postpone work or relocate your workers, if possible, to areas of lower bushfire risk. Follow any warnings issued by emergency services.

Australian Warning System

What is the Australian Warning System (AWS)?

The AWS is a national approach to information and warnings during emergencies like bushfire, flood, storm, extreme heat and severe weather.

For bushfires, the AWS provides information and warnings about **fires that have started**.

The AWS used a national consistent set of icons. Below are the hazard icons for bushfires:

Advice	Watch and Act	Emergency Warning
		
<p>An incident has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.</p>	<p>There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.</p>	<p>An Emergency Warning is the highest level of warning. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.</p>

For further information about the AWS, see the [Australian Warning System website](#).

Where do I find current warnings?

Warnings about emergencies, such as bushfires, will still be issued by your state or territory's emergency or local fire authority:

- [Australian Capital Territory](#)
- [New South Wales](#)
- [Northern Territory](#)
- [Queensland](#)
- [South Australia](#)
- [Tasmania](#)
- [Victoria](#)
- [Western Australia](#)

Warnings are also issued through your state or territory's emergency or fire authority agency's social media accounts, news outlets like [the ABC](#), and your [local ABC radio station](#).

When should I check for warnings for the area I work in?

As changing weather conditions can cause a bushfire to change rapidly, you should monitor for new or updated warnings near your workplace throughout the day.

How can I use the warnings in my risk assessment?

While the warnings apply after a bushfire has started, it is important that **prior to any fire** you consider in your risk assessment what control measures you will put in place at each of the warning levels.

What should I do at each warning level?

Each warning level will have recommended actions.

You should follow any actions issued by your state or territory's emergency or local fire authority and implement the control measures from your risk assessment.

Further information

For further information see the [Working near bushfires](#) webpage on the Safe Work Australia website.