

# Bushfire preparation checklist – outdoor jobs

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Preparing your home and property for bushfires is a job best tackled before the fire season begins, says Jim Smith, volunteer firefighter and former Deputy Commissioner at Fire and Rescue NSW. With these printable lists, you can check off jobs to do around your home and property while time is on your side.

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## If you live in a rural area

- Ensure you have large, cleared paddocks around your home and valuable assets to stop or slow fire
- Replace combustible mulch with rock and pavers for landscaping around buildings
- Check that firefighting equipment such as mobile tanks with pumps and hoses, fixed tanks, and petrol or diesel pumps and generators are all in working order
- Clear all leaf litter from the roof, gutters and ground
- Apply fly screen mesh over vent holes to stop embers getting into roofs
- Check that you have enough hose length to reach all buildings and surrounding areas to extinguish spot fires caused by flying embers
- If you have a swimming pool, tank or dam, put a Static Water Supply (SWS) sign at the entrance to your property
- Check that you have adequate access to your property for fire trucks (of at least four metres in width and height, with a turn-around area)
- Practise your animal emergency plan to build familiarity with steps such as getting in or out of a trailer
- Prepare a safe zone, such as a heavily grazed or ploughed paddock or a large, cleared stockyard, for animals that stay behind
- Mark or tag livestock for easy identification.

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## If you live in a semi-rural area

- Clear a space between the surrounding bush and your property, taking caution to ensure any felled vegetation doesn't damage the home, as this may impact your ability to make a home insurance claim. Check local planning regulations for clearing limits
- Ensure all lawns are kept mowed short
- Remove combustibles such as woodpiles, wooden outdoor furniture and mulch from around your home
- Clear all ground litter and roof litter
- If you have a water source such as a tank or swimming pool, get a petrol- or diesel-powered pump to help put out small fires and ember attacks
- Identify potential water sources for firefighters, including hydrants, water tanks, pools, dams and creeks, and put a Static Water Supply (SWS) sign at the entrance to your property
- Apply fly screen mesh over vent holes to stop embers getting into roofs
- Make sure there's adequate access to your property for fire trucks (of at least four metres in width and height, with a turn-around area).

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## Jim also recommends the following steps to make your home more resistant to bushfires (ensuring any changes meet your local building codes):

- Enclose open areas under decks and floors where embers might fly in
- Install metal gutter guards
- Repair damaged or missing roof tiles
- Install fine metal mesh screens on windows and doors
- Install bi-fold mesh screens around balconies that can be opened or closed to reduce heat load during a bushfire
- Fit seals around doors and windows to eliminate gaps
- Repair any gaps in external walls, other than those required by design, such as ventilation or weep holes
- Install shutters made of fireproof sheeting over glass surfaces
- Add fireproof insulation such as mineral wool or fibreglass
- Consider adding external and internal sprinkler systems supplied by a large concrete water tank.

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## If you live in the suburbs

- Clear gutters and roof of leaves and debris
- Trim back overhanging branches
- Keep lawns short and cleared of ground litter
- Move combustibles such as wood piles, hanging baskets and wooden outdoor furniture away from your home
- Clear combustible mulch from garden beds close to your home
- Check that you have enough hose length to reach all corners of your block
- Seal unintended gaps in the roof and external cladding
- Identify potential water sources for firefighters, including water tanks and swimming pools, and put a Static Water Supply (SWS) sign at the entrance to your property
- Make sure your pets are identified with a name tag or microchip.

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**Sources:** CSIRO, <https://research.csiro.au/bushfire/landscaping/mulches>. NSW Rural Fire Service, [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/prepare-your-property](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/prepare-your-property). Queensland Fire & Emergency Services, *Fire Hydrant and Vehicle Access Guidelines for Residential, Commercial and Industrial Lots*, March 2019.

**Disclaimer:** The content in this PDF has been prepared based on current government and emergency services guidelines and expert advice provided at the time of publishing. This information is subject to change. Please be sure to check for the latest information and always consider your personal circumstances regarding bushfire preparedness and response.

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