Standards Australia

FPA AUSTRALIA

HIA

Homes in bushfire-prone areas



Why bushfire resilience matters

The 2009 Black Saturday bushfires and the 2019–20 Black Summer fire season demonstrated the devastating impact of bushfires on Australian communities and highlighted the importance of building and maintaining more resilient homes and neighbourhoods.

A home's resilience is influenced by its location, how it is designed and built and how well it is maintained over time. Understanding its bushfire exposure and protection features can help homeowners make informed decisions when buying, maintaining and preparing their home.

Useful considerations

When buying a home or planning building work, consider the below questions during discussions with relevant authorities, builders or tradespeople.

Key Standards Australia publications

- AS 3959, *Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas*, sets out methods for determining the **Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)** and related construction requirements. It aims to improve a building's ability to withstand bushfire attack and forms part of a broader approach to reducing bushfire risk.
- SA HB 208.1, *Practitioner's Handbook*, supports practitioners applying AS 3959 through assessment, design, construction, verification, documentation and handover.
- SA HB 208.2, *Homeowner's Handbook*, provides practical guidance for homeowners on property records, voluntary upgrades, vegetation management and preparation for bushfires.

The Handbooks are informative and supplement AS 3959. They do not replace the standard.

Consideration	What to ask
Property status	Is the property designated as bushfire-prone?
Property Bushfire Manual	Is there a Property Bushfire Manual for the home? Does it include the BAL assessment report and relevant building permit documentation? Local council or an accredited bushfire practitioner may assist, if needed, to prepare this manual.
Building upgrades	Will renovations or upgrades to building elements, such as windows, doors or roofing, maintain the home's required BAL performance? Does the tradesperson know your BAL rating? Are approvals needed before work begins?
Ongoing maintenance	Are vegetation and combustible items around the home regularly managed?
Household preparedness	Is there a current bushfire plan for everyone in your house (includes children, vulnerable people, pets and livestock)? Is bushfire safety equipment ready for use?

***Note**: BAL construction can reduce risk but cannot guarantee a home will survive a bushfire. Ongoing property maintenance and household preparedness are also important.*

Where to start

Bushfire mapping, building requirements and vegetation controls vary across Australia and may change over time.

- ☐ Refer to your local fire authority for current warnings and guidance on household bushfire planning.
- ☐ For property and building requirements, start with your local council or state or territory building regulator.
- ☐ For industry resource, you may refer to the '*Protecting Your Home from Bushfire*' guide published by Fire Protection Association (FPA) Australia

Important note: This guide does not include detailed technical requirements or replace relevant Australian Standards or professional advice. If required, seek assessment or technical advice from an accredited bushfire practitioner.

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Further information

Download the free SA HB 208.2 Homeowner's Handbook.

To view AS 3959, *Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas*, visit our reader room at readerroom.standards.org.au