



Natural disasters

BUSHFIRE FACTS

FOREST fires normally travel at 1–3kmh, have flames 10–20m high and thick, and will pass a spot in 30–60 seconds.

Severe forest fires travel at up to 12kmh, with flames 100–150m high and thick.

Grass fires generally travel about 3–10kmh, but speeds of around 25kmh have been recorded.

READ THIS

IT'S True! A Bushfire Burned My Dunny Down, by Tracey McGuire illustrated by Bill Wood.

What's it really like when a bushfire strikes, reducing everything in its path to ash?

Read eye-witness accounts of people who have survived terrifying bushfires, including some who have had hair-raising escapes, like Lou who lost the soles of his feet, Shannon who lost his outdoor dunny, Lucky who lost her ears, Simone who saved Lucky's life, and Kelley who saved the dirty washing.

Also learn practical tips on how to reduce the risk of bushfires.

Activity

WORD trail: Follow the word trail of fire words.

List each word you find and write its meaning.
flamengulfuelitteroaringut
teragingeneratemberscorcheat.

DISASTERS usually occur because of an upset in the Earth's natural geographical or weather patterns but human factors can also have an effect.

Both can cause a change to our normal living conditions.

BURNING BUSHFIRES

Causes

A fire which burns out of control in a forest, scrub, woodland or grassland is referred to as a bushfire or wildfire.

While some occur naturally, mainly as a result of lightning strikes or spontaneous combustion, most are started as a result of human behaviour.

Three factors are identified in the spread of a bushfire.

Fuel

Fuel is a major factor in determining a fire's intensity. Bushfires spread depending on the type and quantity of fuel that surrounds it. Fuel can include everything from trees, underbrush and dry grassy fields, to homes. The amount of flammable material that

surrounds a fire is referred to as the fuel load.

Weather

Large areas of Australia suffer from the threat of bushfires due to our climate which is generally hot, dry and subject to drought.

● Low relative humidity causes fuels to dry out and become more flammable.

● High winds mean more oxygen and more intense flames. Doubling the wind speed quadruples the rate of spread of the fire. Winds also carry burning embers downwind, which can start new fires, known as spotting.

● Low rainfall contributes to increased fire danger as fuel becomes dry and flammable.

Topography

The behaviour of a bushfire is also dependent on the surface features of the land. In general, fire spreads uphill faster than downhill. Small bushfires which advance slowly on flat areas rapidly change into life threatening fires in hilly terrain.

BE PREPARED

- IT IS important to take steps to protect yourself, your family and your property from danger during bushfire season.
- Keep flammable material, for example wood, chemicals and fuel, clear from your house.
- Have an emergency survival kit including emergency numbers.
- Create a household plan to either leave early or to stay and protect the property during a bushfire.
- Stay tuned to bushfire alerts and warnings.
- Check it out: schools.aemi.edu.au is a great online toolkit of disaster resources.

DID YOU KNOW?

- EACH state and territory in Australia, along with the regular fire service, has a volunteer-based emergency fire service whose overall duties are to protect life and property.
- They do this by providing fire management, reducing the risk of wildfires, managing the use of fire for hazard reduction and land management purposes, and providing community awareness and education.

EFFECTS

- BUSHFIRES are one of nature's most powerful forces as they can strike anywhere, without warning, can be extremely destructive and destroy whatever is in its path and pose great threats to lives and property.

TOMORROW:
Natural Disasters
Part 3