



URAMBI VILLAGE FIRE PLAN



At the December 2008 Urambi Village Executive Committee meeting, it was agreed that a formal Fire Plan be developed for the Village. The decision was made in light of the 2003 firestorm that devastated the Canberra region and followed the general view that Urambi Village could indeed be vulnerable if/when another bushfire occurs.

At the time of writing this Fire Plan, Victoria has experience the worst bushfire disaster on record claiming a large number of homes and lives (February 2009).

The Urambi Village Fire Plan has been constructed in consultation with the ACT Fire Brigade, and more general bushfire information can be found on their website, www.firebrigade.act.gov.au.

Three senior ACT Fire Brigade officers visited Urambi Village on the 29th January 2009 to inspect the Village and surrounding areas. Specifically they carried out a general fire risk assessment and provided a number of recommendations that have been included in this Fire Plan. The ACT Fire Brigade has offered to return to Urambi Village to do a presentation on fire safety if residents are interested.

Other information contained within this document is from the ACT Fire Brigade's website which contains a vast amount of information on bushfire protection. This information has been condensed and customised for Urambi Village residents where appropriate.

The aim of the Urambi Village Fire Plan is to inform residents of the potential fire risks to the Village and to encourage them to prepare their properties to prevent bushfire damage to both their properties and fellow residents. It is also hoped that residents will plan whether they would stay and defend their homes or evacuate early. It contains direct recommendations from the ACT Fire Brigade which should be seriously considered by all residents to minimise the risk of bushfire damage to the Village.

The Urambi Village Fire Plan is not intended to be the complete solution in protecting you and your home in the case of a bushfire. It is highly recommended that residents consult the ACT Fire Brigade with any queries they may have regarding bushfire protection not covered in this Plan.

The Fire Plan is split into three sections, the first looks at steps residents can take in the preparing their home for a bushfire. The second section asks residents to decide whether to stay or leave the Village if a bushfire threatens and the final section final section on what plans/action should be taken once a bushfire threatens the Village.



Preparing your home/property

A bushfire entering Urambi Village presents a large risk to residents, pets, households, cars, and personal property without mentioning the destruction of the environment in which we live. All residents should undertake basic precautions to protect their home from the impact of bushfires. It is important for Urambi residents to understand the risk that put their neighbour's properties at risk if they fail to maintain their own property due to the close proximity of our living arrangements.

The ACT Fire Brigade recommend the following *general* steps to protect your home:

1. Place metal screens and/or shutters on windows to reduce the impact of embers and radiant heat on window glass.
2. Fit metal leaf guards on gutters.
3. Make sure all exposed plastic water pipes are protected from the impact of fire. Bury them at least 30 cm underground and if possible use metal pipe and hose fittings.
4. Protect underfloor spaces with non-combustible sheeting or metal mesh. This will prevent embers landing under the house and starting small spot fires.
5. Cover all external vents in your home with metal mesh to prevent embers entering.
6. Protect air conditioners and evaporative coolers with metal screens to prevent damage from embers. Check with suppliers to ensure performance will not be compromised.
7. Ensure external timber cladding and timber windows are well maintained and painted. Check that all gaps are sealed around the house.
8. Place weather-stripping around the inside of doors and windows to eliminate any gaps.
9. If possible, install fencing made from non-combustible materials such as metal or brick.
10. Locate LPG cylinders and Natural Gas mains in an area free from combustible materials. If possible provide metal screens for these objects. Turn gas off if a fire approaches your property.



ACT Fire Brigade note: *The threat of a bushfire is most likely to come from the West of Urambi Village (Murrumbidgee Country Club side). The golf course provides the Village with a fire break and therefore the likelihood of a bushfire within the Village will be most likely started from blown embers as opposed to direct flame.*

Embers will start spot fires in resident's yards which can escalate to a house fire if they are not extinguished. Urambi residents that do not maintain their properties by removing potential fuel for a fire put both their property and neighbour's properties at risk. Planning to leave before a bushfire threatens is NO excuse for not maintaining your property as you place other properties/people/pets at risk.

Urambi should ensure that the Murrumbidgee Country Club continues to maintain the area between the Village and the golf club, keeping the grass short and removing dead branches.

The ACT Fire Brigade recommend the following *general* steps to protect your garden/yard:

1. Clean fine fuels such as leaves, sticks and small branches from the garden.
2. Clean leaves from gutters, downpipes and roof areas.
3. Remove flammable items and rubbish from around the house.
4. Move woodpiles from around the house and garage.
5. Store fuel supplies and garden chemicals away from the house.
6. Trim shrubs and trees so that no branches contact or overhang the walls and/or roof of your house (create at least a 2 metre gap).
7. Prune lower branches of trees and shrubs at least 2 metres from the ground to prevent fire extending into the treetops.
8. Remove dry grass along fences and around structures in the rear yard.
9. Do not use mulch or woodchips on garden beds that abut the walls of your house.
10. If possible design your garden to incorporate areas of lawn and gravel, especially next to your home.
11. Seek advice on fire resistant plants and use them as much as possible in your garden.

ACT Fire Brigade note: *It is recommended that the gutters at the back of the garages (Crozier Circuit side) be kept clean of leaves/branches. These pose a fire hazard to the garages and if ignited, could also hinder attempts to leave Urambi during a bushfire. Gutter guard has already been planned to be installed to the front of all garages in Urambi, but this may not be possible for the back.*

Only 3 of the 10 fire hydrants in the Village were able to be located on the 29th January 2009. Urambi residents are reminded that it is an offence to tamper with the fire hydrants and special caution should be taken when planting gardens. The ACT Fire Brigade are taking steps to help Urambi locate the missing fire hydrants as this has been classified as an urgent risk/task.

The ACT Fire Brigade are only given a limited number of portable fire units/trailers for distribution from the ACT Government. Urambi Village was not deemed a high enough risk rating to have access to one of these, mainly due to the golf course acting as a fire break.



Should you stay or should you go?

Whether Urambi residents should stay and defend their property or go early is a personal decision. In making an informed decision, the ACT Fire Brigade recommend that residents consider the following questions:

1. Do you understand the nature of bushfires and the level of risk to you and your family?
2. Are you committed to undertake and maintain the required level of preparation before and during the bushfire season?
3. Are you physically fit enough to defend your property?
4. Do you think that all members of your household are mentally prepared for the stress and uncertainty of coping with a bushfire? (Consider the elderly, very young or infirm members.)
5. Have you made arrangements for your pets and livestock in case of a bushfire?
6. Do you have equipment such as hoses, buckets, rakes, protective clothing and an alternate water source: for example a pool, a filled bathtub or wheelie bin that could be used to defend your home in a bushfire?
7. Do you believe your house will offer your family adequate protection from a bushfire after all preparation activities have been completed?

ACT Fire Brigade note: Urambi residents should consider whether they would stay or go in the event of a bushfire well in advance (now!). Do not leave the decision to the last minute where it may be too late to leave. Residents that are disabled, elder or those with children/pets should have an escape planned well in advance of a bushfire attack. All residents should plan what items they would wish to take with them if they choose to leave before the bushfire arrives.

It should be clear to residents that they either stay with their property or leave EARLY. It may be too late to leave during the middle of a bushfire and most deaths and injuries occur when people evacuate or leave their homes as the fire impacts on their property.

There are no specific evacuation points recommended by the ACT Fire Brigade as it depends greatly on where the bushfire is threatening. The ACT Fire Brigade suggest that school ovals in the opposite direction to the golf course should be considered as evacuation points. Urambi residents have a number of schools located near the Village including the former Mt Neighbour Primary School, Urambi Primary School or the playing fields opposite the Burns Club on Kett Street. Further information on evacuation points may be given over the radio at the time of a bushfire.

If you answered NO to any of these questions then you are not in a position to safely stay and defend your home. You should make plans to go in the event of a bushfire and GO EARLY.



You plan to leave earlier, but what to take?

In planning to evacuate early, residents should decide where you are going, how you will get there and what trigger you will use to initiate your evacuation plan. If you are planning to evacuate, prepare an emergency kit to take with you, this should contain:

1. Insurance papers and personal documents such as wills, financial papers and passports.
2. Cash and credit cards.
3. Photos, keepsakes and other memorabilia.
4. Medications and doctor's scripts.
5. Spare clothes and personal items for 24 hours.
6. Mobile phone, charger, computer storage discs and hard drive.
7. Emergency telephone numbers including emergency services, local government, neighbours and close relatives and friends.
8. Food and drinking water for 24 hours.
9. Torch, battery powered AM/FM radio, woollen blankets and first aid kit.
10. If you have pets make sure you have pet food, dish for water, basket / cage / leash and any medications.

ACT Fire Brigade note: Residents should be listed to ABC radio 666 for information from the ACT Fire Brigade on the day of a bushfire. This is the Fire Brigade's chosen radio channel to communicate to ACT residents information surrounding a bushfire. Residents should not solely rely on the information given over the radio, but instead incorporate it into their Fire Plan.

Communication between neighbours is also advisable to ensure all residents are aware of the dangers and given the opportunity to leave, particularly if elderly, disabled, and parents with children.

Protecting your home as fire approaches

If you choose to stay and defend your home it is important that you limit the risk of fire damage to yourself and your property. The ACT Fire Brigade the following steps as the fire approaches your home:

1. Stay in the house as the fire front approaches. The front usually takes 5 to 10 minutes to pass by.
2. Close all doors, windows and shutters.
3. Secure outdoor furniture or bring it inside.
4. Remove highly flammable curtains and furniture from window areas.
5. Fill basins, sinks, buckets and bathtubs with water for fire fighting purposes. Do not shelter in your bathtub if fire impacts on your property.
6. Soak towels, blankets and rugs with water and lay along doorways and windows to keep smoke and embers out of the house.
7. Turn off gas supply to the house.
8. Bring your fire fighting equipment (hoses and fittings etc) inside the house to prevent damage or destruction by fire as the fire front passes.
9. Keep checking for spot fires around the house and extinguish if safe to do so.
10. Check each room of the house and the roof space for embers as the fire front passes outside.
11. Do not climb on the roof of your home during bushfires. High winds, embers and smoke could cause you to fall.
12. After the fire front passes and if safe to do so return outside and extinguish any spot fires impacting on your home.
13. Embers can cause fires to occur for as long as 24 hours after the fire front passes. You will need to check your roof space, under floor areas, garden and surrounding areas continuously during this time.

ACT Fire Brigade note: Special precaution should be taken around Urambi Village garages during a bushfire attack. The garages in the Village contain timber frames which are easily ignitable. Due to the sharing arrangements between the garages, flames could easily spread throughout the garages putting resident's safety at jeopardy if trying to evacuate in cars. Many of the garages have electronic doors which may not work if power is cut to Urambi Village. Residents should consider manual override or alternate access to the garage in event of a power failure.

It is recommended that cars are shifted to Crozier Circuit for easy escape and to prevent damage to both the cars and resident's lives.

The ACT Fire Brigade recommend residents wear protective clothing to avoid injury from sparks, embers and the extreme heat radiating from a bushfire. They also recommend that residents organise a bag containing protective clothing before the fire season starts.

Recommended clothing includes:

1. Long sleeved overalls or long sleeved shirt and trousers in natural fibres (eg wool, denim or cotton, no synthetic fibres).
2. Wide brimmed hat or hard helmet.
3. Solid footwear such as boots, preferably leather.
4. Gloves – sturdy garden variety, not rubber or synthetic.
5. A moistened mask or large cloth handkerchief for face protection and to filter smoke and embers.
6. Goggles or glasses to protect eyes from smoke and flying embers.
7. Bottles of water to prevent dehydration. Avoid tight-fitting, heavy clothing as this can cause heat stress to your body due to the intense heat experienced during a bushfire.



Summary of questions Urambi residents should ask themselves

Family considerations

- Do you have a Fire Plan organised?
- Which family members will go early?
- Where will they go and how will they get there?
- What will be the trigger for members of the family to go early?
- What action will you take if members of the family are at work/school?
- What will be included in your emergency kit and where will it be stored?

Preparing your property

- What are the potential risks around your home?
- What maintenance or modifications are required?
- What equipment will you need (hoses, rakes, shovels etc) and where will you store it?
- Where is your alternate water supply and how will you access it?

Personal safety

- How many people will you need to safely defend your home?
- Who will be there to provide you with help?
- What items of protective clothing will you need for all member of the family?
- What is your backup plan if your home alone or unable to return to your home to defend your house (roads blocked)?

On the day of a bushfire

- What actions will you need to take before the fire front arrives specific to your property?
- What action will you take to ensure the safety of your pets and livestock?
- If family members, pets or livestock plan to relocate, when will this be done and how long will it take?

