

After the fires

Water

If your water has been used by fire management agencies, the Victorian Government will replace essential water for household purposes. Contact your local council to arrange replacement.

Restoring your items

It may be possible to salvage some possessions from soot, smoke or water damage. Melbourne University's booklet *Bushfires... Protect Your Precious Possessions*, provides advice on how to protect and restore some possessions from fire. You can download a copy at: www.culturalconservation.unimelb.edu.au/publications/bushfire_protection.pdf

Advice for businesses

Your local Victorian Business Centre can provide information and advice on services that might be available. Contact the Victorian Business Line on 13 22 15 or visit the Business Victoria website at: www.business.vic.gov.au

Advice for primary producers

Primary producers often face a range of issues after fires. Your local Department of Primary Industry Office can provide you with advice on fencing, fodder, and farm business planning. For further information visit www.dpi.vic.gov.au or the DPI customer service centre on 136 186

Emergency contacts

Local Council

Website: www.mav.asn.au

Department of Human Services

Website: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

Emergency Services

Police, Fire & Ambulance call: 000

The Victorian Bushfire Information Line

1800 240 667



Practical advice

Bushfires affect people in many different ways. This can range from the stress of being under threat for long periods to the loss of property and income, or even the loss of loved ones.

Victoria has effective recovery arrangements in place to assist people affected by emergencies. These services are coordinated through your local council. In the first instance, you should always contact your local council to see what recovery services are available. The Victorian Bushfire Information Line (1800 240 667) and ABC radio are primary sources of information during an emergency.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) also provides a range of fact sheets for people affected by emergencies via our website: www.dhs.vic.gov.au/emergency

During a major bushfire these fact sheets may also be distributed at council offices, relief and recovery centres and community meetings in a folder called *After the fires: practical advice*.

This brochure outlines the public health and recovery information available to people affected by bushfire. This information is additional to fire preparedness and response information provided by the fire services prior to and during the fire emergency. Your safety is always most important.

Health matters

Bushfires can impact upon people's health in a number of ways. Extreme temperatures and reduced air quality can have severe effects on some people, particularly older people and people with asthma and other respiratory conditions. Returning to your

property after a fire can be particularly hazardous, and the loss of power and access to clean drinking water can pose a number of health risks. The following fact sheets are available from our website:

- *Preventing heat related illness*
- *Bushfire smoke and your health*
- *Food safety and emergency power failure*
- *Advice for people with water tanks*
- *Fire retardants and health*
- *Hazards on your property after a bushfire*

The impact of an emergency can be stressful and exhausting, and people are encouraged to look after themselves during this period. People who readily use formal and informal support from family, friends or other support organisations are generally found to recover better from stressful situations. Access to information and support will aid recovery for most people. Sharing fact sheets with family and friends may also help you support each other. The following fact sheets are available from our website:

- *The stress of being under threat*
- *Stress after an emergency*
- *Family and crisis*
- *Children and crisis*
- *Teenagers and crisis*
- *When someone you know has had a traumatic experience*

Financial matters and material aid

There are many financial matters to consider after a fire: insurance, mortgages and credit, household budgeting and financial assistance to name a few. Assistance available following emergency events will vary depending on the scale

and type of incident. Financial assistance made available by the Victorian government for any large incident will be published on the department's website. The following fact sheets are also available from our website:

- *Dealing with financial matters after an emergency*
- *Personal hardship grant: emergency grant*

Public appeals and financial and material assistance from non-government organisations may also be available to households substantially affected by a bushfire. Your local council is usually the best source of information regarding the range of local assistance available in your community.

If the fires have affected your employment status you should contact Centrelink on 13 10 21 to discuss your income support needs. Information is also available from the Centrelink website: www.centrelink.gov.au

Insurance

Making early contact with your insurer and knowing what to do while you are waiting for your insurance assessment can make a big difference to your peace of mind. The Insurance Council of Australia provides assistance to anyone experiencing problems resolving insurance issues: www.insurancecouncil.com.au

Accommodation

If you are unable to remain at home and do not have friends or family to stay with, you should contact your local council to seek assistance. If you are renting, then you should contact your landlord or real estate agent to let them know what has happened. Consumer Affairs Victoria provides advice for tenants: www.consumer.vic.gov.au