

Making Victoria FireReady:

Neighbourhood Safer Places. Only a last resort.

Q&As



What is a Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP)?

- NSPs are places of last resort when all other bushfire plans have failed.
- NSPs are locations that may provide some protection from direct flame and radiant heat, but they do not guarantee safety.
- Places of last resort have been designated at a range of different locations, for example recreational reserves, football ovals, streets, car parks, foreshores, tourist centres, and shopping strips. Where a location is approved as an NSP it is identified with a sign and listed on the CFA website.
- NSPs are not an alternative to planning to leave early or to stay and defend your property; they are a place of last resort if all other fire plans have failed.
- A NSP is an existing location and not a purpose-built, fire-proof structure.

How have Neighbourhood Safer Places been designated?

- CFA has been working closely with councils to identify and assess potential places of last resort, which can be designated as a Neighbourhood Safer Place.
- The basic principle of a Neighbourhood Safer Place is that it may afford some protection from radiant heat, the biggest killer during bushfire.
- CFA's criteria for NSPs are based on radiant heat calculations taking significant vegetation into account. Each site will be evaluated on its own merit.
- CFA is assessing potential NSPs to ensure sites will not exceed the prescribed maximum potential for radiant heat exposure, and is providing its assessment to the relevant council.
- Local government is then assessing the site against other criteria outlined in a Municipal NSP Plan, including access and egress, vegetation clearance, traffic management and uses allowed within buffer zones. Agreements with landowners must also be negotiated in some cases.
- CFA has assessed potential NSPs in the designated 52 high-risk areas. Places of last resort will be progressively assessed and designated by CFA and councils across the state.

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For more information contact:

1800 240 667

www.cfa.vic.gov.au

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Q&A continued...

Where are Neighbourhood Safer Places located?

- NSPs are established by local government – not all townships have designated Neighbourhood Safer Places - Places of Last Resort.
- A NSP may be at a local sports field, foreshore or park, or they may be located within a community facility such as a hall, community centre or school.
- It is important to know that NSPs are not always a building or structure - they can simply be a clearing that provides a level of protection from radiant heat.
- NSPs are identified with a green and white sign which includes the words "Bushfire Neighbourhood Safer Place – Place of Last Resort".
- A full list of designated NSPs is available at www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- The CFA and local councils are continuing to assess and finalise additional places of last resort across the state.
- To find out if there are any Neighbourhood Safer Places in your community contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line (1800 240 667), your local council or visit the CFA website.

Who should use a Neighbourhood Safer Place?

- NSPs should only be used as a last resort, by those who have been unable to implement their Bushfire Survival Plan, or whose plans have failed.
- People who are travelling, and who find themselves in an area affected by bushfire may be able to shelter at an NSP as a place of last resort.
- The aim is to provide shelter during the passage of a fire, when all other plans have failed. NSPs should not be considered as places to relocate to when leaving early.
- Travelling to a place of last resort is inherently dangerous - with potential poor visibility, traffic congestion, fire activity, accidents or fallen trees blocking the route.

What will be available at an NSP?

- As a place of last resort, an NSP may provide some protection from radiant heat - the biggest killer during bushfire.
- NSPs are places of limited capacity that do not guarantee safety.
- In a fire, the CFA or other emergency services may not be present at an NSP.
- NSPs may not have the capacity to cater for special needs; and there will be no support services (food or drink, material aid) or provision for pets.

- NSPs may not provide shelter from the elements, particularly from heat and flying embers. On extreme and Code Red Fire Danger Rating days, the temperature is likely to be more than 35°C and the heat and sun will impact on those who shelter at an NSP.
- NSPs will not guarantee a person's safety - they are places of last resort to shelter during a fire front when all other plans have failed.

What should I consider when deciding to shelter at a Neighbourhood Safer Place?

- Safety and survival cannot be guaranteed at an NSP and there may be no support or services provided. NSPs will offer limited protection against radiant heat and embers.
- Travelling to a place of last resort is inherently dangerous. Traffic congestion, fire activity, accidents or fallen trees may block the route.
- Visibility is likely to be extremely poor due to smoke.
- People sheltering at an NSP are likely to experience extreme conditions such as heat, high winds, fire noise, and exposure to embers and radiant heat and may experience breathing difficulties due to smoke and ash.
- Neighbourhood Safer Places are places of absolute last resort.

Where should people go if there is no NSP in their area?

- The safest decision, if you are in a high-risk area, is to leave early. Plan to be safe - do not plan to access a place of last resort.
- The key is planning ahead. Everyone should have a Bushfire Survival Plan and should practise it. In high fire risk areas, on days of severe, extreme or code red conditions, plan to leave the area the night before or early in the day.
- On days of high fire danger consider staying with family or friends in a low risk area, or taking a day trip to your nearest regional centre.
- If your Bushfire Survival Plan has failed and fire is approaching, look for an open area that is as far from vegetation as possible, or a solid structure that will provide shelter from radiant heat. Such places are truly a last resort, to be considered only when all other plans have failed.
- People should not rely on sheltering at an NSP – CFA advises that in the event of a fire, the safest option is to leave early. The safest place to be is out of a high bushfire risk area.

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