



Fires can spark at a moment's notice regardless of the season, so whether you're camping, hiking or having a picnic, be fire ready and fire safe. Following basic guidelines with common sense is vital.

In light of the increase in the number of bushfires causing devastation right across our country, there is no better time like the present to revisit how we as campers are being responsible with our campfires, and how we can also stay safe when heading into the bush.



It's important to be aware of how to stay safe when it comes to fires.

Always research the risks of the area before you leave

Firstly, learn the specific fire regions you are visiting, do not count on town or Shire Council names. Each state has its own fire services website and app with warnings and conditions presented by fire districts. Visit the relevant fire service and park sites for current advice before you leave home.

Don't forget to also check the [Bureau of Meteorology \(BOM\) website](#) for upcoming forecasts. Take note of the days either side of your visit as well, these can impact access and suitability to visit too.

Learn the conditions and Fire Danger Ratings and Bush Fire Alerts restrictions for where



you're going. Regardless of whether you think the fire conditions are low, check with the official sites.

Fire safety is not limited to setting a campfire. As we have seen recently, bushfires are unpredictable.



It's essential to conduct research on the conditions before you leave.

Most importantly - you can always go another time or leave early

The most important lesson you can learn is if you have any concerns, stay home or leave early. Have a fire plan and share it with family and fellow travellers.

Heed the warnings and advice of the locals and authorities. You can always go another time, there is nothing relaxing about putting yourself in unnecessary danger.

On a practical level, the fewer vehicles in an area means better access for firefighters.



Make sure you only light a campfire in a cleared area.

Not all fire risks are obvious

Not all fire risks are obvious - don't forget your muffler will be hot after the drive. Avoid parking, or driving, through areas with tall grass that your muffler could set alight. Stay on made tracks.



Stay on the made tracks as your muffler will be hot after a drive.

Always pack to survive

When heading into the bush, be prepared. Check your survival kit includes a working battery-operated radio, torch and protective woollen clothing. If you don't have wool then something made from natural fibres that covers your arms and legs. Synthetics can melt and burn your skin. Keep the kit in easy reach in your vehicle.

Pack a woollen blanket. Should you get caught in a fire, a blanket makes a great cover for you and your group. Use water sparingly to dampen cloths to put over your face to limit smoke inhalation. Keep as much as you can to drink and avoid dehydration.

Know what to do if caught in a fire. The [NSW Fire Service Fire Safety for Travellers](#) brochure is a valuable resource wherever you are.



Have the right tools on hand to manage your campfire.

Campfire caution - important points to remember

If you wish to set a campfire, here are some important points to remember...

1. No fires in fire ban season... no exceptions!
2. Obey all rules set out in the area you are camping... no exceptions.
3. Gas stoves can still cause fires, be responsible with how you use them.
4. If available, use the provided fire pits. Making your own 'ring' from rocks, especially river rocks, is not a good idea, they have been known to explode from the heat.
5. Collecting firewood within many parks is prohibited. Leave dead wood where it lies, it's important habitat, not fire fuel. To avoid bringing pest species into the area, bring wood free from dirt and weeds.
6. Gather enough wood and kindling before you light your fire. Ask someone else to get more if needed. Never leave a fire unattended.



Use the provided fire pits.

7. Keep fires small (no bonfires) and manageable with a clear space (at least 3m) around the fire.
8. Keep a shovel and water nearby while you have a fire going. We have a dedicated collapsible bucket in our kit for extinguishing fires.
9. Beware of hot BBQ plates, coals, as well as flames, as on a windy day leaf litter can easily catch from any of these.
10. When you leave the site, or off to bed, use water or dirt (water is preferable) to extinguish the flames. Use a stick to move the logs, ash and coals around to make sure there aren't any hidden hot spots. Continue this process until the fire is cool.
11. Check the site and check it again, you would be amazed how hot coals are well below the surface and it only takes a breeze to bring them to life.
12. Lastly, do not use campfires as rubbish incinerators – plastics release toxic gases when burnt. Fire pits are also not receptacles for broken glass or other bits and pieces. Keep them clean and tidy.



Always obey the rules regarding campfires.

Simple but safe

Stay informed, be prepared, pack your survival kit and know how to use it, but most importantly if the conditions aren't good, *don't go*.

Regardless of how you are travelling, or where you are, these are informative and handy links.

- [Bureau of Meteorology weather warnings](#)
- [NSW Rural Fire Service Bushfire Safety for Travellers Guide](#)
- [ABC guide to planning for a Bushfire](#)
- [Geoscience Australia factsheet on Bushfires](#)
- [Bureau of Meteorology Fire Weather Knowledge Centre](#)
- [La Trobe University Guide to Bushfire Safety](#)

What extra precautions do you take when camping to ensure you stay safe?