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Media release

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TIDY UP IN TIME FOR SUMMER

Many homes in areas of high fire risk are not built to withstand fire, despite Victoria being one of the top three most fire-prone areas in the world.

More than 2000 houses were destroyed during the fires in January and February 2009, with many succumbing to fires started by embers.

You should consider your individual fire-risk no matter where you live, especially if you're near paddocks, grassland or bush.

While your plan should be to leave the night before or first thing in the morning on days of high fire risk, you should still prepare your home to give it the best chance of surviving a fire.

There are many ways to make your property safer. Clearing up and planning ahead will help protect your home from fire, and it could save the lives of you and your family if you get caught and need it to shelter.

Having the space surrounding your home cleared of vegetation will minimise your home's exposure to radiant heat and direct flame, which will slow the speed and intensity of an advancing fire.

Without this space, your home may not survive the fire front. If you are caught out at home when a fire hits, this space around your home may increase you and your family's chances of survival.

If you own land in a municipality that is vulnerable to fire, you may be able to clear vegetation on your property around your home without a permit, for fire protection purposes. This includes trees within 10 metres of your house and ground fuel within 30 metres of your house.

Visit www.cfa.vic.gov.au to see if the 10/30 rule applies in your municipality.

Important tips for preparing your home include:

- **Leaf-free gutters** – Keep gutters clean and install leaf guards or a leafless guttering system.

- **Vegetation near the house** - Clear vegetation from around the house, keep grass less than 10 centimetres high and remove weeds.
- **Mulch** - Use stones or pebbles or decayed humus mulch instead of woodchips or dry straw. Keep it moist.
- **Gardens** – Avoid plants with high levels of oils in their leaves such as eucalyptus and tea trees, which are highly flammable.
- **Metal flyscreens** – Install metal flyscreens on windows, chimneys, doors and vents to keep out embers.
- **Around and under the house** - Remove flammable items from around your house, such as paper, boxes, doormats, woodpiles and garden furniture.
- **Back-up water source** – In the event of power failure, use a non-electric (i.e. diesel) pump from an alternative water supply such as a swimming pool, tank or dam.

You can access the CFA Household Bushfire Self-Assessment Tool as well as a number of other helpful resources to help prepare your fire plan from the CFA website.

Alternatively, you can call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 to request a Fire Ready Kit.

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FURTHER INFORMATION:

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