



MEDIA RELEASE

15 January 2020

Protecting the Huon from bushfire

PREPARE – ACT – SURVIVE

With peak bushfire season upon us, Huon Valley Council continues to work hard to lower the risk for our towns in collaboration with the Tasmania Fire Service (TFS) and other fire agencies, and is calling on residents to do their bit by making sure their property is well-prepared.

Council is also aware that there is a high level of anxiety within the community this bushfire season. “With our country suffering its worst bushfire season to date, and the experience of the January 2019 fires still fresh with us, it is understandable that much of our community is worried about bushfire threat,” said Huon Valley Council Mayor Bec Enders.

“We urge all residents to get their property bushfire-ready and be proactive about contacting Council to report potential hazards via hvc@huonvalley.tas.gov.au or on (03) 6264 0300.

“If you see a fire, please contact the TFS on 000.”

WHAT WE DO

Council is committed to lowering bushfire risk in the Huon Valley as per legislative requirements, and works closely with the TFS to do this as part of its membership on the Southern and Hobart Fire Management Area Committees.

Roadside slashing and vegetation management

Roadside slashing and vegetation management is carried out year-round by Council in accordance with the directions stated in the *Local Government Act 1993* on how to deal with fire hazards. Council has two hydra mowers that slash roadsides throughout the Huon all year round and engages a contractor to assist with slashing in peak periods.

We will always do our best to maintain the roadsides and vegetation. Should you see vegetation on Council’s roadsides that you are concerned about, please let Council know via hvc@huonvalley.tas.gov.au or on (03) 6264 0300.

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communications@huonvalley.tas.gov.au



Fire hazard abatement

If you think there is a fire hazard on a property, please let Council know via hvc@huonvalley.tas.gov.au or on (03) 6264 0300, or in person at the Customer Service Centre.

Council inspectors are trained by the TFS on how to recognise and deal with fire hazards, and will assess risks on a property that are reported to Council based on:

- Amount of available fuel present
- Soil moisture
- Fuel type and arrangement/structure
- Site topography
- The level of risk posed to surrounding properties and life

If the fire hazard is deemed to present an immediate risk to life or property on adjoining land, Council will issue the homeowner a fire abatement notice and provide a reasonable time frame (generally two weeks) to remove the hazard, depending on hazard type.

Council has the responsibility to take action to abate a risk at the owner's expense if the owner does not do so within the time frame specified in the abatement notice period.

In the lead up to the bushfire season, courtesy fire hazard reminders are issued to homeowners who have received an abatement notice in the past.

Amendment to the Planning Scheme

Council has brought forward an amendment to the *Huon Valley Interim Planning Scheme 2015* to include a Bushfire-Prone Areas overlay map recently completed by the TFS.

The new overlay mapping applies where there is a subdivision or 'vulnerable' or 'hazardous' use proposed that is within 100m of bushfire-prone vegetation that is equal to or greater than 1 hectare, and was developed with valuable technical and local knowledge.

By clearly defining bushfire-prone areas based on TFS expertise, the overlay will allow for more accurate and efficient assessments of development applications while also providing a resource for the community and professionals when it comes to fire permits and hazard complaints.

Tourism operators

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Operators have a role to ensure that their visitors are informed about bushfire risk in Tasmania, including the Evacuation Centre and where Safer Places are located throughout the Huon Valley.

The TFS has produced a brochure titled '[Bushfire safety for travellers](#)'. The Huon Valley Council Visitor Information Centres have these brochures with information visitors need to know about bushfires in Tasmania.

NOW IT'S YOUR TURN

Now is the time to make sure your home is well-prepared. Residents should also comply with Fire Permit Periods and Total Fire Ban days, remember never to leave a fire unattended, and report any fires immediately to the TFS on triple zero '000'.

Protect what matters most

Preparing your property means ember-proofing your home, removing fire hazards, building a defensible space and preparing a Bushfire Survival Plan. Information on how to do this is available on the TFS website at www.fire.tas.gov.au, and Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods also has a helpful video series exploring eight key aspects to preparing your property, available at www.bushfirereadyneighbourhoods.tas.gov.au.

Council will be releasing a 'Prepare Now for Bushfire' brochure in February 2020 which provides simple advice on the things you can do to lower your risk, including the Fire Danger Rating visual guide which will help you understand the impact of a bushfire on any given day and decide whether to leave early, or stay and defend your well-prepared property. An online version of the brochure is available on the Huon Valley Council website at www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au now.

If you run a business in the Valley, it's important to protect your livelihood by putting a Business Continuity Plan in place. Visit the Business Tasmania website at www.business.tas.gov.au to find out how.

Register your fire

You can register your fire before lighting any fire outdoors on 1800 000 699. This will help prevent unnecessary Fire Service emergency response. If your fire gets out of control, call triple zero '000' or if a TTY user call 106. More information about safely using fire and Fire Permit Periods is available on the [TFS website](#).

Stay informed

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The following is a list of key websites to monitor to stay informed:

- Fire activity near you fire.tas.gov.au
- Weather conditions and warnings <http://www.bom.gov.au/>
- TasALERT Tasmanian Government emergency information <http://alert.tas.gov.au/>
- Road closures <https://www.police.tas.gov.au/community-alerts/>
- Power outages near you <https://www.tasnetworks.com.au/outages>
- Water and sewer outages and alerts near you <https://www.taswater.com.au/News/Outages---Alerts>

Alternatively, tune into your local ABC Radio station for regular updates.

Mental health support

The full impacts of disasters can be severe and long-lasting. Heightened levels of stress and anxiety are common, as are lack of sleep and self-care. It's important to pay attention to your own mental health and look for signs that friends and family might not be okay.

For support please call [Lifeline](http://lifeline.org.au) on 13 11 14 or [Beyond Blue](http://beyondblue.org.au) on 1300 22 4636.

For more information: Mayor Bec Enders (03) 6264 0300

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