



Department of
Planning



Western
Australian
Planning
Commission

PLANNING IN BUSHFIRE PRONE AREAS

BUSHFIRE POLICY FRAMEWORK



SPP 3.7
Planning in
Bushfire
Prone Areas

Guidelines for
Planning in
Bushfire
Prone Areas

FACTSHEET

Version 3, April 2016

RESIDENTIAL OR ACCOMMODATION BUILDINGS (OTHER THAN A HOUSE)

Developing a multi-unit development, apartment, hotel
or any residential development other than a single house

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If you are proposing to build a multi-unit development, apartment, hotel or any residential development other than a single house on a site that is designated as bushfire prone on the [Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas](#), you will be required to undertake a BAL assessment before you can commence development.

DO I NEED A BAL ASSESSMENT

You will need a BAL assessment if:

- your property is located in a designated bushfire prone area; and
- your property is located in an area covered by a local planning scheme.

STEP 1: CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR PROPERTY IS LOCATED IN A DESIGNATED BUSHFIRE PRONE AREA

The bushfire planning reforms only apply to properties in designated bushfire prone areas.

You should check if your property is located within a designated bushfire prone area by finding your property on The [Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas](#). If any section of your property is shaded pink on the map then it is designated as being bushfire prone.

STEP 2: CHECK TO SEE IF YOUR PROPERTY IS LOCATED IN AN AREA COVERED BY A LOCAL PLANNING SCHEME

Development approvals are only required on land that is covered by a local planning scheme. You should check with your local government to find out if your property is covered by a local planning scheme.

If your property is in a bushfire prone area and covered by a local planning scheme, the requirement to undertake a BAL assessment will apply to you.

However, even if your property is not covered by a local planning scheme, you may still need a BAL assessment or have other bushfire building requirements under the Building Code of Australia. You can find further information on building in bushfire prone areas by visiting the [Building Commission's website](#).

WHAT IS A BAL ASSESSMENT AND WHAT DOES THE BAL RATING MEAN

A Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment is an assessment set out in *Australian Standard 3959: Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas* (AS 3959) which determines the BAL rating for a proposed building.

A BAL is one way of determining a proposed building's potential for bushfire exposure and is used to establish the construction requirements you can use to improve the protection of your building from bushfire attack.

BAL ratings include:

- **BAL-LOW**
If the BAL assessment indicates that the development will occur on a site rated BAL-LOW then there are no further bushfire planning or building requirements.
- **BAL-12.5 to BAL-29**
If the rating is between BAL-12.5 and BAL-29, your development application will need to address the bushfire protection criteria and you will need to build your development to the corresponding standard set out in the Building Code of Australia.
- **BAL-40 or BAL-FZ**
If the rating is BAL-40 or BAL-FZ then your development application will need to address the bushfire protection criteria with the aim of achieving BAL-29 or less for the site. You will then need to build to the corresponding construction standard set out in the Building Code of Australia.

If a BAL Contour Map exists for your development site, you may be able to use this in place of undertaking the BAL assessment. If one exists, you may be able to obtain a copy of the BAL Contour Map from the developer or a previous owner.

In all other circumstances a BAL assessment will need to accompany any development or building approvals.

WHO CAN DO A BAL ASSESSMENT

It is strongly recommended that you use an accredited Level 1 BAL Assessor or an accredited Bushfire Planning Practitioner to undertake a BAL assessment. The [Fire Protection Association Australia](#) will be able to provide guidance on suitably qualified consultants offering Level 1 Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) Assessor services in Western Australia. In time, a list of accredited Bushfire Planning Practitioners in Western Australia will be available.

There may be limited circumstances where the [Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas](#) identifies a property as being within a bushfire prone area but the property is no longer

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within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation. This may be where the land has been cleared to create new residential lots since the *Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas* was released. In these instances you might be able to complete a BAL assessment (basic). See the Planning in bushfire prone areas BAL assessment (basic) fact sheet for further details.

DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to undertaking a BAL assessment, your development application should incorporate the bushfire protection criteria requirements. This may be in the form of a Bushfire Management Plan. Development applications in areas of BAL-12.5 to BAL-29 may be approved. Development applications in areas of BAL-40 or BAL-Flame Zone (FZ) will not be supported in most instances.

Vulnerable land uses (such as hotels, where persons may be less able to respond in a bushfire emergency) have additional requirements. If your proposed development involves a vulnerable land use, the Bushfire Management Plan that accompanies your development application should be jointly endorsed by the relevant local government and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Development applications should include an emergency evacuation plan for proposed occupants. It is also recommended that you consider using the services of a suitably qualified Fire Engineer when you are designing your proposed building. Bushfire construction standards under the Building Code of Australia may also apply.

SPECIAL CONTROL AREAS

You should consult your local government if your proposed development is located in any of the following local government areas - City of Armadale, City of Busselton, City of Cockburn, Shire of Mundaring and Shire of Kalamunda. These local governments have Special Control Areas relating to bushfire that may have additional requirements.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You can find further information about the bushfire planning reforms and if they affect you by visiting the Department of Planning's website www.planning.wa.gov.au/bushfire and using the 'What do I need to do' tool.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find further information about when a BAL assessment is required by visiting the Department of Planning's website www.planning.wa.gov.au/bushfire.

You can also find information on building in bushfire prone areas by visiting the Building Commission's website www.commerce.wa.gov.au/building-commission or by contacting your local government.

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