



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

BAL ASSESSMENT (BASIC)

A simplified process to determine the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) for a proposed building on a site that is not within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation

PLANNING IN BUSHFIRE PRONE AREAS

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If you are proposing to build on a site that is designated as bushfire prone on the *Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas* and the building is:

- a single house or ancillary dwelling (e.g. granny flat) on a site with a total area of 1,100m² or greater;
- another habitable building - a building where people may live, work, study, or be entertained (e.g. office or school); or
- another building specified by a local government;
- you will be required to undertake a BAL assessment before you can commence development.

If the site is NOT within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation, a BAL assessment (basic) may be used in place of a BAL assessment.

WHAT IS A BAL ASSESSMENT (BASIC)

A **Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment (basic)** is a simplified process for determining the BAL for a proposed building that has a low risk of bushfire exposure because it is not within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation. A BAL assessment (basic) is based on the principles contained within the *Australian Standard 3959 Construction of Buildings in Bushfire-Prone Areas* (AS 3959).

If you are a landowner/proponent, developer or builder proposing to develop one of the buildings listed above (e.g. a single house on a site equal to or greater than 1,100m²) on a site in a designated bushfire prone area, you may use a BAL assessment (basic) in place of a BAL assessment if:

- your site and the surrounding area has been cleared since the latest release of the *Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas* was published so that it no longer contains bushfire prone vegetation, and is not within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation; or
- the subject land is large enough to locate the proposed building so that the building envelope is not within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation.

BAL ASSESSMENT (BASIC) PROCESS

The BAL assessment (basic) process contains five simple steps.

Complete a **BAL assessment (basic) report** using the information provided at each step of the following process.

STEP 1: DETERMINE THE FIRE DANGER INDEX FOR YOUR SITE

The first step is to determine the Fire Danger Index (FDI) for your site. The FDI for all of Western Australia is 80.

Step 1. Fire Danger Index (FDI): INSERT 80

STEP 2: DETERMINE IF THERE IS BUSHFIRE PRONE VEGETATION NEAR THE PROPOSED BUILDING

The second step is to determine if there is bushfire prone vegetation (i.e. classified vegetation) within 100 metres of the proposed building.

Bushfire prone vegetation includes most types of vegetation including trees and shrubs and unmanaged grasses. However, bushfire prone vegetation does **not** include:

- low threat vegetation (i.e. managed grassland, maintained/mowed lawns, golf courses, public recreation reserves and parklands, vineyards, orchards, cultivated gardens, commercial nurseries, nature strips and windbreaks); and
- non-vegetated areas (i.e. waterways, roads, footpaths, buildings or rock outcrops).

If there is only low threat vegetation or non-vegetated areas in the 100 metre area surrounding the proposed building, you do not have any bushfire prone vegetation within 100 metres of the proposed building.

If there is still bushfire prone vegetation in the 100 metre area surrounding the proposed building, then you should not undertake a BAL assessment (basic). If this applies to you, you should cease this process and engage an accredited Level 1 BAL Assessor or Bushfire Planning Practitioner to undertake a BAL assessment.

Step 2. Bushfire prone vegetation: INSERT NIL

STEP 3: DETERMINE THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THE PROPOSED BUILDING AND BUSHFIRE PRONE VEGETATION

The third step is to determine the horizontal distance between the proposed building and the nearest bushfire prone vegetation in the area surrounding the proposed building.

If your site is flat, it is only the bushfire prone vegetation that is within 100 metres of the proposed building that is relevant. Therefore if your site is clear, and there is obviously more than 100 metres between the proposed building and the nearest bushfire prone vegetation, then a BAL assessment (basic) may be undertaken.

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BAL assessment (BASIC)

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However, if your site is sloping, there should be more than 110 metres between the proposed building and the nearest bushfire prone vegetation. This is because on sloping land the measured distance would be slightly more than horizontal distance. If your site is extremely steep you may need to seek professional assistance to determine the horizontal distance.

Where the distance between the proposed building and the bushfire prone vegetation is **not** obviously more than 100 metres on flat land or 110 metres on sloping land you should measure:

- the distance from where the external walls of your proposed building will be to the base of the bushfire prone vegetation (not the canopy); or
- for a part of the building that has no wall (i.e. car port, verandah, deck, landing, ramp) the distance from the supporting posts/columns to the base of the bushfire prone vegetation.

If the distance between the proposed building and the bushfire prone vegetation is less than 100 metres on flat land or less than 110 metres on sloping land, you should not undertake a BAL assessment (basic). If this applies to you, you should cease this process and engage an accredited Level 1 BAL Assessor or Bushfire Planning Practitioner to undertake a BAL assessment.

Step 3. Distance between the proposed building and bushfire prone vegetation is more than 100 metres on flat land and more than 110 metres on sloping land: INSERT YES

STEP 4: DETERMINE THE SLOPE OF THE LAND UNDER BUSHFIRE PRONE VEGETATION

The fourth step is to determine the slope of the land under the bushfire prone vegetation within 100 metres of your site.

If the horizontal distance between the proposed building and the nearest bushfire prone vegetation is more than 100 metres, the slope of the land does not need to be calculated.

Step 4. Slope of the land under bushfire prone vegetation: INSERT N/A

STEP 5 – DETERMINE THE BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL (BAL)

The fifth step is to determine the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) for the proposed building.

If the following apply to you:

1. FDI is 80;
2. Bushfire prone vegetation is NIL;
3. Distance between the proposed building and bushfire prone vegetation is more than 100 metres on flat land or more than 110 metres on sloping land; and
4. Slope of the land under bushfire prone vegetation is N/A;

then the proposed building will be classified at the lowest BAL (BAL-LOW).

The risk associated with BAL-LOW is considered to be very low. If the proposed building is BAL-LOW, the policy measures of *State Planning Policy 3.7: Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas* do not apply to you and there is insufficient risk to warrant specific bushfire construction requirements.

You should complete the **BAL assessment (basic) report** using the information found at each step of this process. You should submit your BAL assessment (basic) report as part of your application for development approval and/or to demonstrate compliance with the Building Code of Australia requirements for your proposed building permit.

Supporting information such as photos and aerial photography must also be submitted with the BAL assessment (basic) as evidence that your site is not within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation.

Where the decision-maker and/or registered building surveyor is satisfied that the site is not within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation, they may accept your BAL assessment (basic) in place of a BAL assessment.

However, if they are not satisfied with the accuracy of your BAL assessment (basic) (i.e. they believe that your site is within 100 metres of bushfire prone vegetation) then you should engage an accredited Level 1 BAL Assessor or Bushfire Planning Practitioner to undertake a BAL assessment.

Step 5. Bushfire Attack Level (BAL): INSERT BAL-LOW

FURTHER INFORMATION

You can find a copy of the BAL assessment (basic) report [here](#).

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.

© Western Australian Planning Commission

Published by the
Western Australian Planning Commission
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Published January 2016

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