



# Floods, storms and landslides after bushfires

## *What happens after bushfires?*

Bushfires can have long-lasting impacts on the natural environment, increasing the dangers from floods and storms, and the chance of landslides.

### **Floods**

- Plants help to absorb water and reduce runoff. In burnt areas where there are less plants, more water will flow into riverbeds and may pool in low-lying areas, causing flash flooding.
- Flash floods can happen quickly, without warning. They can be very deep, rise quickly and move fast. Floodwater may also carry dangerous boulders, branches and trees.
- Flash flooding may damage and wash away roads and bridges, and erode riverbeds, gullies and banks.

### **Storms**

- Trees that have been damaged by heat or fire may be unstable and more likely to fall when it is windy or wet.
- Storms may also cause flooding and flash flooding due to increased runoff in locations that would normally not flood.

### **Landslides**

- Plants and tree roots help to stop landslides from happening by absorbing water and holding the ground together.
- After bushfires, rain and the loss of plants and roots can make the ground soft and heavy, leading to a greater chance of landslides.
- Landslides can carry debris such as boulders and trees downhill, and cause serious damage to buildings.
- They can be extremely dangerous to anyone on or below the affected area.
- The risk of a landslide occurring in a burnt area depends on how steep the land is, the number of remaining trees to support the land, the soil composition, and the structure of the rocks below the surface.

## How long will the effects last?

- The impacts on the natural environment after a bushfire can last anywhere from two to five years, depending on the intensity of the fire, how quickly plants regrow and whether any floods or storms happened afterwards.

## Stay safe

- Avoid walking in burnt areas or along river banks and gullies during and immediately after rainfall.
- Stay safe by never entering floodwater. It can take just 15 cm of water to float a car.
- Do not drive in dangerous conditions, including during storms and heavy rain. Follow any road signs and warnings, including detours.
- Access emergency information through the VicEmergency app, website and hotline (1800 226 226), or dial in to emergency broadcasters: ABC Local Radio, designated commercial radio and SKY NEWS TV.

## In an emergency

### Victoria State Emergency Service

Flood and storm assistance  
132 500

### Triple Zero

Life threatening medical and emergency assistance  
000



### *Did you know?*

If you live in a bushfire-affected area your water source could become contaminated from debris, ash, small dead animals or aerial fire retardants.

To learn more about water safety, visit:  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/bushfires-and-water-tanks](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/bushfires-and-water-tanks)

## What else can I do?

- Think about how bushfires might affect you, your property, and surroundings. Areas most likely to be impacted are located downhill and downstream from burnt areas.
- Have an arborist or qualified professional inspect any fire damaged trees nearby.
- If you are in low-lying land or near a creek or river, be aware of the risk of flooding and landslides during or after rainfall.
- Look out for blocked waterways and redirected water if you are located near a creek or river.
- Stay informed of warnings and emergencies at: [emergency.vic.gov.au](http://emergency.vic.gov.au).
- For more information on floods, storms and landslides, visit: [ses.vic.gov.au](http://ses.vic.gov.au).



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