

News

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Action stations: Firies on front foot as 'perfect storm' threatens

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The Tasmania Fire Service fears a horror bushfire season lies ahead.

Source: News Limited

AN aggressive statewide fuel-reduction program and a groundbreaking community education program is under way as the Tasmania Fire Service braces for the "perfect storm" of bushfire conditions expected this summer.

A forecast of a hotter and drier summer than usual and conditions similar to those before the devastating 1967 Black Tuesday fires, which claimed 62 lives and destroyed 1400 homes, have fire authorities on high alert.

Locals have told fire service community development co-ordinator Peter Middleton that the conditions leading into this summer are similar to those before the '67 fires, which came after a hot summer followed a cold dry winter.

Be The First To Respond



TFS community development co-ordinator Peter Middleton.

Source: News Corp Australia

"We have had a cold winter with not much rain and an El Nino weather pattern is on its way, leading to potential drier conditions on the East Coast," Mr Middleton said.

In a state first, landowners have been taught how to conduct their own fuel-reduction programs, and fire-prone communities have been exposed to intensive consultation and education in the Bushfire Ready Neighbourhoods program.

The southern Australia Seasonal Bushfire Outlook for 2015-16 has predicted an "above normal" bushfire risk for a large part of the East Coast from St Helens southward across the Fingal Valley, the North and Southern Midlands and the Eastern Tiers down to Sorell and the Forestier Peninsula.

The report says the likelihood of an early fire season is high but will depend on the amount of spring rain in the eastern half of the state. It also says fires could burn for much longer because of the long-term lack of rain and the deep level of dryness right across Tasmania.



Freycinet Vineyard livestock manager Bruce Bresnehan takes part in a burn-off on the property.

Picture: KIM EISZELE

Source: News Corp Australia

Four TFS community development officers have been working in communities identified as high risk – such as South Hobart, Lenah Valley, Leslie Vale, Dulcot, Lachlan and the Tasman Peninsula – to help them become bushfire-ready.

“We take our lead from the communities and listen to what works for them,” Mr Middleton said.

The officers have conducted practice field days and property assessments linked to community events like the Garage Sale Trail, where they can spread the message to large audiences.

Mr Middleton said now was the time for people to get their Bushfire Readiness plans and Bush Fire Survival plans ready.

“Make sure you’ve got Plan B and C ready in case you get caught,” he said.

“Check and test your equipment and fundamental to readiness is clothing.

“Ask yourself what are you going to wear? All your skin should be covered with material that is less flammable, like cotton.

“Footwear is really important – thongs are a no-no, boots are best.”

Mr Middleton said psychological preparedness was one of the biggest factors that got overlooked when preparing for bushfires.

“Are you prepared to deal with the psychological side?” he said.

“A bushfire is a very stressful thing – are you physically able to handle the stress and anxiety that goes with a bushfire?”

