

# APPROVED: Public Information Document - January 2019 Bushfires

**Friday 25 January 2019 - 11:25am**

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## 1 Hashtag

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#Tasfires

## 2 How to access information about fires

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Visit the Tasmania Fire Service website for current Bushfire Warning Messages for fires affecting the State - [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au) or call the Fire Information Line on 1800 000 699.

Keep updated by listening to ABC local radio.

If any fire activity is causing you concern, please telephone Triple Zero (000).

## 3 How to access information on road closures

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For information on current road closures, please visit Tasmania Police website at <http://www.police.tas.gov.au/community-alerts>

Motorists, please avoid driving through smoke affected areas.

If you have to travel, please drive to the conditions with your headlights turned on, obey all road closures and be aware of reduced speed limits.

## 4 Accessing whole-of-government information via TasALERT website

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TasALERT is the Tasmanian Government's official emergency information website.

If you are affected by the fires in Tasmania you can access all emergency information from the Tasmanian Government in one place on the TasALERT website [www.tasalert.com](http://www.tasalert.com)

Or follow TasALERT on social media by searching 'TasALERT' on Facebook and '@TasALERT' on Twitter.

You must not report an emergency or seek assistance through the TasALERT website or social media channels. You must call Triple Zero (000).

## 5 Stay away from bushfire affected areas

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Tasmania Police requires members of the public to stay away from areas affected by bushfires this Australia Day long weekend and to obey road closures. Please reconsider non-essential travel and avoid the affected Central Highlands or Huon areas in particular.

There are a number of uncontrolled bushfires burning particularly in the Central Highlands and Huon Valley. There is a real risk that communities and properties will be affected.

Stay up-to-date about the current fire situation by tuning in to ABC Radio and checking the TFS website [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au) and TasALERT [www.tasalert.com](http://www.tasalert.com)

For up-to-date information about road closures, visit <https://www.police.tas.gov.au/community-alerts/>

## 6 Total Fire Ban Australia Day long weekend

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A statewide Total Fire Ban has been declared by Tasmania Fire Service from 2am on Thursday 24 January 2019 until 2am on Monday 28 January 2019.

No fires can be lit in the open air for any purpose. Please read the following information to check how the Total Fire Ban may affect your long weekend.

Not permitted during a Total Fire Ban:

- all BBQs, portable stoves, pizza ovens or other cooking devices that use wood, charcoal, heat beads or other solid or liquid fuel;
- grinding, welding and cutting metal in the open;
- campfires;
- incinerators;
- burning heaps; and
- burning land

Permitted during a Total Fire Ban:

- electric and gas BBQs and stoves – as long as they are cleared of flammable material for at least one metre; and
- the use of machinery – as long as operators comply with the Tasmania Fire Service “Machinery Operations Guidelines” available at [fire.tas.gov.au](http://fire.tas.gov.au).

The occupier of the land where a fire occurs must immediately:

- Take steps to extinguish the fire or prevent it from spreading; and
- Report the fire to Tasmania Fire service by calling Triple Zero (000).

Please note, no fire permits will be issued during the Total Fire Ban and all existing fire permits are automatically suspended.

For more information, visit [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au)

For information regarding water usage during a day of Total Fire Ban please refer to [www.taswater.com.au](http://www.taswater.com.au)

## 7 Public health messages

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Bushfire and weather conditions in Tasmania over the coming weeks will result in periods of smoky conditions.

People in smoke-affected areas should take particular care of themselves, their family and friends at outdoor events this Australia Day long weekend.

Pregnant women, infants and children, elderly persons, smokers, and people with chronic medical conditions (especially lung and heart conditions) are more sensitive to the effects of smoke.

If you can see and smell smoke, follow your asthma action plan or plan to manage flare-ups of other health conditions. This may mean staying indoors.

If you're planning an outdoor event this weekend, consider moving it indoors or somewhere away from bushfire smoke if it is very smoky.

The following is key public health advice about managing smoky conditions:

- Avoid physical activity outdoors when it is smoky.
- Close doors and windows when it is smoky; air the house when it clears.
- Switch home air conditioners to 'recycle' or 'recirculate'.
- Consider visiting a nearby air conditioned space such as a shopping centre, library or cinema.

The hot weather expected throughout much of the state on Friday can also pose an additional risk to vulnerable people. Steps to stay safe in smoky conditions can also help protect from heat illness, as well as heeding the following advice:

- If you do go outside, wear long-sleeved clothing, sunglasses, a wide-brimmed hat and plenty of broad-spectrum sunscreen (minimum SPF30+).
- Drink plenty of water, even if you don't feel thirsty.
- Never leave anyone in a car in the sun on a hot day.

- Make sure your pets are out of the sun and have plenty of cool water to drink, and don't exercise them in the heat.

If you have chest pain, difficulty breathing, or other symptoms related to the smoke or heat, get urgent medical care. In an emergency call 000.

Useful links

-Smoke and health information:

[www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air/bushfire\\_smoke](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air/bushfire_smoke)

-Hot weather and health information:

[www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing\\_health\\_alerts/extreme\\_heat](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/standing_health_alerts/extreme_heat)

-You can monitor air quality in your area at:

[www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/publichealth/alerts/air)

## 8 Keeping rainwater tanks safe in bushfire affected areas

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Bushfires generate large amounts of ash and debris that can contaminate your rainwater supplies.

Although ash and debris from burnt vegetation in rainwater does not represent a health risk, it can affect the colour, clarity and taste of rainwater.

However, there may be other potentially more harmful contaminants, including dead animals and trace chemical residues from burnt treated timber present.

**If the rainwater smells, tastes or looks unusual, assume it is contaminated and don't drink it.**

### *8.1 Reducing the risk of contamination*

- Check your roof and guttering for dead animals. If it is safe, remove them as soon as possible to avoid contaminants getting flushed into the tank by the next rain.
- If safe and possible, remove ash and debris from the roof and gutters by thoroughly hosing off the roof catchment area if water is available.
- First flush devices or diverters are recommended as a routine installation. These operate between the roof and the tank to prevent ash and other debris from entering the tank and contaminating the water.
- Do not collect this flush water or the first flush of rainwater after the bushfire. You may need to manually divert quite a lot of wash-down water if hosing off the roof, by fully opening the end of the device or propping the diverter to one side.

- If you do not have a first flush diverter, disconnect the inlet from the roof to the tank so the wash-down water runs to waste until the ash and debris is removed.

### 8.2 *Removing contamination*

- If your tank inlet is not sealed, animals may enter the tank and drown. Remove dead animals from your tank (wear rubber gloves) and empty the tank.
- If you need to remove other significant contamination, drain the tank.
- You may then allow the tank to refill with rainwater, or refill it with water sourced from a Council registered water carter (look under 'Water Cartage' in the Yellow Pages).
- Public Health Services recommends that the water used to re-fill the tank be disinfected. For guidance on managing rainwater tanks and on disinfecting the replacement water in your tank, refer to the 2010 enHealth document [Guidance on use of rainwater tanks](#).
- If draining and cleaning the tank is not possible in the short-term, you can use the water for purposes other than drinking, eg watering vegetation, washing and toilet flushing.

### 8.3 *Fire retardants and foams*

- Fire retardants and foams may be present on your roof if they were used to fight the fire at your property. If fire retardant has entered your tank, do not drink the water and do not give it to pets to drink. The water can still be used for fire-fighting and irrigating your garden. If fire retardant has landed on your property or car, remove it with water by scrubbing.

## 9 Track closures

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Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service have closed a number of tracks due to high fire danger. Closures or re-openings can sometimes happen at short notice, so for the latest track closures please visit the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service Facebook page or website: [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au)

## 10 Evacuation advice

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### 10.1 *How will I know if I need to evacuate?*

- If you need to evacuate to a safer place, public announcements will be issued through ABC local radio and television, TasFire website [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au) and [www.tasalert.com](http://www.tasalert.com).
- An emergency warning **SMS** text message may be sent to telephones within the evacuation area but do not wait to receive a text message if you see or hear another announcement.

- Tasmania Police and emergency services personnel will **doorknock** in the area to inform residents of the need to evacuate.

## 10.2 **What do I do if an evacuation is ordered?**

- If you are directed to evacuate your property, take only your **emergency kit**, secure your property and leave without delay. **If you have a car**, drive carefully and obey all road signs and directions from Tasmania Police and emergency services personnel.
- TFS are updating evacuation info on their website at: <http://www.fire.tas.gov.au/Show?pageld=colCurrentBushfires>.
- For information on current road closures, visit the Tasmania Police website: <http://www.police.tas.gov.au/community-alerts/>.

### 10.2.1 **Huonville evacuation information:**

- **If you do not drive or have access to a car**, go to the **Heritage Park** assembly area for **bus transport to Huonville**. Heritage Park is located near the intersection of Arve and School Roads (formal address is 7 Brady Street).
- **If you are incapacitated and unable to safely make your way to the park, advise Tasmania Police personnel or contact SES on 132 500.**
- If you can't find temporary accommodation with family or friends, please advise support personnel when you arrive at the **Huonville Evacuation Centre** (PCYC, Wilmot Road, Huonville).

#### 10.2.1.1 **Can I take my pet?**

- If you need to take the bus or stay at an Evacuation Centre, you may take your pet.
- Pet shelter will be available at the Huonville Showgrounds but you must stay there with your pet.
- If you have a pet crate, make sure you bring it with you.

#### 10.2.1.2 **What about my horse (or other large domestic animals)?**

- Horses and other large domestic animals can be accommodated at the Ranelagh Showgrounds.
- You will need to take feed with you and you must stay there to care for your animals.
- Veterinary support will be available on-site.

#### 10.2.1.3 **What to do after an evacuation**

- You must not return home until authorities tell you it is safe.
- Be aware of road hazards, such as trees or power lines on the road, damaged roads and bridges, or crews working on clean-up and repairs.

- If your property is affected:
  - do not turn on gas and electricity until you are sure it is safe to do so
  - have all wiring, gas and electrical equipment tested by an electrician
  - wear strong boots, gloves and other protective clothing during clean-up.

## 11 Tourism

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### 11.1 Messages for travellers

There is currently a Total Fire Ban in place for the whole of Tasmania until Monday 28 January, with some areas currently affected by fire and smoke.

- Travellers to Tasmania are advised to keep up to date on areas that may be affected and avoid non-essential travel to those locations.
- View the [TasALERT](#) website or listen to [ABC local radio](#) for community alerts or warnings.
- The majority of visitor destinations and attractions throughout Tasmania are not impacted by the fires and are safe to visit, but it is important that you check yourself before setting out.
- There are 18 accredited Tasmanian Visitor Information Network (TVIN) centres around the state, located here: <https://www.startwithi.com.au/centres/>.
- TVIN staff can provide advice to visitors on up to date and current warnings, road or track closures.
- They can also assist visitors to change their itineraries and can help find available accommodation should they need to change their plans.

### 11.2 Messages for tourism operators

Tourism operators should review their safety plans and stay up to date with the latest information.

Operators receiving enquiries from visitors should direct them to:

- [TasALERT](#) website for consistent and current emergency information and warnings
- [ABC local radio](#) for community alerts and emergency information, useful if on the road or outside internet access
- An accredited [TVIN](#) centre if they require assistance to change travel plans.
- The Parks and Wildlife [Facebook page](#) or [website](#) for the latest track, campsite and reserve closure information.

### 11.3 *Tourism accommodation availability*

- The Tourism Industry Council of Tasmania is currently compiling a list of accommodation availability statewide to provide a daily update to the TVIN centres and the Parks and Wildlife Service.
- This will enable them to assist visitors should the fires affect their plans and they need accommodation quickly.
- It is just a precautionary measure should it be required, operators should NOT hold rooms.
- If they have availability Thursday 24 January to Sunday 27 January please contact TICT via email [info@tict.com.au](mailto:info@tict.com.au) detailing what dates, number of rooms and room configurations available.

### 11.4 *Tourism businesses affected by fire*

If your business has been impacted by the current bushfires, please contact Business Tasmania on 1800 440 026.

Business Tasmania provides a range of support and assistance to the business community. In the event of a crisis or emergency, Business Tasmania is the central point of contact for businesses to register their details and seek assistance.

## 12 Donations

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While the goodwill and generosity of the community is very much appreciated, donated goods and assistance are not required at this stage.

Currently there is no public appeal for donations, nor any need to donate bottles of water or food to fire fighters. However, this situation may change in the future, so please keep informed through TasALERT [www.tasalert.com](http://www.tasalert.com) for any updates.

## 13 Volunteering

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If you're thinking about volunteering to help with the current fires, please be aware that only trained volunteers and emergency service workers will be able to assist in affected areas.

However, additional volunteers may be required to help with recovery efforts when it is deemed safe.

The best way you can help is to register through Volunteering Tasmania's online system. **EV CREW (Emergency Volunteering - Community Response to Extreme**

**Weather**) service will match your skills, availability and location with the needs of organisations supporting recovery efforts.

Volunteering Tasmania will contact you if and when your specific skills are needed, which may be days or even weeks after an emergency occurs.

If you would like to find out more about what the **EV CREW** do, or to register your interest in becoming an Emergency Volunteer, click on this link <https://emergencyvolunteering.com.au/tas/volunteering/what-does-the-emergency-volunteering-crew-service-do>

#### 14 Department of Education site closures (libraries, child and family centres and schools)

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There will be a number of Department Of Education sites **closed** on Friday 25 January due to the predicted high levels of fire danger in some areas of the state. This includes Child and Family Centres, Libraries and Schools (to staff only). Please see the up to date information at the following link: <https://www.education.tas.gov.au/about-us/alerts/>

#### 15 Power outage safety and preparation during bushfires

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TasNetworks aims to deliver a safe and reliable electricity supply, however unexpected events such as bushfires can cause extended power outages.

If your power goes out equipment such as electric water pumps cannot be used. Because of this, you should not rely on power supply as part of your bushfire survival plan.

Powerlines and poles are vulnerable to bushfires because they run through all parts of Tasmania's rural landscape, including in fire-prone areas.

It is very possible that powerlines in the path of a bushfire may be damaged or destroyed as a result of bushfires.

TasNetworks takes extra precautions when operating the electricity network on Total Fire Ban Days. These precautions include altering our processes to ensure power does not automatically restore following a fault. As this process involves a physical inspection of reported outages, it may take longer for outages to be restored.

Make sure mobile phones and other essential electronic devices are fully charged and keep up to date with current outages by following TasNetworks on Facebook or visiting [www.tasnetworks.com.au](http://www.tasnetworks.com.au)

## 16 Information for businesses

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Business Tasmania is collecting details of affected businesses and will provide you with updates as new information is released.

Please contact Business Tasmania on 1800 440 026 to register your details to keep informed of assistance provided by government.

Business Tasmania is a Tasmanian Government service which provides a range of support and assistance to the business community.

Bushfire preparation resources for small businesses are available on the Business Tasmania website at [https://www.business.tas.gov.au/preparing\\_for\\_disasters/tools-and-checklists/checklist - bushfires](https://www.business.tas.gov.au/preparing_for_disasters/tools-and-checklists/checklist_-_bushfires)

During an emergency, keep yourself, your staff and guests updated by checking the TasALERT website at [www.tasalert.com](http://www.tasalert.com) and the Tasmania Fire Service website at [www.fire.tas.gov.au](http://www.fire.tas.gov.au) and by listening to ABC local radio.

## 17 Water conservation

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It is critical to maintain the availability of water for firefighting and fire prevention.

TasWater encourages all Tasmanians, even in areas not currently affected by fires, to conserve water to make sure water is available in the system to protect properties and life.

Reduce water use by:

- Turning off all sprinkler systems, including automatic sprinkler systems.
- Where possible, restricting hose use to essential purposes such as firefighting or prevention.
- Rescheduling chores that require water, such as watering plants, washing windows or vehicles, to a day that isn't a Total Fire Ban.

TasWater has procedures in place in the event of power outages at water treatment plants and continues to monitor water systems and treatment plants via remote data systems.

Information on water use during a fire ban: [www.taswater.com.au/fireban](http://www.taswater.com.au/fireban)

Information on water conservation: [www.taswater.com.au/waterwise](http://www.taswater.com.au/waterwise)