

## Bushfires and smoke

### Current fire incidents

More than 600 homes have been destroyed by bush fires and six lives lost this season. Check the [Rural Fire Service Fires Near Me](#) website for current fire incidents. You can also check on the [RFS Facebook page](#), [RFS Twitter](#) and [ABC local radio](#).

The RFS has advice about preparing for a bush fire. Make sure you know what you will do before, during and after a fire.

### Poor air quality from smoke

Smoke from fires across the state has created poor air quality in many areas. Fine particles in smoke can make breathing difficult, worsen existing lung and heart conditions, and cause irritation and allergic reactions in your eyes, nose and throat.

Advice from the Department of Health is for people with conditions like asthma, emphysema and angina to avoid outdoor physical activity when there's smoke around. People with asthma should follow their Asthma Action Plan and have their relieving medication with them. Call Triple Zero in case of emergency. Current air quality is on the [NSW Air Quality](#) website.

### Fire retardants

The Department of Health also has a new page on [fire retardants](#). This includes information on how fire retardants work and their effects on human health.

“The fire retardants currently used in Australia are of low toxicity. Testing shows these chemicals can produce minor irritant effects before they are mixed with water. The concentrated powder may cause minor respiratory irritation to workers who are handling it. Gels can irritate eyes, airways and the skin. Workers are required to wear gloves, goggles and dust masks when handling the powder.

“Risk assessments carried out in the United States and in Victoria demonstrated that the risk of health effects was very low, even to people who are accidentally exposed to the fire retardants during their application. The health risk from drinking rain water contaminated with fire retardants is also low, but the water may taste and smell unpleasant and consumption should be avoided”.

