You may have seen the Fire Danger Rating board next to your local CFA, or by the side of the road when you drive in the country, but what does it mean?

The Fire Danger Rating helps you to understand the risk of bushfire in that specific area today.

The Fire Danger Rating tells you how dangerous a fire would be if one started.

Your risk of bushfire varies depending on where you live. For example, if you live near grassland,

amongst dense bush, near the beach with plenty of coastal scrub, or where the suburbs meet the bush.

Your risk of bushfire also depends on whether you are at home or driving on the freeway.

If your life is at risk from bushfire, your safest option is to leave early.

Do not stay and defend unless you have completed the specific protocol from the CFA.

Decide what will be your trigger to leave early.

For example, I live in the country amongst dense bush. If a bushfire starts in my area, I know it will spread quickly and be difficult to control. It will not be safe and I will be at risk of injury or death.

If there is an Extreme Fire Danger Rating for my area, and the weather conditions are hot, dry and windy, I will pack up and leave that morning or the night before.

The Fire Danger Rating is my trigger to leave.

I will explain each rating and what they mean.

The Low-Moderate Fire Danger Rating is green.

The High Fire Danger Rating is blue.

The Very High Fire Danger Rating is yellow.

If a fire begins on a Low, High or Very High risk day, it can most likely be controlled. On these days, you need to monitor your local weather conditions. Notice how strong the wind is, the direction of the wind and how it changes. Notice any increase in temperature over the last few days and today.

Stay alert to any fires in your area, for example, in the next town. Even if the fire is quickly brought under control, there is still a risk and you should continue to monitor conditions.

Observe your local weather conditions and stay updated with information. Talk to your neighbours, and make sure you are aware of your surroundings. If you receive updated information, such as the fire spreading to another nearby town, you may need to be ready to leave.

The Severe Fire Danger Rating is orange.

If a fire starts and takes hold, it may spread quickly and be uncontrollable. Expect hot, dry and possibly windy weather conditions. Properties and homes may be damaged. Injury and death are possible.

Your actions on a Severe risk day are the same as for Low, High and Very High risk days.

Monitor your local weather conditions. Stay updated with information. If your home is well-prepared before the summer season, if you have learned how to actively defend your property against fire and radiant heat, and if you have followed advice from the CFA, an actively defended home may provide safety. You need to ensure you are physically fit, and even then there is a significant risk if you stay and defend your property. Remember that staying and defending is a serious decision. Any decision to stay and defend should be made carefully. Watch the other video and talk to your local CFA station for more information about how to stay and defend.

If you and your property are not well prepared, leaving early that morning or the night before is your safest option.

The Extreme Fire Danger Rating is red.

A fire that begins on an Extreme risk day will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving.

Expect hot, dry and windy weather conditions. Expect ember attacks and spot fires in the area.

Expect damage to homes and properties. Injury and death are possible. Fires on an Extreme risk day will be worse than on a Severe risk day, and your life will be at risk.

Your safest option is to leave early that morning or the night before an Extreme risk day. Deciding to stay and defend on an Extreme risk day is serious. It is possible only if your home is well prepared, if you know how to actively defend your property against fire and radiant heat, if you have discussed your decision with the CFA and followed their advice, and if your home is built to the correct specifications to withstand bushfire. For example, your windows must be of a specific thickness,

and the structural frame must be steel not wood. Homes built to withstand bushfire are expensive.

If you live in a high-risk area and your home is not well prepared, your safest option on an Extreme fire risk day is to leave early.

The Code Red Fire Danger Rating is red with black stripes.

Houses are not built to withstand fires in these conditions. People may not survive fires in these conditions. Code Red days are not a regular occurrence, so if you see there is a Code Red rating, it is important and you must act. These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire.

If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and come from many directions. Homes will be destroyed.

Code Red conditions are the same as Black Saturday.

No-one can control a fire that begins in Code Red conditions. If a fire begins in these conditions, many people and animals could be injured or killed. It is impossible to actively defend your home in Code Red conditions; it is not safe.

The safest place to be on a Code Red day is far away from high-risk areas. You need to be far away from high-risk areas such as bush, grassland or coastal scrub.

If a Code Red is forecast for tomorrow, pack up and leave the night before or early in the morning. Do not wait to be told to leave. Do not wait and see.

If you leave too late, you may be stuck on the road in extremely dangerous conditions. You may be at risk from falling trees or bushfire as you drive.

Please understand the risk of bushfire in your area.

Monitor your local weather conditions, and make sure you understand each Fire Danger Rating.

Know which Fire Danger Rating is your trigger to leave early. For example, I live amongst dense bush. If there is an Extreme risk day, I will leave my area to stay in Melbourne with family or friends.

Do not wait for someone to tell you to leave.

If there is no Fire Danger Rating board in your area, check the Fire Danger Rating for your area online, via the Fire Ready app, or ask your neighbours or friends. It is your responsibility to find out the Fire Danger Rating for today. You must know for yourself.

Consider the safety of yourself, your family and friends. Your safety is important.