After a bushfire, the Victorian emergency services will work together to make the bushfire-affected area safe again. For example, they will close roads if necessary. You may see different personnel working together, such as from the CFA and Victoria Police.

Do not immediately try to access your home after a bushfire. Wait until the emergency services have confirmed it is safe to return and that you can access your home. Your area may still be dangerous.

If you re-enter before receiving the all clear, you may risk injury or causing an accident. When the roads re-open and you can get through, you will be able to return home and inspect your property.

You may feel some emotional turmoil when you return home. It may take time for your life to return to normal.

I will share my experience of Black Saturday.

After the fires had passed through my area, I returned home to inspect my property. It looked like a war zone, like a bomb had flattened the place. All the trees were dead or burnt and many homes were destroyed.

There were no animals. Many animal carcasses could be seen in the area.

Some small fires were still burning.

Everything looked awful and sad.

There was no mobile phone reception, no electricity, no water and no food. The roads were covered with dead trees and burnt out cars.

When I saw my neighbours, they told me who survived and who perished.

If you are affected by bushfire and lose your home or work place, you may experience grief at the loss of things important to you. It can be a difficult time of sadness and other emotions. You may be emotionally affected by the news and experiences of other people. It can take a long time to get your life back on track again.

Bushfire affects everyone differently. There is no right or wrong way to feel and no time limit on what you feel. You may experience many different emotions, including sadness, anger, depression, anxiety or other emotions. You may feel guilty, for example if your house is still standing while others lost their home, or if you rebuild your house while others must make do with their old damaged home, or if you survived while others did not.

Your emotions may change over time. It is okay not to feel okay. This is a normal response.

It takes time to process the effects of a bushfire. Seek help when you need it, don't try to hold it in.

Seek help from your family, friends, neighbours, colleagues, counsellor and your doctor. Talk to people about how you feel.

It can be difficult to take care of family and think about work while you are dealing with this experience.

You may need to deal with your insurance company, especially if they need to inspect your property. You may need to talk with your bank about your financial situation. You may also have a lot of cleaning up to do around your property. You may need to hire professionals to assist with cleaning up your property, for example, if your home contains asbestos.

Stay alert to the risk from looters who may take the opportunity to steal from your property. Be aware that people from out of town may come to sticky-beak at the damage.

Emergency Relief Centres may be established to provide services to people affected by the bushfire.

They will offer personal support, such as financial assistance or temporary accommodation,

and other services such as psychological support. Funding for Emergency Relief Centres may come from the Government, local Council or community groups.

When you arrive at an Emergency Relief Centre, someone from the Red Cross or a volunteer will meet with you. They will work out what support is required for your individual circumstances.

They will refer you to the appropriate support services, or provide some form of financial support.

Be aware that Emergency Relief Centres may be very busy and chaotic, although every effort will be made to ensure they run smoothly for you.

Make sure you request an Auslan interpreter, or other communication service, such as a deaf interpreter or deafblind interpreter. Ask for this support if you need it.

Do not rush your decisions. Take your time to think and plan carefully. Talk to a counsellor if you need to. Make sure you get all the support you need. There will be a lot of paperwork to do, and lots of cleaning up.

Look after yourself, your family and friends. If you were not personally affected by the fire but your friends were, offer your support to them.

At the same time, look after yourself.