

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO WHEN VELDFIRE APPROACHES?

- Phone your local Fire Services and or Disaster Management Centre;
- Make decisions early – carry out the planned response, that is, to evacuate or to stay?
- Dress in protective clothing;
- Move livestock to safer locations;
- Listen to radio for news;
- Wet garden and house especially on the side of the approaching fire;
- Plug gutters and fill them with water;
- Fill baths, buckets and dust bins with water in case the water supply fails and have mops handy;
- Seal any gaps between doors and floor using wet towels or similar items;
- Close up the house and screen off the windows;
- Remove curtains and furniture away from windows;
- If you decide to stay, go indoors when the fire arrives and remain there until the fire front has passed;
- Take fire hoses and other firefighting equipment indoors with you;
- Patrol the house interior including checking the roof cavity and extinguish any small fires immediately;
- Remain vigilant after the fire front has passed.

USEFUL FIREFIGHTING EQUIPMENT

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| ▪ Hoses. | ▪ Knapsack spray. |
| ▪ Ladders. | ▪ Suitable protective clothing. |
| ▪ Fire beaters, rake-hoes and shovels. | ▪ Gloves. |
| ▪ Torch plus spare batteries. | ▪ Sturdy boots or shoes and woollen socks. |
| ▪ Protective woollen blanket. | ▪ Large handkerchiefs to cover nose and mouth. |
| ▪ Buckets (preferably metal) and mops. | ▪ Water bottles. |

WHAT IF I AM CAUGHT IN A FIRE WHILE DRIVING?

- Don't drive into or near veldfires. If caught in a veldfire don't drive through flames or thick smoke;
- Stop at a clearing or roadside in a low vegetation area. Turn ignition off, and hazard lights and headlights on;
- Stay inside unless near shelter. Keep vents, windows and doors closed. Lie inside, below window level, under a woollen blanket until fire front passes;
- After the main fire passes, if heat or fumes inside become severe, get out and move to already burnt ground, keeping your whole body covered;
- The petrol tank is unlikely to explode in the period you need to stay in the car while being shielded from the deadly radiant heat of the firefront.

DISASTER AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

VELD FIRES

HOW DO I KNOW THAT A VELDFIRE MAY OCCUR?

it is normally YOUR DRY SEASON
You experience VERY HOT CONDITIONS
There are a lot of POTENTIAL FUEL
(e.g. dry leaves, wood, dead plants and grass)



National Disaster Management Centre

Tel: 012 848 4602

Fax: 012 848 4636

Web: www.ndmc.gov.za



cooperative governance

Department:
Cooperative Governance
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



REDUCING VELDFIRE RISK



What are veldfires?

All veld and forest fires are dealt with under the National Veld and Forest Fires Act (No. 101 of 1998). This law defines a veldfire as a “veld, forest or mountain fire, where veld means the open countryside beyond the urban limit or homestead boundary”. About 90% of veldfires are started by humans and the other 10% are started by natural occurrences such as lightning.

How do I know that a veldfire may occur?

- It is normally your dry season;
- You experience very hot conditions;
- There are a lot of potential fuel (e.g. dry leaves, wood, dead plants and grass);
- You can clearly see long dry grass and plants;
- There are moderate to strong winds present.
- What should I do to reduce my risk of veldfire?
- If possible, make firebreaks around your home (use mower, spade, rake), trim branches well clear of the house;
- Clear roof and gutters of leaves, twigs, etc;
- Remove all rubbish, leaf litter and shrubs growing too close to house;
- Keep grass short and green;
- Fit wire screens to doors, windows, vents, and enclose all gaps, roof eaves and the area under your house;
- Keep a ladder handy for roof access (inside and outside) and fit hoses to reach all parts of the house and garden. If water is not connected, obtain a high-pressure pump;
- Store wood, fuel, paints, etc well clear of the house;
- If possible, check you have adequate insurance cover for veld fire;
- Decide on a household plan to either leave early or stay to protect your home during a veld fire.



FIREBREAKS



A firebreak is a strip of land where vegetation has been removed or modified to contain or to reduce the spread and intensity of any veld fire that may occur in or enter a property.

- An owner of land who is obliged to prepare and maintain a firebreak must prepare a firebreak with due regard to the weather, climate, terrain and vegetation of the area. A firebreak must –
 - be wide enough and long enough to have a reasonable chance of preventing a veldfire from spreading to or from neighbouring land;
 - not cause soil erosion;
 - reasonably free of inflammable material capable of carrying a veldfire across it;
 - be located in such a way as to minimise risk to the resources being protected;
- Do not rely on a firebreak to stop a veldfire;
- The effectiveness of a firebreak depends on its positioning and on regular maintenance.



METHODS OF PREPARING FIREBREAKS

- Ploughing;
- Grazing;
- Mowing and slashing;
- Herbicides;
- Burning.