

Geography

Bushfires



For Upper Primary



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Preview

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Bushfires In Australia

Read the information, then complete the activity sheets which follow.

Australia is vulnerable to bushfires because of its climate and vegetation. Look at the possible causes of bushfires and the conditions that bushfires thrive in.

Natural causes	Human causes	Thriving conditions / environments
lightning	arson (deliberately lit fires)	build-up of biomass (dry vegetation)
high temperatures especially after long periods of drought	broken glass left in vegetation	strong winds/ little to no rain
spontaneous combustion of dry fuel (dry vegetation)	embers from BBQs /cigarettes/ matches/faulty electrical equipment	dry grasslands/ eucalyptus forests
	controlled burning that gets out of control	flammable and combustible environments

Fauna

Bushfires can threaten our unique fauna. Some native species are better able to survive in bushfires than others.

- Those species which can move quickly, such as kangaroos and Tasmanian Devils are more likely to escape fierce fires.
- Burrowing animals such as bilbies and bettongs, which can burrow deep into the ground until the fire is brought under control also have a higher risk of survival.
- Koalas which live in highly flammable eucalyptus trees and are slow-moving are among Australia's vulnerable native species in the event of a bushfire.

Flora

Some Australian native flora re-sprout and flourish after a bushfire.

- **Banksia ericifolia**
- **Banksia ornate**
- **Eucalyptus regnans**
- **Callitris species**



Warnings

State Emergency Services issue bushfire danger ratings during fire season from low to moderate to code red.

Bushfire Season

When are different states most susceptible to bushfires?

Perth

= summer

Darwin

= winter and spring

Alice Springs

= spring and summer

Adelaide

= summer and autumn

Tasmania

= summer

Use the information on page 3 to complete this activity sheet.

1. Bushfires thrive in certain conditions. List four conditions in which bushfires are likely to start.



(A)	(B)
(C)	(D)

2. List four human actions that can start a bushfire below.

(A)	(B)
(C)	(D)

3. Certain plants and animals have high resilience to bushfires. What does this mean?



Kangaroo



4. The kangaroo is one animal that has high resilience to bushfires. Why do you think this is?

Use the information on page 3 to complete this activity sheet.

1. Think about where you live.



I live :

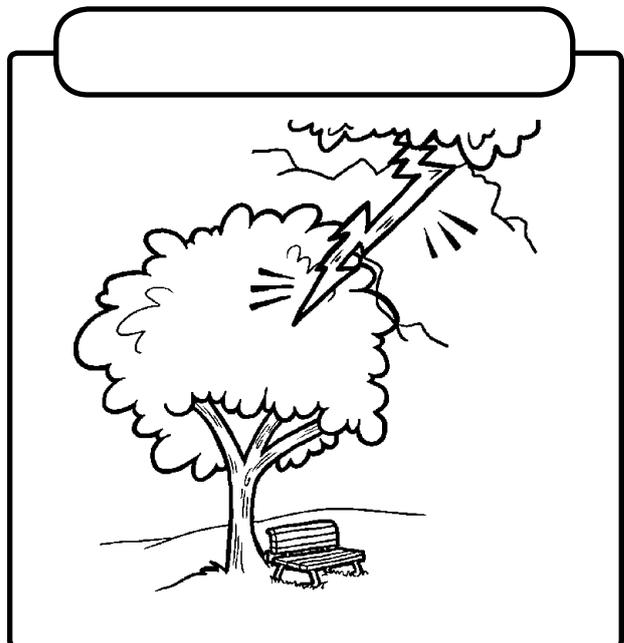
2. Complete the sentence stubs.

A The bushfire danger rating in my area would most likely be code red during ...

B The bushfire danger rating in my area would most likely be moderate during...

C The bushfire danger rating in my area would most likely be low during ...

3. Study the pictures. Label each picture either natural or human action.



Use the information on page 3 to complete this activity sheet.

- What would you do during a bushfire alert? Work with a partner to paste the actions listed at the bottom of the page onto the timeline. Discuss your timeline with another pair.

The form consists of a central vertical line with a horizontal bar at the top. From this bar, a vertical line extends downwards. On either side of this central line, there are four horizontal rectangular boxes, one on each side, for pasting actions. A large, diagonal watermark reading 'Preview' is overlaid across the center of the page.



Bring pets inside. Hose down outside of house facing fire. Fill gutters with water.	Put on protective clothing. Check for spot fires around house and put them out.
Alert family and neighbours about smoke in nearby parkland.	Fill bath/sinks with water. Keep buckets handy.
Store flammable materials away from house. Shut off gas at the meter.	Call 000. Give accurate details of your location.
Move furniture to centre of the room. Take down curtains. Tape windows.	Go indoors. Shut windows and doors. Place wet towels under gaps.

Use the information on page 3 to complete this activity sheet.

- What four recommendations would you give to the owner of this house to make it safer in the event of a bushfire? Write your advice in the space provided.

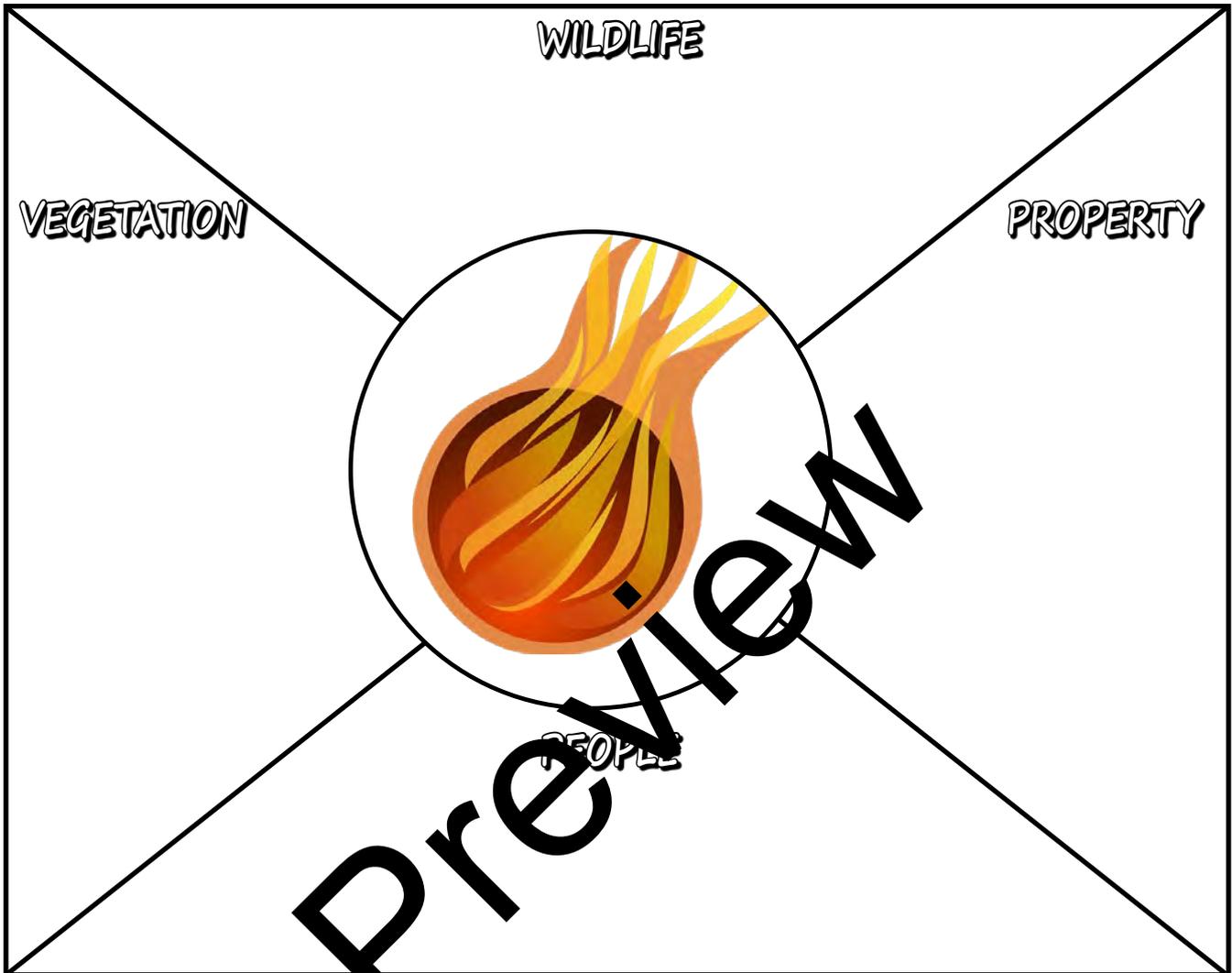
Prepare Act Survive



- ---
- ---
- ---
- ---

Use the information on page 3 to complete this activity sheet.

1. Write what you know about Australian bushfires under the headings.



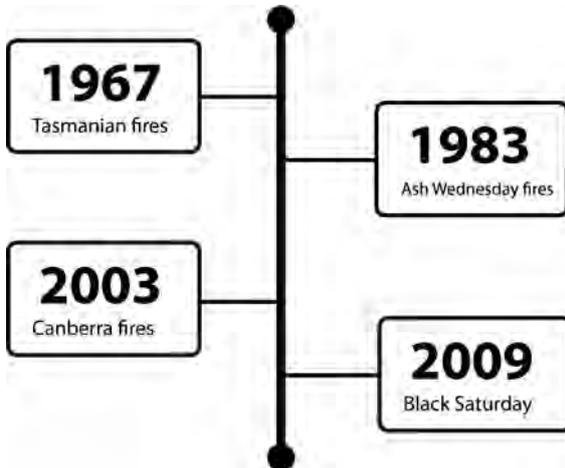
2. Jot down your thoughts below explaining why it is important to report a bushfire early.



Deadly Bushfires

Read the information, then complete the activity sheet which follows.

Australia has had some devastating bushfires in the past which will be remembered for many years to come. Read about some of them below.



Tasmanian Fires

The Tasmanian fires broke out in 1967. Firefighters found themselves battling 110 fires in total. The extent of the damage caused by the fires was huge. 264,270 hectares of land was burnt, 62 people tragically lost their lives and 1,400 homes were destroyed. There were a number of causes: a heat wave, back-burning, and arson (deliberate lighting of a fire by a person).

Ash Wednesday Fires

The Ash Wednesday fires happened in 1983. These fires broke out in South Australia and quickly swept through the Adelaide Hills. There were 80 fires in total that firefighters were left battling. The damage of the fires was extensive. 514,000 hectares of land were burnt, there were 75 fatalities, 3,700 buildings were completely destroyed and farmers suffered a massive loss of livestock and income. A long period of drought before the fires broke out which caused a build-up of dry vegetation and faulty power lines have been blamed for the fires.

Australian Capital Territory Fires

Raging bushfires affected the Australian Capital Territory from January - March in 2003. Namadji National Park and Tidbinbilla Range were the worst areas hit. 160 fires broke out in total. 1.2 million hectares of land was unfortunately burnt, there were 4 deaths and a total of 500 homes were tragically destroyed. The causes of the fires are believed to be: high temperatures (40°C), strong winds and lightning strikes.

Black Saturday

The Black Saturday bushfires happened in February, 2009 in Central Victoria. There were 400 fires in total that needed to be put out. The damage was catastrophic. 173 people were killed and hundreds more were injured. 5,500 buildings were burned to the ground, more than 1 million hectares of land was burnt and sadly more than 1 million native animals perished during these fires. The causes of the fires are believed to have been: faulty power lines, arson, lightning and faulty machinery.

Use the information on page 9 to complete this activity sheet.

Australia's climate makes it a hotspot for bushfires.

1. Annotate the map showing where four of Australia's deadliest bushfires were located and write two facts about each.

**Your Opinion**

2. In your opinion, which fire was the worst? Give reasons for your answer.

3. Do you know another real life bushfire? Where was it? How was it started?

Answers

Page 4

Thriving conditions: strong winds; little to no rain; dry grasslands; eucalyptus forests; flammable and combustible environments

1. Human actions: arson; controlled burning that gets out of control; embers from BBQs; discarded cigarettes; faulty electrical equipment
2. This means that they are more likely to survive in the event of a bushfire.
3. It is fast-moving so has a high chance of fleeing from the fire.

Page 5

3. 1 = human; 2 = natural

Page 6

Answers will vary

Page 7

Possible responses:

1. Sweep up leaves
2. Remove leaves from guttering
3. Cut back low-hanging trees
4. Store flammable liquids in a shed
5. Close all windows and doors
6. Make sure pets are kept inside
7. Remove newspaper from the table
8. Keep the grass mowed
9. Relocate pot plants away from the house
10. Fix broken tile on roof

Page 8

1. Wildlife: can be injured or killed in fires. Some

animals will need help relocating
Vegetation: can be destroyed, although some might resprout and grow back stronger

Property: can be damaged or completely burned down; possessions can be lost
People: some people might not have time to evacuate in the event of a bushfire and might get caught in the fire

2. It is important to report a bushfire early because it has less chance of spreading and getting out of control; it makes it easier for firefighters to battle

Page 10



2. The Black Saturday bushfires were the worst. More people were killed and more buildings were destroyed. Students can compare the statistics.