

EXPERT ADVICE FACTSHEET

Rebuilding after a bushfire is a big job. Everybody has different circumstances and will make different choices, and that's okay. We know that not everyone wants to rebuild straight away. You can access support when you are ready.

This factsheet highlights the types of expert advice you have access to through the Rebuild Support Service (RSS) such as:

- Access to a free Victorian Building Association registered building surveyor
- Access to Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) assessment information
- Access to experts who can help if your rebuilding may be more difficult due to high levels of bushfire risk.

GET FREE ADVICE FROM A REGISTERED BUILDING SURVEYOR

The Victorian Building Authority regulates Victoria's building industry to keep communities safe and to empower building practitioners.

Through the RSS, you have access to a free VBA registered building surveyor who can help you understand the building permit process and requirements.

You can get advice on:

- Building in a bushfire prone area and responding to bushfire risk.
- Information on BAL assessments and other assessments (e.g. land capability).
- Construction requirements in line with BALs.
- Building permit requirements.
- Registered practitioners.
- Warranty insurance provided by builders.
- Owner builder responsibilities and registration
- Occupancy permits.
- Timelines to commence and complete building work.
- Private bushfire shelters.
- Emergency Accommodation provisions in the building legislation.
- Building disputes and issues during construction.

You can talk to a building surveyor today by contacting the RSS.

FREE BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL (BAL) ASSESSMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR BUSHFIRE AFFECTED PROPERTY OWNERS

BALs reflect the level of bushfire intensity that a home may experience during a bushfire and help to determine your bushfire construction requirements for rebuilding.

In most cases, a BAL assessment is needed for both your planning and building permits.

It is just one of the many considerations in rebuilding to improve bushfire safety. Other measures that increase bushfire resilience include:

- Considering how and where a house is situated or sited on a block of land to reduce a home's exposure to a bushfire.
- Considering the need to provide a firefighting water supply, emergency service access and defensible space (an area around your home where vegetation is managed).

The BAL classification is important because it helps indicate the materials and construction methods required for your build. Designing and building houses that are resistant to radiant heat and ember attack are fundamental to bushfire resilience and community safety.

Bushfire Recovery Victoria has worked with your local Council and Country Fire Authority to prepare preliminary bushfire hazards assessments for all properties with a home destroyed in the 2019-20 bushfires.

You can get a copy of your preliminary BAL assessment by making an appointment with the RSS.

REBUILDING EXPERTS AVAILABLE FOR COMPLEX SITES

For a small number of properties, rebuilding to meet contemporary building and fire safety standards will be more difficult due to high levels of bushfire risk. These sites are called complex sites. It may be more difficult to position new homes and avoid bushfire risk.

The Complex Site Taskforce is a free independent service that has been established to support property owners with complex sites. It exists to ensure every option has been explored to rebuild safely, and to meet current standards.

The Complex Site Taskforce consists of rebuilding experts. They provide free advice to property owners to help them achieve a successful outcome. The Complex Site Taskforce has skillsets in:

- Architecture
- Planning
- Building
- Fire behaviour and risk
- Bushfire resilience and adaptation
- Clinical psychology.

If following the advice of the Complex Site Taskforce, there are no options for safely rebuilding back on a property, then there is support for the owner to resettle. This includes voluntary purchase of land by Government through the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning's Retreat and Resettlement program.

Owners of complex sites can access advice from the Complex Site Taskforce by contacting the RSS.

YOUR LOCAL RSS IS HERE TO HELP

The Rebuild Support Service is a free one-stop-shop that provides support to people who are rebuilding.

Through the RSS, you can access:

- Dedicated planning and permit information, support, and legal advice.
- Advice from building experts.
- Information on financial assistance options.
- Other services you may be eligible for.

The RSS is delivered by the East Gippsland Shire Council and Towong Shire Council.

Get started today.

East Gippsland Shire

www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au/Bushfire_information

(03) 5153 9500

Towong Shire

www.towong.vic.gov.au (select 'Upper Murray Fires 2020')
1800 518 222.

View the *Rebuild Support Service factsheet* for more information.

LAST UPDATED: SEPTEMBER 2021

The rebuilding journey can be overwhelming

If you would like to talk to someone about this, Recovery Support Workers are here to listen and link you to experts who can help.

To talk to someone today, call **1800 560 760**, or visit your local recovery Hub. To find your hub online and check opening hours visit: brv.vic.gov.au/community-recovery-hubs

