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Victorians Urged to Prepare Early for Bushfire Season

Victoria's peak independent forestry body, the Victorian Association of Forest Industries (VAFI) is urging all Victorians to prepare early for another challenging bushfire season.

The VAFI, along with the Country Fire Authority (CFA), has identified three areas at highest risk of bushfire activity, as the Otways, Dandenong Ranges and far-east Gippsland, with 52 communities within those areas identified as particularly vulnerable.

"As the bushfire season opens, Victorians need to get their emergency plans ready early and those planning on spending time over summer holidaying in these high-risk areas also need to be aware of the increased fire threat, and should plan accordingly," Mr Dalidakis said.

"If you are holidaying in these high risk areas, you need to formulate a comprehensive plan well in advance of any potential bushfire. Holidaymakers would also be advised to speak to tourism operators in areas they are staying and ensure there is a bushfire action plan in place and request a copy.

With the start of the state's bushfire season and concerns that the approaching summer will be much worse than last season, the VAFI says taking some precautionary steps can reduce the threat of fires to homes, land and most importantly loved ones.

"The devastation of Black Saturday is still fresh in everyone's minds and all Victorians - whether they live in rural areas or in the urban fringe - need to be alert to the very real and dangerous threat posed by bushfires," VAFI chief executive Philip Dalidakis said.

"By developing a comprehensive bushfire plan and also doing things like clearing rubbish such as dead trees, branches or other dried vegetation from around their property, all Victorians can help minimise the risks they face."

"The decision on whether or not to evacuate your family needs to be made well in advance of the bushfire period. Leaving early means being packed and ready to leave well in advance of the fire front, not at the last minute as the bushfire approaches."

Mr Dalidakis said it was also important to recognise that forest industry workers were among the many rural and regional volunteers who dedicated their time and energy to firefighting efforts every summer, and are on the frontline of efforts to keep Victorians safe.

"The forest industry is vital if we are to appropriately maintain fire tracks, reduce fuel loads, and provide firefighting vehicles and personnel. The sustainable management of our forests is an essential aspect in reducing the overall bushfire threat Victorians face every summer."

"Rural and regional volunteers are the backbone of our local communities and play an important role throughout the year but especially during times of crisis," Mr Dalidakis said.

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