

# Factsheet: Staying safe during events in State forests

Information to help you stay safe and get the most out of your event in State forest

This factsheet has been designed to help you understand your safety responsibilities when hosting events in State forests, as well as some key risks and how to stay safe.

It is important to know that as an event organiser, you are responsible for the safety of event participants in State forests.

DEECA's risk assessment and mitigation measures focus on visitor sites and walking and mountain bike trails where DEECA provides built infrastructure and services to support specific recreation activities. Event organisers must be aware that the broader forest and road network is not subject to our regular visitor risk assessments.

## Key risks in State forests

### Falling trees or limbs causing injury or death

Trees and limbs may fall unpredictably and can have catastrophic consequences. While statistically, deaths from limb and tree fall is incredibly low, visitors should avoid camping under trees and take extra care near trees in high winds or storms.

### Disused mineshafts

Victoria's forests are dotted with thousands of legacy mineshafts from Victoria's gold rush. Many of these mines, dating from between 1850 to 1990, have not been rehabilitated and their exact location is unknown.

For visitors walking through the bush, these open mine shafts may be hidden by vegetation. There have been incidences of visitors walking off formed tracks and roads and falling to their death.

### Fire Protection

Campfires are prohibited on Total Fire Ban and Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating days. Use of permanent gas or electric BBQs designed and manufactured only for meal preparation are allowed to be used on a Total Fire Ban day only for cooking meals. They must be in a fixed or stable position when in use, their use must be supervised at all times and you must be able to put it out if necessary and have at least 10 litres of water nearby. BBQs and stoves using solid or chemical fuels are always prohibited on Total Fire Ban days.

### Key advice when using fire:

- Fuel stoves or existing fireplaces should be used where possible.
- Campfires can easily escape and become bushfires.
- Where there is no fireplace:
  - light your campfire in a trench 30cm deep to prevent embers flying out
  - clear the ground and surrounding space above the fire of flammable materials, such as leaves, twigs, tree stumps, to an area of 3m
  - only use the amount of wood needed for cooking and warmth.
- Don't light campfires or barbeques when it is hot or windy.

- Fires must not be left unattended and must be fully extinguished before you leave.
- If you leave your campsite for any reason, put out your campfire – even if you plan to come back
- Fill up a bucket with water and use it to put out your campfire. When the ashes are cool to the touch it is safe to leave.
- Dirt is not to be used – fires can keep burning underground for days in the right conditions.
- Any motor driven pump, generator or other engine (including chain saws and vehicles) must be fitted with a compliant spark arrestor that is in working order. Where there is a reasonable possibility of the spread of fire, you must have one of the following available for immediate use:
  - a hose connected to an adequate water supply
  - a knapsack spray pump with a tank holding at least 9 litres of water
  - a dry chemical fire extinguisher.

## Bushfire risk

Victoria is one of the most bushfire prone areas of the world. If you are in forests between November to April, you are at risk from bushfires.

## Ways to stay safe in State forests

- Plan ahead and monitor weather forecasts to avoid being in forests during storm and high wind events and days of extreme or catastrophic fire danger.
- Reconsider visiting forests on hot and windy days as fires can start and spread quickly.
- For weather and fire danger warnings, check the Bureau of Meteorology and CFA websites.
- Download the Vic Emergency app to receive real-time emergency updates. You can also set up 'watch zones' in the app to receive location specific alerts.
- Seek open areas in high winds. Get out from under tree canopy and try to get at least one tree length away from surrounding trees in case they drop limbs or fall over.
- Be careful walking off track and actively look for holes, depressions and openings.