

Private bushfire shelters

A private bushfire shelter (commonly referred to as a bushfire bunker) is an option of last resort where people can take refuge during a bushfire while the fire front passes. It may be a prefabricated commercial product or a structure built on site.

The best way to ensure your safety during a bushfire is to leave your property early when it is recommended under the bushfire warning system and follow the [CFA's advice](#).

However, some people choose to construct a private bushfire shelter as part of their bushfire survival plan. Even if you are living in a Bushfire Prone Area, there is no legal requirement to build a private bushfire shelter – it is a matter of personal choice.

It is compulsory to obtain a building permit if you are building a private bushfire on your property.

Permit requirements

A [building permit](#) must be obtained for a private bushfire shelter before construction begins. Bushfire shelters have to comply with performance requirements set out in the Building Code of Australia, including safe accessing the shelter and maintaining acceptable conditions within the shelter when it is being occupied.

To obtain a building permit under the new system you will need to do one of the following:

- purchase a shelter that has been accredited as meeting the performance requirements in the regulations by the Victorian Government's Building Regulations Advisory Committee
- apply to the [Building Appeals Board](#) for a determination that your non-accredited bushfire shelter complies with the regulations
- obtain certification from a fire safety engineer who did not design the shelter to satisfy a building surveyor that your non-accredited bushfire shelter meets the requirements of the regulations.

It is important that you seek the advice of a relevant registered building practitioner, such as a fire safety engineer or a structural engineer, before you purchase or construct a private bushfire shelter, or before modifying an existing building to be used as a private bushfire shelter.

We recommend that you consider your bushfire safety options carefully, and view a private bushfire shelter as a part of your overall bushfire survival plan, rather than a simple solution. You also need to consider whether you and your family are psychologically ready to stay in the private bushfire shelter during a fire.