

SURVIVING A BUSHFIRE IN PEARL BEACH

Pearl Beach Brigade, NSW RFS
&
Pearl Beach Progress Association

Purpose and Introductions

- Heighten awareness of bushfire risks and survival plan to Pearl Beach residents and community
- Pearl Beach Brigade - Captain Lindsay Boyd and Luke Stevenson
- Pearl Beach Progress Association – SAG Paul Toohey
- Central Coast Council Emergency Preparedness – Jen East
- Pearl Beach long term resident – Paul Barclaire

Safety Risks in Pearl Beach

Lindsay

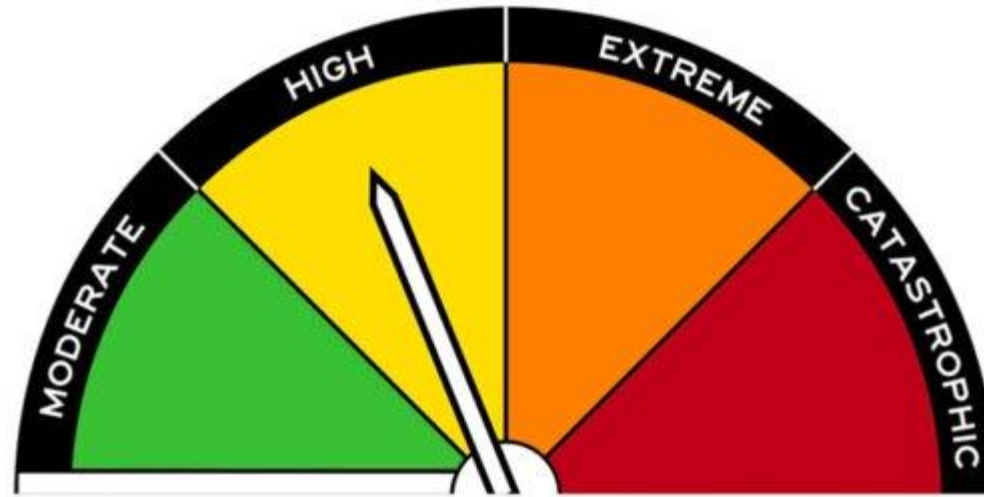
- Pearl Beach surrounded by the Brisbane Water National Park:
 - makes it highly vulnerable to bushfires
 - Some bush has not burnt for >30 years
 - Ember attack
- Single road access
- Above ground power lines
- Village is nestled amongst lots of trees:
 - Many houses are not fire ready
 - Gutters & roofs covered in leaf & other litter
 - House yards are also covered in leaf & other litter

Guiding hierarchy

Lindsay

- RFS crew safety
- Protect life
- Protect property
- Restore normality

Before The Fire Starts – Fire Danger Ratings



MODERATE

Plan and prepare.

Most fires can be controlled.

HIGH

Be ready to act.

Fires can be dangerous.

EXTREME

Take action now
to protect your life and property.

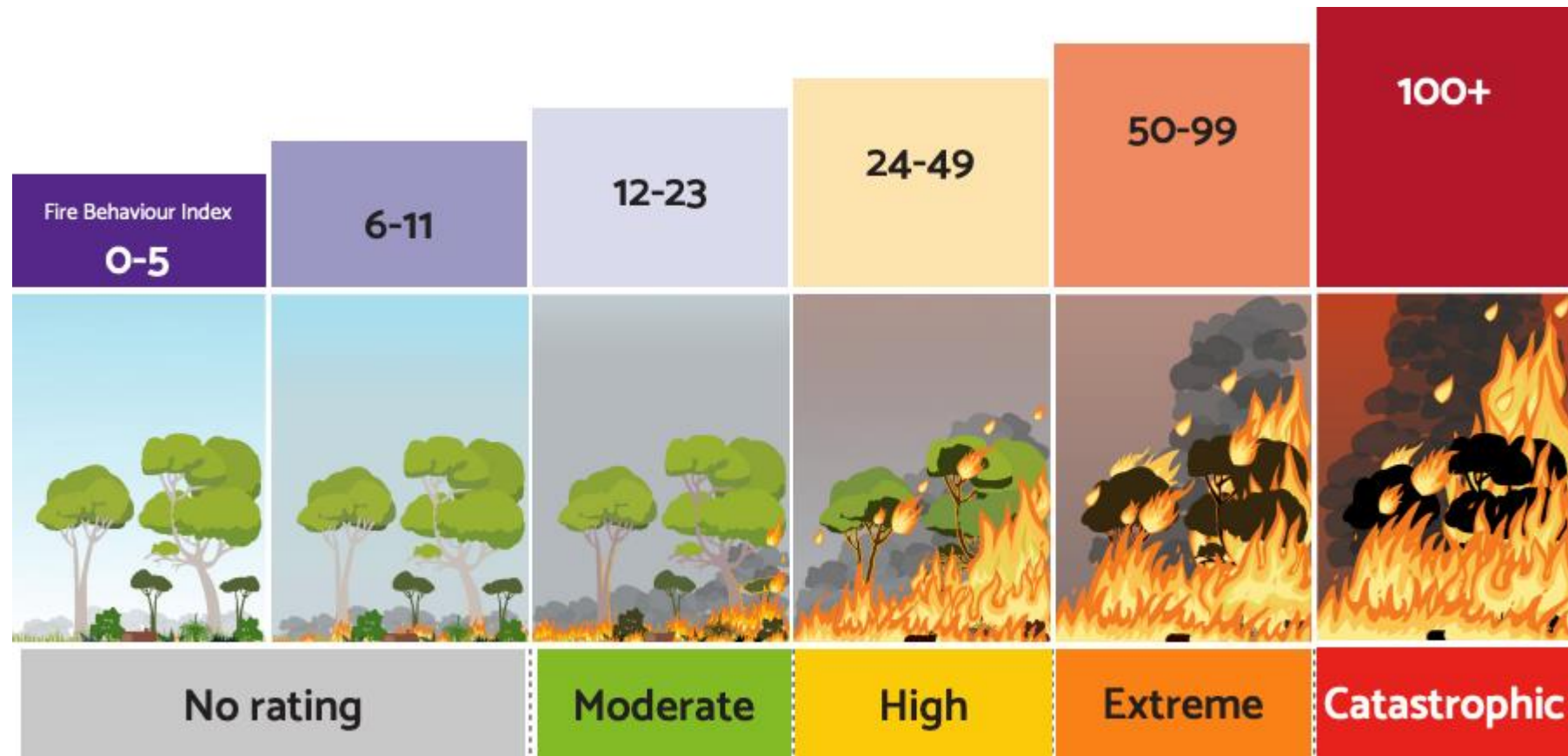
Fires will spread quickly and be
extremely dangerous.

CATASTROPHIC

For your survival,
leave bushfire risk areas

If a fire starts and takes hold,
lives are likely to be lost.

Before The Fire Starts – Fire Danger Ratings



Pearl Beach Bushfires

Paul T & Paul B

- Early settlers in Pearl Beach, formed a brigade to fight bushfires in 1929.
- October 1948 – 70 Pearl Beach homes under threat from serious bushfire outbreak
- December 1953 – bushfire 200 yards of village & destroyed a house, boatshed and 3 boats.
- In 1979, a fire burned through the National Park and threatened the village.
- December 1990 – bushfire swept through the village and destroyed 12 houses and damaged many others.
- In 2016 a bushfire on Patonga Rd with visible flames on horizon
- Expectation of another severe bushfire in Pearl Beach ...this year, next or 3-5 years?
- Safety initiative by PBPA – Community Support Centre / Neighbourhood Safer Place - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_FsCe7RyRw

Bushfires of 1990 – Paul Barclaire's experience





Could Pearl Beach experience what Mallacoota experienced 31 Dec 2019?



- Massive fire trapped about 4,000 residents in the town.
- People had to shelter on the beach, the lake, or their boats.
- Destroyed at least 100 homes & buildings plus widespread damage to the wildlife & the environment.

Could Pearl Beach experience what Mallacoota experienced 31 Dec 2019? *cont/-*

- Cut off road access and power supply.
- People were isolated and in need of assistance.
- ADF and other govt agencies launched rescue & relief operations – evacuations by air & sea with deliveries of food, water & medications.
- Quick 2 min video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWR-KrCX6RE>
- Yes, potentially there is a risk that this could occur in Pearl Beach.

Bushfire Survival

Lindsay & Luke

- The Smoke, flames and heat are beyond anything you expect.
- There are 600 properties in Pearl Beach, RFS has 1 Fire Truck in the village perhaps 3+ trucks in a catastrophic bushfire event.
- Potentially 100x homes at risk.
- Cannot anticipate help to arrive in a catastrophic bushfire event; act on the basis you're on your own.
- All residents and visitors to Pearl Beach need to be watching the forecast fire danger ratings alerts and be ready to act quickly. If a fire starts you will have only minutes to act.
- Clearly, be aware it is not safe to STAY. In EXTREME or CATASTROPHIC fire weather, leave IMMEDIATELY

Real-time alerts

Hazards Near Me app (formerly Fires Near Me)

- Download it to your Mobile Phone and set up alerts around Pearl Beach NSW.
- Set-up a watch zone to automatically receive alerts of any Fire, Flood & Tsunami within the area.

Other emergency info sources:

- Call 1800 679 737 for major bushfire information
- NSW RFS Website – rfs.nsw.gov.au
- Local radio stations – ABC FM 92.5 and AM 702
- Your neighbours – Support and inform each other, especially vulnerable neighbours.

Everyone must have a Bushfire Survival Plan

- Get ready for a bushfire at your home in Pearl Beach.
- Identify a place to evacuate to – it is not safe to stay in village
- The RFS and the Pearl Beach Safety Advisory Group have supplied RFS's Bushfire Survival Plan Brochure to all residents over the past 3-4 years and is a **MUST HAVE**, so be sure to complete the plan within the brochure.
- Pick up the brochure here today or it can be downloaded from https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/36597/BFSP-Complete.pdf
- Follow warning guidelines - nothing in between.
- No property is defensible in CATASTROPHIC fire conditions. Like a bomb going off – **just GO**

What to do if trapped in Pearl Beach

Paul T

- The **Neighbourhood Safer Place** locations are:
 - **Pearl Beach Memorial Community Hall**, 9 Diamond Road which has fire protection sprinklers and backup power. These protection mechanisms will not lessen the effects of driving smoke plumes. Breathing will be impaired in such circumstances.
 - **Beach** by the Amenities Block. Beware that there will likely be showers of embers onto the beach – it is far from being a safe place of refuge.
- These locations are NOT a default option. Leave early - GO if you can – you can always come back.
- Parking will not be available. Out front will be blocked off for any emergency service vehicles.
- NSP operating procedures folder. Open and read: it will tell you what to do
- Pets in cages – get one *today* if you don't have one – too late on the day

RFS Simulation of potential Pearl Beach Fire

- Lindsay & Luke ???
- Exactly what is required and how to project the simulation

Central Coast Council Emergency Preparedness

- Jen East to cover all hazards, storm, flood & fire with a focus on Bushfire

Memorial Community Hall

Neighbourhood Safer Place



Presentation by RFS Pearl Beach & Pearl Beach Progress Association

Panel & questions session

Thank you all for attending