

Mapping update

Q. What is the Bushfire Management Overlay and what does it aim to achieve?

The Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) is a planning control applied to land with the potential to be affected by extreme bushfires.

The BMO helps make new homes, our communities, and the environment safer and more resilient by establishing specific planning permit requirements for new land uses and developments.

These requirements ensure that bushfire hazards, such as vegetation, slope and site access, are assessed and bushfire protection measures are implemented to manage risk.

Q. Why was a review of bushfire mapping undertaken?

More than 2,000 homes were destroyed, and 173 lives lost in the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. This mapping update is part of the Victorian Government's commitment to implement all 67 recommendations of the *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission*.

The update establishes consistent bushfire mapping in the planning system and forms part of the government's commitment to make ongoing improvements to the planning and building systems.

Q. Who prepared the updated mapping?

The updated mapping has been prepared by DELWP in accordance with the recommendations of the *2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission*.

The mapping review was completed in partnership with the Country Fire Authority (CFA) and council officers, who provided feedback on the local environment.

Q. What is the new mapping criteria for being included in the BMO?

The hazard mapping criteria was developed by DELWP, the CFA and CSIRO based on best available science and experiences from previous bushfires.

CRITERIA 1 Vegetation type and size	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Forest, woodland, scrub, shrubland, mallee and rainforest vegetation that is 4 hectares or more in size
CRITERIA 2 Ember buffer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">A 150m buffer is applied from the edge of vegetation identified in Criteria 1.
CRITERIA 3 Extreme risk inclusions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Areas that fire authorities have advised may be subject to extreme landscape bushfire.

Q. When was the updated mapping introduced?

The updated mapping was introduced into the planning scheme by Planning Scheme Amendment GC13 which was gazetted on **3 October 2017**.

This amendment also applied to 63 other councils.

Q. How many properties have been added to the BMO?

Around 108,000 properties have had the BMO applied across Victoria.

This brings the total number of properties in the BMO to about 230,000. Of these, around 103,000 are public land.

Q. Have any properties had the BMO removed as part of the mapping review?

Yes. Around 17,000 properties have had the BMO removed across Victoria, including properties in our municipality. The review identified that these properties are not considered to be affected by extreme bushfire under existing criteria.

These properties will likely remain in a Bushfire Prone Area. Future development may still be required to build to the relevant bushfire construction standard under the Building Act and regulations.

Q. What consultation was undertaken?

DELWP worked in partnership with council officers and fire authorities to verify the mapping update before it was introduced. This allowed council to provide feedback on the local environment and our planning scheme.

Q. How are affected property owners being notified?

DELWP has worked with council officers to develop effective strategies for us to notify property owners. DELWP is providing funding support to assist with local notification processes.

DELWP has also provided a package of information materials. These materials are available at www.planning.vic.gov.au/bmo

Q. What is a Bushfire Prone Area? How is it different to the BMO?

The Bushfire Prone Areas map applies to all land at risk from bushfires in Victoria. Buildings in these areas are required to meet the relevant bushfire construction standards through the building permit process. These standards are designed to improve structural bushfire protection of buildings.

These construction measures alone **cannot** guarantee that a building will survive a bushfire event. This is due to the unpredictable nature and behaviour of fires and the degree of vegetation management on a property.

The BMO applies to Bushfire Prone Areas with the potential to be affected by extreme bushfires. In addition to the bushfire construction requirements, properties in the BMO are required to assess a range of additional bushfire hazards such as vegetation, slope and site access, and implement protection measures to further manage risk.

Property owners information

Q. How can I check if I'm in the BMO?

The State Government's VicPlan mapping tool <http://mapshare.maps.vic.gov.au/vicplan/> can be used to check the zone and overlays applying to a property, including the BMO.

Q. Why didn't I receive notice before the BMO was applied to my property?

The changes to the BMO are about making new homes, our communities and the environment safer and more resilient to bushfire. The changes respond to the *2009 Victorian Bushfire Royal Commission - recommendation 37*.

The mapping update is based on the identification of extreme bushfire hazards by DELWP, fire authorities and council.

No public consultation was undertaken prior to the maps being introduced to avoid any potential for uncertainty and confusion about the mapping criteria and the technical nature of bushfire risk.

Q. Where can I get more information about the BMO and why it's been applied to my property?

DELWP has created a webpage specifically for the introduction of the updated BMO mapping www.planning.vic.gov.au/bmo

The page has detailed information for landowners, including fact sheets, information on mapping criteria, and planning permit requirements.

If there are specific questions that the webpage doesn't answer, please contact one of our planning officers.

Q. Can I appeal if I don't think my property should be included in the BMO?

DELWP has a process in place to review the mapping on a regular basis in partnership with fire authorities and council.

If you think your land may not meet the mapping criteria you should contact our planning department for advice. If council planning officers agree that your land may not meet the criteria, DELWP may undertake a review.

Land that meets the criteria will not be removed.

Q. Do I have to retrofit my existing home?

While the BMO does not apply retrospectively to existing homes or approved developments, including subdivision, it is recommended that all property owners and occupiers take steps to improve the resilience of their property to bushfire.

The CFA website has information on making homes and properties safer. You can prepare a Fire Ready Kit www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/fire-ready-kit/

Q. What does it mean if my property has been included in the BMO? Do I need a planning permit to build now?

If the BMO applies, a planning permit may be needed to subdivide your land, build a new house or extend an existing house by more than 50% of the existing floor area.

Other types of buildings and new uses may also need a planning permit.

Please speak to council officers to discuss planning permit requirements and processes.

Planning permit details

Q. What will the planning permit require me to do?

If a planning permit is required under the BMO, in addition to any other planning controls, you will need to meet specific bushfire application requirements. This may include completing bushfire site hazard and bushfire landscape assessments.

A planning permit **may** be granted by council once you have demonstrated that your proposed development meets the relevant application requirements and implements appropriate protection measures to manage bushfire risk.

Technical Guide: Planning Permit Applications - Bushfire Management Overlay details the process for preparing a planning permit application. It is available at www.planning.vic.gov.au/bushfire-protection/bushfire-management-overlay

Q. What bushfire protection measures will be required in the BMO?

Although bushfire risk varies across our region, the bushfire protection measures in the BMO require future developments and uses to:

- Build to current bushfire construction standards
- Site the building away from the bushfire hazard
- Manage vegetation and fuel loads
- Install water tanks and provide fire truck access
- Refer your plan to the CFA, if required

A mandatory planning permit condition will require these measures to be implemented and maintained at all times by the landowner.

Vulnerable uses and developments such as schools and childcare facilities, and proposals in areas with significant landscape risk, may require additional bushfire protection measures. In these cases, broader landscape issues such as evacuation and availability of safer places must be considered as part of the planning permit process.

Q. Are there any planning permit exemptions?

There are some exemptions from applying for a planning permit under the BMO, including:

- Extensions to existing homes less than 50% of the existing floor area, and
- Construction of certain outbuildings, such as a shed or garage, if less than 100m².

Other exemptions may apply for some uses and development. You can check with local council officers to see if exemptions apply.

Q. What if I already have a planning or building permit?

Approved planning permits will continue to operate until expiry.

If there is an approved building permit but no planning permit, or you are proposing to extend or amend an existing planning permit, you can view the Transitional Provisions Fact Sheet available at www.planning.vic.gov.au/bmo. You can also check with our planning department.

Q. What does it mean if only part of my land is included in the updated mapping?

The mapping is based on bushfire hazards, not property boundaries.

It is common for properties to only be partially included in the BMO.

The BMO planning requirements are only triggered if new development is proposed on the part of a property that is in the BMO.

Q. Will this cost me more?

Bushfire construction standards already apply to Bushfire Prone Areas under the Building Act and regulations. The bushfire protection measures required under the planning system are unlikely to substantially increase development costs.

There may be some costs associated with preparing bushfire hazard assessments and site plans. Standard planning permit application fees will also apply.

BMO schedules have been prepared for some townships and settlements by DELWP, the CFA and local councils. These remove certain application requirements, such as a bushfire hazard assessment. This may further reduce application costs for permit applicants.

The State Government's VicPlan mapping tool <http://mapshare.maps.vic.gov.au/vicplan/> can be used to check if a BMO schedule applies to your a property.

Q. What is a BMO schedule and what does it do?

A schedule to the BMO specifies bushfire protection measures for new homes based on local bushfire risk. Schedules have been developed by DELWP, the CFA and local councils. They include predetermined protection measures, streamlined rules, and reduced application requirements for new homes.

Landowners can use the bushfire protection measures predetermined in a schedule or choose to use the regular BMO process.

A fact sheet has been developed for each affected township that explains the schedules and application requirements. The fact sheets are available at www.planning.vic.gov.au/bmo

Q. What if I am in an urban, suburban, township area or rural living area?

The BMO includes streamlined application requirements for new homes in urban, suburban, township and rural living areas based on the zoning of land. These streamlined rules apply across Victoria, and make it simpler to identify the bushfire protection measures that need to be provided for a new home.
