

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**  
**Question Without Notice**

**Thursday, 23 February 2023**

**C192. Hon Sophia Moermond to the Minister for Emergency Services**

I refer the Minister to the answer to question C166 of yesterday regarding the Pemberton Timber Mill Fire and the advice given by DFES to the residents of Pemberton, and I ask

1. Will the Minister table the advice given to residents on reconnecting rainwater tanks and any other advice regarding hazardous materials that may have been present after the fire, as indicated had been provided; and
2. If not, why not?

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**Answer**

1. Yes, I table that advice
2. Not applicable.



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Hon Stephen Dawson MLC  
**MINISTER FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES; INNOVATION  
AND THE DIGITAL ECONOMY; MEDICAL RESEARCH; VOLUNTEERING**

**The following alert has been issued by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services WA.**

Residents in or near the warning area are advised to disconnect their rain water tanks until their gutters and roofs have been flushed by rain as water may not be safe for drinking. Residents in Pemberton are being asked to restrict their water use to essential purposes until Sunday 11 December 2022 inclusive to help maintain water supply for firefighting and refill town supply.

Time of issue: 04:19 PM

Date of issue: 09 December 2022

**Structure Fire ALL CLEAR in PEMBERTON in the SHIRE OF MANJIMUP**

- The structure fire near BROCKMAN STREET in PEMBERTON in the SHIRE OF MANJIMUP has been contained and controlled.
- The structure contains asbestos.
- Smoke is no longer affecting houses bounded by Golf Links Road to the north, Walcott Street to the east, Abbott Street and Burma Road to the south and Conte Road to the west.

**WHAT TO DO:**

- People with medical concerns should contact their local doctor or call Health Direct on 1800 022 222.
- Residents in or near the warning area are advised to disconnect their rain water tanks until their gutters and roofs have been flushed by rain as water may not be safe for drinking.
- Residents in Pemberton are being asked to restrict their water use to essential purposes until Sunday 11 December 2022 inclusive to help maintain water supply for firefighting and refill town supply.

**ROAD CLOSURES AND CONDITIONS:**

Roads have not been closed.

Motorists are asked to avoid the area, reduce speed and drive carefully for the safety of crews.

Road information may also be available from Main Roads WA by calling 138 138 or visiting [travelmap.mainroads.wa.gov.au](https://travelmap.mainroads.wa.gov.au) or by contacting the SHIRE OF MANJIMUP.

**WHAT FIREFIGHTERS ARE DOING:**

Volunteer and career firefighters are working to make the scene safe.

#### **EXTRA INFORMATION:**

- The incident was reported at 5:09 am on 9 December 2022.
- The cause of the fire is unknown.
- People are asked to report any suspicious behaviour to Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

#### **KEEP UP TO DATE:**

Visit [Emergency WA](#), call 13 DFES (13 3337), follow DFES on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), listen to [ABC Local Radio](#), 6PR, or news bulletins.

During a power outage, your home phone, computer or other electronic devices connected to the NBN will not work. Include a battery powered radio in your emergency kit.

Updates will be provided when the situation changes.

**END**

Media Contact: DFES Media and Corporate Communications on 9395 9543

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# Pemberton Mill Fire

 15 Dec 2022, 2:50 pm  [Media Releases](#)

Members of the community within the Shire of Manjimup would be aware that in the early hours of Friday morning 9 December 2022 a significant structural fire occurred within the Pemberton Timber Mill site. The fire occurred within the asbestos and steel clad main building of the site located on the southern edge of the Pemberton townsite.

As with all structural fires in Western Australia, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) assumed operational control and responded through the Pemberton and Manjimup Volunteer Fire and Rescue Services, supported by other fire crews from the South West. Throughout their response to the situation, DFES involved and liaised with the Department of Health, Department of Education, the Water Corporation, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), Department of Biodiversity and Attractions, the WA Police, the Shire of Manjimup and local business owners and updated the community with information via notifications on the Emergency WA website.

Shire President Paul Omodei praised the efforts of DFES and local fire and rescue volunteers "We extend our sincere thanks to DFES and the magnificent efforts of those fire brigade officers, members and volunteers in both initially containing and then controlling the fire"

DFES has now handed the site back to Parkside Pty Ltd, who have secured the site with fencing and a significant clean-up effort has now commenced under the initial advice of the DWER. Parkside have engaged the services of demolition and environmental specialists to assist with this process.

Cr Omodei added "DWER attended the site with stakeholders on 15 December 2022 and it was agreed that a Management Plan would be produced to guide the site clean up. Early indications are that the Pemberton community is safe from asbestos contamination as it appears to be primarily contained on the site and Parkside is likely to be taking action to seal exposed asbestos fibres on the site shortly to minimise any further risk."

"We will continue to update the community as information comes to hand and the meantime we ask members of the public to please stay off the site." he concluded.

Further information regarding risks associated with fire damaged asbestos, please follow the following links.

- [Fire Damaged Asbestos](#)
- [EH Risks during and after a bushfire](#)

-ENDS-

Authorised by Andrew Campbell, Chief Executive Officer  
Contact Sheri Laba, Public Relations Officer

**Contact for comment: Paul Omodei, Shire President**  
**Contact: 0448 810 773**

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## Fire damaged asbestos

There are countless fires in WA each year in urban and rural areas. Sometimes these occur as major bushfires affecting many buildings. Although asbestos present does not burn, it may be physically damaged during a fire and possibly disperse into adjacent areas. If asbestos contamination is properly managed by reference to the Guidance note on the management of fire damaged asbestos (PDF 907.64KB) it poses virtually no risk to the public.

## Asbestos contamination

For asbestos cement sheets (10–15 per cent asbestos), this damage often occurs as shattering from the explosive release of contained moisture into sheeting pieces. The fire asbestos impact areas include:

- dispersed airborne free fibre and small fibre bundles
- building skeleton and footprint
- adjacent circular zone of coarse fragment scatter
- areas of fine surface material (such as flakes) from smoke plume deposition (depending on wind)
- sometimes, contamination from fire-fighting water runoff carrying fine asbestos material.

## Management of asbestos impacts

Following a fire, emergency services and environmental and health agencies take interim measures to prevent disturbance of asbestos contamination. These include erecting temporary fencing if practical and cleaning of priority traffic areas. Evacuation of adjacent buildings due to asbestos contamination is only rarely necessary.

The following more thorough assessment and clean-up of the asbestos contamination is usually the responsibility of the site owner. The Local Government Environmental Health Officer (LG EHO) is normally the relevant regulatory authority under the *Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992*, and supervises the process.

In some cases, such as large bushfires, the Western Australian Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements may take charge of some or all of the clean-up and work with the LG EHO in this regard.

It is important that the assessment and clean-up is done in a systematic way by asbestos professionals, using the Department of Health's *Guidance Note on the Management of Fire Damaged Asbestos 2014* and the *Safe Work Australia Code of Practice - Safe Removal of Asbestos 2005*.

Specifically, the asbestos contamination normally must be cleaned up by an asbestos removalist with an unrestricted WorkSafe license and this should be by following a plan devised by and be under the guidance of an asbestos consultant.

In this way any asbestos fire contamination and associated public health risks will be fully addressed.

## Fire damaged asbestos resources

- Hazards on your property after a bushfire (HealthyWA website)
- Environmental health risks during and after a bushfire for Environmental Health Officers
- Guidance note on the management of fire damaged asbestos (PDF 687KB)
- Asbestos fire contamination leaflet (PDF 606KB)

## Key contacts

### Asbestos professionals

Asbestos consultants – in the case of artificial surface and/or limited soil contamination this should be an occupational hygienist (external site)

In the case of extensive soil contamination, e.g. a large bushfire, this should be an environmental consultant (external site).

## More information

- **Environmental Health**  
Phone: 9222 2000  
Email [ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au)

### Related links

- [About asbestos](#)
- [Asbestos contaminated sites](#)



# After a bushfire – hazards on your property

**There will be hazards that you may come across in and around your property and the local community following a bushfire.**

Before going back to your property to view damage, retrieve personal items, clean-up or to reoccupy it, be aware of the potential risks.

It is extremely important that you follow advice from emergency response and recovery agencies, including your local government, before returning to your property.

In many cases some cleaning, e.g. asbestos contamination, will have to be done by professionals.

## The immediate risks

- Damaged downed power lines/electrical wires
- Damaged gas supplies and fuel leaks
- Unstable structures.

## Hazards to be aware of when returning to your property

- Burnt and friable asbestos cement material
- Ash from burnt treated timbers, such as copper chrome arsenate (CCA) timber
- Damaged chemicals, poisons or pesticides
- Ash and dust
- Fumes from burnt plastic material
- Metals and other residues from burnt household appliances
- Decomposing food in your fridge following power outages
- Damage to on-site wastewater systems such as septic tanks or leach drains causing sewage problems
- Contamination of swimming pools or rainwater tanks with debris and bacteria
- Dead animals, particularly on farms, that need be appropriately buried.

The demolition of buildings or structures may require a permit from your local government.

## Before going back to your property



- For safety reasons, only adults should help clean-up materials after a bushfire.
- Do not enter your property until you have been told that it is safe by emergency services, Western Power or Horizon Power, or your local council.
- Buildings and other structures may be unstable to enter or walk on. Get advice from your local council building section to make sure it is safe before you enter.
- Be aware that hot, smouldering coals and other potentially hazardous materials may be hidden under the rubble.
- If you think buildings on your property may contain asbestos cement sheeting, take extra care – see the section 'Asbestos – clean-up and disposal' on this page.

## Looking after your health

If you are cleaning up during hot weather, be aware of the risks of heat stress and make sure you have:

- bottled drinking water
- food – perishable food should be kept cold in an esky or cooler bag
- sunscreen
- a hat.

## Protective clothing

- Wear strong enclosed shoes or boots and heavy-duty work gloves to protect you from broken glass, standing on sharp objects or getting burnt by smouldering coals.
- Wear protective overalls (with long sleeves and trousers). If convenient, wear disposable coveralls and dispose of them with other waste after use.
- Any non-disposable clothing (including shoes) should be washed or wet cleaned before reuse.
- If the property or site contains asbestos, disposable overalls should be placed in a sealed bag after use and disposed of as asbestos waste.

## Should I wear a face mask?

- A face mask should be worn if you are near any hazardous material in a fine of dusty form that may be being disturbed.
- Ordinary paper dust masks, handkerchiefs or bandannas do not filter out fine ash or dusts or any asbestos fibres that may remain. They are generally not very useful in protecting your lungs.
- Special disposable face masks (marked as P1 or P2 in accordance with AS/NZS 1716:2012) should be worn. They are available at most hardware stores. 'P2' masks filter out a slightly higher

proportion of fine particles than 'P1' and are more common.

- Wearing a P1 or P2 face mask can make it harder for you to breathe normally. If you have a heart or lung condition, talk to your doctor before using one.
- You should note that these types of masks are much less effective if there is a poor seal around the face and mouth. Men with facial hair, especially beards, will have trouble getting a good seal.

## Cleaning up and handling waste

Make sure you wear adequate protective clothing, gloves and shoes before handling any debris, ash or other waste.

- Any items that could be flammable or toxic, such as gas bottles, petrol, drums/bottles of chemical or poison, should be left where they are or separated from other debris. Get advice from local fire safety officers on safely disposing of these items.
- Wetting down ash and debris with water will help to limit airborne dust before you start cleaning up. Do not use high pressure water sprays as these can stir up ash and dust.
- Don't spread ash around your property, particularly if asbestos material or CCA-treated timber was burnt.
- Building rubble should not be buried. Hazardous materials such as asbestos or chemicals may contaminate soil and groundwater, which may also require controlled clean-up.

## Utilities and services

Electricity networks may be damaged and may not be energised, leaving you without power.

The top priority will be to make hazards safe, then restoration work will commence as quickly as possible. You may also need to have repairs done to the power lines and poles on your property.

Be safe – if you see a downed powerline or damaged electrical assets stay at least 8 metres clear and call 13 13 51 to report the hazard to Western Power.

Remember:

- mains water and sewerage services may not be functioning due to damaged pipes and/or lack of power to pump water
- mains gas supplies may be damaged or turned off
- mobile phone towers may be damaged or not supplied with power to operate (these towers only have limited back up battery power).
- you may not have access to internet services
- local Government Services may be affected.

## Asbestos cement material

You may have damaged asbestos on your property following a bushfire. This will mostly be asbestos cement sheeting (fences, walls, roofs, eaves).

### You should not enter a property that contains burnt asbestos

Burnt or friable asbestos sheets and material containing asbestos presents a health hazard and exposure to airborne asbestos fibres will be extremely high.

If in doubt, treat flat or corrugated cement sheeting from buildings built prior to 1990, as asbestos until confirmed otherwise.



### Important information

- During a fire asbestos often shatters from the heat and releases flakes of asbestos cement around the property.
- If damaged material is disturbed in a way that generates dust asbestos fibres can be released and inhaled into the lungs. Inhalation of asbestos fibres must be minimised to prevent asbestos-related diseases such as mesothelioma.
- It is possible that asbestos material from adjacent properties may contaminate your premises
- Following the fire, emergency services, local governments and environmental and health agencies take interim measures to prevent disturbance of asbestos contamination. These include:
  - erecting temporary fencing if practical
  - install asbestos warning signs
  - cleaning of priority traffic areas and
  - evacuation of adjacent buildings (in rare occasions)
  - It is important that your property is assessed, and controlled clean-up is done by an asbestos removalist with an unrestricted license.
  - If necessary and safe to do so, owners properly equipped with Personal Protective Equipment and Clothing (PPEC), may visit the site to reclaim personal effects with supervision. PPEC includes:
    - Well-fitting P2 or N95 mask / respirator
    - Disposable coveralls – if available or old clothes that can be disposed of later
    - Disposable gloves or waterproof ones that can be promptly washed
    - Disposable shoe covers – if available or waterproof shoes that can be cleaned

- You should not attempt to remove and dispose of burnt asbestos yourself.

## Small scale bushfires/property fires

- The organisation of the assessment and clean-up of asbestos contamination in smaller property fires is usually the responsibility of the property owner.
- The Local Government Environmental Health Officer (LG EHO) is usually the relevant regulatory authority under the Health (Asbestos) Regulations 1992, and supervises the clean-up process to ensure clean-up is correctly managed.

## Large scale bushfires

In large bushfires that require a multi-agency response and result in significant cost impacts to communities, the [Western Australian Disaster Recovery Funding Arrangements \(external site\)](#) may take charge of some or all of the clean-up and work with emergency and response agencies, and the Local Government Environmental Health Officer to manage risks.

## Asbestos professionals

For a list of Occupational Hygienists, who may be able to advise on site management, refer to the [Australian Institute of Occupational Hygienists \(external site\)](#).

## Licensed asbestos removalists

For a removalist with the required unrestricted license refer to [worksafe \(external site\)](#).

## Ash from copper chrome arsenate (CCA) treated wood – clean-up and disposal

Copper chrome arsenate (CCA) is a preservative that protects the timber from insects. Freshly treated CCA timber can be identified by its yellow/greenish colour, which fades to grey over time.

CCA-treated timber is commonly used in structures around the home including:

- decks
- garden furniture
- picnic tables
- playground equipment
- landscaping timbers, retaining walls and fences
- gazebos and patios.

Structures made from CCA-treated timber can be damaged or destroyed. The remaining ash and char from damaged CCA-treated wood can contain up to 10 per cent (by weight) arsenic, copper and chromium.

## Precautions for young children and animals

Although ash is too large to be breathed into the lungs, ash particles can irritate the eyes, nose and throat.

Swallowing only a few grams of CCA-treated timber can be harmful.

Children, pets and other animals must be kept away from contaminated ash areas until clean-up is completed.

## Safe disposal and handling

Before handling damaged CCA-treated timber, it is essential to wear personal protective equipment such as gloves and dust masks.

- Ash should be double-bagged, sealed and taken directly to your local landfill.
- Damaged timber can also be taken to landfill.

After coming into contact with ash, it should be washed off your hands, face and neck as needed (e.g. can use a portable camp shower to wash and change before leaving the site). If ash gets in your eyes, gently wash out your eyes with clean water.

If you or anyone in your family experience symptoms or is suspected to have swallowed ash from CCA-treated timber, seek medical attention.

## On-site wastewater system damage

[On-site wastewater systems](#) can be easily damaged during a bushfire. This includes [septic tanks \(primary treatment systems\)](#), [secondary treatment systems \(STS\)](#), [aerated wastewater treatment systems \(AWTS\)](#), and their land application systems, for example plastic leach drains, sprinklers and below ground drippers and connection pipes.

Plastic and fibreglass on-site wastewater systems, or systems made with plastic components, are more susceptible to damage than concrete tanks particularly if installed above ground. This includes shallow PVC pipes, plastic tanks and sumps, and plastic irrigation pipework which may be installed above or below ground. Pumps and other equipment with electrical components may also be damaged.



**If your system is damaged and presents an immediate safety risk, action should be taken as soon as practicable to make it safe. For example, if the lid is missing, place a temporary cover or fencing around the system to prevent access to the area. It is recommended that damaged on-site wastewater systems are not used until repaired or replaced.**

Avoid driving or walking near a fire-affected system until it is assessed by a licensed plumber or service technician familiar with on-site wastewater systems.

Contact with effluent or untreated wastewater from damaged on-site wastewater systems can cause illness and should be avoided at all times.

## Actions

Due to the risks associated with using systems after a bushfire, the following actions are recommended:

- If the on-site systems are damaged, make arrangements to repair the system as soon as possible

to prevent sewage from backing up into the house.

- Avoid driving or walking near underground pipes, tanks and tank covers and their land application systems, which may have been weakened or damaged.
- Reduce water use as much as possible until the system is inspected and repaired by:
  - reducing the frequency of toilet flushing for liquid waste
  - taking shorter showers or shower elsewhere
  - limiting laundry and dishwashing as much as possible. If possible avoid using automatic clothes washers and dishwashers.
- If the power has not been restored, the septic tank can be used as a temporary holding tank and pumped out periodically, provided the tank is not damaged. You may need to disconnect the pump (if present) and block the outlet to the land application area. If the tank is significantly damaged and can't be used as a temporary holding tank, do not use the system until it is repaired or replaced.
- Once power is restored, ponding may occur near the wastewater system and these areas should be avoided. Contact a licenced plumber or authorised service technician to reassess the system.
- Replace shallow PVC pipes if they have melted as they may cause blockages.
- Repair or replace damaged electrical components and pumps as soon as possible.

For further advice, please contact Environmental Health Directorate on 9222 2000 or email [ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au)

## Damaged chemicals poisons or pesticides after a bushfire

Buried, moved or dangerous damaged goods may include:

- gas cylinders
- containers of corrosives
- oils
- pesticides
- pool chemicals or industrial chemicals.

Extreme care must be taken when handling any spills or containers of suspected poisons, chemicals, gases or pesticides, especially if containers are damaged.

Do not handle or transport damaged gas cylinders.

Spills or containers of these goods should be isolated until safe management has been arranged.

Try to identify chemicals and their hazards using labels and markings.

If the label has been removed and the container is leak proof and sealed it can be disposed at a landfill facility that takes chemicals. For large quantities a chemical waste management company may need to be contacted to arrange safe disposal.

## **If there is damage to chemical containers resulting in a leak or spill**

- Contact the local fire services branch and any relevant authority for expert assistance
- Cordon off the area
- Do not wash spillage down drains
- If safe to do so, prevent spread of spilled material by using sand, soil or other commercial spill-containing products
- Minimise the potential for presence of an ignition point or flame in case the chemical is flammable.

## **General tips for dealing with poisons, chemicals and pesticides**

- For chemicals that can be identified, check the product material safety data sheet before handling chemicals. Contact the manufacturer /supplier or it may be available from their website. When handling chemicals wear personal protective equipment such as the chemical resistant gloves, protective eyewear and respirator fitted with the filters recommended by the material safety data sheet, enclosed footwear, long-sleeved shirts and trousers.
- Be aware that some chemicals are odourless and can pose an increased risk when working in an enclosed space.
- Separate chemicals from each other to prevent the risk of any chemical reactions. For example, oils and dry pool chlorine may cause a fire if brought together.
- Operating generators and other fuel-powered equipment should stay outdoors or be placed in a well-ventilated area to prevent the build-up of contaminant exhaust gases such as carbon monoxide.
- This includes preventing mobile plant (earth-moving equipment) coming into contact with containers, particularly gas cylinders
- Prior to switching equipment back on, check for any damaged parts and ensure all chemical processing and handling equipment(e.g. pool equipment) is checked and cleared for use by a qualified electrician.
- Contact your supplier regarding the safe return to operation for gas supply systems

## **Rainwater tank contamination**

Water in rainwater tanks on your property can be contaminated during or after a bushfire, either indirectly by ash, smoke, debris or directly by fire and firefighting activities.

If there is any risk of contamination, do not use water from your rainwater tank for the following activities:

- drinking



- preparing foods
- making ice
- washing and bathing
- cleaning teeth
- watering animals.

You should assume that the water in your tank is contaminated if:

- your roof is covered by ash or other fire debris
- There are dead animals on your roof or gutters or in your tank
- you think that your roof was covered by fire suppressant water either dropped by aircraft or sprayed from ground units
- the tank has been burnt by fire and the internal lining material is damaged
- the plumbing to or from the tank is damaged
- the water is cloudy, tastes or smells unusual or has an unusual colour
- the water contains debris or ash
- the water level has increased.

If you think that your water tank has been contaminated in any way, you can still use the water to:

- flush toilets
- water the garden
- wash clothes (providing it will not stain clothes)
- wash cars
- fight fires.

## Other sources of water

Water drawn from deep bores or wells should be safe to use. Do not obtain water from a creek or stream that has been affected by bushfire as the water may be contaminated.

## First rains

Ensure that all rainwater from the first good rainfall event after the fire is run to waste, as this may be contaminated by ash and other pollutants from the fire.

## Water testing

Water testing is usually not necessary as contamination after a bushfire is usually obvious.



If you would like to test the chemical quality of water in your water tank after a bushfire, contact a [National Association of Testing Authorities \(NATA\) \(external site\)](#), accredited chemical laboratory.

Refer to the Department of Health Publication, [Standard Drinking Water Test \(external site\)](#) for further information.

If you need advice about interpreting the results from any water testing after a bushfire, contact the Water Unit at the Department of Health by emailing [ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:ehinfo@health.wa.gov.au) or phoning 9222 2000.

## Can I treat rainwater to a drinking water standard if it has been contaminated?

No, it is usually very difficult and expensive to remove effectively any contamination caused by fire suppressants or any other potentially harmful by-products caused by ash from burnt bush, plastics and metals.

## Refilling your rainwater tank

You may need to drain and refill your tank with water from a commercial water carting company. Before you do, make sure that:

- the tank or any associated pipework has not been damaged by fire
- the tank has been desludged and cleaned, if contaminated, by a specialist contractor.

Do not reconnect your down pipes until your roof and gutters have been cleaned or rainwater from the first rains after the fire has been run to waste.

Make sure that the commercial carting company:

- uses the tanker exclusively for drinking water
- gets the water from a scheme drinking water supply
- has treated the water with at least 1 milligram per litre of chlorine while in transit
- follows the Department's [water carting guidelines \(external site\)](#).

## Drinking water

Water pipes and storage may be damaged. Before using mains water:

- check with your local council that supplies are safe
- run the taps for a few minutes to remove any contaminated water inside the tap
- thoroughly clean taps and their parts with hot water and detergent
- if you are unsure of the quality of your tap water, use bottled water or boil water before use. However, boiling water will not remove chemical contamination.

Sometimes following a disaster, a [boil water alert](#) is issued for areas connected to mains scheme water because the mains water may be unsafe to drink or cook with.

If a boil water alert has been issued, it is essential you follow this warning to prevent illness.

Your local radio station or [local government \(external site\)](#) will provide updates. Check their websites for information.

## Swimming pool contamination

After a bushfire, a swimming pool may contain debris including ash. This may affect the chemical balance of the water. Several actions may need to be undertaken before your pool is safe to use again.

Swimming pools should either be emptied or kept chlorinated to prevent the water quality from deteriorating.

Contaminated swimming pools can be a:

- source of odours and bacteria
- breeding place for mosquitoes
- risk to people who use them.

## Can the pool can be emptied

To determine whether your pool can be emptied following damage by a bushfire, advice from a building consultant may be required.

Emptying a pool situated in an area with a high water table or in water-logged soils may put the pool walls under stress.

Potentially contaminated pool water needs to be disposed of to a location where it will not cause overflow or contaminate other water bodies.

If it is safe to empty the pool:

- all water and residue should be removed
- flush plumbing pipes and replace filters
- clean and sanitise the pool floor and walls

Once completely cleaned, the pool can be refilled using scheme water. Disinfectant can be added to bring the pool up to the operating parameters.

## Where a pool cannot be emptied

For pools unable to be emptied, a trained technical operator will need to inspect the pool and determine an appropriate treatment to remove solids from the water.

Depending on the amount and type of inundation, the water may need to be treated over several days. Qualified operators should determine the time required for waste removal, chemical treatment process and chlorination to achieve the required filtration of pool water.

## Disposal of unsafe food

When bushfires cause the power to go out, it generally means the food in a fridge or freezer will go off.

Unless cold storage (below 4°C) is available within 2 hours of a power cut, all potentially hazardous foods like cheese that are typically stored in the fridge need to be placed in alternative cold storage, eaten immediately or disposed.

### If in doubt, throw it out

- Food will remain safe in your refrigerator for 2 hours. If it has been more than 4 hours, throw the food out.
- Food can remain frozen between 24 to 48 hours in a freezer. If food has thawed out throw it out.
- Food can remain frozen in a freezer that has been without power for between 1 and 2 days, provided it is in good condition and was operating at minus 15C or below. If the freezer door is kept shut, a full freezer can keep food frozen for up to 48 hours, while a half full freezer can keep food frozen for 24 hours.

Where larger quantities have to be disposed of such as for restaurants or cafes, contact the Environmental Health Services at your [local government \(external site\)](#). Without correct disposal, fly breeding may result and increase the risk of the spread of diseases.

## Dead animal control

Following a bushfire, many animals, particularly farm animals may not survive.

It is important to promptly dispose of these animal carcasses to prevent fly breeding, reduce odours, and protect surviving animals from disease.

Landholders should search their property for dead animals as soon as possible after a disaster, provided it is safe to do so.

In some cases, carcasses may have commercial value, so consider sending them to a rendering plant if possible.

If rendering is impractical, dispose of the dead animals on the premises.

## How to dispose of dead animals

- Cover a carcass with crude oil or kerosene to keep away dogs, scavenging birds and vermin.
- Well-fed pigs are the only animal carcasses that will burn satisfactorily. Old railway sleepers can be used as fuel. Burning of other carcasses is not recommended.
- Bury other carcasses. Use earth moving equipment if it is available.
- Choose a site where subsurface drainage will not reach water supplies.
- Bury the carcass at least 90cm to 120cm deep, so predatory animals won't be able to reach them.

- If quicklime (Builder's Lime) is available, cover the carcasses with it before backfilling. Quicklime speeds up the decomposition process.

Contact your [local government \(external site\)](#) animal control officer for further guidelines.

## Resources

- [Asbestos cement material following a bushfire fact sheet \(PDF 527KB\)](#)
- [Ash from CCA treated wood following a bushfires fact sheet \(PDF 454KB\)](#)
- [Damaged chemicals, poisons or pesticides following a bushfire \(PDF 452KB\)](#)
- [Damaged on-site wastewater systems following a bushfire fact sheet \(PDF 677KB\)](#)
- [Rainwater tanks after a bushfire fact sheet \(PDF 645KB\)](#)
- [Contaminated swimming pools following a bushfires fact sheet \(PDF 568KB\)](#)

## More information

Contact Environmental Health Services at your [local government \(external site\)](#).

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### Acknowledgements

Public Health

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Department of **Health**