

What is bushfire fuel?

Bushfire fuels are mostly made up of fallen bark and leaf litter, grass, tussocks, heath and shrubs. These fuels are thin and fine-structured, typically less than 6mm wide. They dry out and heat up quickly as a fire approaches, and burn fast.

These fine fuels burn in the fire front, the most dangerous and intense part of a bushfire. Heavy wood such as tree branches and fallen logs do not burn in the fire front, but often burn later after the front has passed.



Bushfire fuel is usually described by where it sits in the landscape.

Canopy fuels – the tops of the trees.

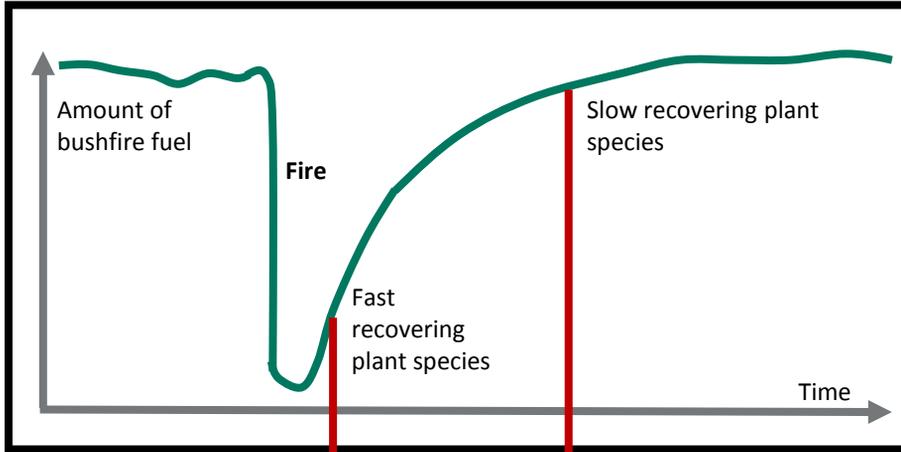
Bark fuels - rough, strappy or loose tree bark on the tree trunk.

Elevated and near-surface fuels - these are live or dead shrubs, grasses and heath.

Surface fuels - fuels sitting on the ground. Mostly made up of dead and dry leaf litter and twigs.

Fuel Reduction Program

Bushfire fuels are not constant over time. Bark and leaf litter accumulates as fresh bushfire fuel after a fire, and plant growth re-establishes the near-surface and elevated fuel layers. Depending on the type of bushland, this process can take as little as 5 years in dry open grassy woodlands or longer than 30 years in shrubby damp forests.



This graph shows how the amount of fuel changes during and after a fire. The amount of fuel burned depends on how intense the fire is. As fuel reduction burns have a lower intensity than a bushfire, there is always some fuel left behind.



Four months after a fire.
Fine fuel hazard **LOW**

Seven years after a fire.
Fine fuel hazard **MODERATE**

For more information, visit www.fire.tas.gov.au
or call the Fuel Reduction Unit on **1800 000 699** or fru@fire.tas.gov.au