



DHW Technical Guideline

TG015 Building in Bushfire Prone Areas

1. Purpose

This guideline sets out the Department of Housing and Works' (DHW) requirements for non-residential government building projects located in bushfire prone areas.

2. Background

State Planning Policy 3.7 Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas was first gazetted on 7 December 2015 with the most subsequent amendment occurring in November 2024. This policy applies to all land designated as bushfire prone by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) as highlighted on their Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas.

3. Requirements for government projects

All State Government non-residential building projects procured through DHW must be designed in accordance with the current version of:

- [State Planning Policy 3.7 - Bushfire / Planning for Bushfire Guidelines](#),
- DFES's [Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas](#)
- National Construction Code (NCC) and
- AS 3959 *Construction of buildings in bushfire-prone areas*.

This requirement applies to all DHW non-residential projects, whether development approval is required or not.

These Guidelines and Standards are designed to enhance building performance when exposed to bushfire attack. However, designers must be cognisant of a drying climate, more extreme temperature events and extended fire seasons due to climate change. To aid designers Section 5 below provides some sensible "climate -aware" approaches that are not mandated but should be considered.

3.1. NCC2022 Part G5 Construction in bushfire prone areas

New construction requirements have been introduced in NCC2022 for buildings built in designated bushfire prone areas to reduce danger to life, minimise the risk of loss of buildings and to provide shelter to occupants who are unable to evacuate.

Part G5 applies to the following building classifications:

- Class 2 – a building containing two or more sole occupancy units,
- Class 3 – a residential building providing long-term or transient, accommodation for a number of unrelated persons,
- Class 9a - health care building,
- Class 9b - early childhood centre and a primary or secondary school,*
- Class 9c - residential care building, and
- Class 10a - building or deck immediately adjacent or connected with the above class buildings.*

***Class 9b – Primary and Secondary Schools and Early Childhood Centres**

On 17 April 2025, Building Regulations 2012 were amended (*[Building Amendment Regulations \(No. 2\) 2025](#)*) to provide an extended transition period for the bushfire construction requirements in Part G5 for Class 9b primary and secondary schools and Class 9b early childhood centres, and any Class 10a building or deck immediately adjacent or connected to these building types.

From 1 May 2025 until 30 April 2028, a building permit proponent for the above Class 9b and associated 10a buildings or decks are taken to comply with Part G5 of the NCC (2022 edition) Volume One if they comply with Part G5 of the NCC (2019 edition) Volume One (Amendment 1).

Projects subject to this extended transitional arrangement are to follow the requirements of Section 4.2 of this Guideline.

This extended transitional arrangement does not apply to a Class 9a health-care building, a Class 9c residential care building, or a Class 10a building or deck immediately adjacent or connected to such buildings.

Existing buildings

Fit outs and renovations that are internal only are not required to adhere to the NCC2022 Part G5 requirements. However, for projects that involve modification of the external building fabric or extending the building footprint, compliance with Part G5 must be met, either by a deemed-to-satisfy solution for projects rated as BAL-LOW or BAL-12.5 and/or through a Performance Solution.

3.2. Buildings not required to comply with NCC2022 Part G5

Where the building is not required to comply with NCC2022 Part G5 but is located in a bushfire prone area (including the Class 9b buildings subject to the extended transitional arrangement above), DHW requires that it meets the requirements of AS3959 for the assessed BAL. The certifying Building Surveyor is to include the BAL assessment within their certification for Building and Occupation Permits.

Existing buildings

This requirement is to be considered and applied on building alterations and additions, and refurbishment projects with the intent that any new building elements (particularly to the external façade and mechanical services) do not increase the potential for ignition caused by burning embers, radiant heat or flame generated by a bushfire, and the intensity of the bushfire attack on the building.

4. Assessment processes for government projects

At the start of the project, design teams are required to check each project site on DFES's [Map of Bush Fire Prone areas](#). If any part of the site is marked as being at risk of bush fire, the design team shall carry out the following.

4.1. Buildings required to comply with NCC2022 Part G5

For Part G5 applicable projects, design teams are required to undertake a [BAL Assessment \(Basic\)](#) to determine if the proposed building has a low risk of fire exposure. The Department of Planning provides guidance on how to complete this assessment, refer to Appendix A.5 in the [Planning for Bushfire Guidelines](#).

If the criteria for a BAL Assessment (Basic) cannot be met, the design team will need to engage an accredited Level 2 or 3 BAL Assessor or a Bushfire Planning Practitioner to:

- confirm the site's BAL, and
- develop a bushfire management plan for the site.

Note: A Level 3 assessor is to be used for a vulnerable land use in all instances.

During Design Development, if not completed before the design team shall apply the site or design modifications as required, in accordance with NCC2022 Part G5, with the assistance of the building surveyor through a deem-to-satisfy solution or performance solution.

Performance solutions shall be submitted as part of the building permit application.

For further clarification on the NCC requirements, project managers and design teams are to contact DHW's Permit Authority.

4.2. Buildings not required to comply with NCC2022 Part G5

Design teams are required to undertake a [BAL Assessment \(Basic\)](#) to determine if the proposed building has a low risk of fire exposure. The Department of Planning provides guidance on how to complete this assessment, refer to Appendix A.5 in the [Planning for Bushfire Guidelines](#).

If the site's BAL is assessed as being LOW, no further action is required. If a DA is required, the BAL Assessment (Basic) documentation will form part of the application.

If the criteria for a BAL Assessment (Basic) cannot be met, the design team will need to engage an accredited Level 2-3 BAL Assessor or a Bushfire Planning Practitioner to:

- confirm the site's BAL,
- advise on required design and construction measures in accordance with AS 3959 and
- develop a bushfire management plan for the site.

Note: A Level 3 assessor is to be used for a vulnerable land use in all instances

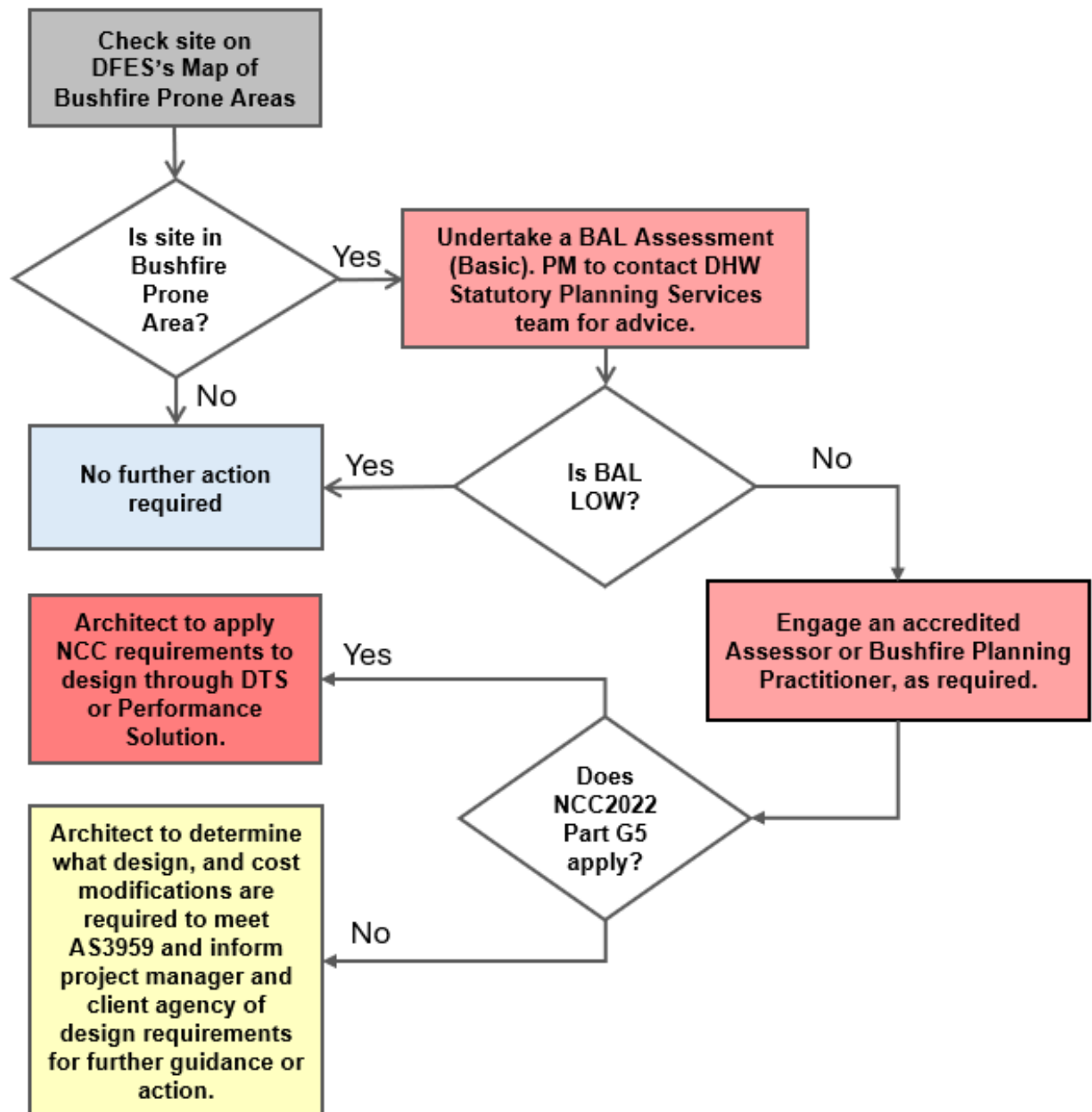
The project architect will need to identify what site or design modifications as required, in accordance with AS 3959, and any associated costs.

This information must be provided to the DHW project manager and client agency, for further guidance and action. This documentation will form part of a Development Approval application if DA is required.

For further clarification on these requirements, DHW project managers and design teams are to contact DHW's Statutory Planning and Asset Policy branch, who can provide guidance on planning requirements and BAL assessments.

4.3. Flow chart

This process is illustrated in the flowchart below:



5. Climate change considerations

Compliance with AS 3959 and NCC Part G5 should be regarded as establishing a baseline level of bushfire resilience based on current assumptions. Good design goes a step further by recognising how sensitive those assumptions are to changes in fire behaviour, and by favouring decisions—particularly around siting and landscape planning—that remain effective as conditions change.

Therefore, it is incumbent on designers to consider the potential effects of a changing climate in Western Australia when conducting the above assessments.

The following items, though not exhaustive are provided as guidance only.

5.1. Consider building criticality

As the consequences of failure vary significantly across different facility types, the criticality of a building should be considered alongside its bushfire exposure.

Therefore, consider designing to the next BAL level up (selectively), i.e. for marginal sites (e.g. close to BAL thresholds), and particularly for critical infrastructure or vulnerable occupants (schools, aged care, healthcare, etc).

5.2. Increase defensible space beyond minimum

Planning / landscape decisions can be more robust than construction-only fixes, (using distance and fuel management lowers the severity itself, whereas relying on construction methods assumes that the fire intensity remains within the prescribed severity limits).

5.3. Material and detailing robustness

Make more robust, items that often fail before primary structures, such as ember resistance, seals, and junction detailing.

5.4. Consider performance solutions

NCC Part G5 allows performance-based design. Where warranted this enables explicit consideration of higher fire-line intensity and longer duration exposure.

5.5. Future land-use change

Particularly relevant in peri-urban WA is the need to assume vegetation management may degrade over time – increasing fuel loads.

6. References

1. Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, *Industry Bulletin 169: Building Amendment Regulations (No. 2) 2025: Bushfire requirements for Class 9 vulnerable use buildings* https://www.wa.gov.au/systems/files/2025-04/ib_169_building_amendment_regulations_no2_2025_bushfire_requirements_for_class_9_vulnerable.pdf
2. Department of Fire and Emergency Services, *Map of bushfire prone areas* <https://maps.slip.wa.gov.au/landgate/bushfireprone/>
3. Department of Planning, *State Planning Policy 3.7 and guidelines* <https://www.wa.gov.au/government/document-collections/state-planning-policy-37-planning-bushfire-prone-areas>
4. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, *Planning for Bushfire Guidelines: For the implementation of State Planning Policy 3.7 Bushfire*, November 2024. <https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/docs/default-source/policy/planning-for-bushfire-guidelines---for-the-implementation-of-state-planning-policy-3-7-bushfire.pdf>

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