

The health and wellbeing of Victorian Adults affected by bushfires.

In light of Australia's Bushfire season, D'Accord OAS EAP wishes to extend our assistance to all of those who may have been previously impacted or are at potential risk of the upcoming season. We acknowledge the unexpected and enormous sense of urgency to respond and be alert to our community members and intend to be a step ahead in offering support to those in need.

Communities and individuals affected by the bushfires can go through a multitude of thoughts, feelings and behaviours. D'Accord OAS and our associates are prepared for the uptake of psychological aid that will be required to help people heal and support one another.

Access Support 24 hours a day 7 days a week, by calling D'Accord OAS 1300 130 130 (AU)

Personal Safety is Paramount

When supporting others in a time of crisis it is crucial to be aware of one's own wellbeing. If you find that your day to day functioning is being affected by thoughts and memories of recent events, please discuss with a mental health professional.

See a Mental Health professional for assistance if you are experiencing:

- Panic symptoms
- Feelings of extreme guilt
- Loss of interest in the future
- Feeling overwhelmed for no obvious reason
- Avoiding things that bring back memories
- Thoughts of self-harm or ending your life

Offering Support following a Traumatic Event

When speaking with someone affected by fire, re-assure them that their reactions are normal and be there for them without judgment.

Allow the person to discuss what happened, even if they become emotional. Calm yourself and listen attentively.

Try not to insist on talking if the person doesn't want to. They may need time alone with their thoughts. Remind them that you are there to listen when they are ready.

Dealing with Emotional After-effects of Bushfires

It is important during these times to maintain usual activities and routines where possible.

- Allow yourself time to heal.
- Re-establish enjoyable social routines.
- Spend time with family and friends.
- Talk about how you feel about recent events when you are ready.
- Engage in activities that encourage relaxation and selfcare.
- Explore and understand the impact of trauma and what to expect.

Bushfire Resources & Information

The impact of the bushfire season on people's mental health can be silent, but there is always support to lean on. We can see the wonderful resilience of our communities and environment when they feel supported and cared for. Together we support each other through what can be a very challenging time.

While there are a number of organisations at a local, state, and federal level lending assistance to those impacted by fire, D'Accord OAS is also providing immediate support on the ground, in person and via telehealth across the state during the fire season.

National Crisis Support Numbers for Individuals & Communities:

Lifeline – 13 11 14

Beyond Blue – 1300 224 636

GriefLine – 1300 845 745

Kids Helpline – 1800 55 1800

Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

Disaster Welfare Assistance Line – 1800 018 444

Victoria

Victoria Emergency Warning Map

- <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>

VicEmergency Information Hotline

- 1800 226 226
- <http://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>

Road Closure Information

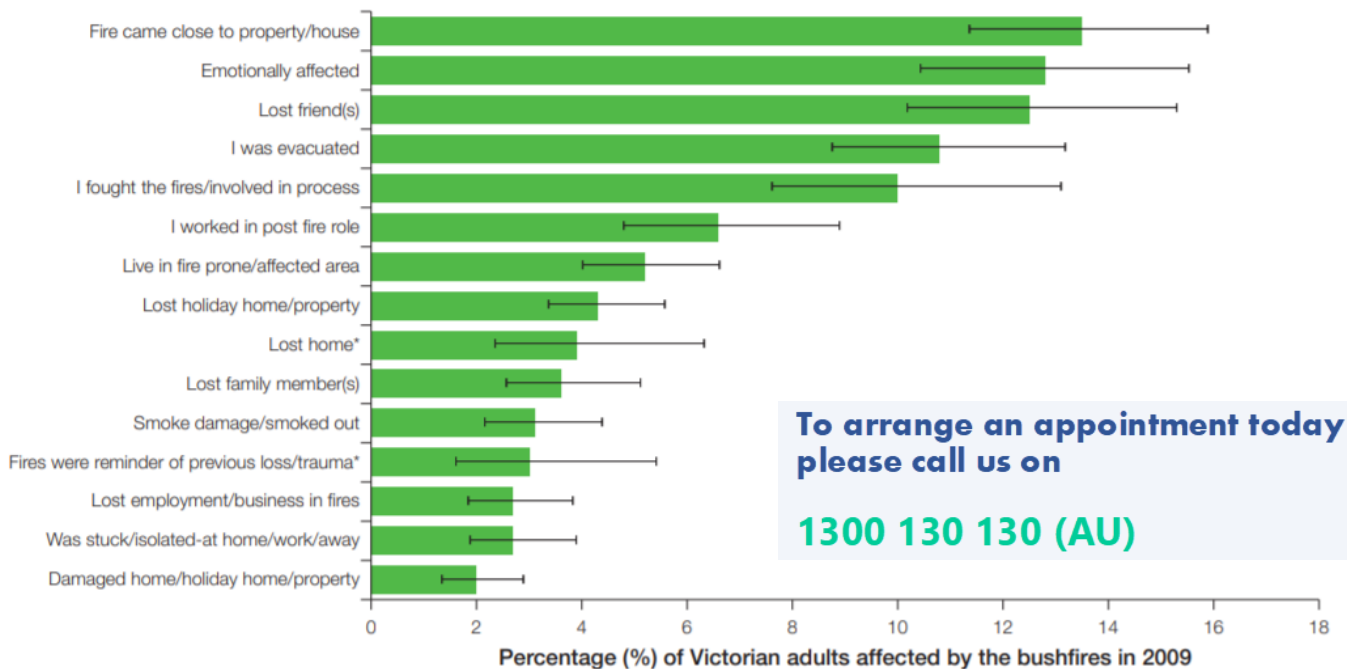
- <https://traffic.vicroads.vic.gov.au/>

Councils

- www.eastgippsland.vic.gov.au
- www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au

How were people affected by the bushfires in 2009?

Adult Victorians were affected by the fires in a number of different ways



D'Accord OAS empathise this time of year may resurface past or present trauma and grief. If either yourself, a loved one or a colleague are in need of emotional support, we encourage you to speak with one of our D'Accord OAS representatives who can direct you toward an appropriate clinician to offer support during this time.

Coping after a traumatic event

Everyone will respond in their own unique way to a traumatic event. Trauma can affect how you feel and think, and your physical wellbeing. This might include strong feelings of fear, sadness, guilt, anger, or grief. It can be difficult to think clearly, concentrate or remember details. It might also be difficult to come to terms with what has happened and how it has changed your life, making it difficult to cope with everyday stresses. Your sleep, appetite and social habits can also be affected after experiencing trauma.

After a traumatic event it can be helpful to:

- Understand that it's normal to have strong reactions to a traumatic event. Give yourself some time to recover.
- Express how you feel by talking to someone, writing about it or finding a creative outlet to share your reactions.
- Avoid using drugs or alcohol to cope. They will not help you feel better over time.
- Gradually confront what has happened rather than trying to block it out. Thinking about what has happened can be helpful as you begin to process your experiences. If you begin to dwell on it consider putting some time aside to think about it and then move on to something else.
- Try to maintain your normal routine.
- Look after yourself physically; maintain a healthy diet, get regular exercise and ensure you have enough sleep.
- Talk to your family and friends about what help you need.
- Teach yourself how to relax using techniques such as yoga, breathing or meditation, or do things you enjoy, such as listening to music or gardening.