



How much does it cost residents to prepare their property for wildfire?

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What does it cost residents to adequately prepare for wildfire?

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Wildfire (or ‘unplanned fire’) has resulted in significant loss of property and lives. Residents can improve the probability of survival of structures and themselves by undertaking suitable preparation. However, only a small proportion of residents adequately prepare for wildfire with monetary and time costs cited as significant impediments. Few studies have attempted to quantify the monetary and time costs for residents to prepare. Here we use data from an online survey to estimate the extent to which cost drives the probability of residents undertaking preparatory actions. Cost was found to be a significant driver if preparatory actions were being undertaken primarily for wildfire. However, cost was not a significant driver if the preparatory actions were partially or primarily for other purposes, e.g. landscape maintenance. The average cost for residents in our survey to adequately prepare for wildfire was approximately \$AUD 10,000, with a subsequent annual maintenance cost of approximately \$AUD 1,000. The largest costs were related to altering landscaping features, e.g. fencing, positioning of garden beds. Risks from landscape features, hence the cost to remove them, could be reduced through further development of guidelines or standards for building in fire prone landscapes. Overall, two primary factors were found to predict the extent of preparation of a resident – planned future actions and their risk perception. Residents who intend to evacuate in the event of a wildfire are less likely to prepare than those that plan to stay and defend, which points to a problematic gap between official advice to prepare regardless of intended actions and public tendencies to only prepare if they intend to stay and defend.