

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the concept of Green Bag flagging?

Displaying a Green Bag at the front of your property during an emergency indicates to the authorities that you've elected to self-evacuate ('Green means I've gone!'). That will allow Police or other agencies to first call on other properties where no Green Bag is displayed, thus saving time and possibly lives!

Why is the Green Bag system necessary?

Time is critical in evacuations and the authorities may only have a limited period in which to methodically check properties in an at-risk area, to ensure people are safely evacuated. Property-by-property checks are time-consuming and this method allows Police and other agencies to do it much more quickly and, in this way, potentially save lives. If emergency authorities are confident you've left for a safer place, they can check other properties first.

On evacuation, should I wait until I'm told by authorities to evacuate, or just decide myself?

It's far safer to evacuate early, rather than leaving it to the last minute. There may not always be time for someone to specifically warn you, so you need to be proactive. Take the advice of the authorities, listen to the radio and monitor social media or the internet if you can.

When should I use the Green Bag?

You should use the Green Bag as a flagging device when you are self-evacuating and when you know that no other people remain at the property. You should only use the Green Bag flagging system when you have time to do so, without delaying an urgent departure due to the emergency.

Where should I locate the bag if I need to use it?

You should put the bag at the front of your driveway, where it can be clearly seen by Police or other emergency authorities from the road and won't obstruct any emergency vehicle. If you share a driveway with a neighbour place your Green Bag at the point where your property splits off and if you have more than one driveway consider marking both if you can. Make sure you weigh down the bag and do not cover any house numbers.

What do I use to weigh down my Green Bag?

You should use something heavy, like a brick, rock or filled water bottle. If you don't have such an item, tie your Green Bag to your letterbox or a post ensuring not to cover any house numbers.

If I don't use a Green Bag, will I be in more danger, or worse off?

The Green Bag evacuation system isn't mandatory. You don't have to use a Green Bag if you don't wish to, but the system certainly helps the emergency authorities when they have to evacuate an area in a rapid time frame. You using the Green Bag system could help save the lives of your neighbours, friends or relatives who live in the same area, by improving the efficiency of evacuators. If there is ANY DOUBT as to whether a property has been flagged, it will be treated by authorities as not.

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What are the benefits of Green Bag flagging?

Green Bag evacuation flagging simply helps the authorities evacuate an area much quicker than normal, because they have a better idea of which property occupants have already left. Seeing a Green Bag means they can prioritise checking on properties where there is no Green Bag displayed.

Has it been tried and proven elsewhere?

Evacuation flagging systems are not new. They have been introduced successfully in Canada and New Zealand and work particularly well in small, semi-rural types of communities. The Shire of Bridgetown-Greenbushes successfully conducted Phase One of this trial in 2012-13 and will continue this season. Previous exercises in Denmark and Mundaring have also been successful.

Will the Green Bag evacuation flagging system be extended to other parts of WA?

At this time (2013-14), it is only being used in Bridgetown-Greenbushes, Armadale, Geraldton, Manjimup, Nannup, Wanneroo and York. If it is extended into other areas, the public will be advised. The authorities want to be absolutely certain this system works effectively and these communities were chosen from a number of local governments keen to participate in this trial.

Which emergency authority is responsible for using the system?

That will depend on what the emergency is. DFES is the hazard management agency for all fires in WA, although either DFES, DPaW or Local Government may be the controlling agency for a particular fire. Conducting an evacuation will normally also involve the Police, SES and/or other agencies. Generally, the Police are tasked by the controlling agency with coordinating bushfire evacuations.

What if I'm disabled or have poor mobility?

If you're disabled, old or unable to move easily, make sure you contact Police as early as possible to get advice about what you should do, and also to let them know of your circumstances.

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Why were Green Bags chosen as the flagging item?

Green Bags were selected because they are common, cheap, have a consistent colour and shape and are easily obtainable by most people (many may even have them already). It is also likely that people will know where to find them quickly in an emergency.

Won't it blow away or melt in a fire?

This is always a risk, but any flagging object can be subject to problems of this sort. Green Bags were considered a good option because they are common, cheap and consistent in colour and shape and people are likely to know where to find them quickly in an emergency. The usefulness of flagging the property is to speed up getting the message to residents to evacuate - that's before the firefront reaches the area. If the bag is blown away, then the property will be checked as if it had not been flagged.

Will marking my property affect decisions by firefighters about protecting my home?

No, marking your property is a tool to advise firefighters and Police officers that persons have left the residence when a WATCH and ACT bushfire warning has been provided. It will be used to assist firefighters and Police officers to quickly identify homes where people have not indicated they have left for a safer place. If there is any doubt that persons have not left the premises, it will be checked at the earliest available and safe opportunity to do so.

What about the security of my possessions?

Security of the evacuated area is an inherent part of the evacuation process. When leaving, you should lock your home as usual. If possible, leave any gates open or unlocked to assist emergency responders accessing your property.

What else do I need to know?

You should remember that the authorities will use methods such as radio, social media and the internet to disseminate public information about an emergency and what people should do. During an emergency you should try to monitor these sources of information to stay abreast of what's occurring.