

On the ground: VBA inspectors checking safety of bushfire-affected properties

The Victorian Building Authority is deploying teams of building inspectors to bushfire-affected areas to assist councils with their secondary impact assessments of fire-damaged properties.

VBA inspectors will visit properties across affected regions to identify hazards, assess the stability of any remaining structures (such as masonry walls and chimneys), and determine whether homes and outbuildings are safe to enter.

Inspectors will then provide an assessment report to the local council's municipal building surveyor, who will consider the VBA's findings and make an informed decision on the steps required to make the properties safe.

Possible actions municipal building surveyors could take include issuing an emergency order for the removal of damaged or collapsed buildings and structures, and any other action deemed necessary, such as bracing structures and fencing sites.

With the first inspections starting in the East Gippsland towns of Bellbird Creek, Cann River and Club Terrace from 10 February, VBA inspectors have recently completed specialist training to ensure they remain safe on properties with a range of potential hazards. These include collapsed structures, fallen electricity lines, asbestos, sewerage or septic system leaks, burnt trees, overhanging branches and hazardous chemicals.

The VBA's State Building Surveyor, Andrew Cialini, said the inspections were just one part of the Authority's months-long bushfire response program.

"The VBA has been supporting municipal building surveyors in bushfire-affected parts of Victoria for several weeks now by sharing information and resources, acting as a central point of contact for incident management advice, and co-ordinating the distribution of resources to where they are needed," said Mr Cialini.

VBA inspection teams comprising three or four people will spend four nights in bushfire-affected areas before returning to Melbourne.

Their deployments come after key access roads reopened to the public and East Gippsland Shire Council requested on-the-ground assistance from the VBA.

The Municipal Association of Victoria has also been assisting by providing co-ordination of resources from other council areas.

The VBA anticipates its deployments will continue on a rotating basis until mid-March and is currently [seeking further support](#) from registered building surveyors and inspectors who can assist with secondary site assessments in the region.

A registered building surveyor and inspector with vast expertise in bushfire response management has accompanied the initial VBA inspection team to observe inspection processes and determine how the VBA can provide additional assistance beyond its inspection activities.

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