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Installing an external water



spray system

by Tony Murphy

Why wait helplessly for your house to burn down next bushfire season? With this External Water Spray System and some simple preparation, you'll be ready to fight back

Most Australians (pyromaniacs excluded) looked on in horror as the 2001 Christmas bushfire crisis destroyed more than 160 houses and incinerated huge tracts of bush in south-eastern Australia. So with another bushfire season upon us, we thought a story showing how to save your property (and perhaps even your life) might be a good idea.

Our love of bushland living poses a problem for fire-fighters as, generally, our homes are not designed to cope with the destructive power of a bushfire unless they comply with Australian Standard AS3959.

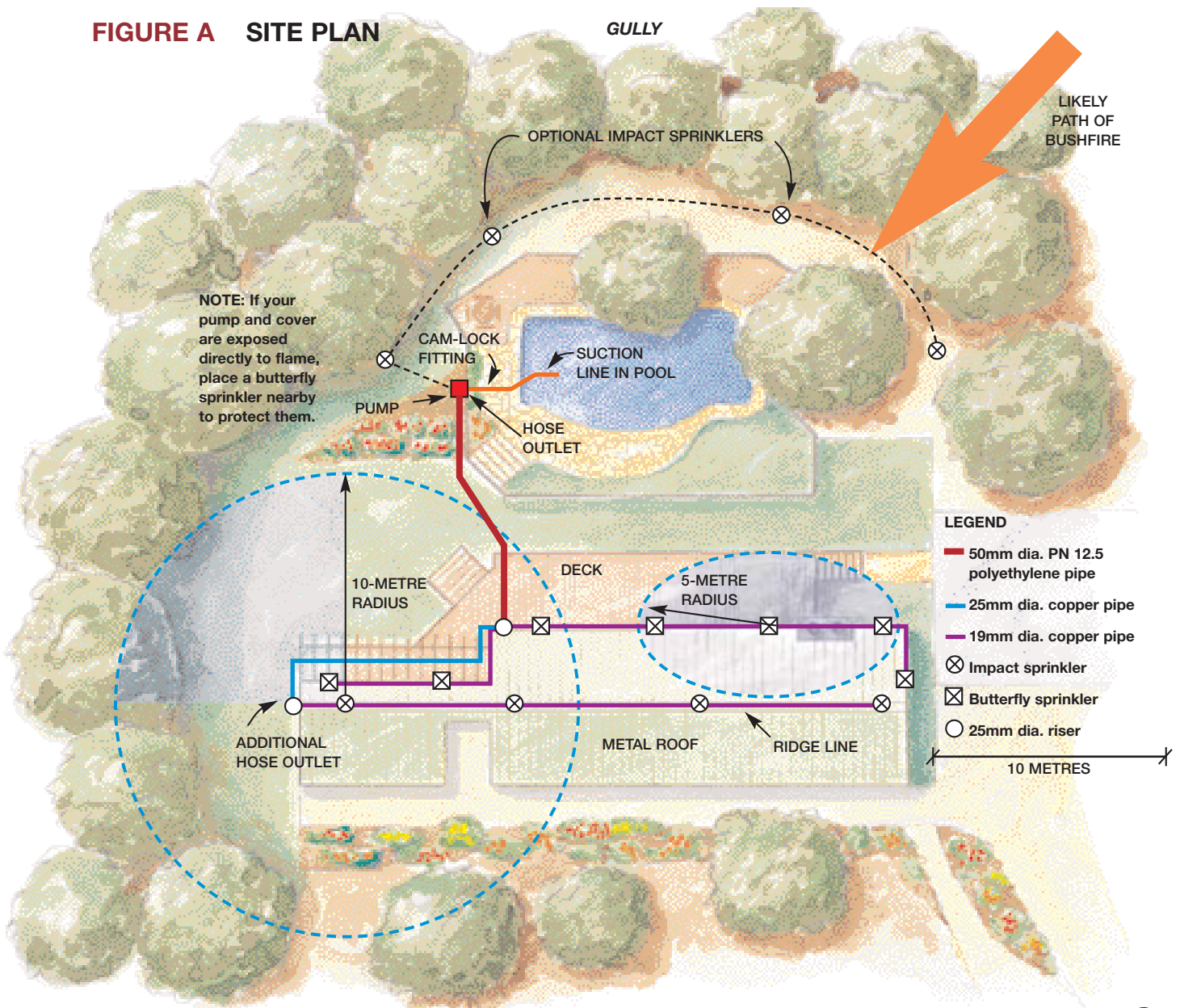
Unfortunately, it seems any national standard for External Water Spray Systems (EWSS) is years away; and though it's difficult to assess their performance in a bushfire, with high

temperatures, gusty winds and abundant fuel all fanning the flames, an EWSS will give you a huge advantage in bushfire defence. So we've collected as much wisdom as possible to produce a story that we hope will help the brave souls who fight for their homes every bushfire season.

An EWSS is not a guarantee that your property won't be damaged in a bushfire, but experts have told us that it will give you, your family and your property a sporting chance.

You'll need to get on a first-name basis with a good irrigation supplier. You'll be haunting them for a while, but that's fine as you'll be spending serious bucks there – around three to four grand for a job similar to that featured here – so make sure they offer plenty of advice and technical help.

FIGURE A SITE PLAN



Getting started

Start by making a scale drawing of your property showing external walls, windows, eaves, gable ends, decks, pool and other available independent water sources over 22,000 litres (Fig. A). A 1:100-scale drawing will be fine, but 1:50 offers more detail. Using your drawing, you can begin to map out the many elements of your system. These will include:

- Most suitable pump location;
- Type, positioning and zoning of sprinklers;
- Length, diameter and materials of tubing and pipework;
- Area covered by system.

To finish your map, you must do some homework with your 'new mates' at the irrigation shop. You should research:

- Sprinkler head type and performance data, including water spread and usage;

- Pump data, including flow rates and performance curves.

Is it all starting to sound a bit technical? It really isn't all that difficult. One word of warning here though: If your house or the area you wish to protect is large, or your water source is a long way from the area to be protected, talk to your irrigation supplier about it. If they suggest that you need a hydraulics engineer to design your system, spend the bucks and hire one.

A system such as that featured should take a competent DIYer around 6 days to install and test. By doing it yourself you could save around \$3000 (including the pump cover).

