



## Task sheet: Expert group 1 – Ignition of bushfires

How do bushfires start?

The following statistics are from the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, which has been collecting data on the causes of bushfires on public land. The first table lists the causes of fires, by percentage of total. The second table lists the causes according to the percentage of burnt land attributed to them.

Causes of fires, by percentage	%
Lightning	26
Deliberate	25
Agricultural	16
Campfire	10
Cigarettes/Matches	7
Unknown Causes	6
Miscellaneous	5
Machinery/exhausts	3
Planned burn escapes	2
Public utilities	1

Causes by percentage of area burnt	%
Lightning	46
Public Utilities	14
Deliberate	14
Miscellaneous	9
Agricultural	7
Planned burn escapes	5
Unknown Causes	3
Machinery/Exhaust	2
Campfire	1
Cigarettes/Matches	<1

Source: Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment

[www.dse.vic.gov.au/fire-and-other-emergencies/fire-management/causes-of-bushfire/bushfire-statistics](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/fire-and-other-emergencies/fire-management/causes-of-bushfire/bushfire-statistics)

Use these online resources to find out more about how bushfires get started.

- GeoScience Australia  
[www.ga.gov.au/hazards/bushfire/bushfire-basics/causes.html](http://www.ga.gov.au/hazards/bushfire/bushfire-basics/causes.html)
- Attorney General's Department, Emergency Management Australia  
[www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/Get\\_The\\_FactsBushfires](http://www.ema.gov.au/www/ema/schools.nsf/Page/Get_The_FactsBushfires)

# Bushfire Education



Using the tables of statistics, and the information you gathered in your research, answer the following questions.

- 1 a What are the main causes of bushfire ignition?
  - b How significant are man-made causes?
- 2 Which of the causes of bushfires are most preventable and which are least preventable?
- 3 Do the statistics support or contradict the belief that 'thunderstorms increase the danger of bushfires'?
- 4 How might public utilities (eg electricity supply) ignite bushfires?
- 5 What are commonly held beliefs about the causes of bushfires? To research this question, survey the rest of the class. Ask them to rank the following causes of bushfires from 'causing the most number' to 'causing the least number' of bushfires:
  - a cigarettes and matches
  - b campfires
  - c broken glass
  - d lightning
  - e deliberate
  - f planned burn escapes.