

# THE FIRES OF BLACK FRIDAY

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MSC

## WHERE

- Large areas of Victoria
- 2 million hectares
- Whole townships engulfed

## WHAT

- Large bushfires
- Extreme winds
- Large damage to environment and property

## WHY

- Carelessness by humans
  - Many people lit fires randomly
- Fire believed to have originated from humans
  - Burning off for land clearing and grass growth
  - Lighting campfires
  - Inappropriate sawmill operations
  - Domestic fires
- After drought
- Severe, hot, dry summer
- Extremely strong winds

- Potential causes:
  - Land owners
  - Graziers
  - Miners
  - Forest workers
- Rural fire service
- Country fire authority

## WHAT DO THEY THINK?

- No official cause identified
  - Potential causes identified above did not comment
- Fire brigade and management services say that it is very unlikely to ever get that bad again

## AFTERMATH

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## EFFECTS

- 71 people died
- Whole townships destroyed
- Many sawmills burned to ground
- Thousands of sheep, cattle, horses killed
- Millions of hectares of forests damaged
- Soil fertility affected
- Important water catchments impacted
- Soil burned so much that took decades for it to restore



## CHANGES OVER TIME

- Fire was only present for short period of time in 1939
- Not there anymore

## SHOULD IT BE LIKE THIS?

- No, it should not be like this
- Largely caused by many dangerous factors coinciding
- Not likely to occur again

- More back burning
  - These fires were the catalyst for widespread back burning
- Aerial firefighting
  - Water-bombing
- Better co-operation of competing agencies
- Better training for firefighters