

SAFE AS HOUSES

Next-generation construction materials increase levels of protection for those living in bushfire-prone areas



In an age when environmental credentials and energy savings are valued just as highly as aesthetics, builders are responding to the demand.

And after last year's Grenfell Tower tragedy in London and the Lacrosse building fire at Docklands in 2014, safety has also risen in prominence when considering construction materials for new homes and apartments.

Hebel — a building material prominent in external walls, floors and fences — is one of the next-generation products increasingly being used in houses, townhouse and apartment developments by builders such as Nostra Homes and Porter Davis.

Made from autoclaved aerated concrete (AAC), which was used for the rapid rebuild of German cities after World War II, the lightweight product has similar impact resistance as traditional brick and possesses superior insulation and acoustic qualities compared with other masonry products.

In other words, it's warmer in winter and cooler in summer.



Perhaps more timely though, CSIRO testing has shown Hebel achieves Fire Resistance Levels (FRLs) of 60 minutes through to 240 minutes, meeting or exceeding the requirements for all six Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) categories.

It isn't alone. FireCrunch BAL FZ masonry products have been shown to withstand temperatures of up to 1200C, and Stegbar has a range of timber windows and doors that

SMART MOVES

The CFA advises that where you live will dictate what to do before, during and after a fire.

But having a well-rehearsed fire plan is integral.

Your fire plan should incorporate the quickest and safest exit points from every room, meeting points, staying low if there's smoke, and a tried-and-true strategy for all family members to know how to contact emergency services.

Generally speaking, if you live in an urban area near grasslands, walk at least two streets back if a fire starts.

Be sure to cover up any exposed skin because radiant heat can cause serious injury or death.

Grassfires are unlikely to spread into built-up areas, but stay indoors and keep all windows and doors closed, place towels or blankets around the bottom of doors and window sills, and don't use the air conditioner.

Hebel is a versatile building material that is strong, solid and energy efficient.



Hebel products, including floor systems, are non-combustible and fire resistant.

Industry Association director of building policy Simon Croft said.

"The NCC in turn references Australian Standard AS 3959, which prescribes the deemed-to-comply construction and material requirements to follow when building in bushfire-prone areas.

"AS 3959 contains five classifications or levels for bushfire-resistance construction depending on where a building site may be located," Mr Croft said.

"Most building product manufacturers will advertise or label their product as to what bushfire resistance level it meets, so if you are undertaking building work in a designated bushfire-prone area you should look for products that meet the relevant bushfire resistance level applicable to that site."

Before moving in, a building surveyor will use the BAL to check compliance with the construction requirements of the standard for the area, including for floors, roofs, external walls and windows, verandas and carports.

meet the requirements for bushfire attack level BAL-40 (very high risk).

The renewed emphasis on safety through tighter regulations is particularly relevant considering that many of the new housing estates on Melbourne's fringe are being developed near or in bushfire-prone areas.

Hume and Whittlesea are among the 25 Victorian councils identified on a map of bushfire-prone areas that was created after the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission.

"In Australia, building work in a designated bushfire-prone area needs to comply with the National Construction Code (NCC)," Housing

YOUR EMERGENCY KIT

PLAN AHEAD

- Pack an emergency kit, including provisions for pets, and leave it in a handy place for quick deployment
- To preserve treasured memories, scan important documents and photos and store on a USB
- Download apps, such as VicEmergency; and save important contact numbers, including family and emergency contacts, in your phone
- Buy a battery-operated radio to stay in touch with the latest news; also buy a torch and extra batteries
- Mark your exit routes and petrol stations on hard-copy maps, including a Plan B option if possible
- Talk to the neighbours to work out how you can help each other

Source: CFA



ADVERTISING FEATURE

HENLEY

Every house at St Claire is already matched to a lot, making the buying process easier. (Artist's impression)

By Vanessa Mulquiney

Henley's new boutique residential development St Claire, in the emerging suburb of Wollert, has redefined premium Melbourne living with a range of house and land packages and ready-built homes on offer.

St Claire, 27km north of the Melbourne CBD, is Henley's latest master-planned

community, where every house is already matched to a lot, streamlining the home-buying process.

A beautifully designed and built community, St Claire is also backed by Henley's reputation for quality.

The lots in Stage 1 are already titled, which means buyers will not endure a long wait before building their dream home.

"Forget about long lead times for land titles and compromising on your favourite home design," Henley general manager land development Chris Betts said.

"Each lot at St Claire has a pre-planned house design matched to it, so you won't need to waste time hunting for the land you love or vice versa.

"Plus, our variety of lot sizes means that you can have the choice of a low-

maintenance backyard or a larger space for entertaining."

Buyers can choose from a selection of pre-planned house and land packages and then customise their homes with a choice of internal colours and finishes from Henley.

"The second option is a range of ready-built homes," Mr Betts said.

"It's as simple as it sounds — already built and ready for you to move into from November."

Both options include front-garden landscaping, fencing, driveway and letterbox.

St Claire will catch the homebuyer's attention for all the right reasons.

If you seek shopping convenience, Pacific Epping shopping centre — with more than 220 stores, including Coles, Woolworths, Target, Big W and Best&Less — is within easy reach. Westfield Plenty Valley shopping centre, including Village Cinemas, is also nearby.

The Hume Highway, Western Ring Rd and Metropolitan Ring Rd are easily accessible, while Epping train station is 4.8km away and the new Mernda train station only 11km away.

Built to last, a Henley home comes with a structural guarantee of 50 years. Henley is proud to put the company's name on its builds and will confidently stand by its workmanship for far longer than the industry standard.

stclaireestate.com.au