

## Bush Fire Policy

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### NQS

QA2	2.2.1	Supervision - At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
	2.2.2	Incident and emergency management - Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practised and implemented.

QA6	6.2.3	Community engagement - The service builds relationships and engages with its local community.
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### National Regulations

Reg	168(2)(e)	Policies and procedures in relation to emergency and evacuation
	97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
	98	Telephone or other communication equipment

### My Time, Our Place

LO2	Children develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities and an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active community participation
	Children become socially responsible and show respect for the environment

LO4	Children resource their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials
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### Aim

Our service aims to keep all children and educators safe at all times. Therefore, in the instance of a bush fire, the service will act at all times to protect the educators and children in line with recommendations and instructions from relevant emergency authorities.

## Related Policies

Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy

Emergency Service Contact Policy

Physical Environment (Workplace Safety, Learning and Administration) Policy

## Who is affected by this policy?

Children

Families

Educators

Community

Visitors

## Implementation

Our service will prepare a Bushfire Action Plan should a bushfire affect the service's operations.

The aim of this Bushfire Action Plan is to outline the activities that educators, children, families and visitors will undertake in the following circumstances:

- On days of very high, severe, extreme fire ratings including Total Fire Bans and Code Red Days
- When there is a fire in the local district.
- When a bushfire is threatening or impacting the site.
- During a period of recovery if a bushfire impacts the service.

During peak bush fire seasons, such as Spring and Summer, educators will monitor the Fire Danger Rating daily. If the Rating is Very High or above, educators will monitor the situation via the internet, radio or other form of local communication to stay aware of the current situation.

Our transport arrangements to evacuate children to the nearest bushfire safer place or last resort refuge if there's a bushfire are by busses, which will be situated in Bright or Myrtleford.

Our educators will follow a "leave early" policy rather than a "stay and defend" policy whenever a bushfire may impact the service.

### Closure due to Severe Bushfire Risk or Code Red Day

Services identified by the Department of Education as being in high risk fire areas will be placed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR). These services must close on days determined as 'Code Red' fire danger in their district by the Emergency Management Commissioner.

If the service will be closed due to severe bushfire risk or a Code Red day, the Nominated Supervisor will ensure that:

- families are advised as soon as possible about the service closure eg by SMS
- information about the closure is posted on the service website and any service social media
- families are also advised bus services will not run in area on Code Red days
- the advice is updated if the service will be closed for more than one day
- nobody, including staff, remain on site on days of closure.

If listed on the BARR, the Nominated Supervisor will:

- submit the current emergency management plan via the NQA ITS using Regulatory Authority Requested Information (RI01) form by the 21<sup>st</sup> of November every year
- ensure their provider and service contact details including after hours and emergency contact details are at up-to-date at all times.

## Preparation

Before the Bush Fire danger period (1 October to 31 March) our nominated supervisor will:

- ensure trees are trimmed to a distance of 2m from buildings.
- ensure any dead branches, leaves and undergrowth are removed from around buildings.
- ensure bark, heavy mulch, wood piles and any other flammable materials close to buildings are removed.
- arrange for any lopping of branches if necessary
- arrange for gutters and roofs to be regularly cleaned and kept free of leaves
- ensure tile and paintwork on buildings is well maintained
- ensure there is well maintained equipment to fight fires (eg long hoses with nozzles, buckets, sprinklers, petrol/diesel powered pump)
- prepare a bushfire survival kit which will be organised and stored somewhere that is easily accessible. This kit will include:
  - A copy of the Bushfire Action Plan
  - Emergency Contact Details for each child.
  - Child attendance registers.
  - Emergency telephone numbers.
  - Working torch and spare batteries
  - First Aid Kit.
  - Educators/Children Medications and Medical Register
  - Mobile Phone and Charger
  - Drinking Water
  - Woollen blankets
  - Towels
  - Gloves
  - Smoke mask

- Goggles
- Battery operated radio and spare batteries

This Kit will be checked at the start of Spring for contents.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will implement as many of the following as possible to further reduce the risk from bushfires, particularly in high risk areas:

- fit metal fly wire mesh or solid screens to spark proof windows, doors, ventilators and skylights
- close in all openings in eaves and under-floor areas
- seal all gaps in the roof area along the ridge cap, gutter line and fascia board
- extend wall cladding on buildings and sheds to the ground
- seal the flute spaces at the fascia board with fibreglass insulation or scribed flat metal with corrugated iron roofs
- use an appropriate fire rated insulation (sarking) immediately below the tiles in tiled roofs require
- install a sprinkler system with metal fittings to wet building and garden
- plant lower flammability vegetation, including plants and trees with a low oil and high water and salt content.

#### **Very High, Severe or Extreme Fire Danger Ratings including Total Fire Bans and when Fire is Reported in the Local District**

On days where the Fire Danger Rating is Very High, Severe or Extreme, or when fire is reported in the local district, the service will inform families by posting a warning by email and on the front door/foyer/noticeboard.

Children will be transitioned throughout the day as per our usual practice. However, if it's very smoky outside resulting in low air quality children will be kept indoors. Where possible fans will be used instead of air conditioning.

Any educators who planned to attend off-site training will stay at the service and have their training cancelled/rescheduled.

The nominated supervisor will ensure that:

- all gates have access keys and ensure the locks are in working order.
- all outdoor taps are in working order with hoses attached and buckets placed beside each exterior tap
- any outdoor industrial dumpster is closed at all times.
- all hazards are removed from passages and walkways and nothing is blocking emergency exits.

All educators will monitor conditions when outside. Educators will also ensure that no art and craft works, posters etc are hung outside and that garbage bins are emptied throughout the day.

Educators will ensure the Bushfire Survival Kit is easily accessible and contains a mobile phone which is in full working order, has a fully charged battery, and a battery charger. The Emergency Contact register, Daily Roll and the medical register for the day will also be added to the kit.

Family members will be required to provide a reliable contact number for the day together with their child's asthma medication.

### **Additional Steps Where Fire Reported in Local District**

In addition to the steps outlined in the previous section of the policy:

The nominated supervisor will ensure all preparation activities have been undertaken. They will also ensure there is a current evacuation plan in place that can be implemented after considering any local road closures etc.

All children's activities outside the building will be cancelled.

Educators, families and visitors to the service will be encouraged to reverse park their cars.

The nominated supervisor/educators will:

- turn off power and gas (including gas cylinders)
- back up all computer files.
- ensure that whistles are in place beside each portable fire extinguisher so they can be used to notify everyone if a fire starts on site.

Educators will be diligent in ensuring children's personal items are placed in their bags when not in use.

### **Fire Reported in Immediate Vicinity or Directly Impacting the Service**

The steps outlined in the previous sections will be followed immediately.

In addition:

The Nominated Supervisor will:

- contact and liaise with the emergency services
- implement emergency evacuation procedures if it is safe to do so
- implement emergency shelter in place procedures if it is not safe to evacuate. In this case the Nominated Supervisor will ensure educators:
  - move all hoses inside building
  - close all doors and windows
  - access the roof space every 10-20 minutes to check for spot fires
  - soak towels and place under external doors
  - block drain pipes and fill gutters with water



- continually patrol property for spot fires and extinguish
- remove curtains, move furniture away from windows

The nominated supervisor will inform the approved provider of the situation and regularly keep them updated.

The approved provider/nominated supervisor will inform the regulator about the situation, advising the number of children affected, the educator ratios in place and any issues or injuries that have arisen.

### **Recovery after the Front has passed.**

The nominated supervisor will:

- ensure that no educators, family members, children or visitors leave the service or evacuation centre until the situation is considered safe by the emergency services
- at all times work to keep the regulator aware of the situation, including the number of children affected, emergency educators ratios in place, any issues that arose and if possible the impact to the service.

The nominated supervisor will

- assess the situation and if necessary make arrangements for the care of children for an extended period of time
- continue to check the building and surrounds for 2-4 hours after the front has passed
- arrange to have fire fighting equipment, warning system and Bushfire Safety and First Aid Kits checked and readied for use again.

Educators at the service will stay on duty until all children have been collected or relief educators arrive.

Only a qualified educator will administer first aid should the situation arise.

Relevant educators will undertake a debrief of the fire emergency situation and the procedures undertaken. Educators will be requested to review their own roles, responsibilities and preparation before and during the crisis. The policy will be reviewed to ascertain its effectiveness.

If necessary, the approved provider/Nominated Supervisor will arrange for relevant authorities to check the safety of the site.

### **Fees and Charges**

Attendance fees for the day will still be charged. Child Care Subsidy payments are available if your child is absent for any reason for up to 42 days each financial year. Should a family member be unable to collect, or arrange collection of their children within one hour of the usual operation hours of the service, late fees will apply as per our Fees Policy.

## **Sources**

**National Quality Standard**

**Education and Care Services National Regulations**

**The Bushfire Royal Commission Report Vic 2009**

**My Time Our Place Framework for School Age Care**

**Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004**

**Emergency Management Act 1986**

**Guide to Developing an Emergency Management Plan by DEECD Victoria**

**[www.mychild.gov.au](http://www.mychild.gov.au)**



## Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by:

- Management
- Employees
- Families
- Interested Parties.

**Reviewed: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2020**

**Date for next review: 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021**