

Bushfire or Grassfire Policy

Aim

Our service aims to keep all children, employees and visitors safe at all times. In the event of a bushfire or grassfire that may or has impacted the service, all managers and employees will take appropriate action to protect children, employees and visitors in line with recommendations and instructions from relevant emergency authorities.

Implementation

If bushfires or grassfires have been identified as a potential risk to our Service, this Policy and Procedures form part of our Emergency Management Plan as discussed in our Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy. As outlined in that Policy, bushfire and grassfire emergency procedures implemented to manage the risk of these potential emergencies must be rehearsed at least every three months to ensure all employees and children can respond effectively. The Nominated Supervisor will also ensure all staff, including relief staff, and families are aware of this Policy and relevant emergency responses by including the Policy in staff induction processes and in information provided to families, including policy review processes.

To ensure the safety of all children, employees and visitors, the Nominated Supervisor will prepare a **Fire Action Plan** covering:

- The following fire ratings in local area
 - High - Fires can be dangerous. Be ready to act
 - Extreme - Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous. Take action now to protect life and property
 - Catastrophic - If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost. For your survival leave bushfire risk areas.
- a bushfire or grassfire in the local district
- a bushfire or grassfire threatening or impacting the service
- recovery after a bushfire or grassfire impacts the service.

As we are located on or near a school site, the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will work with school staff to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach is taken to manage fire emergencies, including potential access to shelter-in-place buildings nominated by the school as a last resort sheltering option.

The Nominated Supervisor and all educators will follow a “leave early” policy rather than a “stay and defend” policy whenever a bushfire or grassfire may impact the service.

Preparation

The Nominated Supervisor will diarise to ensure the following prevention measures are implemented before and during the bushfire danger period (1 October to May although bushfire risk can vary across the state, from season to season and from year to year) and may use a bushfire and grassfire readiness checklist like that prepared by the VIC Dept of Education and Training to ensure all relevant fire preparation actions are completed.

Before bushfire danger period

- trees trimmed so they're at least 2 metres from buildings
- gutters and roofs regularly cleaned
- dead branches, leaves and undergrowth removed from around buildings
- bark, heavy mulch, wood piles and other flammable materials which are close to buildings removed (and flammable materials stored safely)
- firefighting equipment checked to ensure it's well maintained and ready (eg long hoses with nozzles, buckets, sprinklers, petrol/diesel powered pump, portable fire extinguishers), and maintenance immediately organised if not (see Physical Environment Policy for maintenance schedule under AS 1851-2012)
- location of current bushfire neighbourhood safer places and last resort refuges nearby reviewed by visiting [CFA](#) and communicated to all employees
- emergency/safe refuge kit prepared/checked at start of Spring.

Before and during the bushfire danger period

- regularly check for and remove any vegetation, debris, or rubbish around or under buildings that may be easily ignited
- check all staff can operate relevant fire equipment and organise training if required
- ask families to confirm or update their emergency contact details
- check children's asthma management plans are current and their medication has not expired.

The Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor will implement as many of the following as possible to further reduce the risk from bushfires or grassfires, 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
- instal 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.

During peak bushfire seasons the Nominated Supervisor will monitor the Fire Danger Rating daily and take appropriate action consistent with the Fire Action Plan below.

Bushfire information and updates is available from:

- local media eg local ABC radio
- bushfire Apps including 'Fires Near Me'
- traffic apps which may detail related road closures eg VicTraffic
- social media eg Vic Emergency
- VicEmergency Hotline on 1800 226 226
- websites including [VIC Emergency](#) and [CFA](#).

Our transport arrangements to evacuate children to the nearest bushfire safer place or last resort refuge if there's a fire, including where the fire danger rating is catastrophic and bus services are cancelled, are: **<insert transport arrangements including action if planned arrangements cannot be actioned>**

Services identified by the Department of Education and Training as being in high risk bushfire areas will be placed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register. If listed on the Register, the Nominated Supervisor will:

- ensure their provider and service contact details including after hours and emergency contact details are up to date at all times
- maintain a register of bushfire emergency equipment, update it at least once during the October to May bushfire season and ensure the equipment is in working order. Equipment may include water supplies and equipment, fire hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers, sprinkler systems, alarms, fire blankets and communication systems
- consult annually with relevant local authorities (eg CFA, Fire Rescue Victoria, local Council) where possible and appropriate about fire preparations, action plans and compliance issues, including compliance advice on the Shelter-in-Place building, and keep a record of consultation or visit
- submit the current emergency management plan via the NQA ITS using Regulatory Authority Requested Information (RI01) form by the 1st of September every year.

Closure due to Bushfire or Grassfire Risk

We will not accept children on days when there is a catastrophic (formerly Code Red) danger rating applying in the immediate area. Generally schools in the local area will be directed to close where there is a catastrophic local fire warning and the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor may use this information to inform their decision about closing the service. Services located on or close to school grounds will liaise with school Principals and staff to ensure a consistent and co-ordinated approach is taken to manage fire emergencies.

OR

Closure due to Bushfire or Grassfire Risk

Services such as ours on the Bushfire At-Risk Register must close on days determined as catastrophic (formerly Code Red) fire danger in their district by the Emergency Management Commissioner. We will not operate any of our bus routes on these days. A list of services on the Register is available on the Department of Education and Training's website.

AND

Services such as ours classified by the Department as Category 4 - at some risk of bushfire or grassfire- must close on days determined as catastrophic (formerly Code Red) fire danger in their district by the Emergency Management Commissioner. We will not operate any of our bus routes on these days. A list of services classified as Category 4 is available on the Department of Education and Training's website.

If the service will be closed, the Nominated Supervisor will ensure that:

- families are advised as soon as possible about any service closure eg via SMS, social media or Smartphone Apps
- information about the closure is posted on the service website and any service social media
- 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.

Fire Action Plan

The Nominated Supervisor and educators will ensure children are protected from smoky environments resulting in low air quality by keeping children indoors with windows, doors and air vents closed and sealed where possible. Where possible fans will be used for cooling or air conditioning set on recycle mode if this feature available.

High Fire Danger Rating

Educators will transition children throughout the day as usual, but keep them indoors if it's very smoky outside resulting in low air quality.

The following steps will be implemented to protect children and adults at the Service:

1. Nominated Supervisor tells families about fire rating eg display warning in the entrance/on noticeboard/on website/service social media
2. Nominated Supervisor
 - Checks there are keys which open any gates/locked doors and makes sure they work
 - Monitors conditions when outside and regularly during the day using radio, internet etc
 - Checks passageways and exits are clear
 - Checks outdoor taps and hoses work properly
 - Checks Emergency/Safe Refuge Kit – ensure there's a charged phone and charger.
 - Adds copies of emergency contact details for children and staff, child and staff attendance sheets, and Medication register for the day
 - Has medications (children and staff) ready to go including emergency asthma inhalers

Educators

- Regularly empty bins - ensure any outside industrial dumpster is kept closed
- Check passageways and exits are clear

Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings

Where the Service is open during days when there is an extreme **or catastrophic (remove 'or catastrophic' if on the Bushfire At-Risk Register or classified as Category 4)** fire danger rating affecting the local area, the Approved Provider or Nominated Supervisor may decide to pre-emptively close the Service at any time and children must be collected as soon as possible. Where this is not safe or possible, children will be evacuated or cared for in line with our emergency management procedures if required. Families will be advised about any closure as soon as possible via social media, service website, SMS or email. Multiple channels may be used to assist the flow of information.

In addition to the steps taken when the fire rating is High, the following steps will be implemented to protect children and adults at the Service when local fire ratings are extreme or catastrophic:

Nominated Supervisor:

1. ensures all families aware of extreme or catastrophic fire rating, the potential for Service to close, and that children may need to be urgently collected eg display warning in the entrance/on noticeboard/on website/service social media.

2. asks families to provide a reliable contact number for the day and advised to monitor the Service social media, website, messages, email for information about any emergency fire events.
3. cancels offsite training, and children's outdoor activities including excursions and bush kindy programs
4. urgently reviews evacuation plans and checks evacuation route and transport requirements to ensure they can be implemented after considering any local road closures, transport issues or similar circumstances. They will contact relevant authorities for advice if required
5. ensures:
 - firefighting equipment is ready (eg long hoses with nozzles, buckets, sprinklers, petrol/diesel powered pump, whistles beside portable fire extinguishers)
 - buckets placed beside each outside tap
 - employees and visitors reverse park cars
 - arranges back up of computer files (to external source)
 - turns off gas cylinders if on premises
 - turns off air conditioning unless confident it's not drawing in smoky air from outside

Educators:

- keep children inside and engaged in indoor activities
- keep any artwork, posters etc inside not outside
- ask employees and visitors to reverse park cars
- cancel all outdoor activities including excursions and bush play programs

Fire in Local Area

If there is a fire in the local area, the Nominated Supervisor must assess the risk of the fire impacting the Service, in consultation with relevant authorities where relevant, and take appropriate action consistent with the local fire danger rating at the time. This may include, for example, implementing the Emergency Evacuation Procedure (attached to Policy). Action taken, for example, will differ if there's a fire in the local area and the danger rating is moderate (most fires can be controlled) compared to the action required if there's an extreme or catastrophic fire danger rating.

Fire in Immediate Area or Impacting Service

The Nominated Supervisor will immediately call 000, follow all advice, and if safe to do so, implement the Emergency Evacuation Procedure.

If impossible to evacuate

The Nominated Supervisor will immediately call 000, follow all advice, and implement the Shelter in Place Emergency Procedure (attached to Policy).

After fire threat/impact

Nominated Supervisor will implement recovery phase of emergency procedures which are attached to this Policy.

Fees and Charges

Attendance fees for the day will still be charged. Child Care Subsidy payments are generally still available if a child is absent because of a fire emergency. Should a family member be unable to collect, or arrange collection of their children of the usual operation hours of the service, late fees will apply as per our Fees Policy.

Related Policies

Bush Play Policy

Emergency Management and Evacuation Policy

Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy

Physical Environment and Safety Policy

Sources

National Quality Standard

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.

6.2.3 Community engagement - The service builds relationships and engages with its local community.

Education and Care Services National Law

167 Offence relating to protection of children from harm and hazards

Education and Care Services National Regulations

168(2)(e) Policies and procedures in relation to emergency and evacuation

97 Emergency and evacuation procedures

98 Telephone or other communication equipment

Early Years Learning Framework

Learning Outcome 2

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

Learning Outcome 4

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

Other

Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness VIC DET

DET VIC Code Red Days, Bushfire at Risk Register

Guide Fire Ready Kit – CFA

The Australian Fire Danger Rating System Fact Sheet

The Bushfire Royal Commission Report Vic 2009

www.mychild.gov.au

DET VIC

Review

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Approved Provider, Supervisors, Employees, Families and any committee members.

Reviewed: 1st May 2023

Date for next review: 1st may 2024

Emergency Evacuation Procedure Bushfire and Grassfire

Nominated Supervisor must monitor conditions and advice from emergency services eg local ABC radio, emergency apps eg VicEmergency, Fires Near Me, traffic apps eg VicTraffic, social media eg Vic Emergency, VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226, websites eg [VIC Emergency](#) and [CFA](#).

1. Nominated Supervisor
 - sounds alarm and says an evacuation (not practice) is taking place
 - calls 000
2. Nominated Supervisor implements emergency evacuation arrangements, including transport plan if required (ie no safe assembly area). This may mean advising emergency services transport for children and adults at centre urgently required if planned transport unavailable
3. All educators on breaks return to their room to help evacuate children to assembly area
 - if children are outside evacuation may occur from there if this is the safest option
 - if only some children outside educators/Room/Group Leader will immediately decide who is responsible for evacuating children who are inside and outside
4. Room Leaders advise which educators in room will
 - evacuate mobile children
 - help children and adults who cannot walk by most appropriate method which has been previously discussed eg wheelchairs, physical assistance
5. Educators evacuate children to assembly area
 - wherever possible use the stairs NOT the lifts in a multi-storey building unless the stairs are unsafe. Never use lifts if there's a fire
 - conduct head count so aware if all children accounted for
 - locate child if there is time to do so and this won't risk safety of other children/adults.

Educators must acknowledge Room/Group Leader's directions.
6. Nominated Supervisor advises which educators/staff will check toilet, kitchen, playrooms and outside areas for children and adults and guide remaining children and visitors to the on-site/off-site assembly point.

Educators/staff must acknowledge Nominated Supervisor's directions.
7. Designated educators/staff evacuate toilet, kitchen, playrooms and outside areas to assembly area
8. Nominated Supervisor collects children's and staff attendance sheets, visitor register and the Emergency Kit including medications before leaving centre (must include parent/guardian phone numbers)
9. Educators check all children in their groups are present at assembly area using attendance sheets
 - report any absences to Nominated Supervisor as soon as possible
10. Nominated Supervisor checks all educators, staff and visitors are present at assembly area

11. Nominated Supervisor advises emergency services immediately if any child or adult is missing and follows their advice
12. Educators and staff supervise and reassure children
13. Educators and staff support children, staff and visitors who are injured and apply first aid if required
 - first aid applied by employees with current first aid qualifications
14. Educators and staff follow instructions from emergency services
15. Nominated Supervisor and educators contact parents/guardians to tell them what has and will happen by the most appropriate method in the situation eg via service website, email, answering machine, telephone calls, phone texts
16. Nominated Supervisor ensures no-one leaves assembly point until emergency services give all clear

Next steps – see After Fire Evacuation or Shelter in Place Emergency Procedure

Emergency Shelter-in-Place Procedure Bushfire and Grassfire

Nominated Supervisor must monitor conditions and advice from emergency services eg local ABC radio, emergency apps eg VicEmergency, Fires Near Me, traffic apps eg VicTraffic, social media eg Vic Emergency, VicEmergency Hotline 1800 226 226, websites eg [VIC Emergency](#) and [CFA](#).

Shelter-in-place as last resort until either fire has passed or a more suitable alternative is available.

1. Nominated Supervisor:
 - sounds alarm or agreed warning system if safe to do so
 - calls emergency services on 000 and advises nature of emergency
2. Nominated Supervisor and educators quickly move all children, employees and visitors to the shelter-in-place location
 - help children and adults who cannot walk by most appropriate method eg wheelchairs, physical assistance
3. If safe to do so, Nominated Supervisor organises to:
 - move hoses inside
 - block drainpipes and fill gutters with water
 - close all doors and windows
 - soak towels and place under external doors
 - turns off gas supplies
 - remove curtains, move furniture away from window
4. Nominated Supervisor collects children's and staff attendance sheet, visitor register and the Emergency Kit
5. Educators check all children in their groups are present
 - report any absences to Nominated Supervisor as soon as it is safe
6. Nominated Supervisor checks all educators, staff, children, and visitors are present
7. Nominated Supervisor advises emergency services immediately if any child or adult is missing
8. If safe to do so Nominated Supervisor:
 - checks roof space every 10-20 minutes for burning embers/fires
 - continually patrols property for spot fires and extinguishes
9. Educators and staff supervise and reassure children
10. Educators and staff support children, staff and visitors who are injured
11. Educators and staff follow instructions from emergency services
12. If possible Nominated Supervisor contacts parents/guardians to tell them what has and will happen, including if children need to shelter-in-place beyond service closing time
13. Nominated Supervisor ensures no-one leaves until emergency services give all clear

Next steps – see After Fire Evacuation or Shelter in Place Emergency Procedure

After Fire Evacuation or Shelter in Place Emergency

1. Nominated Supervisor ensures children or adults who are injured receive medical attention if required
2. Nominated Supervisor and educators contact parents/guardians to collect children if required eg via service website, email, answering machine, telephone calls, text
 - tell parents/guardians any relevant information eg building damaged and unsafe, evacuation point, areas to avoid, parking instructions
3. Nominated Supervisor ensures educators stay on duty to care for and supervise children (after rostered hours if necessary) until families or relief staff arrive
4. Nominated Supervisor implements following where parents/guardians cannot be contacted, or are unable to get to the centre, to collect their child:
 - contact parents/guardians and authorised nominees every **15** minutes where previous attempts to make contact have been unsuccessful
 - ensures there are enough service staff available (including relief staff) to adequately care for and supervise each child
 - ensures child is never left alone with any adult unknown to staff, or not assisting in managing the emergency or child's care in a professional capacity
 - contact the police or Child Protection Services for advice if emergency is over and service staff are unable to stay with the child any longer
5. Following a shelter in place emergency, Nominated Supervisor organises for:
 - hoses to be moved outside
 - premises and surrounds to be regularly checked for 2-4 hours after fire
6. Complete Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record for children that have suffered an injury or trauma
7. Get parent/guardian to sign Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record and give them a copy
8. File original Record in child's file and record summary details in the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Register, including time notified to Regulator if relevant
9. Nominated Supervisor notifies the Regulator of serious incident within 24 hours through NQS ITS and records summary details in the Serious Incident Register, including time notified to Regulator if relevant
 - File acknowledgement with Incident Record in child's file
10. If service closes Nominated Supervisor reports closure and reason within 24 hours to:
 - CCS Assessments CCSAssessments@dese.gov.au
 - Regulatory Authority
 - any third-party software provider

Advise these agencies when service reopens.
11. Nominated Supervisor notifies the Work Health and Safety Authority as soon as possible about **work-related incidents** where:
 - a person dies

- a person suffers a serious injury or illness
- there's a dangerous incident (near miss)

Refer WHS Regulator (eg SafeWork/WorkSafe) for more information.

12. File notification in WHS Register
13. Debrief after emergency, review emergency plan, response and roles, and implement any improvements to policy and procedures if required.
14. Record improvements in QIP
15. Nominated Supervisor organises for:
 - any used fire equipment to be checked and replaced if necessary
 - safety inspection of site if necessary by relevant authorities