

Bushfire Policy

Written by	<i>Principal</i>
Date approved by School Council	<i>May 2019</i>
Date of Review	<i>May 2022</i>

Rationale

Due to the potentially devastating effects of bushfire, certain schools have been placed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register, with added implications for planning and provisions surrounding the event of a bushfire. Mount Eliza North Primary School is on the Bushfire At-Risk Register. The incidence of bushfire in Victoria highlights the need for our School to be thoroughly prepared. The School's Emergency Management Plan addresses the risk and procedure for dealing with Bushfire Emergencies and Incidents, and is informed by the DET's School Site Bushfire Readiness Review Checklist. This checklist covers:

- arrangements for the safety and welfare of staff and students, including relocation to pre-arranged sites or rendezvous points;
- readiness levels and "trigger points" for decisions regarding school closure;
- monitoring fire risks and activity on high-risk or total fire ban days;
- notification arrangements to emergency services;
- accessing support, including transportation (e.g. buses) at short notice, in line with "stay or go" planning strategies;
- communications plan and contact lists (including school community, local government and emergency services); and
- roles and responsibilities of school personnel in executing emergency plans.

Aims

- To ensure the safety and wellbeing of the 'Whole School Community' during incidents of Bushfire or potential Bushfire.

Implementation

Where possible, up to 3 days' notice of a planned closure will be provided by DET should the School be required to close due to a **CODE RED Day**. Parents and carers should, however, expect that in some instances fewer than 3 days' notice may be provided.

- The final decision to close should be confirmed by 12 noon the day prior by DET. This decision will not change and cannot change regardless of any changes in the weather forecast.
- When the School is closed for bushfire, NO staff or members of the School community will remain on site OR are permitted on site during a closure (DET Requirement).
- The Principal will review the timing arrangements for the release of students on days of extreme fire danger, including their movement by bus at the end of the school day, when fire risk is generally higher.
- Parents will be notified at the start of the "summer period (term 4) and again at the beginning of the school year about these arrangements, including arrangements for communicating emergency information to them.

Off-site activities as per DET Policy

- The safety of students and staff is paramount and off-site activities may be cancelled, postponed or relocated if faced with the threat of bushfire.

- Off-site activities include any activity undertaken by staff and/or students away from their normal school facility (Mount Eliza North Primary School). This can include camps, field trips/excursions, sporting activities, training or conferences for staff.
- All staff are required to ensure that information about their activity (e.g. camp or excursions) has been entered into the Student Activity Locator (SAL) online database as per the DSC Excursion planning requirements
(<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/excursions.aspx>).

The School will provide local government agencies with a copy of their plan to facilitate overall coordination in the event of a bushfire and ensure the school Emergency Management Plan is integrated into local emergency arrangements. Staff, students and parents shall be informed about, and understand the school arrangements in advance of any fire emergency.

The Incident Support and Operations Centre (1800 126 126) liaises with fire authorities to monitor major fire activity throughout the fire danger period, and communicates directly with schools that may be affected. The Incident Support and Operations Centre should be contacted ASAP regardless in the event of a threat of approaching bushfire.

Evaluation

This policy will be reviewed as part of the school's three-year review cycle.