



Bushfires and Disaster Management Plans

It is understandable that people who live or work in the Dandenongs are on edge about the very real bushfire risk that exists during summer. There is also been understandable concern about the safety of all children in this area whilst they are attending school.

Some parents have recently expressed concern about the location of BHCS and have asked about the school's emergency plans.

As part of our "Emergency Management Plan" we have both lock-down and building evacuation plans in place. Our OH&S Officer meets on site with a CFA representative each year to specifically review our planned response to a bushfire threat.

We were informed that BHCS is situated on a relatively low risk site. Some of the factors in our favour are our position low in a river valley (as compared to a hillside location) and the protection we have from the major threat areas to the north and the south-west. Our buildings have a high thermal capacity and the great majority of the building material is non-combustible. We have installed a heavy duty firefighting system throughout the school, and we have constructed a four-metre wide fire track that encircles all the built areas.

In the event of a bushfire threat to the school we would initiate a containment situation where all the students would be kept under cover in the school buildings until the threat recedes. The major concern we have is the potential danger to traffic travelling along the local roads, and specifically along Wattle Valley Road, in situations of high stress, heat, poor visibility and potential tree damage. Because of the risks involved the school will NOT attempt to evacuate students by bus unless emergency services give the all clear.

Should you hear of an emergency taking place, such as a fire within this area, we request that you DO NOT come up to the school to retrieve your children unless the school has specifically contacted you. Doing so may unnecessarily put you in danger as well as blocking up the roads needed by emergency service vehicles. In severe cases, these roads may even be blocked off, preventing your access. Please be assured that your children will be much safer at school than you would be in attempting to "rescue" them.

In case of a bushfire emergency occurring, the School will provide parents with as much information as practically possible during the time of the emergency using its website and an SMS service.

On the reverse of this letter is the flowchart of our Bushfire Management Procedure.

We trust that this currently provides families with any questions they may have had regarding this.

Kind regards,

Andy Callow
Principal

BUSHFIRE MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE

Belgrave Heights Christian School is in a risk area for bush fire and must following Mandatory State Guidelines to close on days that have been classed as CODE RED.

In the event of a bush fire starting during a school day and the school has not already received a 'State Alert' or message from Local Fire Authorities, the Principal will communicate with Local Fire Authorities to seek direction and instruction, which would then be carried out by the School.

