##

**BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS POLICY**

*This policy was last ratified by School Council on* ***October 28, 2019***

**Rationale**

Fire danger ratings and warnings are used in Victoria to provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life.

Schools that have been identified as being at high fire risk are included on the Department’s Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/bushfirerisk.aspx>.

Schools included on the BARR will close on days determined as Code Red by the Emergency Management Commissioner. Buninyong Primary School’s Scotsburn Campus has been identified as being one of those at high bushfire risk and is listed on the BARR.

All schools who are listed on the BARR are expected to follow the Victorian Registration and Qualifications (VRQA) ‘Guidelines on Bushfire Preparedness’ to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff and students.

**Aims**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of the staff and students at Buninyong Primary School’s Scotsburn Campus in the event of a Code Red fire danger day.

**Guidelines**

In the event of a forecasted Code Red day by the Emergency Management Commissioner for our school’s district, Department of Education and Training policies and procedures will be adhered to.

**Policy**

Where possible, Buninyong Primary School will provide parents of our Scotsburn Campus with up to four to seven days’ notice of a potential Code Red day closure by letter and will be backed up by messages sent via SMS and Compass. Parents should, however, expect that in some instances fewer than four days’ notice may be provided.

A Code Red day will be determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner no later than 1.00pm the day before the potential closure. Once we are advised of the confirmation of the Code Red day, we will provide parents with advice before the end of the school day.

Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help families plan alternative care arrangements for students.

On Code Red days, students from our Scotsburn campus (along with their teachers) will operate out of our Buninyong campus. Students will need to be collected by parents from the courtyard at the completion of the school day (3:30pm).

It is also important to note that:

* No staff will be on our Scotsburn site on Code Red days.
* School camps/excursions will be cancelled if a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the camp/excursion is located.
* Bus routes will not operate on Code Red days, meaning alternate arrangements will need to be organised by parents of our Scotsburn students to make their way to and from our Buninyong Campus.
* Scotsburn families are advised to drop off and collect their children from the main courtyard on Code Red days. Staff will be there to welcome students and advise them about the routine for the day.

On Code Red days, families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – ***on such days children should never be left at home or in the care of older children.***

**School Preparation**

As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, the school’s Emergency Management Plan will be regularly updated in accordance with DET guidelines, ensuring that we are prepared in the event of a bushfire.

In addition to this, our school will ensure compliance with the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA) ‘Guidelines on Bushfire Preparedness’ and the school’s Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) team will ensure preparedness procedures are implemented before and during high fire periods (October to March).

**Off-site activities**

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/students away from their normal school facility. This can include camps, excursions, sporting activities and training or conferences for staff.

**Managing Risk on Days Rated as ‘Severe’ or ‘Extreme’**

In addition to the above, the Principal team and the leader of our Scotsburn campus will monitor conditions closely when the fire rating is severe or extreme. If decided that the risk of fire is too great on a particular day, arrangements will be made to host students from our Scotsburn campus at our Buninyong campus. This is in addition to arrangements for Code Red days. Parents will be notified in advance if a decision to relocate has been made.

**Communicating Bushfire Preparedness Processes and Staff Roles**

In Term 1 and 4 of each year, Buninyong Primary School will publicise this policy in the school newsletter for community reference. In addition to this, a copy of this policy will be given to all Scotsburn students on enrolment.

Training of staff with specific roles and responsibilities in preparing for, monitoring and executing emergency bushfire procedures including the effective operation of relevant emergency equipment will also take place each year.

**What can parents/carers do?**

* Make sure that your family’s Bushfire Survival Plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements for your children in the event that our Scotsburn campus is closed.
* Ensure that our school has your current contact details, including the mobile phone numbers for both parents/carers.
* Keep in touch with us by reading newsletters and Compass alerts and messages.
* Checking our website and asking our staff about emergency plans.
* Check warnings during the October – March fire period from <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/> before travelling and holidaying away.
* Remain vigilant during the bushfire season.
* If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family’s Bushfire Survival Plan.

For up-to-date information during the bushfire season and how to create a Bushfire Survival Plan, please visit <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare> or call the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226.**

**More information and resources**

School Policy and Advisory Guide:

* [Excursions and Activities](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/excursions.aspx)
* [Emergency and Risk Management](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/safety/Pages/excursionsafety.aspx)
* [Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/excursions/Pages/outdoorguidelines.aspx)
* [Camps, Sports and Excursions Fund](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/csef.aspx).
* [Code Red Days](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/coderedabout.aspx)

VRQA:

* Guidelines on Bushfire Preparedness for Registered Schools: <https://www.vrqa.vic.gov.au/schools/Pages/bushfire-preparedness.aspx>

CFA:

* Plan and Prepare <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare>

**Review Cycle and Evaluation**

This policy was last reviewed on the 28th of October and is due for review in October, 2020.