



This brochure provides you with important information about our approach to managing bushfire risk in government schools and preschools. We want to ensure parents and carers are well prepared for a bushfire emergency.

Please help us prepare for the fire danger season by:

- » familiarising yourself with the information contained in this brochure
- » reading all bushfire information provided to you by your child's school, preschool, vacation, rural or out of school hours care, including their site emergency management plan
- » talking to your children about what will happen if a bushfire occurs when they are at school or preschool
- » making sure your emergency contact details are updated and made available to your school or preschool before the start of the fire danger season
- » making a personal bushfire survival plan for your family and letting your child's school or preschool know if this will affect your child's attendance.

By taking the above steps it will help us to keep your children as safe as possible.

## Bushfire risk ratings

A bushfire 'risk rating' is applied to all schools and preschools in designated bushfire-prone areas, based on their 'bushfire attack level' (BAL). A BAL measures a site's potential for exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame in the event of a bushfire emergency. The BAL is calculated by specialist consultants, who analyse information such as the location, surroundings or construction of the site, previous bushfire history and other relevant factors.

The 4 categories are:

- » **R1** Extreme/Very high-risk
- » **R2** High-risk
- » **R3** Medium/Low-risk
- » **NR** Non-rated.

## Bushfire preparation

All government schools and preschools have a site emergency management plan. Schools and preschools with a risk rating of R1 and R2 are also required to have a bushfire response plan. Sites in bushfire-prone areas that are rated R3 or NR are strongly encouraged to have a bushfire response plan, but it is not currently mandatory.

During the months of August and September each year, R1 and R2 sites are required to prepare for the annual fire danger season. Generally the fire danger season starts on 1 November and ends on 30 April. The Country Fire Service (CFS) advises us of the actual dates of each fire danger season every October.

### Preparations

Pre-season bushfire preparations at schools and preschools include:

- » doing a bushfire preparation audit to ensure the site is bushfire ready
- » managing vegetation to reduce bushfire fuel loads on and around the site
- » updating their site emergency management plan and bushfire response plan.

In addition, there are processes in place to ensure that school bus and taxi services have appropriate plans in place in the event of a bushfire affecting their usual routes.

Schools and preschools practice their emergency procedures throughout the year and, before the fire danger season, R1 and R2 sites work hard to ensure that all staff and students understand what to do in the event of a bushfire emergency.

### IP

Find your school's risk rating by searching Bushfire Information at [www.bushfireinformation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bushfireinformation.nsw.gov.au)



## Total fire ban days

During fire danger season, the CFS advises the public of total fire ban days. The rating is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology each day and is an early indicator of the potential danger, should a bushfire start. A fire danger rating is not a predictor of how likely a bushfire is to occur, but how dangerous it could be if it did occur.

There are 3 classifications of total fire ban – ‘severe’, ‘extreme’ and ‘catastrophic’ – and schools may be required to take special measures on these days to make sure that they are ready to respond to a bushfire threat.

The bushfire threat flowchart can be found on the Department for Education website and is a handy guide to what schools and preschools may need to do on the respective fire ban days, depending on their own risk rating.

## ‘Catastrophic’ fire danger days

If the CFS gives advance notice of a forecast ‘catastrophic’ fire danger day, schools and preschools in the relevant fire ban district(s) that have a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 will be directed to **se**. In addition, school transport services in the affected fire ban district(s) will be cancelled.

Schools and preschools that have a risk rating of R3 or NR will remain open as usual, but are required to be vigilant because of the increased danger posed if a bushfire began burning under those conditions.

If your child’s school or preschool is open, but their bus or taxi service has been cancelled, you will need to make your own travel arrangements. If your child is unable to attend because of the transport cancellation, you will need to advise the school.

The closure of schools and preschools on days of forecast ‘catastrophic’ fire danger enables families in the district to enact their personal bushfire survival plan more easily. It is important that you have arrangements in place if your child’s school or preschool is closed, even if your own plan does not involve leaving the area. It is not advisable for children to be left at home on days of ‘catastrophic’ fire danger.

If the CFS elevates an existing fire danger rating to ‘catastrophic’ on the day in question, all schools, preschools and transport services will remain **e** and **e es** unless otherwise advised.



# School closures

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On rare occasions, it may be necessary for the department to direct any school or preschool to close because of bushfire activity and/or an increased bushfire threat level. The decision to close schools and preschools is not taken lightly because of the known impact on parents, caregivers and local communities. As a consequence, a formal direction to close is only issued under predefined circumstances or when there is a genuine belief that schools will be endangered by a bushfire event if they remain open.

When a site has been directed to close, no person is permitted to be on site. This means that all services, including vacation care, out of school hours care, rural care and any scheduled activities

## School excursions and camps

All schools and preschools take into consideration risks associated with the fire danger season when planning any excursions or camps. This includes monitoring daily weather conditions to determine if any planned activities will be cancelled due to fire danger ratings.

If a bushfire is burning on the day of an intended camp or excursion and is likely to threaten the destination or return to the school, the

In the event of a bushfire or grass fire impacting on a camp or excursion that is already underway, the school and preschool will liaise with the Security and Emergency Management unit to determine the most appropriate action to take. Parents will be contacted by their child's school or preschool to inform them of any action or changes that will be taken as a result.

## What you can do to prepare for the fire danger season

Have a personal bushfire survival plan and discuss it with your children. Keep it up to date and make sure that all family members know what to do.

If your bushfire survival plan affects your child's attendance at school, preschool, vacation care, rural care or out of school hours care, you need to let the school or service know.

Visit the CFS website [www.cfs.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfs.vic.gov.au) for more information on how to develop your own plan.

Know your child's school or preschool bushfire response plan and:

- » give your child's school, preschool, vacation care, rural care or out of school hours care your up-to-date contact details (mobile phone number, email address and alternative contact number)
- » review the list of key contacts and people authorised to collect your child on your behalf
- » like the CFS, SES, SAPOL and education department pages on Facebook
- » bookmark the CFS, SES, SAPOL and education department websites so you can easily access them in an emergency
- » practice your bushfire survival plan with your family
- » talk to your child about what will happen if a bushfire emergency occurs.



## In the event of a bushfire emergency

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If a bushfire is approaching, the safety of children and other occupants is the highest priority. In these situations schools and preschools will:

# During a bushfire emergency

C s e e e s e e e e s :

- If your child has been moved to the school's bushfire refuge, they are accounted for and supervised.

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# Frequently asked questions

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## **My child attends a R1 or R2 risk rated site, and a 'catastrophic' fire danger warning has been declared for the following day. Will their school be open?**

Total fire bans are issued by the CFS for individual fire ban districts. If your child's school or preschool is in one of the fire ban districts that has a 'catastrophic' fire danger day and it has a risk rating of R1 or R2, it will be closed. This closure will also extend to any vacation care, rural care, out of school hours care services that operate from the site.

If the fire ban district that your child's school is located in does not have a 'catastrophic' fire danger day declared, it will still be open as usual.

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## **My son's school is closed because of the 'catastrophic' fire danger day. Why is my daughter's school still open, even though they are in the same district? Surely it's still dangerous?**

Schools and preschools that have been given a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 are considered to be most at risk if a bushfire threatens to impact upon them. 'Catastrophic' fire danger conditions make it highly likely that a bushfire could be started and will make it extremely difficult for emergency services to get it under control. R1 and R2 rated schools and preschools do not open on these days to assist in reducing a clear risk.

Sites that have a bushfire risk rating of R3 or NR are less likely to be impacted by a bushfire and are likely to be safer locations if a bushfire begins

to threaten the area. They are generally located within or extremely close to CFS 'bushfire safer places'. Although there is a moderate risk of embers hitting the school or preschool building during a serious bushfire event, the location and construction of the site will offer a higher level of protection and 'spot fires' are unlikely to take hold within the grounds.

The department considers R3 and NR rated schools and preschools to be relatively safe locations, which is why they remain open.

## **My child catches the school bus every day but his school is not a high-bushfire-risk location. How does a 'catastrophic' fire danger day affect me?**

If your child takes school transport or uses a school taxi service and a 'catastrophic' fire danger day is declared for that fire ban district, school transport services will be cancelled and you will need to make alternative arrangements.

## **Does the transport cancellation policy apply to all districts? Surely the bushfire risk is not the same everywhere?**

If your fire ban district **•** have any schools or preschools that have a R1 or R2 risk rating, the transport cancellation policy will not apply. Currently, only the North East Pastoral and North West Pastoral districts do not have any risk-rated sites.



## What happens if the weather changes and during the day the CFS upgrades the fire danger warning from 'extreme' to 'catastrophic'?

All schools, regardless of their risk rating, will remain open and all transport services including school buses and taxis will operate as normal. You may wish to enact your own personal bushfire survival plan, and may choose to collect your child early if necessary.

## Is my school's bushfire refuge also the local community bushfire refuge?

No. If your town has a community refuge, it will most likely be a town hall or other locally identified building. A school's bushfire refuge is purely designed to house the children and staff in the event of an imminent bushfire threat. Check with your local CFS for the location of your community bushfire refuge.

## A neighbour told me that a grass fire is burning near my child's school/preschool. Should I collect my child?

If a fire is burning near your child's school, the school will enact their bushfire response plan (or site emergency management plan). This will include moving to a bushfire refuge or other suitable location to ensure all children and staff are safe.

If a fire is burning in the area, you need to seriously consider whether you should travel through the affected area to get to school. Your child is being cared for by the school and collecting your child from the relative safety of a bushfire refuge may put you and your child at unnecessary risk from actual bushfire or reduced visibility from smoke. In addition, there may be road closures in place that you are not aware of. Roads and access points need to be kept clear for emergency service responses.

## How will I be notified if a bushfire is affecting my child's school?

Each school determines its own method of notifying parents of an active emergency, so it is important that you are aware of the system used by your child's school. Your school may have a dedicated SMS system, use social media or smartphone applications and will likely use these mediums to communicate during an emergency.

However, you should consider the possibility that these systems may not operate effectively if there is a power outage or a loss of telecommunications infrastructure in the area. If you suspect there may be an incident threatening your child's school or preschool, contact the **De** **e**

### **I live in a bushfire prone area and as part of my personal bushfire survival plan I keep my child at home with a parent during extreme weather conditions. Do I need to tell anyone?**

You need to advise your child's school, preschool, vacation care, rural care or out of school hours care services if your child is not going to be in attendance that day. This helps the school to manage their resources and keep account of all students in attendance on the day.

### **My child is scheduled to go to school camp/excursion today and I am worried about the risk of a bushfire as there are forecast 'extreme' weather conditions, what should I do?**

Schools will reconsider any planned camps or excursions if weather conditions have the potential to put children and staff at risk, and will monitor daily weather conditions to determine if any activities will be cancelled.

Your child's school will advise you if any planned camps or excursions are to be cancelled. If a planned camp or excursion hasn't been cancelled and you believe there is a risk, you can choose to remove your child from the activity and keep them at home. If you choose this option, please ensure you inform the school. Alternatively, you can request your child attends school as normal on the day/s of the planned activity.

### **My child is currently on school camp/excursion and a bushfire has started close to the area. What will the school do to keep my child safe? What should I do?**

If a bushfire or grass fire starts and is impacting on a camp or excursion that is already underway, the school and preschool will take advice from the Security and Emergency Management unit. You will receive information from your child's school/preschool to inform you of any action or changes that will be taken as a result. It is not advisable to collect your child from the camp or excursion as it may put you and your child at risk. The Security and Emergency Management unit will work with emergency services to keep children and staff safe. In these situations, contact the Department for Education Emergency Information Hotline – 1800 000 279 for further information.

### **Who should I call for more information if a bushfire emergency is near my child's school?**

**Department of Education  
Emergency Information Hotline  
1800 000 279.**

## Parent checklist

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- ... Have you given your emergency contact details to your child's school or preschool, including the names and contact details for people authorised to collect your child from school/preschool?
- ... Have you received and read the information provided to you by your child's school/preschool, including their site emergency management plan (bushfire response plan)?
- ... Do you have your own personal bushfire survival plan in place? Does it consider how you will manage different scenarios and consider school, preschool, school transport, out of school hours care, vacation and rural care? You need to practice enacting your plan in advance.
- ... Have you talked to your children about what will happen if a bushfire occurs when they are at school or preschool?
- ... If your personal bushfire survival plan affects your children's attendance at school/preschool or other related service, have you let your school/preschool know?
- ... Are your family and caregivers ready for a bushfire emergency?



## Contact Information

Department for Education Emergency Information Hotline	1800 000 279
Department for Education website	<a href="http://www.education.sa.gov.au">www.education.sa.gov.au</a>
SA CFS	<a href="http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au">www.cfs.sa.gov.au</a>
CFS Bushfire Information Hotline	1300 362 361
Emergency Services	000
South Australian Police	131 444

### Bushfire information for the deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired

If you are deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, you can contact the CFS through the National Relay Service:

TTY users	Phone 133 677 then ask for 1300 362 361
Speak and listen users	Phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 1300 362 361
Internet relay users	Connect to the NRS then ask for 1300 362 361
To report a fire or emergency	Access TTY 106 AccessITTY 106then3@ 1 0 0 506