

SCHOOL PRPAREDNESS & PRE-EMPTIVE ACTIONS FOR THE BUSHFIRE SEASON



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand this policy, please contact Tony Bellette at tony.bellette@education.vic.gov.au.



Fire danger ratings indicate how dangerous a fire would be if one started in those conditions and provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life. They can be a trigger for action in community and for school and household level fire plans.

Schools and children's services listed on the Department of Education and Training's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and those at some lower risk of bushfire or grassfire on the Category 4 list will be closed when a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast in their Bureau of Meteorology district.

Schools and early childhood services listed on the Department of Education and Training's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and those at lower risk of bushfire or grassfire on the Category 4 list take pre-emptive actions on elevated fire danger days to minimise the risk of being caught in a fire in these conditions. The category of risk (per the BARR or Category 4 list) determines the actions that the school or early childhood service will need to take on days of elevated fire danger.

Our school has been identified as being one of these schools at high bushfire or grassfire risk and is listed on the Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR) / a category 1 School.

Our school will enact its pre-emptive action plan for **relocation** on a day forecasted as **Extreme Fire Danger Rating** in our **local government area (LGA), Moorabool Shire.**

Our school will also **close** on a day forecasted as **Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating** in our **local government area (LGA), Moorabool Shire** and/or the **Central Fire District.**

The department will advise our school of the potential for a **Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating** as information becomes available, however the pre-emptive closure will be **confirmed by 1pm the day prior to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Day.**

Fire danger ratings are forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology up to four days in advance. Should a Catastrophic day be forecast, we will notify visiting School of the potential closure by an email or phone call to the home school Principal. Closure of the school due to a forecast Catastrophic day will be confirmed on the day prior and we will provide you with advice before the end of the school day.

If a school is onsite at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre when a Catastrophic Fire Danger Day is forecast, impacting their Program, the school will be set home at a minimum the day before the Catastrophic Fire Danger Day is implemented.

Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child. It is also important to note that:

- No staff will be on site on days where the school is closed due to a forecast Catastrophic day.

- School camps will be cancelled if a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the camp is located, or if the travel involves passing through areas that have Catastrophic fire danger.
- All bus routes that travel through the Catastrophic area will be cancelled.
- Depending on which fire weather district is impacted, bus route cancellations may affect our school.

Families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan on Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Days. **On such days, children should never be left at home alone or in the care of older children.**

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) advises that when Catastrophic days are forecast, the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of the Catastrophic day.

As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, we have:-

- updated and completed our Emergency Management Plan
- prioritised any maintenance works that may assist in preparing for the threat of fire
- ensure out fire fighter equipment is ready through monthly checks during the bushfire season
- cleared our facility's grounds and gutters
- ensure our shelter in place is prepared through monthly checks
- ensure our staff are regularly trained through EMP scenarios

What can parents do?

- Make sure your family's bushfire survival plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements in the event that our school is relocated or closed due to elevated fire danger or a Catastrophic fire forecast. Further information can be found on the [CFA's website](#).
- To ensure you are up-to-date with current information in relation to your School's Program at Blackwood Special Schools Outdoor Education Centre, please maintain close communication with your home school Principal and/or your child's classroom teacher
- Please ensure you correctly complete all program paperwork – Consent & Medical Forms – with the most current and accurate details.
- Please ensure you home School has all of your current & accurate contact details, including your mobile phone numbers.
- Most importantly at this time of year, if you're planning a holiday or short stay in the bush or in a coastal area, you should check warnings in advance of travel and remain vigilant during your stay.
- If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family's Bushfire Survival Plan.
- You can access current information about school and early childhood services closures, including those due to elevated fire danger, on the Department of Education and Training's website – see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx>

Multiple sources that offer information on emergencies are listed below:

- VicEmergency app – that can be downloaded on your android and iOS mobile devices
- VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226)
- Website <https://emergency.vic.gov.au>
- Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/vicemergency>)
- Twitter (<https://twitter.com/vicemergency>)

ABC local radio, Sky News and other emergency broadcasters.