



Emergency Bushfire Management Policy

Purpose of this policy

To prepare for and then ensure the safety of students, staff and school visitors on days of forecast elevated fire danger taking into consideration the importance of shared responsibility and continuance of education.

Prerequisite policy

- Emergency Management Planning Policy
[Bushfire Planning](#)

Policy

All registered schools, as a component of their registration, must comply with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA)
[Guidelines for Bush Preparedness](#)

Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR)

Schools around Victoria are at varying risk from bushfire. The Department's Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR) records the schools and early childhood services most at risk from bushfire. [Bushfire At Risk Register](#)

Entry onto the BARR considers:

- Bushfire Prone Area designation - publically available map, built on a number of criteria that maps where fire can reach under Code Red conditions, and aligns to building controls [Bushfire Prone Area designation](#)
- [Bushfire Management Overlay](#) triggers the need for a planning permit for certain developments and requires new developments to include appropriate bushfire protection measures
- [Bushfire Fire Risk Register](#) map assets at risk from bushfire and assess the level of risk to the asset
- terrain - influences the direction and speed at which a fire will travel

- fuel type exposure - vegetation type, i.e. forest, mixed, grass.

Schools on the BARR are further categorised based on their bushfire risk. The categorization determines actions for individual schools on days of elevated fire danger and enables targeted treatments.

Shelter-in-place building

All schools (regardless of their BARR status) must nominate a building or buildings on the school site that can provide temporary accommodation until emergency services arrive and/or as a building of last resort if there is insufficient time to evacuate. The school must identify the shelter-in-place in their Emergency Management Plan.

The shelter-in-place building for BARR schools must be suitable to provide a temporary protective measure from a predicted ember and smoke attack from fire or other outdoor hazardous incident for the entire school population. There are a small number of BARR schools that do not have a building that would offer an adequate level of protection in the event of a bushfire. These schools must identify alternate arrangements in their Emergency Management Plan.

Code Red day

Determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner, a Code Red day is the highest level of Fire Danger Rating and signifies the worst conditions for grassfires and bushfires. Once a Code Red day has been determined this decision will not change, regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. Schools on the BARR must close on a determined Code Red day in their weather district.

The Region wherever possible, will:

- provide schools with four to seven days notice of a planned Code Red day closure
- confirm the final decision to close a school no later than 1.00pm the day before the planned


Code Red day closure.

Ahead of the fire danger period, schools on the BARR must:

- advise their school community and site users that the school will be closed on any determined Code Red day
- complete the activities outlined in the School Site Bushfire/Grassfire Readiness Review **Checklist**.
- notify bus travellers and parents/carers that no school bus services will operate to or from a school closed on a determined Code Red day.

Before every Code Red day closure, schools on the BARR must:

- notify staff, parents/carers and other site users e.g. contractors, of 'potential' and confirmed closures

 check proposed camp and excursion venues located in forecast Code Red districts and update the Student Activity Locator with any cancellations or changes

- notify bus travellers, parents, bus operators and client schools of potential and confirmed cancellation of bus routes.

No staff will remain on site and all out-of-school care programs (including vacation, before and after school programs) will not operate.

All school closures are published on the Department's website along with changed bus routes and/or bus service cancellations.

Note: Schools not on the BARR will remain open, unless directly threatened by fire or another emergency. Forecast elevated fire danger Schools on the BARR categorised at highest or higher risk will have pre-planned approved relocation arrangements in place ahead of summer.

These arrangements will be enacted under localised severe and/or extreme fire weather conditions.

Ahead of the fire danger period, these schools must:

- engage/involve their school community in bushfire preparedness planning
- identify a host location
- develop a Bushfire Preparedness Relocation Plan for approval from their Regional Director. If all practicable relocation options are exhausted identified higher risk BARR schools will be approved by their Regional Director to close. Before every relocation, the relocating schools must:
 - notify the Regional Director
 - notify staff, parents and carers and other site users e.g. contractors
 - complete the School Relocation Principal Checklist and forward to the Regional Director
 - make alternate arrangements for camps and excursions

that are due to depart or arrive at the school on the day of the relocation. Schools on the BARR, regardless of categorisation, may still apply to their Regional Director, on a case-by-case basis to have alternate arrangements for their school due to forecast elevated fire danger. These schools, in the first instance, should discuss their plans with their regional Manager Operations and Emergency Management. Fire in the landscape In the event of exposure to an immediate bushfire threat or other emergency, the school principal has the authority to enact the school's emergency management plan.

Related policies

- Emergency and Security Services Support
- Reporting (emergency and incidents)
- Emergency and Risk Management
- Supervision
- Worksafe Notification Related legislation
- Emergency Management Act 1986
- Emergency Management Act 2013
- Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017

Department resources Emergency Management Planning Online - for an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) for government schools and EMP templates for early childhood services and non-government schools. Further information is available from emergency.management@edumail.vic.gov.au or the regional Manager, Operations and Emergency Management (contact details in the table below).

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Refer to:

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/pages/spag.aspx>
for all prerequisite and related policies.