

Bushfire Preparedness Policy

Rationale:

Seville Primary School is committed to ensuring the highest standards of care, safety and welfare for our students. Our school is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its employees and contract workers as well as visitors to our site. Seville Primary School recognises that in all its activities it has a duty of care to identify, assess and control risks so that the possibility of harm is minimised or eliminated.

The purpose of this policy is to detail procedures and management tasks so that the school minimises risks and is in a suitable state of preparedness for any fire related event.

Seville Primary School is on the BARR (Bushfire at Risk Register) and has been identified as a school with a high risk of bushfire. As a result, our school will close on days rated as CODE RED. On Code Red days, NOBODY will be in attendance at the school.

Policy:

The Bushfire Preparedness Policy should be read in conjunction with our Emergency Management Plan where details of management tasks, contacts and roles and responsibilities of key personnel are documented should our school emergency management plan be enacted due to bushfire.

Any activity or excursion that occurs on a day of extreme fire danger and total fire ban will be cancelled or recalled if deemed necessary by school leadership, even at short notice if necessary. Where excursions are not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required.

As a school on the BARR, the Junior Building has been identified as our designated Shelter in Place in case of a bushfire. This building has been inspected by the CFA and made compliant for bushfire readiness.

Key Responsibilities

All Staff will be responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with the Emergency Management Plan and their responsibilities within it, including the procedures for bushfire response.
- Ensuring they participate fully in all drills conducted.
- Undertaking training provided by the school for any specific roles they have as part of the emergency management plan.
- Ensuring all flammable materials within their area of responsibility are identified on the school chemical register and arranging for appropriate storage in flammable resistant cabinets.
- Ensuring all building exits are continuously kept clear of obstructions via regular workplace inspections.

All Teaching Staff will be responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with emergency procedures for each excursion they participate in and in particular, emergency procedures pertaining to camps and campsites.
- Ensuring that emergency procedures are explained to students as soon as practical after arrival at campsites.
- Planning to cover arrangements if an excursion needs to be cancelled or recalled because of bushfire threat.
- Committing to training for specific roles and responsibilities in preparing for, monitoring and executing emergency bushfire procedures, including the effective operation of relevant emergency equipment.

The Principal will be responsible for:

- Working with maintenance staff and gardener to regularly monitor and remove materials that may be regarded as bushfire hazards. This would include clearing branches overhanging buildings, debris and rubbish around and under buildings including gutters and dry grass and vegetation.
- Working with the maintenance staff and gardener to ensure that any flammable substances are stored appropriately.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of the Emergency Management Plan and their roles within this and participate in emergency drills each term.
- Ensuring that staff always cooperate to maintain integrity of classroom and office exit points.
- Ensuring that all visitors to our school are aware of our emergency procedures. This is communicated via signs in each room and during OHS Induction for volunteers and contractors.

The Principal and the OH&S representative are responsible for:

- Maintaining a register of bushfire emergency equipment and ensuring it is in working order. (An updated register of bushfire emergency equipment, in working order, should include water supplies and equipment, fire hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers, alarms, first aid materials and medical equipment, fire blankets and communication systems)
- Ensuring that all gates are kept clear and that there is appropriate access to facilities and grounds for emergency vehicles. Keys are located in the main office for locked gates.
- Ensuring all assembly points designated on the Emergency Management Plan have appropriate access to emergency equipment.
- Ensuring regular checks of all fire equipment by the CFA employed by the school.

Site Preparedness

Seville Primary school will ensure site preparedness by regularly managing materials that may easily be ignited around buildings and facilities and by maintaining a current school emergency management plan.

Communication of bushfire information

Parents have been notified that they will be contacted in the event of a Code Red day the afternoon before via Compass message and/or text. This information is provided to parents in the newsletter at the start of each year and again in October prior to the summer/bushfire season. The information provided to parents is provided at the end of this policy.

Staff training in bushfire preparedness

Staff roles and responsibilities in relation to fire preparedness are documented in our Emergency Management Plan. This is presented at the beginning of each year during our day 1 staff information session. Staff also practice their roles and responsibility through regular fire drills – one per term. Our school also maintains up to date evacuation plans in every classroom and office area. The Principal and Leadership team attend regular DET briefings for BARR schools and in relation to Emergency Management Plans and procedures.

Fire drills

We practice evacuation drills each term as listed in our Emergency Management Plan with those specifically related to fire preparedness practiced in October and February prior to the fire season.

Annual visits from CFA

The CFA conducts an audit and safety check of our fire safety equipment twice yearly as per the OHS Activities Calendar. We have also met with the CFA for advice in regards to the development of our Emergency Management Plan and to provide them with a copy for their reference in case of a bushfire. Staff are also provided with training on the use of fire extinguishers. We invite the CFA education truck once a year for an additional fire safety education session for our students.

Bushfire Equipment register

As a school on the Bushfire at Risk Register we have a building designated to Shelter in Place. This building was reviewed by the CFA annually for its compliance for bushfire readiness. Modifications were made on both occasions as required to ensure compliance as per documents on the School Facilities Profile. Further to this there are regular checks to equipment listed on our Fire Safety Equipment Register.

Emergency contact numbers

Emergency numbers are located on evacuation plans located in the plastic pocket of each classroom, learning areas and entry exit points.

Additional and Relevant Documents:

- SPS Statement of Values and School Philosophy
- SPS Emergency Management Plan
- www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires.
- www.cfa.vic.gov.au

Policy evaluation and review

This policy will be reviewed as part of the School's three-year review cycle

This policy was ratified by School Council in 2020.

This policy will be reviewed by School Council in 2023.

Appendix: School procedures for the bushfire season

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

Schools and children's services listed on the DET Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) will be closed on days declared by Fire Authorities as a Code Red fire danger day.



Our school has been identified as being one of those at high bushfire risk and is listed on the BARR.

Where possible, we will provide parents with up to three days notice of a planned closure. We will contact you directly by letter with advice on planned closures and will confirm the decision to close by 12 noon the day before the planned closure.

The communication process at our school will be a notice will be sent to all families as soon as we have notification of a Code Red Day. This may be up to 3 days in advance.

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 Code Red day.
- Out-of-school-hours care will also be cancelled on these days
- School camps will be cancelled if a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the camp is located.

On these 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.**

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

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 closed.
- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters and by talking to your child's teacher or any other member of the teaching staff about our emergency management plan.
- If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family's bushfire survival plan.

You can access more information about children's services closures on the Department of Education and Training website – see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx>.

For up-to-date information on this year's fire season see:

- <https://emergency.vic.gov.au>
- Facebook ([facebook.com/cfavvic](https://www.facebook.com/cfavvic))
- Twitter (twitter.com/CFA_Updates)
- ABC local radio, Sky News and other emergency broadcasters
- VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226)