BUSH FIRE POLICY

Bushfires are an inherent part of Australia's environment. Bushfires can significantly impact on lives, property and the environment. The basic factors that determine whether a bushfire will occur include the presence of fuel, oxygen, and an ignition source. The intensity and speed the bushfire will spread depends on the current temperature, fuel load (fallen bark, leaf litter, small branches), fuel moisture (dry fuel will burn quickly, damp or wet fuel may not burn at all), wind speed, and slope angle.

Emergency management arrangements for fire safety differ within each state and territory and are determined by the State Emergency Services or combined emergency service agencies.

The National Law requires early childhood education services to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from any harm or hazard likely to cause injury, including bush fires. Regulations 97 and 168 (2) of the Education and Care Services National Regulations require that every early childhood education and care service in Australia has an emergency and evacuation policy and procedure which includes:

- a risk assessment to identify the potential emergencies that are relevant to the service
- instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency and evacuation procedures
- an emergency and evacuation floor plan and
- the rehearsal of emergency and evacuation procedures every 3 months.

This policy outlines the strategies and procedures the Service will adhere to in the event of a bush fire, including information about Service closure during an emergency evacuation and forms part of our Service's **Emergency Management Plan (EMP).** The EMP records the emergency management arrangements to ensure every reasonable precaution to protect children, staff and visitors from harm and hazard is maintained at all times.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
12	Meaning of serious incident
51	Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)
89	First Aid Kits
93	Administration of medication
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
168(2)(e)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to: Emergency and evacuation

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Emergency Evacuation Policy Health and Safety Policy	Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Supervision Policy

PURPOSE

We aim to ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children and staff from harm and hazards likely to cause injury, including potential injury from bushfires. The potential for extreme fire conditions varies greatly throughout Australia, both in frequency and severity. Each state and territory have varying mandatory regulations for implementing policies and procedures for being safe in areas where bushfires occur. Our Service will adhere to the regulations outlined by our Regulatory Authority within our state or territory and be familiar with relevant legislation and other special requirements such as building regulations, traffic restrictions or emergency announcements that may apply to the area our service is located.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, staff, management, and visitors of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is vital for the Service to be informed and prepared for bush fire conditions and respond appropriately during periods of high fire danger or local bush fire activity. This policy is to be implemented should a bush fire threaten our Service. During peak bush fire season, the nominated supervisor will monitor fire ratings through relevant authorities on a daily or hourly basis and communicate with all stakeholders as required. We are aware of our Fire Danger Rating and have appropriate fire safety equipment installed and maintained at all times. Our *Emergency Management Plan* (EMP) ensures all staff are trained to use fire safety equipment and through regular training, understand evacuation procedures in case of an emergency.

DEFINITIONS

The Australian climate is frequently hot, dry, and susceptible to drought. The widely varied fire seasons are reflected in the continent's different weather patterns. For most of southern Australia, the danger period is summer and autumn. For New South Wales and southern Queensland, the peak risk usually occurs in spring and early summer. The Northern Territory experiences most of its fires in winter and spring.

A 'Bush fire prone area' is an area of land that can support a bushfire or is likely to be subject to bushfire attack. Bush fire prone maps are prepared by local councils and governments within each state and territory. Baseline data for bushfire prone areas is referred to as Bushfire Attack Level (BAL). (see additional information for each State or Territory's contacts)

Bushfire at-risk register (BARR): a register listing schools, kindergartens and childcare facilities within Victoria. This register is managed through the Department's emergency and natural disasters area.

Fire danger rating (FDR): provides an indication of the possible consequences of a fire. This rating is standardised across all Australian states and territories. The higher the fire danger rating, the more dangerous the conditions. Ratings range from *Low* to *Moderate*, to *Catastrophic*. FDR are maintained and updated by emergency services in each state or territory.

Emergency Management Plan (EMP): identifies the nature and range of possible emergencies and hazards to which children and staff may be exposed and the response and procedure in the event of an emergency. Effective planning and preparation of the EMP within the workplace ensures optimal

response to emergencies should they occur. A risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that impact the service form the basis of the EMP.

MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- ensure the *Emergency Management Plan* (EMP) is updated regularly inclusive of Emergency and Evacuation policies and procedures (see Appendix 1 for further information about inclusions)
- consult with relevant authorities for guidance and advice on the management of bushfire risk and emergencies
- submit EMP to regulatory authority, RFS, CFA or other agency by due date if required
- establish an Incident Management Team (IMT) to lead the implementation of the Emergency and Evacuation Plan- (e.g. Chief Warden, Planning officer, communications officer, operations officer) or in smaller services, assign multiple roles for educators/staff
- conduct a risk assessment to identify a potential bush fire risk to the Service
- ensure the risk assessment considers-
    - prevention measures the Service will take prior and during the bush fire period
    - procedures to be taken when there is a bush fire in the local district including onsite and offsite evacuation procedures
    - response measures the Service will take if confronted with a bush fire hazard or emergency
    - identified evacuation assembly areas and evacuation routes (it is recommended that the plan contains two external (off-site) evacuation assembly areas if practical to do so)
    - what assistance will be required to evacuate children at the service (including non-ambulant children and infants, consideration for multi-story buildings)
    - what mechanisms are in place to ensure the transfer of real-time information, such as weather forecasts, bush fire activity, site closures and emergency operations
    - how parents will know where to locate their child if evacuated
    - procedures to ensure children are only released to persons authorised to collect them
    - mechanisms to ensure visitors and contractors are aware of the service's emergency response procedures
- contact the local council *or* use a program (such as that available at https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/building-in-a-bush-fire-area/planning-for-bush-fire-protection/bush-fire-prone-land/check-bfpl for NSW) to determine if you are in a bush fire prone area

- ensure a current emergency and evacuation floor plan of the Service is clearly displayed near each exit of the service
- ensure emergency drills, including a bush fire drill are practiced with educators and children every 3 months
- ensure a record is kept of each emergency evacuation drill practiced
- ensure the Service and educators are prepared for bush fire conditions and prepared to respond quickly and appropriately during high fire danger periods
- ensure all fire safety equipment is installed and maintained regularly- (fire extinguishers, fire panels, smoke detectors, long hoses with nozzles, buckets etc.)
- ensure all outdoor taps are in working order
- communicate with staff, educators, and families about bush fire preparation information and provisions
- discuss *Bush Fire Response Procedure* at team meetings and make any amendments as required
- ensure local emergency services have current contact details, including mobile number for emergency contact after hours
- ensure a clear and effective communication procedures during an emergency are rehearsed to test its effectiveness in an emergency
- organise and communicate with off-site evacuation sites about emergency arrangements
- ensure the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is checked daily. Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology   http://www.bom.gov.au/?ref=hdr *or* specific State/Territory sites (*see appendix*).
- ensure gutters are cleaned out and free from dry leaves and other debris
- trim trees to 2m from the Service building
- ensure flammable items are removed from the Service
- ensure all emergency exits are clear and accessible at all times
- conduct an 'emergency first aid kit / backpack audit' to ensure emergency contact information and supplies are current (*see Appendix 2 for suggested inclusions*)
- ensure all records of attendance of children, staff and volunteers are accurate each morning
- ensure current emergency phone numbers are near the phone, including emergency services and the Regulatory Authority [insert details for each state/territory] *and* in the contacts of designated mobile phones
- monitor the bush fire situation when the rating is above High through internet or radio
- ensure the *VicEmergency* app (CFA emergency services) is installed on designated Service mobile phones.
- not accept children for care on days when there is an extreme or catastrophic danger rating

- cancel any outdoor activities on days where air quality due to bushfire smoke may cause harm to children
- be prepared for Code Red Days and consequent closure of the service if listed on the BARR in **Victoria.**
- notify the Regulatory Authority in the event of any closures or damage to premises within 24 hours or as soon as possible via the NQA ITS or email if there is no access to phones
- at a reasonable time after the incident has occurred, consider asking emergency services to review the service's incident response

EDUCATORS WILL:

- assist in the development and review of the Service's Emergency Management Plan (EMP)
- examine the Service grounds during their daily indoor and outdoor safety checks to ensure flammable and/or combustible materials (e.g. dead leaves and bark, chemicals) have been removed
- ensure they are familiar with the daily Fire Danger Rating (FDR)
- ensure the emergency first aid kit / backpack is organised and stored in an area that is easily accessible
- become familiar and confident with the Service's emergency evacuation policies and procedures
- participate in emergency drills, including *Bush Fire Response* procedures at least every 3 months
- become familiar with the Service's emergency exits
- be aware of the designated assembly area
- eliminate all papers around the Service, including artwork, posters, displays and emptying garbage bins if advised that bush fires are in the local district
- keep up to date with professional development and training about bush fires and emergency evacuation procedures
- be familiar with their role and responsibilities in the event of a bush fire.

VICTORIA
- Early Childhood Services at the highest risk of fire danger are placed on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR). https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/bushfirerisk.aspx   - NQF approved early childhood services in Victoria listed on the BARR must submit their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) via the NQA ITS Online Portal by **1 September** each year   - Inclusion on this register is a trigger for Early Childhood Services to pre-emptively close on days declared Code Red in their Bureau of Meteorology district

- Emergency Management Plan resources:
  https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/support/EmergencyManagementPlan_EarlyChildhood.docx
- Emergency Management Plan template for early childhood services
- See Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness for further information
- For information regarding emergency closures and relocations:
  https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx
- Fire Danger Rating updates: https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings
- Country Fire Authority: https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/home

RESOURCES

Bushfire Emergency Planning Guideline A guide to planning for bushfire emergency

Early Childhood Australia Resources for Bushfire affected communities

NSW Department of Education *Developing your Service's Emergency Management Plan and Procedures* (updated April 2021)

NSW Department of Education Service site bushfire grassfire readiness checklist

https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/emergency-management/emergency-management-plan

NSW Rural Fire Service for up-to-date information

NSW Rural Fire Service Development Planning A guide to developing a Bush Fire Emergency Management Evacuation Plan

Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment – Emergency and natural disaster assistance

Emerging Minds- Bushfire preparedness for your family

Be You- resources- Bushfires and mental health

Department of Education Victoria- Emergency Management Plan 2020-2021 Template

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
Australian Government: Geoscience Australia. Community safety: Bushfire:
http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/hazards/bushfire
Community Early Learning Australia. Bushfire advice for children's services:
https://www.cela.org.au/2018/01/07/bushfire-advice-for-childrens-services/
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2018).
Education and Care Services National Regulations. (2011).
NSW Government Education. Information sheet for the 2017/2018 bush fire season: Early childhood education and care:

https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/media/documents/ECE-Bushfires-information-sheet.pdf

NSW Rural Fire Service. BAL rating and bush fire prone area map: https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/building-in-a-bush-fire-area/planning-for-bush-fire-protection/bush-fire-prone-land/check-bfpl

NSW Rural Fire Service. Fire Danger Rating: https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans

Victoria State Government Education and Training. Emergency management requirements: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation/Pages/emergencymanagementrequirements.aspx

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY:	Nikia Nankervis	Centre Manager	13/03/2024
POLICY REVIEWED	MARCH 2024	NEXT REVIEW DATE	MARCH 2025
MODIFICATIONS	• No changes or modifications		
POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
OCTOBER 2022	• additional information for EMP inclusion • specific NSW information added • links checked and updated		OCTOBER 2023
JANUARY 2020	• risk assessment inclusions • preparing for closures information added • resource section added- including sample template for EMP • sources checked for currency		OCTOBER 2021

APPENDIX 1

The purpose of the Emergency Management Plan is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, children and visitors at our Service in the event of an emergency.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN inclusions

- Name and address of the Service
- Early childhood service facility profile (description of the service)
- Emergency contact details of Service (including designated mobile phone number)
- Incident Management Team structure and contact details and responsibilities
- Incident Management Team responsibilities- pre-emergency/during emergency/post-emergency
- Communication tree- Process for notifying, alerting and reporting emergencies
- Educators/staff trained in first aid (names and contact details)
- Emergency response procedures (on-site evacuation/relocation procedure; off-site evacuation procedure; lock down procedure; lock out procedure; shelter-in-place procedure)
- Arrangements for children/students and educators/staff with additional support needs
- Parent/family emergency contact details
- Evacuation diagram and procedures including assembly points and transportation arrangement if required to evacuate
- Essential services on premises- location of hydrants and water main
- A site-specific **Risk Assessment** identifying the particular emergency and hazards, assessing the risks they present and details on how your service will manage these.
- For **Bush Fire Policy** the Risk Assessment will detail-
  - prevention measures the Service will take prior and during the bush fire period
  - procedures to be taken when there is a bush fire in the local district
  - response measures the service will take if confronted with a bush fire hazard or emergency
- Emergency response drills schedule
- Emergency kit checklist
- Testing of equipment

- Response procedures for specific emergencies – indicate process for making decisions
    - warning staff and children
    - evacuation
    - shelter and assembly area
    - location of designated emergency exits
    - location of fire hoses/extinguishers/ fire blankets
    - location of first aid kits
- Recovery measures to support the return to the Service and routines
- Notification to Regulatory Authority
- Trauma counselling and description

Coldstream Primary School OSHC and Early Years

APPENDIX 2

EMERGENCY KIT CONTENTS CHECKLIST

Use the list below as a **guide** on what is required to maintain your Emergency Kit

EMERGENCY KIT CONTENTS	✔
Small portable First Aid kit	
Copy of Bush Fire policy & Emergency Management Plan	
Copy of Service's site plan identifying exists from building, safe spaces to shelter and assembly points	
Emergency contact details for children	
Emergency contact details for staff	
Details of additional/medical needs of staff and children	
Potentially required medications (e.g. EpiPen, asthma inhaler)	
Charged mobile phone/s	
Phone chargers to suit any mobile phone likely to be used in an emergency	
Fully charged UHF radio (remote locations) with charger	
Portable battery powered radio	
Torch and spare batteries	
Whistle/s	
Service keys	
Staff safety vests	
Bottled water and disposable cups	
Non-perishable snacks (such as biscuits/crackers, dried fruit, energy/muesli bars)	
Spare nappies, baby wipes, and gloves	
Tissues	
Sunscreen and spare hats	
Garbage bags	
Other	