



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.

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.

<https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/regulation/2011/653/chap4/part4.2/div5/reg97>

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	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Emergency Evacuation Policy Family Communication Policy Health and Safety Policy	Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy Supervision Policy Work Health and Safety Policy
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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 Victoria 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 in which 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 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 for further information about inclusions).
- 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.
- 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.).
- Communicate with staff, Educators, and families about bush fire preparation information and provisions.
- Discuss bush fire response procedures at team meetings.
- Ensure local emergency services have current contact details, including mobile number for emergency contact after hours.
- Ensure a clear and effective communication procedure during an emergency is implemented.
- 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 'evacuation bag' audit to ensure emergency contact information and supplies are current (*see appendix for 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 Department of Education *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.
- Be prepared for **Code Red Days** and consequent closure of the service if listed on the BARR in **Victoria**.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- 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.
- Become familiar with the Service’s emergency exits.
- Be aware of the designated assembly area.
- Eliminate all papers around the Service, including art work, 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.
- Be familiar with their role and responsibilities in the event of a bush fire.

STATE SPECIFICATIONS

VICTORIA

Early Childhood Services at the highest risk of fire danger are placed on the Department’s Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR).

NQF approved 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.

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>

Emergency Management Plan

resources: https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/support/EmergencyManagementPlan_EarlyChildhood.docx

SOURCE

Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQUA). (2018). Revised National Quality Standard.

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/>

NSW Government Education. Information sheet for the 2017/2018 bush fire season: Early childhood education and care: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/latest-alerts/2017/bushfire-preparedness-and-the-national-law/ECE-Bushfires-information-sheet.pdf>

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/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/latest-alerts/2017/bushfire-preparedness-and-the-national-law/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. Development Planning: https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/29271/DPP1079-Emergency-management-and-evacuation-plan-FORM.pdf

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>

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
October 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional information added to points.• References added for resources and information.• Sources/references alphabetised.	October 2019
August 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to mandatory submission of EMP for Victorian services on the BARR register added• Additional information and links added	August 2020
October 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minor punctuation• All URLs checked (state-specific and sources)• Sources information improved	October 2020

See ‘Appendix’ on the next page: Emergency Management Plan inclusions

APPENDIX

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN inclusions

- Name and address of the Service
- Early childhood service facility profile
- 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
- Educators/staff trained in first aid
- Emergency response procedures (on-site evacuation/relocation procedure; off-site evacuation procedure; lock down procedure; lock out procedure; shelter-in-place procedure)
- Children/students and educators/staff with additional support needs
- Parent/family contact details
- Evacuation diagram and procedures including assembly points and transportation arrangement if required to evacuate
- 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 to 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 drills schedule
- Emergency kit checklist
- Response procedures for specific emergencies
- Recovery measures to support the return to the Service and routines.