

Bushfire Preparedness Policy

Daylesford Dharma School will take all mandated measures to prepare for bushfire response and to manage bushfire warnings and events in a manner that ensures the care, safety and welfare of children and staff and to effectively communicate this with parents and carers.

In the event of an approaching bushfire, the entire school will evacuate immediately to the onsite shelter-in-place and remain there until approved to leave or instructed by emergency services to evacuate to the off-site evacuation point. The school will respond appropriately to instructions from emergency services.

Purpose:

The incidence of bushfire in Victoria highlights the need for our school to be thoroughly prepared. As a school located in Daylesford, we are considered to be at high risk of fire danger, and so Daylesford Dharma School is listed on the Department of Education and Training (DET) Bushfire At-Risk Register. We must ensure the care, safety and welfare of our students in accordance with applicable laws and Schedule 4 clause 12 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017. And so:

This means that the school will preemptively close on days declared Code Red.

The school may also close on non-Code Red days in the event of a bushfire or elevated risk.

Aims:

- To prepare for and ensure the safety and wellbeing of the school community during incidents of bushfire or potential bushfire.
- To provide students with a safe and secure environment where the risk of harm is minimised and students feel physically and emotionally secure.
- To ensure that the school's buildings, facilities and grounds meet all legal standards and fully comply with health standards.
- To consult with local authorities on bushfire regulations and bushfire preparedness.

The school will maintain an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) that addresses the risk and procedure for dealing with Bushfire Emergencies and Incidents, and is informed by the DET and Country Fire Authority resources:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bushfire-and-grassfire-preparedness/guidance>

This includes:

- arrangements for the safety and welfare of staff and students, including relocation to the identified off-site evacuation or rendezvous point;
- readiness levels and ‘trigger points’ for decisions regarding school closure;
- monitoring fire risks and activity on high-risk or total fire ban days and maintaining a heightened state of readiness by continuously monitoring the situational bushfire risk, and ensuring open lines of communication with local emergency services;
- notification of all arrangements to emergency services;
- accessing support, or initiating the school’s own buses for transportation at short notice to evacuate, in line with “stay or go” planning strategies;
- communications plan and contact lists (including school community, local government and emergency services); and
- roles and responsibilities of school personnel in executing emergency plans.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- The Principal will inform students, staff and parents about specific bushfire preparedness arrangements and train relevant staff in their bushfire preparedness roles. This will include providing copies of the Bushfire Preparedness Policy and Procedure to staff (including relief staff) and parents. These documents will be publicly available on the school website in their most current form.
- The Principal will review the Bushfire Preparedness Policy and Procedure annually in October of each year. This includes in relation to the planning of off-site activities such as excursions and camps.
- The Principal shall establish and monitor on an annual basis the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and will review this plan after any significant event.
- The Principal will consult with local authorities on bushfire regulations and bushfire preparedness in its annual review of its EMP.
- The Principal will ensure that there is a practice of evacuation procedures and drills at least once per term between October and March.
- Additionally the Principal will provide staff with training in their roles prior to drills that includes the effective use of the bushfire emergency equipment.
- The Principal must ensure that notices of bushfire evacuation procedures and updated bushfire emergency numbers are displayed around the school.
- All staff will ensure that doors and exits are not obstructed.
- Classroom teachers will be responsible for implementing the evacuation drill or evacuation plan in line with the EMP procedure.

- The Principal will identify and regularly monitor the materials within school grounds that could be easily ignited and delegate their removal from the school.
- The Principal will ensure access to the designated assembly points is always maintained with unobstructed access to emergency equipment and continued access to facilities and grounds for emergency vehicles.
- The Principal will consult with the Country Fire Authority, Fire Rescue Victoria and Hepburn Shire Council on bushfire preparedness and compliance with local bushfire regulations for buildings, facilities and grounds.

Record Keeping responsibilities:

- An updated register of Bushfire Equipment
- An Evacuation Drill Register
- Maintenance Register for Bushfire Preparedness
- Records of annual consultations with relevant local agencies

Linked Documents:

DDS-DOC-001 Emergency Management Plan

DDS-REG-007 Evacuation Drill Register

DDS-REG-008 Maintenance and Essential Services Register

DDS-REG-009 Bushfire Equipment Register

Review Date:

October 2022

Basis of Discretion:

Not applicable.