

Bushfire Preparedness Procedure

Bushfire Statement

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 staff and children and effectively communicates with parents and carers.

Background

Daylesford Dharma School is listed on the Department of Education and Training (DET) Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR). This means the school will preemptively close on days declared by fire authorities as being at Code Red Fire Danger Rating.

The School is situated in CFA District 15 and the Central zone and shares a border with the North Central zone. These 3 zones are referenced to monitor emergency notifications.

On extreme weather warning and total fire ban days, all off-site excursions are cancelled and the school remains in a heightened state of readiness. This includes the Principal and Office Manager checking notifications in a 40km watch zone via the VicEmergency app. In the event of a regional fire, streaming the CFA Channel District 15 is enacted to directly monitor fire responses. This is the responsibility of the Principal and Office Manager.

Fire Response Procedures

Fire Response Key Actions:

- In an approaching bushfire and if emergency services advise it is potentially unsafe to evacuate, the entire school will assemble immediately in the onsite Shelter-In-Place at Building B and remain there until approved safe to evacuate.
- In the event of a bushfire possible threat, the entire school will enact the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) to evacuate to the Bushfire Off-Site Safer Area evacuation point identified as Bridport Street Daylesford 3460, (at the east side bus shelter opposite the Daylesford CFA station.)
- In the event of a grassfire, the school will not evacuate unless advised by emergency services. The EMP will be enacted to assemble the whole school at the onsite Shelter-in-place at Building B.

Regional Bushfire Response

The trigger to consider a whole school evacuation will be any visible plume of smoke situated to the North or West. (This is not to be confused with a smoke haze.)

Advice of a fire in the Central or North Central zone may also trigger an evacuation if deemed safe to do so in consultation with emergency services.

In the event of ***an approaching bushfire*** and *if emergency services advise it is potentially unsafe to evacuate*, the entire school will assemble immediately at the onsite Shelter-In-Place at Building B and remain there until approved safe to evacuate. Building B is the northern building facility of senior primary classrooms referenced on school plans.

In the event of ***a bushfire possible threat***, the entire school will enact the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) to evacuate to the **Bushfire Off-Site Safer Area evacuation point, identified as Bridport Street Daylesford 3460, (east side bus shelter opposite the Daylesford CFA station.)**

Bushfire Evacuation Key Actions:

- The school will respond appropriately to instructions from emergency services and follow its EMP.
- Classroom teachers lead students onto the school buses to evacuate to enable parent/carer reunification at the off-site safer area.
- Families are advised via SMS emergency of the evacuation arrangements.
- The Incident Controller (usually the Principal), releases any visitors and contractors and remains in phone contact with emergency services and parent/carers.
- The Incident Controller remains at the off-site safer area place supervising under the guidance from Emergency Services until all students have been reunited and signed out only to their approved parent/carer.
- The Incident Controller approves and signs out staff to leave the off-site safer area at the completion of their evacuation supervision.

Regional Grassfire Response

In the event of a grassfire, the school will not evacuate unless advised by emergency services.

It is estimated by the Daylesford CFA that grassfire flames will not exceed 1.5m in height and that it is safer to enact the onsite Shelter-In-Place at Building B. (This is the northern building facility of senior primary classrooms that is known as Building B on school plans.) The School will enact its EMP to evacuate to shelter in place and remain there until approved safe to evacuate when the threat has passed.

When the school is closed in response to bushfire risk, no one including staff, contractors and other users, will be permitted on site.

In all circumstances the school will notify parents/carers directly of any changes to a planned offsite activity.

Closure of School due to declared Code Red Day

Code Red Fire Danger ratings in our area can also mean a school closure or change to school bus routes, out-of-school hours and off-site activities (such as after school care, camps or excursions). The safety of students and staff is paramount and so we will cancel, reschedule or, if safe to do so, recall offsite activities affected by:

- a forecast Code Red Fire Danger weather warning
 - a bushfire threat
 - any other actual or forecast extreme weather event such as flooding, winds and storms.
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- The school will be closed on days declared Code Red by the Emergency Management Commissioner and communicated through the DET, Bureau of Meteorology, VicEmergency, and the CFA.
 - Parents/carers will be notified as soon as possible in regard to school closure. All staff and contractors will also be notified.
 - When the school is closed, a sign will be placed at the school entrance and the school will remain locked.
 - Notices informing parents and visitors of this will be displayed around the school and communicated on Compass.
 - Where possible, up to 3-days notice of a planned closure will be provided should the School be required to close due to a Code Red Day. However, experience indicates that a Code Red fire danger rating day may be forecast at short notice. Parents and carers should expect that in some instances less than 3 days notice may be provided.
 - When the School is closed for bushfire preparedness, NO staff or members of the School community, members of the public or contractors will remain onsite OR are permitted on site during a closure.
 - Once the final decision to close is confirmed, this decision will not change– regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. This will help limit confusion and help families plan for how their children will be cared for when their school is closed.

Off-site activities

The safety of students and staff is paramount and off-site activities will be cancelled, postponed or relocated if faced with the threat of bushfire or extreme weather warnings.

Off-site activities include any activity undertaken by staff and/or students away from their normal school facility. This can include camps, field trips/excursions, sporting activities, training or conferences for staff.

As the school is in a fire-prone area, we must consider the appropriateness of activities undertaken on days of extreme weather as well as days of total fire ban. Options could include cancelling, postponing or relocating the activity if extreme weather or fire conditions are forecast. Such decisions will be made as early as possible to ensure the ongoing safety of staff and students. The Principal will be responsible for making this decision and informing those concerned/affected.

Offsite activities include any activity undertaken by staff and children away from their school. This can include:

- Camps
- Excursions
- Field trips
- Sporting activities
- Training or conferences for staff

School bus transport

- Bus routes passing through high-risk areas or routes operated by schools in high-risk locations will be closed on high-risk fire days.
- A school bus route will be closed if it has to pass through an area affected by fire even if the associated school is not affected by fire and remains open.
- The school will liaise with the Bus Coordinator at Daylesford Secondary College (the regional bus coordination terminal), as to any changes or cancellation of services: Shannon, Daylesford Secondary College, 5348 2367. Bus Route Closures: www.education.vic.gov.au.
- If a bus route is threatened by unexpected fire, the school will enact its local Emergency Management Plan (EMP).
- **Information on any changes to bus routes or cancellation of services will be provided by the school to parents as soon as is possible and practicable via SMS and the Compass platform.**

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.
- The Principal will review the Bushfire Preparedness Policy and Procedure annually.
- The Principal shall annually review and monitor the Emergency Management Plan.
- The Principal will consult annually with local authorities on bushfire regulations and bushfire preparedness.
- The Principal will ensure that there is a practice of evacuation procedures and drills at least once per term between October and April.

- The Principal will ensure that in October and February of each year, staff are briefed on the Bushfire Preparedness procedure, EMP evacuation, and trained to use the fire hose reels to dampen down the buildings and grounds.
- The Principal will ensure that materials that could be easily ignited will be regularly monitored and removed from the school.
- The Principal will ensure that the Zone 1 grounds surrounding school buildings are maintained as green spaces throughout the year and that only fire resistant plants occupy Zone 1.
- The Principal must ensure that there is an updated register of Bushfire 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 procedure.

Pre-emptive actions

- The Principal will annually review the Emergency Management Plan and ensure that all staff are familiar with the details.
- The Principal will ensure that all staff and parents are aware of the evacuation location and conduct Evacuation Procedures.
- The First Aid Officer will ensure that a copy of the Emergency Services Contacts and Resources List is displayed near the office phone and in every classroom.
- All staff with responsibilities identified in the EMP will ensure they have local Emergency Service phone numbers in their mobile phone and ensure mobile phones are charged at all times.
 - Teachers will prepare or refresh their First Aid Kit in the portable drybag and keep up to date lists of students and staff with special needs. These kits are located in each classroom close to the exit doors.
- Prepare school grounds - clearing clutter, debris and plant litter; have hoses connected to outside water supply at all times.
- Ensure there are sufficient woollen blankets for ember protection and drinkable water in the Bushfire Evacuation kit.
- On days of Total Fire Ban or when the local fire danger rating is extreme, the school will remain in a state of heightened readiness. All staff will be informed and reminded of conditions at the morning briefing. The Principal and Office Manager will maintain a regular check of VicEmergency and CFA warnings and alerts.

Preemptive Maintenance Bushfire preparations:

According to the BMO Report: BAL Assessment, 90 Daylesford Trentham Road Daylesford Ref No.18.415, the Daylesford Dharma School site is outside the Bushfire Management Overlay plan and so buildings have been constructed to a BAL 12.5 rating on condition:

- the land is managed to the distance of at least 22 metres from the outer edges of any structures.

- the garden is maintained so that high threat vegetation (such as oil rich native trees and shrubs) are not planted around the buildings and that any trees are maintained and pruned so the canopy does not overhang the structures.
- that landscaping is established and maintained according to the CFA publication “Landscaping for Bushfire Garden Design and Plant Selection” and that any native plantings within the gardens of the defensible space are maintained to standards as required under Clause 53.02 of the planning scheme listed:
(http://planningschemes.dtpli.vic.gov.au/schemes/vpps/53_02-Bushfire-Planning.pdf)
- grass must be short cropped and maintained during the declared fire danger period.
- plants greater than 10 centimetres in height must not be placed within 3 metres of a window or glass feature of the building.
- shrubs must not be located under the canopy of trees.
- Individual and clumps of shrubs must not exceed 5 square metres in area and must be separated by at least 5 metres.
- Trees must not overhang or touch any elements of the building.
- The canopy of trees must be separated by at least 5 metres.
- There must be a clearance of at least 2 metres between the lowest tree branches and ground level.
- all leaves and vegetation debris must be removed at regular intervals during the declared fire danger period from October to April each year.
- no flammable objects are to be located within 10 metres of a building or close to the vulnerable parts of the building.

Daylesford Dharma School Fire Topography

The Daylesford CFA have advised on 18th September 2023 that the School is well positioned with cropped green farm pastures surrounding the property. The Daylesford-Trentham Rd in the north provides a fire break, as does Settlement Rd to the south at the rear of the property. They noted that in 2023, the neighbour to the east removed 2 stands of Cypress pines, further reducing a fire risk.

The School is free from shrubs in the defensible zone and the property perimeter is planted with only fire permissible species - Oak and Blackwood. The buildings are well maintained and well sealed for ember deflection. The planting exclusion zone around the buildings is well managed. The ornamental creek to the north, adjacent to shelter-in-place Assembly Area B provides additional humidity in the landscape.

Building B at the north of the property has been identified as an excellent building for shelter in place in an emergency situation where evacuation is not safe. This building is constructed to BAL 12.5 standard and is protected by the firebreak of the road to its north and cropped farm land on its boundary. Additionally it is protected by an ornamental creek that increases its green protection and is easily

accessible to the Fire Hose reel. Verandahs can be defended from ember attack by mop and bucket and with additional support from the fire hose reel operator.

Further matters to note

The School will annually provide local government agencies with a copy of their Bushfire Preparedness procedure and Policy to facilitate overall coordination in the event of a bushfire.

The School will ensure the EMP is integrated into local emergency arrangements.

Staff, students and parents shall be informed about, and understand the school arrangements in advance of any fire emergency.

Linked Documents:

DDS-DOC-001 Emergency Management Plan

DDS-POL-32 Bushfire Preparedness Policy

DDS-REG-007 Evacuation Drill Register

DDS-REG-009 Bushfire Equipment Register

DDS-REG-008 Maintenance and Essential Services Register

We will be Closed Posters

Bushfire Closure Day templates for communications - Compass, Text, Email.

Linked Policies:

DDS-POL-028 Occupational Health & Safety Policy

Review Date:

September 2024

Basis of Discretion:

Not applicable.