

# BUSH FIRE POLICY

Bushfires are an inherent part of Australia’s 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 will depend on the current temperature, fuel load (fallen bark, leaf litter, small branches etc.), fuel moisture (Dry fuel will burn quickly, damp or wet fuel may not burn at all), wind speed, and slope angle.

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.

## NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

| QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND SAFETY |                        |   |
|--|------------------------|---|
| 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

Emergency Evacuation Policy  
Incident, Illness, Accident & Trauma Policy  
Family Communication Policy  
Supervision Policy  
Administration of First Aid Policy  
Work Health & Safety Policy  
Health & Safety 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. When experienced close to populated areas, significant loss is possible.

## SCOPE

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

## IMPLEMENTATION

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.

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.

## DEFINITIONS

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.

**MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:**

- 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> (NSW) to determine if you are in a bush fire prone area. See below for other State specifications.
- In Victoria, schools, kindergartens and child care facilities at the highest risk of fire danger are placed on the Department's Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR). Inclusion on this register is a trigger for the school, kindergarten or child care facility to pre-emptively close on days declared Code Red in their Bureau of Meteorology district.
- **No Trikki Kidz Services are listed on the BARR.**
- Create and update the service's emergency and evacuation policies and procedures regularly.
- Conduct a risk assessment to identify a potential bush fire risk to the service.
- Ensure a current emergency and evacuation floor plan of the service is displayed.
- Ensure emergency drills, including a bush fire drill are practiced with educators and children.
- 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 the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is checked daily, available from <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans> (NSW).
- 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 gutters are cleaned out and free from dry leaves and other debris.
- Ensure flammable items are removed from the service.
- Ensure a clear and effective communication procedure during an emergency is implemented.
- Organise and communicate with off-site evacuation sites about emergency arrangements.
- Trim trees to 2m from the service building.
- Conduct an "Emergency Evacuation Bag / First Aid Kit Audit" to ensure emergency contact information and supplies are current.
- Ensure current emergency phone numbers are near the phone, including emergency services and the Department of Education and Communities *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 *Fires Near Me* app is installed on designated service mobile phones (NSW).
- Create an Emergency Plan identifying information including:
  1. Name and address of the service
  2. Contact details of service (including designated mobile phone number)
  3. Number of employees and sign in/out registers
  4. Number of occupants with support needs
  5. Family contact details
  6. Details of location or address to evacuate to if required
  7. Assembly points and transportation arrangements if required to evacuate
  8. Prevention measures the service will take prior and during the bush fire period
  9. Procedures to be taken when there is a bush fire in the local district
  10. Response measures the service will take if confronted with a bush fire hazard or emergency
  11. Recovery measures to support the return to the service and routines

#### **EDUCATORS WILL:**

- Examine the service grounds during their 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 Evacuation Bag / First Aid Kit is organised and stored in an area that is easily accessible.
- Become familiar and confident with the service emergency evacuation policies and procedures.
- Become familiar with the service's emergency exits.
- Eliminate all papers around the service, including art work, posters, displays etc. 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.

#### **Bush Fire "Shelter in Place" Procedure**

On notification of a bush fire by the authorised authority, the Responsible Person will advise educators and staff to move children indoors to engage in quiet activities until further advice on the danger received. Although unlikely, should a bushfire be likely to impact on the service, the lockdown procedure should be followed. The fire service will advise when the immediate danger has passed, however, children, families, educators, staff, students, volunteers and visitors should remain indoors to avoid exposure to smoke and radiant heat. Collection of children from the service will be arranged as soon possible.

## STATE-BY-STATE SPECIFICATIONS

## VICTORIA

- Early Childhood Services at the highest risk of fire danger are placed on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register
- 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>

## TASMANIA

- Tasmania has developed an Emergency Management Framework for Vulnerable People which is inclusive of Early Childhood Services  
<http://www.ses.tas.gov.au/assets/files/EM%20Publications/State%20Emergency%20Policies/Emergency%20Management%20Framework.pdf>
- Tasmanian Fire Services (TFS) has developed Fire Evacuation Plan Guidelines which have been designed to meet TFS requirements

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- A bushfire 'risk rating' is applied to Early Childhood Services and pre-schools in a bushfire prone area which is based on their Bushfire Attack Level (BAL)
- The BAL measures the Service's potential for exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame in the event of a bush fire. The four categories are:
  - R1 Extreme/Very high-risk
  - R2 High risk
  - R3 Medium/Low risk
  - NR Non-rated
- Services with a risk rating R1 and R2 are required to have a specific bushfire response plan as well as their general emergency management plan.

**WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

- The Department of Fire and Emergency Services provides Guidelines for preparing a Bushfire Risk Management Plan used to identify at risk locations including Early Childhood Services: <https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/waemergencyandriskmanagement/obrm/Documents/OBRM-Guidelines-for-Preparing-a-Bushfire-Risk-Management.pdf>
- Services should have their own Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan which identifies dealing with bushfires: <http://det.wa.edu.au/policies/detcms/policy-planning-and-accountability/policies-framework/guidelines/emergency-and-critical-incident-management-plan-template.en?cat-id=3458013>

**NORTHERN TERRITORY**

Early Childhood Services are required to:

- Conduct a risk assessment to identify potential emergencies affecting the Service and use this to prepare policies and procedures.
- Prepare an Emergency Management Plan.

**AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY (ACT)**

- Early Childhood Services should follow advice from the ACT Emergency Services Agency to be bushfire ready: <http://esa.act.gov.au/>

**SOURCES:**

Community Early Learning Australia: <https://www.cela.org.au/2018/01/07/bushfire-advice-for-childrens-services/>

ECE Bush-fire Information: <file:///C:/Users/a-ecr/Desktop/ECE-Bushfires-information-sheet.pdf>

Education and Care Services National Regulations.

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](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>

Revised National Quality Standard.

The Australian Government – Geoscience Australia: <http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/hazards/bushfire>

REVIEW

|                 |  |                  |                  |
|-----------------|--|------------------|------------------|
| POLICY REVIEWED | OCTOBER 2018   | NEXT REVIEW DATE | OCTOBER 2019     |
| MODIFICATIONS   | New policy created   |                  |                  |
| POLICY REVIEWED | MODIFICATIONS  |                  | NEXT REVIEW DATE |
| October 2018    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional information added to points.</li> <li>• References added for resources and information.</li> <li>• Sources/references alphabetised.</li> </ul> |                  | October 2019     |