

# Bushfire Policy

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## 1. Policy statement

### Values

Yarra Warra Pre-School is committed, as far as practicable, to providing a safe environment for all children, staff and any other persons participating in the program.

We are committed to:

- As far as practicable, providing a safe environment for all children, staff, and any other persons participating in the program in the event of a bushfire.
- Closing on days forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology as either “Severe” or “Extreme” on the Fire Danger Rating (**FDR**) index. This is a pre-emptive closure authorised by the Pre-School.
- Closing on “Code Red” FDR days or otherwise as directed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (**DEECD**). The underlying principle at all times is the safety of children and the desirability of children being with their families, safely enacting the families’ fire safety plans (DEECD Emergency Management Children’s Services October 2009).
- Preparing for ongoing bushfire seasons by purchasing appropriate equipment and ensuring emergency procedures are in place to effectively manage the threat of fire danger at the centre on an ongoing basis.
- All staff being adequately trained and aware of emergency procedures.
- Responding to the needs of the children, in the event that a child is injured, becomes ill, or is traumatised whilst attending the centre.
- Strongly advocating that parent/guardians make informed choices about sending children on potential risk days (that are not designated “Severe” or “Extreme” FDR days).
- When the centre’s emergency plan has been activated children can only be collect by those with a signed ‘Authorisation to Collect in an Emergency’ form.
- Complying with regulatory and legislative requirements.

### Purpose

To achieve a Bushfire Policy that plans for the safety of the children, volunteers and staff at Yarra Warra Pre-school.

## 2. Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Yarra Warra Pre-School committee, at the committee meeting on 12 August 2014.

## 3. Review date

This policy will be reviewed annually, or varied earlier if necessary, and the committee will within 28 days of making any change, notify the parents/guardians of the children attending, of that change (Regulation 42).

## 4. Scope

This policy applies to the committee, staff, parents/guardians, children, volunteers and students attending the centre.

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## 5. Background

In the Nillumbik Shire, North Warrandyte is considered to be one of the most vulnerable because of geographical, environmental and community factors (per Nillumbik news Sept-Oct 2009). The Pre-School is located on the crest of a hill characterised by “open, forested country, with an understorey of native grasses” (per Parks Victoria). Exit routes and access to the Pre-School are limited to Research-Warrandyte Road only, and potential places of relative safety are limited to the surrounding forested areas.

This Policy addresses the individual needs of the Yarra Warra Pre-School and will be amended from time to time to take into account changes in regulatory and legislative requirements.

## 6. Legislation

- *Children’s Services Regulations 2009*
  - o Regulation 40 Information to be available
    - o 40(1) The proprietor must ensure that the following information is displayed prominently at the main entrance to the children’s service
    - o 40(1)(g) details of emergency evacuation procedures
  - o Regulation 63 Staff to have first aid training
  - o Regulation 76 ‘Emergency care procedures are developed and regularly practised at the premises of the children’s service by the staff and volunteers with the children being cared for or educated by the service’
  - o Regulation 77 ‘Access to an operating telephone or similar means of communication whenever children are being cared for or educated by the service
  - o Regulation 84 ‘the proprietor must supply and maintain a suitably equipped first aid kit at the children’s service which is easily recognisable and readily accessible to staff but inaccessible to children
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004 (Vic)*

## 7. Definitions

**Emergency Management Plan (EMP):** means the emergency management plan prepared for the Pre-School. The EMP sets out the roles, responsibilities and actions to be taken in the event of an emergency, including a bushfire.

**Central District:** means the area covering the Nillumbik municipality that is used by the Bureau of Meteorology to identify which particular FDR applies to it.

**DEECD:** Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

**Emergency mobile phone:** means the mobile phone used as an additional communication device to communicate via SMS message with parents/guardians and other key stakeholders in the event of an emergency.

**Fire Danger Rating (FDR):** means the rating determined by the Bureau of Meteorology, in consultation with fire agencies, and is a prediction of fire behavior, including how hard it would be to put out a fire once it starts. (Source: CFA Website)

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## **8. Key responsibilities**

### **The committee are responsible for:**

- Developing, in collaboration with staff, appropriate procedures to be followed in the event of a bushfire threat at the centre.
- Supporting staff to gain appropriate knowledge for the implementation of this policy.
- Regularly reviewing and updating procedures as required, approving any changes to the policy and informing staff and parents/guardians of these changes.
- Approving any additional expenditure or resources.
- Ensuring that every aspect of this policy is addressed and implemented prior to the start of the fire season.
- Maintaining the fire box and fire equipment, i.e. ensuring all items are accounted for and in working order (e.g. working batteries for torches, water supplies etc). Fire equipment is listed at Schedule 1.
- Ensuring bushfire procedures are prominently displayed and practised per term.

### **Qualified staff are responsible for:**

- Being familiar with the procedures and responsibilities outlined in the EMP.
- The day-to-day implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring the safety of the children in their care.
- Ensuring the safety of any children needing special assistance
- Ensuring procedures are in place for efficient emergency communication with parents/guardians.
- Providing a pastoral care in the event of an emergency.
- Assisting maintenance of the fire box and fire equipment, i.e. ensuring all items are accounted for and in working order (e.g. batteries for torches, water supplies etc). Fire equipment is listed at Schedule 1.
- Wearing lanyards recording staff responsibilities (see EMP, p. 10) and ensuring they are with them/accessible at all times during the fire season.
- Scheduling and participating in fire drills as scheduled in the EMP, and recording the details and dates of practices.
- Ensuring they have appropriate personal protective clothing to wear in a bushfire emergency.
- Directing and utilising extra parent helpers in the absence of a CFA member.
- Liaising with the CFA and organising a training session once a year on fire emergency procedures (that parent helpers can attend). Training should address: use of scanner, use of mobile phone, activation of sprinkler system, and sharing information about the purpose of lanyards etc.
- Training relief staff, volunteers and student teachers on the Pre-School's EMP.

### **The parents/guardians helpers are responsible for:**

- Being familiar with the Pre-School's bushfire emergency procedures.
- Signing all children in and out for every kinder session including if a parent chooses to collect a child outside of normal collection times.

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- Completing the sign in book (themselves) located in the foyer at the beginning and end of each visit.
  - Supporting the centre by endeavouring to have at least one parent helper on duty during the fire season (November/December & February/March).
  - Understanding that even though the Pre-School is located close to the North Warrandyte CFA it may not be possible for a fire truck to be stationed at the Pre-School in a bush fire.
  - When acting as a parent helper: participating and assisting in the practice of emergency evacuations.
  - When acting as a parent helper: wearing the lanyards provided and following the directions of staff during a bushfire emergency.

## 9. Pre-Emptive Closures

### Closure of centre on “Severe” and “Extreme” FDR days

- When a day is forecast as “Severe” or “Extreme” for the Central District (see Schedule 2) all kindergarten sessions for that day will be cancelled and the kinder will be closed.
- To minimise disruption to classes if after consultation with members of the North Warrandyte CFA conditions are deemed safer in North Warrandyte the Pre-School Director and President are able to agree to override the Fire Danger Rating for that day, allowing classes to proceed. This option will only be considered outside of the Fire Danger Period.  
As always it is up to the parents’ discretion and they may choose whether or not to send their child/children to Pre-School in line with their own fire plan.
- Parents/guardians are asked to be alert to days being forecast as “Severe” or “Extreme” FDR days. This will necessitate families being abreast of local weather conditions, tuning into the nightly/morning news or radio news, or checking the CFA website ([www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)).
- Fire Danger Ratings are based on the weather forecast for each of the 9 Bureau of Meteorology weather forecast districts. The Bureau of Meteorology provides a weather forecast (and related Fire Danger Ratings) **up to four days**. Providing this information in advance enables people to prepare for any significant forecast of fire weather.
- The Pre-School will endeavor to inform parents/guardians of the centers closure by text message. However, if a day is forecast as “Severe” or “Extreme” for the Central District, parents/guardians should proceed on the basis that the centre will be closed.
- A sign will be placed on the main pre-school entrance door alerting parents of the Pre-School’s closure where possible.

### DEECD Directed Closures

- Yarra Warra Pre-School has been placed on DEECD’s Bushfire At-Risk Register.
- Inclusion on the Register is a trigger for notifying parents/guardians that our centre will be pre-emptively closed in the event that the Bureau of Meteorology issues a Code Red Fire Danger Rating warning for the Central District.
- DEECD will endeavour to provide up to 3-days notice of a planned closure.
- Parents/guardians should expect that less than 3-days notice may be provided.
- The final decision to close will be confirmed no later than 12 noon the day before the planned closure.
- Once DEECD has directed our centre to close, the decision will not change – regardless of changes in weather forecast.

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- Subject to the period of notice provided by DEECD, Yarra Warra Pre-School will communicate DEECD directed closures by:
    - displaying a copy of a DEECD Notice in the foyer; and/or
    - text message to parent/guardian mobile phone number.

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## 10. Pre-School Instigated Closures

- Based on local conditions and advice from local authorities Yarra Warra Pre-School staff and committee may decide to close on a day that does not meet any of the criteria described above (e.g. local weather conditions, existing fire in the area).
- In this case the decision to close will be made by Pre-School teaching staff and the President.
- The decision to close may be made at any point during the day. This may be while a session is in progress. In this case the Pre-School will activate its Bush Fire action Plan (please see the Bush Fire Action Plan for more information).
- The Pre-School will inform parents/guardians of the centers closure by text message.
- A sign will be placed on the main pre-school entrance door alerting parents of the Pre-School's closure where possible.
- Teaching Staff and the President are responsible for notifying DEECD of the decision to close.

## 11. Evacuation

The Pre-school may be evacuated by emergency services if it is deemed necessary and the required resources are available.

- Pre-School staff will notify parents via text message, with details of the evacuation point. It will most likely be the closest designated evacuation centre.

## 12. Emergency Preparation Procedures

### A. Preparation for the fire season:

#### 1. Inside kinder room:

- Check the contents of the firebox in October each year to ensure readiness and complete the Fire Equipment Inspection Register (see Schedule 1). Ensure all battery driven devices are in good working order.
- Establish plans for offsite backup of all electronic information.
- Ensure all records are updated and recorded in suitable format.
- Ensure mobile phone is updated and charged at all times.

#### 2. Outside kinder room:

- Conduct a fire protection working bee in October each year to ensure readiness:
  - Check and clean gutters of all debris
  - Remove all fallen branches
  - Remove all fuel around the kinder building and perimeters (constant monitoring required during the season as it can and will build up due to northerly winds)
  - Check water tank water levels to ascertain whether water should be purchased for the fire season
  - Check sprinklers are not blocked and work as required
  - Fill three 240L water containers
  - Ensure hoses are in working condition

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### 3. Communication:

- Communicate the relevant content of the Pre-School's EMP to staff, parents, visitors, emergency services and other relevant parties.
- Testing of all emergency procedures –
  - Testing of emergency procedures in the absence of usual Teacher(s) to make sure that the emergency procedures can be executed by back-up staff.
  - Testing of emergency procedures without prior notification to staff, parents and children to make sure the procedures can be executed unexpectedly.
  - Establish a formal process for informing relief staff and parents on duty of their roles and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.

### **B. Procedures to be followed during the fire season:**

1. On a **daily** basis during the fire season (November/December & February/March) teachers will:
  - Turn on internet (CFA site)
  - Turn on radio and/or scanner (as required)
  - Ensure their mobile phones are on and fully charged.
  - Unlock firebox
  - Ensure all lanyards are worn by staff
  - Draw the blinds (as required)
2. On a **weekly** basis, teachers will activate the sprinkler system to ensure appropriate operation.
3. Teachers will run the sprinkler system, during hot weather, at their discretion for the purpose of dampening down the building.
4. The committee will organise additional fire preparation working bees (as required) to check/clear fuel around the centre, and the test sprinklers and other emergency equipment is in order.
5. **Per term** staff will conduct, record and document emergency procedure drills. Details of drills will be recorded in the Emergency Management Plan Exercise Record (see EMP, Appendix A) and stored in the Emergency Management Policy folder (located in the office). Teachers will also conduct practice sessions to congregate children at their discretion.
6. On a **yearly** basis, prior the fire season – at the AGM the committee will appoint a fire maintenance officer who will be responsible for overseeing the working bees, sprinkler checks and general fire maintenance that is required.
7. **Bi-annually** the committee will ensure the centre's emergency mobile phone is up-to-date with current contact numbers (at the end of Term 3 and at the commencement of Term 1).

### **13. Related documents**

- DEECD *Children's Services Guide, Practice Note 51* [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/earlychildhood)
- Emergency Procedures, Guidelines for Kindergartens and Child Care Centres (Available from MFB Community Safety Department or CFA Community Safety Directorate)
- DEECD *EC006-2009 Preparing Children's Services for Bushfires*
- DEECD Children's Services Guide

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[www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/careankinder/csg/guide](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/ecsmanagement/careankinder/csg/guide)

- DEECD, *Victorian Kindergarten policy, procedures and funding criteria update 2010-12*
- CFA - Living in the Bush – Bushfire Survival Plan Work Book [www.cfa.gov.au](http://www.cfa.gov.au)
- DEECD Bushfire and Emergency Management Self-Assessment
- 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission – Interim Report  
[www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/interim-report](http://www.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/interim-report)

**Centre policies**

- Emergency Management Policy
- Accident, Injury and Medical Emergency
- Delivery and Collection of Children

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## 14. Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee will:

- Consult annually with the North Warrandyte CFA representative.
- Consider feedback from staff and parents/guardians regarding the policy.
- Any changes made to the Royal Commission findings must be integrated into the current policy.
- Evaluate the awareness of staff and other relevant people of the procedures to follow in the event of a bushfire threat.
- Ensure that procedures are evaluated on a yearly basis (i.e. at the end of each fire season) to assess lessons learned, to identify new risks, and if necessary the appropriate changes made. Consider:
  - What went right?
  - What needs improvement?
  - Who will update our plans and procedures in the future?
  - What lessons have been learned?

### REVISION RECORD

Date	Version	Revision description
9 January 2011	No. 1	Over the past several months and discussions with DEECD and CFA, the current policy has been substantially revised insofar as many parts are now contained in the Pre-School's Emergency Management Plan (based on DEECD's template).
23 January 2011	No 2	Amended to reflect pre-emptive closures authorised by Pre-School on basis of FDR "Severe" or "Extreme"; consequential amendments; updated Schedule 2.
11 August 2014	No 3	Review of the policy in line with new Bush Fire Action Plan to meet the needs of the pre-school following local incident in Feb 2014 which lead to the closure of the pre-school for an afternoon.

## Contents of fire equipment

1. Fire equipment (housed outside):
  - Fire retardant hose & connections x 1
  - Metal buckets & cotton mops x 4
  - Fire knapsack (portable fire extinguisher) x 1
  - 240L water containers x3
2. Fire equipment (housed inside):
  - P2 masks x 30
  - Head LED torches & spare batteries x 4
  - Goggles x 5
  - Fire blankets x 15
  - Hydrolyte
  - Asthma spaces
  - First Aid supplies
  - Food supplies
    - Crackers, lollies
    - Bottled water
3. Fire equipment (office):
  - Scanner & spare batteries
  - Portable mobile phone charger with cords for staff phones
  - AM/FM Radio & spare batteries x 3
  - Emergency mobile phone and charger

## Fire Equipment Inspection Register

Inspection of fire equipment must be recorded in the Fire Equipment Inspection Register.

Fire Equipment Inspection Register						
Items	Responsible person	Date	Yes	No	Comments	Action required/ date discharged
Fire retardant hose & connections x 2						
Metal buckets & cotton mops x 4						
Fire knapsack (portable fire extinguisher) x 1						
240L water containers x3						
P2 masks x 30						
Head LED torches & spare batteries x 4						
Goggles x 5						
Fire blankets x 15						
Water, food						
Scanner						
AM/FM Radio						

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Emergency mobile phone						
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**Understanding Fire Danger Ratings** (Source: CFA website)

**Emergency Management Plan**

Refer to the Pre-School's 'Emergency Management Plan' (an operational copy is held in the office; please speak with a staff member).