

Bushfire Policy – Information Statement

February 2011



What is the purpose of the Bushfire Policy?

To achieve policies and procedures that plan for the safety of the children, volunteers and staff at Yarra Warra Pre-School (**Pre-School**) in the event of a bushfire.

The Pre-School is 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.
- All staff being adequately trained and aware of emergency procedures.
- Strongly advocating that families make informed choices about sending children on potential risk days (that are not designated 'Severe' or 'Extreme' Fire Danger Rating (FDR) days).
- Advocating that once the Pre-School's emergency plan is activated that all children should remain at the Pre-School until the emergency has passed.

Will the Pre-School close during the fire season (November/December & February/March)?

Yes. The kinder will close on:

- any day that is forecast / declared as 'Severe' or 'Extreme' on the FDR index by the Bureau of Meteorology; or
- 'Code Red' FDR days or otherwise as directed by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).



Why is the Pre-School closing on days other than those directed by DEECD?

The Committee of Management, in consultation with key stakeholders and professional consultants, has determined that the safest option for staff and children is to also close on Severe or Extreme FDR days.

How will my family know that the Pre-School is closing?

We ask our families to be alert to the possibility of days being declared forecast / declared as 'Severe' or 'Extreme'. During the fire season, the Fire Danger Rating will feature in weather forecasts and be broadcast on radio and TV and appear in some newspapers. Families will need to be abreast of local weather conditions. For families with internet access, the CFA website is updated regularly and FDR status is recorded in advance (www.cfa.vic.gov.au).

Where possible, affected families will be notified of the Pre-School's closure by SMS message. However, if a day has been forecast/declared a Severe or Extreme FDR day for the Central District, families should proceed on the basis that the Pre-School will be closed. A sign will also be placed at the Pre-School alerting families of the closure.

What does this mean for my family?

When a day is declared as Severe or Extreme on the FDR index for the Central District, all kindergarten sessions for that day (including enrichment sessions if applicable) will be cancelled.

When will DEECD direct the Pre-School to close?

The Pre-School has been placed on DEECD's Bushfire At-Risk Register. This means that if the BoM issues a Code Red FDR warning for the Central District, the Pre-School will be directed to close. DEECD's underlying principle is the safety of children and the desirability of children being with their families, safely enacting the families' fire safety plans. (Note: No staff will remain at the Pre-School during a DEECD directed closure.)

How will the Pre-School and families be advised of DEECD directed closures?

- Where possible, DEECD will provide up to 3 days notice of a planned closure.
- The Pre-School and our families should expect that, in some instances, fewer 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.
- All warnings of potential or actual closure of facilities will be posted on the DEECD website (www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires) by 10:30am each morning during the bushfire season.
- Once DEECD has directed our Pre-School to close, the decision will not change – regardless of changes in FDR forecasts. This is intended to limit confusion and provide time for parents to make alternative care arrangements for their children.
- Subject to the period of notice given by DEECD, the Pre-School will communicate DEECD directed closures by:
 - displaying a copy of the applicable DEECD Notice in the foyer; and/or
 - sending an SMS message to our families (via parent/guardian mobile phone numbers).

Visit www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/faqs.htm#1 for further information.

Does the Bushfire Policy require me to do anything?

We ask that you:

- be familiar with the Pre-School's emergency procedures;
- sign your child in and out for every kinder session including if you choose to collect your child outside of normal collection times, and complete the sign in book yourself when attending the Pre-School as a parent helper;
- support the Pre-School by endeavouring to have two parent helpers on duty during the fire season;
- when acting as a parent helper, participate and assist in the practice of emergency evacuations; and
- when acting as a parent helper, wear a lanyard (provided by staff) and follow the directions of staff in the event of a bushfire emergency.

You should also consider, in advance, alternate care arrangements for your child/ren in the event of the Pre-School closing.

Will fee relief be available to families?

There will be no fee relief in respect of DEECD directed closures or Pre-School instigated closures. The Committee will, however, review this position at the end of March 2011 in anticipation of the 2011/2012 fire season.

Will the Bushfire Policy change?

The Bushfire Policy will be evaluated at the end of each fire season, and appropriate changes made. It will also be amended from time to time to take into account changes in regulatory and legislative requirements.

Where do I find more information?

You will find the Bushfire Policy in the Centre Policies folder (red folder) in the foyer. Please don't hesitate to speak with our staff or a Committee member if you have any further queries.