



BUSHFIRE POLICY

QUALITY AREA 2 | Version 2.0

Yarra Warra Preschool Inc.
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PURPOSE

To achieve a Bushfire Policy that plans for the safety of the children, volunteers and staff at Yarra Warra Preschool and actions to be taken in relation to bushfire and grassfire risk.

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Yarra Warra Preschool 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 with a Fire Danger Rating (FDR) forecast as either **'Extreme'** and **'Catastrophic'** as determined for the Central fire district. This is a pre-emptive closure authorised by the Preschool. Yarra Warra Preschool Director in consultation with the Committee of Management executive (CoM exec), will review the Fire Danger Rating, at 4pm on the preceding day, and confirm closures. Ratings can be found through cfa.vic.gov.au, on the VicEmergency App or call 1800 226 226.
- ensuring that as Yarra Warra Preschool is a service listed on the Department of Education (DE) Bushfire at-Risk Register, the service does not operate on any day that the Victorian Emergency Management Commissioner declares as having a Catastrophic Fire Danger rating that applies to the Central Fire District. (For your survival leave bushfire risk areas). As advised by the Country Fire Authority (CFA) (Rohan Thornton) this policy includes closing on extreme and catastrophic rating days. This is deemed best practice for families, staff and the wider community.
- 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 "Catastrophic" or "Extreme" FDR days).such as High (Be ready to act)
- ensuring that when the centre's emergency plan has been activated children can only be collected by those written in your child's enrolment form.
- complying with regulatory and legislative requirements.

SCOPE

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

BACKGROUND and LEGISLATION

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 Preschool 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 Preschool 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 Preschool and will be amended from time to time to take into account changes in regulatory and legislative requirements.

Legislation

- *Children's Services Regulations 2009*
 - Regulation 40 Information to be available
 - 40(1) The proprietor must ensure that the following information is displayed prominently at the main entrance to the children's service (done in front noticeboard under verandah)
 - 40(1)(g) details of emergency evacuation procedures
 - Regulation 63 Staff to have first aid training
 - 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'
 - Regulation 77 'Access to an operating telephone or similar means of communication whenever children are being cared for or educated by the service. 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)*

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For regularly used terms e.g. Approved provider, Nominated supervisor, Notifiable complaints, Serious incidents, Duty of care, etc. refer to the Definitions file of the Yarra Warra Preschool folder.

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.

Communication: means messages sent to families to communicate urgent information, being KinderLoop and EnrolNow emergency SMS function.

Department of Education : Department of Education Victoria

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

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)

Bush-fire-at-risk register: Schools, kindergartens and child care facilities assessed to be at the highest risk of fire are placed on the department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR).

Executive Committee: relates to the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

The committee is responsible for:

- developing, in collaboration with staff, appropriate procedures to be followed in the event of a bushfire threat at the kindergarten.
- Using the WhatsApp group as a means for communication between staff, Director and Committee executive at the Kinder regarding closures.
- 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

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- Ensuring families are notified of closures on KinderLoop and through EnrolNow emergency SMS function.

The Director is responsible for:

- 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).
- being familiar with the procedures and responsibilities outlined in the EMP.
- advising staff of their roles and responsibilities outlined in the EMP, especially when these roles change due to changes in the regular roster.
- the day-to-day implementation of this policy.
- ensuring the safety of the staff, volunteers and children at the kinder.
- developing, in collaboration with staff and Committee, appropriate procedures to be followed in the event of a bushfire threat at the kindergarten.
- Regularly reviewing the Department's bushfire information and advising the Committee of operational or policy updates.
- Using the WhatsApp group as a means for communication between staff, Director and Committee executive regarding closures at the Kinder.
- regularly reviewing and updating procedures as required, approving any changes to the policy and informing staff and parents/guardians of these changes
- ensuring that every aspect of this policy is addressed and implemented prior to the start of the fire season
- Notifying families in a timely manner of any closures on KinderLoop and through EnrolNow emergency SMS function.
- 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 Preschool's EMP.
- Notifying DE and Nillumbik Council on the day of centre closures through approved communication channels

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
- providing pastoral care in the event of an emergency
- knowing the location of the fire box and fire equipment,
- being familiar with their role allocations as per the EMP depending upon which role they are rostered on each day
- 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

The parents/guardians helpers are responsible for:

- being familiar with the Preschool'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
- understanding that even though the Preschool is located close to the North Warrandyte CFA it may not be possible for a fire truck to be stationed at the Preschool in a bushfire

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- when acting as a parent helper: participating and assisting in the practice of emergency evacuations
 - when acting as a parent helper, following the directions of staff during a bushfire emergency.

PRE-EMPTIVE CLOSURES

Closure of centre on “Extreme” and “Catastrophic” FDR days

- when a day is forecast as “Extreme” or “Catastrophic” for the Central District (see Schedule 2) all kindergarten sessions for that day will be cancelled and the kinder will be closed
- Yarra Warra Preschool Director in consultation with the Committee executive, will review the Fire Danger Rating, at 4pm on the preceding day, and confirm closures. Ratings can be found through cfa.vic.gov.au, on the VicEmergency App or call 1800 226 226.
- to minimise disruption to classes if after consultation with members of the North Warrandyte CFA conditions are deemed safer in North Warrandyte the Preschool 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**
- parent’s may choose whether or not to send their child/children to Preschool in line with their own fire plan on Moderate and High FDR days
- parents/guardians are asked to be alert to days being forecast as “Extreme” or “Catastrophic” 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)
- Fire Danger Ratings are based on the weather forecast for each of the nine 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 Preschool will endeavor to inform parents/guardians of the kinder’s closure by KinderLoop, and where deemed appropriate, emergency SMS message actioned through EnrolNow. However, if a day is forecast as “Extreme” or “Catastrophic” for the Central District, parents/guardians should proceed on the basis that the centre will be closed
- DE and Nillumbik Council will be advised on a closure day by the Director and/or President
- a sign will be placed on the main Preschool entrance door alerting parents of the Preschool’s closure where possible.

Department of Education Directed Closures

- Yarra Warra Preschool has been placed on Department of Education’s (DE) Bushfire At-Risk Register
- inclusion on the Register is a trigger for notifying parents/guardians that our centre will be preemptively closed in the event that the Bureau of Meteorology issues a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating warning for the Central District
- DE endeavours to provide four to seven days’ notice of a possible Catastrophic FDR day closure to enable preschools to forewarn their staff and parent/carer community. .
- parents/guardians should expect that less than 3-days notice may be provided
- the final decision to close will be confirmed no later than 1 pm the day before the planned closure.
- once DE has directed our centre to close, the decision will not change – regardless of changes in weather forecast
- subject to the period of notice provided by DE, Yarra Warra Preschool will communicate DE directed closures by:
 - o displaying a copy of a DE Notice in the foyer; and/or
 - o text message to parent/guardian mobile phone numbers

Preschool Instigated Closures

- based on local conditions and advice from local authorities Yarra Warra Preschool 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 the Preschool Director and the Executive Committee.

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- 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 Preschool will activate its Bushfire Action Plan (please see the Bushfire Action Plan for more information)
 - the Preschool will inform parents/guardians of the centre's closure by KinderLoop and EnrolNow SMSmessage
 - a sign will be placed on the main Preschool entrance door alerting parents of the Preschool's closure where possible
 - teaching staff and the President are responsible for notifying the DE of the decision to close.

EVACUATION

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

- Preschool staff will notify parents via KinderLoop, with details of the evacuation point. It will most likely be the closest designated evacuation centre.

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 including paper and electronic copies
- ensure the Directors mobile phone is updated and charged at all times.

2. Outside kinder room:

- Director to conduct a fire protection inspection in October each year to ensure readiness and to appoint with Committee approval Nillumbik Council or a suitable organisation or individual to:
 - o check and clean gutters of all debris
 - o remove all fallen branches
 - o 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)
 - o check water tank water levels to ascertain whether water should be purchased for the fire season
 - o check sprinklers are not blocked and work as required
 - o fill three 240L water containers
 - o ensure hoses are in working condition.

3. Communication:

- communicate the relevant content of the Preschool's EMP to staff, parents, visitors, emergency services and other relevant parties.
- testing of all emergency procedures –
 - o testing of emergency procedures in the absence of usual Teacher(s) and or director to make sure that the emergency procedures can be executed by back-up staff
 - o testing of emergency procedures without prior notification to staff, parents and children to make sure the procedures can be executed unexpectedly
 - o 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:

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1. On a **daily** basis during the fire season (November/December and February/March) the Director will:
 - refer to the Victorian Emergency App (Director and/or Person in Day to Day Charge)
 - Check CFA site on internet
 - turn the radio on and/or scanner (as required)
 - ensure their mobile phones are on and fully charged.
 - unlock firebox
 - issue staff roles during an emergency as per rostered allocations
 - draw the blinds and turn off air conditioners (as required).
 2. On a regular basis, director will activate the sprinkler system to ensure appropriate operation.
 3. Director will run the sprinkler system, during hot weather, at their discretion for the purpose of dampening down the building.
 4. The Director will engage a maintenance provider to check/clear fuel around the centre, and liaise with council for a contractor to test sprinklers and ensure other emergency equipment is in order on a regular basis during November to March.
 5. **Per term** staff will conduct, record and document emergency procedure drills. Details of drills will be recorded in the Emergency Management Plan (see EMP) and stored in the Emergency Management Policy folder. Teachers will also conduct practice sessions to congregate children at their discretion.
 6. On a **yearly** basis, prior to 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 Director will ensure the parent/carer contact details are up-to-date on KinderLoop and in EnrolNow (at the end of Term 3 and at the commencement of Term 1).

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Children's Services Regulations
www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/statutory-rules/childrens-services-regulations-2020
- Managing bush and grass fire risk in Early childhood services
www.vic.gov.au/managing-bushfire-grassfire-risks-early-childhood-services
- Kindergarten Funding Guide www.vic.gov.au/kindergarten-funding-guide
- Your bushfire plan (CFA) www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-and-during-a-fire/your-bushfire-plan
- 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission – Interim Report [2009 VBRC - Interim Report](http://www.vic.gov.au/2009-vbrc-interim-report)
- Department of Education Emergency Management in early childhood services
<https://www.vic.gov.au/emergency-management-early-childhood-services>
- Department of Education Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bushfire-and-grassfire-preparedness/policy>

POLICIES

- *Administration of First Aid*
- *Emergency Management Plan*
- *Privacy and Confidentiality*
- *Participation of Volunteers and Students*
- *Occupational Health and Safety*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Bush Kinder: Extreme Weather*
- *Asthma Management Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness*
- *Delivery and Collection of Children*

EVALUATION

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

- consult annually with the North Warrandyte CFA representative
- consider feedback from staff and parents/guardians regarding the 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?

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Contents of fire equipment
- Attachment 2: Know your daily Fire Danger Rating

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings/about-fire-danger-ratings>

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Yarra Warra Preschool committee, at the committee meeting on November 2024

REVIEW DATE:

This policy will be reviewed in October and May 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).

REVISION RECORD

Date	Version	Revision description
9 January 2011	No. 1	Over the past several months and discussions with DE and CFA, the current policy has been substantially revised insofar as many parts are now contained in the Preschool's Emergency Management Plan (based on DE's template).
23 January 2011	No 2	Amended to reflect pre-emptive closures authorised by Preschool 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 Preschool following local incident in Feb 2014 which lead to the closure of the Preschool for an afternoon.
September 2019	No. 4	Format review General update of information to ensure inline with DE regulations
January 2020	No. 5	Update of information inline with DE regulations
Oct 2022		Policy updated as advised by Rohan Thornton from the C.F.A.
Sep 2023		To be reviewed September 2023
November 2024		Updated references to DEECD Updated procedures to reflect new communication methods, KinderLoop and EnrolNow SMS Inclusion of Director roles and responsibilities Related policies updated and sources updated to current policies Removal of centre mobile phone references

ATTACHMENT 1:

Contents of fire equipment

1. Fire equipment (housed outside):
 - fire retardant hose and connections x 1
 - metal buckets and 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 and 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 and spare batteries
 - portable mobile phone charger with cords for staff phones
 - AM/FM Radio and spare batteries x 3
 - emergency mobile phone and charger

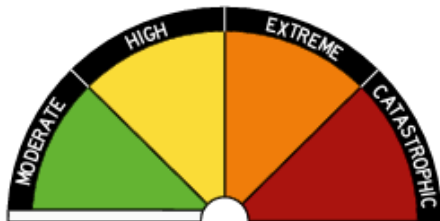
Fire Equipment Inspection Register

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

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

ATTACHMENT 2:

Know your daily fire danger rating



Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire could be if one started. The higher the rating the more dangerous the conditions. Fire Danger Ratings feature in weather forecasts during the fire season.

To check your district's daily Fire Danger Rating, visit cfa.vic.gov.au or call **1800 226 226**.

	What does it mean?	What should i do?
CATASTROPHIC	<p>If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ These are the most dangerous conditions for a fire. 	<p>For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Your life may depend on the decisions you make, even before there is a fire. ▶ For your survival, do not be in bushfire risk areas. ▶ Stay safe by going to a safer location early in the morning or the night before. ▶ Homes cannot withstand fires in these conditions. You may not be able to leave and help may not be available.
EXTREME	<p>Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ These are dangerous fire conditions. ▶ Expect hot, dry and windy conditions. 	<p>Take action now to protect your life and property</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Check your bushfire plan and that your property is fire ready. ▶ If a fire starts, take immediate action. If you and your property are not prepared to the highest level, go to a safer location well before the fire impacts. ▶ Reconsider travel through bushfire risk areas. ▶ Leaving bushfire risk areas early in the day is your safest option.
HIGH	<p>Fires can be dangerous.</p>	<p>Be ready to act.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ There's a heightened risk. Be alert for fires in your area. ▶ Decide what you will do if a fire starts. ▶ If a fire starts, your life and property may be at risk. The safest option is to avoid bushfire risk areas.
MODERATE	<p>Most fires can be controlled.</p>	<p>Plan and prepare.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Stay up to date and be ready to act if there is a fire.

Monitor conditions and official sources for warnings by going to cfa.vic.gov.au, emergency.vic.gov.au or call the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226**

Sourced from: CFA Fire Ready Kit (version 2) Page 4 [Resources For Schools at Risk of Fire | CFA \(Country Fire Authority\)](#)