



Bushfire Preparedness Policy

Rationale:

Schools that have been identified as being at high fire risk and on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) DEET BARR Register will close on days determined Code Red by the Emergency Management Commissioner. St Patrick's Parish Primary School **has not** been identified as being one of those at high bushfire risk and is **not listed on the BARR**.

Bushfire preparedness is not just a concern for schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register. Student transport to and from school, participation in off-site activities including camps, excursions and sporting activities and the risk of localised fire events demonstrate the importance of bushfire preparedness for all schools.

The school will therefore adhere to all relevant Catholic Education Commission of Victoria & Department of Education, Victoria guidelines where bushfires and Code Red Days are anticipated.

Policy Statement:

St Patrick's Parish Primary School's Bushfire Preparedness Policy outlines the arrangements made by the school to eliminate or reduce, so far as is reasonably practical, the risk of harm to members of the school community and property resulting from elevated fire danger condition including Catastrophic (Code Red) fire alert days.

This policy applies to all members of the St Patrick's Parish Primary School community, school sites and associated 'off site' activities including camps, excursions and sporting activities and service providers.

Types of Fire Events:

Code Red Days:

Determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner, a Code Red Day is the highest level of Fire Danger Rating and signifies the worst conditions for grassfires and bushfires. Once a Code Red day has been determined this decision will not change, regardless of any changes in the weather forecast.

School's not identified on the DEET BARR Register will remain open on Code Red Days. Those listed on the DEET BARR Register will close with appropriate arrangements communicated to parents and carers up to four days' in advance.

Total Fire Ban Days:

Schools will remain open on Total Fire Ban Days; however, the following arrangements will be made:

- » Lighting or use of fire in the open air is not permitted;
- » All open fires for the purpose of cooking are not permitted;
- » Hot-works such as metal works, grinding, welding, soldering or similar are not permitted without a permit;
- » Activities that have the potential to start a fire are not permitted.

Guidelines:

St Patrick's Parish Primary School maintains an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) that applies to all staff members, students, visitors, contractors and volunteers on site or participating in an off-site activity. The purpose of the EMP is to detail the roles, responsibilities and procedures to undertake in the event of any emergency, including bushfire.

The School Principal will:

- » Ensure that the EMP is reviewed at least annually and immediately after any significant incident. Emergency Management Committee (EMC) will be established including members of the Leadership Team to participate in the review.
- » Ensure that the EMP includes procedures for the planning and approval of offsite activities which consider the risk of bushfire in the activity vicinity.
- » Schedule and facilitate regular tests of the Emergency Preparedness arrangements.
- » Ensure maintenance personnel conduct regular maintenance to monitor and remove materials that be regarded as a bushfire risk.
- » Cancel or recall at short notice if necessary any activity or excursion that occurs on a day of extreme fire danger or Code Red Day. Where excursions are not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required.
- » Ensure that staff, contractors and volunteers are aware of the school's Bushfire Preparedness Policy.

Staff Members will:

- » Ensure they are familiar with emergency procedures for each excursion they participate in and in particular, emergency procedures pertaining to campsites. Emergency procedures should be explained to students as soon as practical after arrival at campsites.
- » Plan for arrangements to be made if an excursion needs to be cancelled or recalled because of the threat of bushfire.
- » Participate fully in all Emergency Preparedness Drills.
- » Ensure all flammable materials within their area of responsibility are identified on the school chemical register and arranging for appropriate storage.
- » Ensure all building exits are continuously kept clear of obstructions.

Site Preparedness:

St Patrick's Parish Primary School conducts regular maintenance on all buildings and facilities to ensure that they do not pose an increased risk in the event of a fire. Maintenance personnel also ensure that, where possible, items that may easily ignite are removed from the school site. This would include branches overhanging buildings, debris and rubbish around and under buildings, including gutters and dry grass and vegetation.

The school hall has been nominated as the *Safe Location* used to assemble in the event of an external fire or incident. If the school is required to be evacuated, parents will be notified via our school Facebook page and phone calls, texts or emails to collect their children if possible. All remaining children will be taken by staff to the emergency location shelter in town, currently Southcombe Park stadium, until they can be collected by parents.

School Closure:

As St Patrick's is **not** listed on the DEET BARR Register, the school will remain open on Code Red days.

School bus transport:

If a bus route is threatened by unexpected fire, the school will enact its local emergency management plan. Information on changes to bus routes or cancellation of services will be provided by St Patrick's via our school Facebook page and phone calls, texts or emails to affected families.

Off-Site Activities:

The safety of students and staff members is paramount and off-site activities may be cancelled, postponed or relocated where the potential threat of bushfire has been determined. The Student Activity Locator (SAL) will be completed by supervising staff members prior to attending the off-site activity. SAL is completed on-line and registers the camp, excursion, sporting event etc with the Catholic Education Office.

The school Principal and supervising staff members will also regularly monitor forecast conditions for all off-site activities throughout the summer period. Where conditions are forecast to be extreme, a decision will be made as to whether or not the activity will proceed.

Off-site activities planned to take place in district where a Code Red Day has been declared will not take place. When a Code Red Day has been declared after an off-site activity has commenced, e.g. during a camp, staff and students will be required to return to school.

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

Resources:

Victorian Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) [DEET BARR Register](#);

Victorian Department of Education & Training (DET) – *Bushfire Preparedness*;

Victorian Department of Education & Training (DET) – *Code Red Days*;

Victorian Registration & Qualification Authority (VRQA) - *Guidelines on Bushfire Preparedness Registered Schools*

Monitoring and Review:

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Date of next Review: 2024