

Newsletter article: highest bushfire risk schools

October 2012

New school procedures for the bushfire season

The way schools in Victoria respond to bushfires has been revised.

New fire danger ratings and warnings have been introduced in Victoria to provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life.

Schools – and children’s services – identified as being at highest bushfire risk **will be closed on days declared by fire authorities to be Code Red**. Our school has been identified as a school at highest bushfire risk.



Where possible, we will provide parents with up to three days notice of a planned closure. We will contact you directly by letter [or phone] with advice on planned closures and will confirm the decision to close by 12 noon the day before the planned closure.

Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child.

No staff will remain on site when the school is closed by the risk of fire.

We will also cancel any offsite activities (such as school camps and excursions) if the activities are at risk. There may also be changes to school bus routes. Depending on routes, this may also occur on days when the school is not closed.

On high fire risk days families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – on such days, children should never be left at home unattended or in the care of older children.

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the safest option when a Code Red day is declared is to leave the night before, or early in the morning of the Code Red day.

As part of preparing our school for the threat of fire, we have completed the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s self-assessment of our emergency preparedness

What can parents do?

Make sure your family’s Bushfire Survival Plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements in the event that our school is closed. Make sure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters, by checking our website when it is set up in 2013, and by talking to your child’s teacher or any other member of the teaching staff.

Most importantly at this time of year, if you’re planning a holiday or short stay in the Bush or in a coastal area, you should check warnings in advance of travel and remain vigilant during your stay.

If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family’s Bushfire Survival Plan.

You can access more information about school closures on the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website – see www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires.

For up-to-date information on this year’s fire season, visit the CFA website at www.cfa.vic.gov.au or call the 24-hour Victorian Bushfires Information Line on 1800 240 667.