

Bushfire response procedure

This is a mandated procedure under the operational policy framework. Any edits to this procedure must follow the process outlined on the [creating, updating and deleting policy documents](#) page.

Overview

This procedure details the manner in which schools, preschools and education offices must ensure appropriate levels of readiness to respond to a bushfire on any given day and the procedures to be followed by the department in the event of an active bushfire impacting upon or threatening a site or service. It is a component of the emergency management policy.

Scope

This procedure applies to all departmental personnel, sites and services, but is most relevant to staff, volunteers, students, visitors, sites and services located within, or on the fringes of, designated bushfire prone areas.

The emergency management policy details that a bushfire 'risk rating' category shall be applied to all sites, based on their bushfire attack level (BAL). Categories to be applied are R1 (extreme/very high risk), R2 (high risk), R3 (medium/low risk) and NR (negligible risk). These categories are used to determine the appropriate level of bushfire mitigation activities and asset protection measures required for individual locations.

Bushfires are a natural part of the Australian eco-system and South Australia is particularly at risk – the annual fire danger season generally occurs between November and April of each year. Owing to the consistency and prevalence of the risk posed to sites and services by bushfires, specific procedures have been developed to prepare for and respond to this type of emergency event.

The purpose of this procedure is to:

- complement the requirements and stipulations within the bushfire preparation procedure
- establish clearly defined parameters and processes in relation to the enactment of bushfire related emergency management procedures
- clearly outline the requirements and responsibilities of sites, services and key personnel in the effective management of bushfires and fire danger season as a whole
- ensure that site leaders, staff, students and groups associated to the department are appropriately informed and able to respond to active bushfire emergencies impacting upon a site or service.

Although predominantly intended to address actions to be undertaken during fire danger season, the information contained within this procedure may be applied in responding to bushfire threats and fire danger ratings declared by the Country Fire Service (CFS) at any time of the year.



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Detail

Fire danger season – response requirements

South Australia's fire danger season generally commences on 1 November each year and concludes on 30 April the following year. Dates vary between fire ban districts and can also vary from year to year. The CFS is responsible for determining the official dates of fire danger season and communicating those dates to the state government and the community.

Bushfire threat levels and responses

During fire danger season, all departmental staff are required to identify the daily CFS fire danger rating and any total fire ban applicable to the fire ban district in which their site or service is located.

The bushfire threat flowcharts (refer to supporting information) are designed to enable staff to determine the appropriate course of action to be taken in response to CFS forecasts of fire danger ratings and associated total fire ban days. The flowcharts document requirements in relation to events and circumstances predominantly relevant during fire danger season but should also be used to respond to bushfire threats impacting upon a school, preschool or education office at any time of the year.

To complement the flowcharts, step-by-step minimum requirements that sites and services must adhere to in response to the relevant fire danger rating are detailed in the following sections. The required actions are relative to a site's individual bushfire risk rating and will therefore vary from location to location.

Pre-emptive and emergency school closures

The CFS is responsible for notifying the department and the general public when a total fire ban has been issued for a fire ban district. The fire danger rating for each fire ban district is declared on the evening prior to the relevant day.

Sites and services deemed to be at risk on days of a total fire ban or at any other time during fire danger season may be directed to close in response to the category of fire danger day declared for their fire ban district, prevailing weather conditions or the level of bushfire activity in the area. Specific conditions apply to forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger days and are detailed below.

Where a bushfire event impacting upon a township or suburb is determined to be a level 3 (major) incident, a declared major emergency or a level 4 (disaster level event), the Minister for Education (or their approved delegate) will be requested to direct the closure of all schools, preschools and educational services in that township or suburb on the day following the event (as a minimum).

No site or service shall cease to operate on days of forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger, total fire ban or at any other time during fire danger season unless formally authorised to do so by the Minister for Education (or their approved delegate) (refer to the emergency management policy).

‘Catastrophic’ fire danger days – declared in advance

To assist in the effective management of ‘catastrophic’ fire danger days, the department maintains a list of ‘high bushfire risk’ sites associated to each CFS fire ban district. The list contains all R1 and R2 government schools and preschools, as well as sites and services that have been deemed as being at increased risk of bushfire impact by virtue of either their proximity to a R1 or R2 site, proximity to a neighbouring fire ban district or otherwise assessed as ‘high bushfire risk’.

The list of ‘high bushfire risk’ sites applies only to ‘catastrophic’ fire danger day operations. It is reviewed at the conclusion of each fire danger season and following major bushfire events.

All ‘high bushfire risk’ schools and preschools in the affected fire ban district(s) are required to close. No persons are permitted on site, including contractors, hirers and non-departmental services.

All non-essential services and extra-curricular activities (eg out of hours school care (OSHC), school sports) scheduled to operate at ‘high bushfire risk’ schools and preschools in the relevant fire ban district(s) are cancelled.

School transport services (including bus and taxi services) scheduled to travel through the relevant fire ban district are cancelled provided at least one school or preschool in the relevant fire ban district has been categorised as ‘high bushfire risk’.

Schools and preschools that are not formally categorised as ‘high bushfire risk’ will remain open unless the site leader has received confirmation from their Education Director or the Security and Emergency Management (SEM) unit that a closure authority has been issued by the Minister for Education (or approved delegate).

The SEM unit will notify Catholic Education South Australia (CESA) and the Association of Independent Schools of South Australia (AISSA) of the ‘catastrophic’ fire danger day and the action taken by the Department for Education. CESA and AISSA schools will apply their respective closure policies where required.

In instances where schools and preschools are unable to meet their duty of care requirements due to authorised staff absences attributed to the ‘catastrophic’ fire danger day (eg enacting a personal bushfire survival plan) an authority to close must be sought. The site leader must inform their education director of the reason for the staff absences, the impact on duty of care requirements and the reason why alternate staffing arrangements or operating arrangements cannot be achieved. The education director must contact the SEM unit to obtain a closure authority from the Minister for Education (or approved delegate).

‘Catastrophic’ fire danger days – declared on the relevant day

Although the CFS generally declares fire danger ratings on the day prior to the relevant day, it is occasionally possible for them to be declared or escalated on the relevant day. In these instances, the department’s specific procedures for ‘catastrophic’ fire danger days change substantially.

All ‘high bushfire risk’ schools and preschools in the affected fire ban district(s) will remain open unless otherwise directed by the SEM unit or an authorised representative of the emergency services.

All non-essential services and extra-curricular activities (eg OSHC, school sports) scheduled to operate at ‘high bushfire risk’ schools and preschools in the relevant fire ban district(s) are cancelled.

School transport services (including bus and taxi services) scheduled to travel through the relevant fire ban district remain operational unless otherwise directed by the SEM unit or an authorised representative of the emergency services.

Schools and preschools that are not formally categorised as 'high bushfire risk' will remain open unless otherwise directed by the SEM unit or an authorised representative of the emergency services.

Site leaders and Education Directors must immediately inform the SEM unit via 1800 000 279 of any instance where, as a result of a 'catastrophic' fire danger day, an authorised representative of the emergency services has issued a direction to close a school or preschool or to cancel, suspend or amend a scheduled transport service.

The SEM unit will notify CESA and AISSA of the 'catastrophic' fire danger rating and the action taken by the Department for Education. CESA and AISSA schools will apply their respective policies.

The SEM unit, in collaboration with the CFS and other relevant emergency management agencies, will undertake an assessment of the risks associated to schools and preschools in the relevant fire ban district(s) remaining open. Where necessary, the SEM unit will seek authority for and coordinate any school closures, student relocations and any relevant tasks associated to school transport services, in collaboration with the relevant Education Director.

Responding to fire danger ratings: low-moderate/high/very high

Step 1: precautionary measures

The CFS considers that a bush or grass fire ignited in these conditions is likely to be capable of being controlled. However, existing or previous fires may still be active in the area. Sites and services should ensure they are aware of any ongoing bushfire activity and should consider monitoring local ABC radio broadcasts and the CFS website if potential risks are present.

Step 2: site operation

All sites and services, regardless of risk rating, will remain open as normal.

Step 3: fire event impacting upon site

Sites and services must enact the relevant response procedure within their emergency management plan (EMP) or enact their bushfire response plan (BRP) as appropriate to the proximity and severity of the fire.

The SEM unit will provide direction and assistance on being made aware of any fire which threatens to impact on departmental sites, services or transport routes, subject to the following criteria:

- an 'emergency warning' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 25km of a site or service
- a 'watch and act' or 'emergency warning' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 5km of a site or service.

Sites must not wait for direction prior to enacting emergency procedures.

Step 4: seek advice

Following a self-initiated decision to enact their EMP or BRP in response to an active bushfire threat, sites and services must inform the SEM unit on 1800 000 279 at the earliest safe opportunity. Advice relating to CFS activity and (if close to the end of normal business) the viability of transport arrangements will be provided by the SEM unit.

Step 5: communicate

Schools and preschools enacting their EMP or BRP as a result of a bushfire must use the pre-approved communication templates (refer to the communication responsibilities section) to provide information to parents and caregivers in accordance with their agreed communication strategies and processes.

Responding to fire danger ratings: severe (total fire ban)

Step 1: precautionary measures

The CFS considers that a bush or grass fire ignited in these conditions will be difficult to control. All sites in the affected fire ban district(s) must be prepared to enact the appropriate elements of their emergency management plan (EMP) or bushfire response plan (BRP).

Schools and preschools with a risk rating of R1 or R2 situated in the affected fire ban district(s) are to ensure the site Incident Response Group is alerted to the fire danger rating. Regular monitoring of the CFS website or local ABC Radio is essential for these sites.

Step 2: site operation

All sites and services, regardless of risk rating, will remain open as normal on days of 'severe' fire danger.

Step 3: fire event impacting upon site

Schools and preschools with a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 must enact their BRP in the event of a bushfire impacting upon their site or student transport facilities.

R3 and NR sites and services should enact the relevant response procedure within their EMP, as appropriate to the proximity and severity of the fire.

The SEM unit will provide direction and assistance on being made aware of any fire which threatens to impact on departmental sites, services or transport routes, subject to the following criteria:

- a 'watch and act' or 'emergency warning' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 25km of a site or service
- an 'advice', 'watch and act' or 'emergency warning' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 5km of a site or service.

Sites must not wait for direction prior to enacting emergency procedures.

Step 4: seek advice

Following a self-initiated decision to enact their EMP or BRP in response to an active bushfire threat, sites and services must inform the SEM unit on 1800 000 279 at the earliest safe opportunity. Advice relating to CFS activity and (if close to the end of normal business) the viability of transport arrangements will be provided by the SEM unit.

Step 5: communicate

Schools and preschools enacting their EMP or BRP as a result of a bushfire must use the pre-approved communication templates (refer to the communication responsibilities section) to provide information to parents and caregivers in accordance with their agreed communication strategies and processes.

Responding to fire danger ratings: extreme (total fire ban)

Step 1: precautionary measures

The CFS considers that a bush or grass fire ignited in these conditions will move quickly, be unpredictable and be very difficult to control. All sites in the affected fire ban district(s) must be prepared to enact the appropriate elements of their emergency management plan (EMP) or bushfire response plan (BRP).

Schools and preschools with a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 situated in the affected fire ban district(s) are to ensure that the Incident Response Group is alerted to the fire danger rating. Constant monitoring of the CFS website or local ABC radio station is essential for these sites.

Step 2: site operation

All R3 and NR rated schools, preschools and education offices located in the affected fire ban district(s) will operate as normal on days of 'extreme' fire danger, unless otherwise advised by the SEM unit.

Schools and preschools with a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 situated in the affected fire ban district(s) will operate as normal on days of 'extreme' fire danger unless otherwise advised by the SEM unit.

All school and preschool transport services will continue to operate as normal unless otherwise advised by the SEM unit.

If a school or preschool is unable to safely deliver 'normal business' as a result of approved short-notice staff absences arising from personal bushfire survival plans (PBSPs), the site leader should seek a closure authority via the SEM unit (refer to the emergency management policy, bushfire preparation procedure and the fire danger season – response requirements section above).

Step 3: fire impacting upon site

Schools and preschools with a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 must enact their BRP in the event of a bushfire impacting upon their site or student transport facilities.

R3 and NR sites and services should enact the relevant response procedure within their EMP, as appropriate to the proximity and severity of the fire.

The SEM unit will provide direction and assistance on being made aware of any fire which threatens to impact on departmental sites, services or transport routes, subject to the following criteria:

- an 'advice', 'watch and act' or 'emergency warning' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 25km of a site or service.

Sites must not wait for direction prior to enacting emergency procedures.

Step 4: seek advice

Following a self-initiated decision to enact their EMP or BRP in response to an active bushfire threat, sites and services must inform the SEM unit on 1800 000 279 at the earliest safe opportunity. Advice relating to CFS activity and (if close to the end of normal business) the viability of transport arrangements will be provided by the SEM unit.

Step 5: communicate

Schools and preschools enacting their EMP or BRP as a result of a bushfire must use the pre-approved communication templates (refer to the communication responsibilities section) to provide information to parents and caregivers in accordance with their agreed communication strategies and processes.

Responding to fire danger ratings: catastrophic (total fire ban)

Step 1: precautionary measures

The CFS considers that a bush or grass fire ignited in these conditions will be extremely difficult to control and require significant resources. These are the worst possible conditions for the spread of a bushfire. All sites remaining open in the affected fire ban district(s) must be prepared to enact the appropriate elements of their emergency management plan (EMP) or bushfire response plan (BRP).

All sites remaining open in the affected fire ban district(s) are to ensure the site Incident Response Group is alerted to the fire danger rating. Constant monitoring of the CFS website or ABC Radio 891 is essential for all operating sites.

Step 2a: site operation (fire danger rating declared in advance)

Schools and preschools categorised as 'high bushfire risk' in relation to the affected fire ban district(s) will be closed on days of where a forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger rating has been supplied in advance.

All school bus and taxi services scheduled to travel through the affected fire ban district(s) will be cancelled when the fire danger rating has been supplied in advance, provided at least one school or preschool in the relevant fire ban district(s) has been categorised as 'high bushfire risk'.

All schools, preschools and education offices that have not been formally categorised as 'high bushfire risk' for the relevant fire ban district(s) will operate as normal unless the site leader has received confirmation

from their Education Director or the Security and Emergency Management (SEM) unit that a closure authority has been issued by the Minister for Education (or approved delegate).

All school closure directions will be coordinated by the SEM unit in conjunction with the Minister for Education or their authorised delegate.

Schools and preschools with duty of care issues related to authorised staff absences must seek a closure authority via their education director and the SEM unit (refer to the emergency management policy, bushfire preparation procedure and the 'catastrophic' fire danger days – declared in advance section above).

No school or preschool is to close or suspend operation without the prior approval of the Minister for Education or their authorised delegate.

Step 2b: site operation (fire danger rating declared or elevated on the day)

Schools and preschools categorised as 'high bushfire risk' for the affected fire ban district(s) will operate as normal on days where a fire danger rating has been elevated to 'catastrophic' that day, unless otherwise directed by the SEM unit or an authorised representative of the emergency services

All schools, preschools and education offices that have not been formally categorised as 'high bushfire risk' for the relevant fire ban district(s) will operate as normal unless otherwise directed by the SEM unit or an authorised representative of the emergency services.

All school bus and taxi services scheduled to travel through the affected fire ban district(s) will operate as normal when the fire danger rating is elevated to 'catastrophic' that day, unless otherwise directed by the SEM unit or an authorised representative of the emergency services.

The SEM unit will advise schools and preschools if a school closure is subsequently deemed appropriate (refer to the 'catastrophic' fire danger days – declared on the relevant day section above).

All school closure directions will be coordinated by SEM unit in conjunction with the Minister for Education or their authorised delegate.

Schools and preschools with duty of care issues related to authorised staff absences must seek a closure authority via their education director and the SEM unit (refer to the emergency management policy, bushfire preparation procedure and the 'catastrophic' fire danger days – declared in advance section above).

No school or preschool is to close or suspend operation without the prior approval of the Minister for Education or their authorised delegate.

Step 3: fire event impacting upon site

Schools and preschools with a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 must enact their BRP in the event of a bushfire impacting upon their site or student transport facilities.

R3 and NR sites and services should enact the relevant response procedure within their EMP, as appropriate to the proximity and severity of the fire.

The SEM unit will provide direction and assistance on being made aware of any fire which threatens to impact on departmental sites, services or transport routes, subject to the following criteria:

- an 'advice' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 25km of a site or service

- a 'watch and act' or 'emergency warning' message being issued by the CFS for a fire within 50km of a site or service.

Sites must not wait for direction prior to enacting emergency procedures.

Step 4: seek advice

Following a self-initiated decision to enact their EMP or BRP in response to an active bushfire threat, sites and services must inform the SEM unit on 1800 000 279 at the earliest safe opportunity. Advice relating to CFS activity and (if close to the end of normal business) the viability of transport arrangements will be provided by the SEM unit.

Step 5: communicate

Schools and preschools enacting their EMP or BRP as a result of a bushfire must use the pre-approved communication templates (refer to the communication responsibilities section) to provide information to parents and caregivers in accordance with their agreed communication strategies and processes.

Communication responsibilities

Schools, preschools and education offices

The bushfire preparation procedure details the requirements and recommendations for all sites and services with regard to the availability and effectiveness of communication systems in readiness for a bushfire emergency.

During the course of fire danger season, sites must apply their communication strategy to alert staff, students, parents, caregivers and other site users of active bushfire events and any closures arising from forecast 'catastrophic' or 'extreme' fire danger days.

Schools and preschools operating or managing a student transport service must ensure that they have robust communication strategies in place to advise parents and caregivers of any delays, diversions or cancellations for a transport service as a result of 'catastrophic' fire danger days, bushfire activity impacting upon the relevant site or bushfires affecting the transport route.

As detailed in step 5 of the bushfire threat flowchart, sites and services must use the pre-approved templates when communicating information about active incidents and site closures to staff, parents and caregivers. Approved communication templates for email and SMS systems can be found on the [SEM unit intranet page](#) and should be used as a guide on information to be given when communicating via telephone.

Each of the communication templates directs the recipients to contact the department's emergency information hotline on 1800 000 279 to obtain information about an incident. Directing parents and caregivers to this service enables schools and preschools to concentrate on the processes associated to the management of the emergency and focus on the wellbeing of its staff and students.

It is critical to the effective management of bushfire emergencies that persons (including parents and caregivers) are not encouraged or directed to attend a site or service in circumstances that may expose them

to increased risk. This stance will be reinforced by call-takers on the department's emergency information hotline.

During a bushfire or in response to the threat of a bushfire, schools, preschools and education directors are not to contact CFS regional commanders directly without prior authority from the SEM unit.

Security and Emergency Management (SEM) unit

During active bushfire events, in particular largescale bushfires, it is imperative to maintain clear communication pathways, ensure a single source of truth and reduce unnecessary demands for information from the CFS and other emergency services. During fire danger season, CFS regional commanders are directed to only provide information to nominated SEM unit personnel. In responding to incidents, sites and services must not contact their CFS regional commander or operations centre directly unless authorised to do so by the SEM unit. Staff must not take advantage of local stakeholder networks to circumvent these arrangements.

In addition to maintaining the line of communication with the CFS, the SEM unit is responsible for the following communication tasks during fire danger season and in response to bushfire related emergencies:

- confirmation of school and preschool closure authorities to relevant sites, education directors and corporate business units
- notification to affected schools, preschools and education directors of known bushfire events likely to impact upon service delivery or school transport arrangements
- notifications to CESA and AISSA relating to departmental site closures and bushfire events likely to affect service delivery or school transport arrangements
- ensuring effective staffing of the department's emergency information hotline and updating incident, total fire ban, school closure and transport service information on the hotline's introductory messages
- providing incident, school closure and operational information (including impacts on student transport services) to the department's media unit, web-page managers and social media managers
- consultation with and dissemination of information to and from the CFS and other emergency services
- providing timely incident and operational updates to senior executives and the Minister for Education as appropriate to the location and severity of a bushfire event.

Although the SEM unit have responsibility for handling communication between the department and the relevant emergency services, sites must report all fire sightings to the CFS/SA Police by calling 000 as appropriate to the seriousness of the event.

School vacation arrangements

Many schools and preschools continue to be populated during school vacation periods as a result of services such as vacation care, rural care and holiday sports programs. In addition, building works and other site infrastructure projects are often scheduled to take place at this time.

The emergency management policy and this procedure continue to apply to departmental sites and services during vacation periods.

All services, maintenance and construction works scheduled to take place on a departmental school or preschool with a bushfire risk rating of R1 or R2 will be cancelled on a day of forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger. No persons are permitted to be on site. Dissemination of this information to relevant persons must be included in the communication strategy (refer to the bushfire preparation procedure and the communication responsibilities section above).

Bushfire risk management – school transport

General instructions

As detailed in this procedure, the emergency management policy and the bushfire preparation procedure, student transport services (including buses and taxis) may be cancelled, suspended, delayed or diverted in response to a 'catastrophic' fire danger day or an active bushfire threat. Sites and services must ensure that notification of any impact on transport services is effectively communicated to parents and caregivers (refer to the communication responsibilities section).

The SEM unit will advise schools and preschools of any known bushfires that are deemed likely to adversely impact upon school transport arrangements. The unit holds a map of all known bus transport routes managed or operated by departmental schools and can assess the potential impact of a fire, relative to the route and known conditions. Fires impacting upon transport arrangements may occur prior to the commencement of school, but are significantly more prevalent at the end of the school day.

Notification process and risk assessments

Unless an active bushfire has an 'emergency warning' message from the CFS in place or it is clear that the fire is sufficiently significant as to pose a threat to transport services for several hours, the SEM unit will delay a risk assessment of any new or active fires until after 1400hrs (2.00 pm) each day. The SEM unit will contact the managing site(s) for the transport services to discuss the potential impact of bushfires with an 'advice' or 'watch and act' message in place and provide advice on the most appropriate course of action for the scenario.

Sites and services managing or operating student transport services should contact the SEM unit if they become aware of a fire being reported in the local area after 2.00pm and have not received contact or if their transport service(s) are due to run earlier than scheduled (eg planned early closure).

Student collection and duty of care arrangements

In instances where it is necessary to cancel or substantially delay a scheduled student transport service, students are required to be supervised at the school or preschool until services can resume or children have been collected by their parent, caregiver or approved person. Schools and preschools must ensure appropriate staffing levels are maintained for duty of care requirements relating to students awaiting collection or unable to be collected. Authority for the collection of students by any person other than those

ordinarily approved for student collection must be obtained from an appropriate parent or caregiver. It is recommended that a record (eg SMS or email) of that authority is retained.

The bushfire preparation procedure details requirements for appropriate training and instruction for drivers, to ensure that they are equipped to deal with encountering an uncontrolled bushfire on their route. In instances where it is necessary for the bus or taxi to return to the nearest school as a result of an uncontrolled bushfire, local emergency procedures and duty of care requirements must be instituted. Advice and assistance may be sought from the SEM unit.

Staff travel through fire ban districts

The bushfire preparation procedure contains more detailed information relating to the planning and risk assessment associated to commuting and work related travel during fire danger season.

Staff travel throughout fire danger season must be appropriately risk assessed, taking into account the current conditions, the fire danger rating for the area(s) in which travel will occur and any other relevant factors. In general terms, the risks associated to not making the journey must exceed the risks associated to the journey itself.

If the journey is essential and you are aware of active bushfires in the area before you start, plan an alternate route and do not travel to the affected area. If you encounter smoke or uncontrolled fire whilst travelling, turn around and go back if it is safe to do so.

Staff encountering an active, uncontrolled bushfire during a work-related journey should immediately contact the emergency services by calling 000 and seek direction. Do not continue to drive towards a bushfire.

Camps and excursions

General instructions

Planning and contingencies relating to excursions or camps in fire ban districts are detailed in the bushfire preparation procedure. Appropriate planning is the most effective way to mitigate risks posed by excursions during fire danger season.

If a bushfire is burning on the day of the intended camp or excursion and is likely to threaten the destination or any subsequent return to school, the excursion or camp must be cancelled.

In the event of a bush or grassfire impacting upon a camp or excursion that is already underway, establish contact with the CFS and the SEM unit as a matter of priority.

Emergency services

For incidents requiring search or rescue, the police will coordinate the response and should be immediately contacted by the group, the school contact person or both.

Emergency services can respond most effectively when they have accurate knowledge of the location and the nature of the group they are dealing with.

The activation of all emergency services is carried out by calling 000.

Accurate and current knowledge is essential. If a party deviates from an itinerary lodged with relevant authorities, the swiftness of an emergency services response can be seriously compromised.

Roles and responsibilities

Chief Executive

Ensuring the department's compliance with Work Health and Safety legislation.

Authority to close schools and preschools in an emergency, as delegated by the Minister for Education.

Chief Operating Officer

Authority to close schools and preschools in an emergency, as delegated by the Minister for Education.

Executive Director, Infrastructure

Authority to close schools and preschools in an emergency, as delegated by the Minister for Education.

Executive Director, Partnerships, Schools and Preschools

Authority to close schools and preschools in an emergency, as delegated by the Minister for Education.

Security and Emergency Management unit

Notifying sites and services of known bushfires representing a threat to site operation or impacting upon transport services.

Providing advice and support to site leaders responding to bushfire threats, including liaison with CFS on the likely impact of an incident upon education services.

Coordinating emergency school closures with the relevant delegate.

Notifying relevant sites and services of forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger days.

Notifying key corporate personnel, education directors, Catholic Education South Australia, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia and relevant business units of 'catastrophic' fire danger days and any other notable bushfire events.

Ensuring effective lines of communication between CFS regional commanders and the department.

Maintaining external stakeholder relationships to ensure advance notification and priority communication agreements.

Maintaining the Education Emergency Information Hotline and ensuring the timely provision of bushfire management information to the Media unit and online communications team.

Providing advice to the Minister for Education and senior executives during level 3 bushfire events.

Representing the department at the State Coordination Centre and State Emergency Centre as required.

Education directors

Ensuring the requirements of the emergency management policy, emergency management procedure and bushfire response procedure are being met in schools and preschools.

Representing the department on Zone Emergency Support Teams (ZESTs)

Coordinating the provision of post-incident support services for staff and students.

Ensuring and supporting the official communication pathways between the department and CFS regional commanders.

Ensuring and supporting coordination with the SEM unit in response to locally identified bushfire events

Principals/directors/leaders

Ensuring site compliance with the bushfire response steps detailed within this procedure.

Ensuring the effective operation of communication strategies on days of higher risk.

Assisting and supporting the enforcement of departmental policy on site access on days of 'catastrophic' fire danger.

Notifying staff, parents and caregivers (as relevant) of incidents impacting upon or threatening to impact upon their service.

Notifying the SEM unit and education director of active, unreported bushfires in the vicinity of a site or service.

Conducting risk assessments for staff travel and camps and excursions.

Seeking emergency closures in line with departmental policy.

Ensuring the readiness of the bushfire shelter and/or contingency plans on days of higher risk.

Employees

Inform their principal/director/supervisor of any personal bushfire survival plan likely to impact upon their ability to perform normal duties.

Provide evidence (on request) to support a personal bushfire survival plan.

Undertake reasonable risk assessments in relation to travel on days where a total fire ban has been declared or a bushfire risk is present.

Comply with any reasonable direction to assist the principal/director/leader in responding to a bushfire emergency.

Definitions

Authorised representative of the emergency services – a person employed by the Country Fire Service, Metropolitan Fire Service, State Emergency Service, SA Police or SA Ambulance Service who is on duty and acting in their official capacity at the time of issuing a direction to a site leader or education director.

Bushfire attack level (BAL) – a means of measuring the severity of a building’s potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact, measured in increments of radiant heat (expressed in kilowatts / m²).

Delegate – a person afforded the equivalent authority and responsibility of another for the purposes of enacting any requirement under this procedure or its associated policies, procedures and documents.

Designated bushfire prone area – areas defined by each state and territory in Australia as being at greater risk of bushfire than other areas by virtue of their vegetation, topography or other factors. In South Australia, these areas are also referred to as bushfire protection areas. Further information is available [here](#).

Duty of care – refers to a legal obligation to take reasonable care to protect another from all reasonably foreseeable risk of harm. In the education setting, the duty of care requires staff to take all reasonable steps/actions to minimise the risk to students of suffering harm that is reasonably foreseeable. The duty is relevant whether the students are on the school site or off-site (eg at an excursion or camp, within and beyond normal operating hours), including transporting to an off-site venue. The department also owes a duty of care to its employees and so staff need to ensure their duty of care considerations extend to taking all reasonable steps/actions to minimise the risk to staff of suffering harm that is reasonably foreseeable.

Emergency – an event occurring on departmental premises, or involving any person under the employ, direction or care of the department that causes or threatens to cause:

- a) the death of, or injury to, or other damage to the physical or mental health of, any person
- b) the destruction of, or damage to, any property
- c) a disruption to essential services or to services usually provided by or supervised by the department
- d) harm to the environment, or to flora or fauna.

This may include naturally occurring events (such as bushfires, floods or storms) but also includes fires, explosions, emissions of poison or other hazardous agents, or acts of hostility or extreme violence.

Emergency management – the plans, structures and arrangements that are established to bring together key areas of the department, other government agencies, volunteer groups and private organisations in a coordinated way to deal with emergency needs, including prevention, response and recovery.

Emergency management plan – a specific plan for each site or service to detail the way in which they will respond to emergencies affecting their location.

Emergency response procedure – a potential response to an emergency incident. May include evacuation, shelter in place, lockdown, a combination of those responses or a partial enactment of such a response.

Evacuation – an emergency response involving the relocation of people from dangerous or potentially dangerous areas to a safer location. The purpose of an evacuation is to use distance to separate people from the danger created by the emergency.

Fire ban district – one of 15 geographic areas defined by the Country Fire Service (and other emergency services). Used to assist in the enforcement and declaration of total fire bans.

'High bushfire risk' sites – a list of sites required to close on days of forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger, by virtue of either their bushfire risk rating, their proximity to a R1 or R2 site, proximity to a neighbouring fire ban district or otherwise deemed to be at increased risk of bushfire impact

R1, R2, R3 and NR – bushfire risk ratings applied to physical departmental sites or services based on the BAL. Sites rated at R1 and R2 have specific requirements detailed in this procedure.

Schools, preschools and education offices – an all-encompassing phrase to describe any service operated by the Department for Education, including but not limited to rural care, long day care, children's centres and corporate offices

Shelter-in-place – an emergency response to an evident or suspected external threat or danger that involves the use of a building or part of a building and its indoor atmosphere to shield occupants from the threat or danger, without the need to physically secure rooms or buildings.

Supporting information

Bushfire threat flowchart A – low-moderate/high/very high fire danger rating

Bushfire threat flowchart B – severe fire danger rating (total fire ban)

Bushfire threat flowchart C – extreme fire danger rating (total fire ban)

Bushfire threat flowchart D – catastrophic fire danger rating (total fire ban)

Related legislation

[Emergency Management Act 2004](#)

[Work Health and Safety Act 2012](#)

AS 3745-2010 Planning for Emergencies in Facilities

Related policy documents

Emergency management policy

Emergency management procedure

Bushfire preparation procedure

Ministerial Instrument of Delegation for School Closures

[Camps and excursions policy](#)

[Camps and excursions procedure](#)

[Work health and safety policy](#)

[Duty of care policy](#)

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Amendment(s): insertion of recommendations from Pinery Fire review including clarification of roles and responsibilities, references to standardized communication templates, removal of the term 'close proximity' to provide clarity around the point at which SEM unit will notify sites of fires likely to impact upon them, updated terminology.

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