



No. 5218

Sunbury & Macedon Ranges Specialist School

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School procedures for the bushfire season

The way schools in Victoria respond to bushfires are being constantly revised. Fire danger ratings and warnings are used 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 have been included on the Bushfire-At Risk Register (BARR) and will be closed on days determined by fire authorities to be Code Red.

Our Bullengarook Campus has been identified as a school at highest bushfire risk and is listed on the BARR.



This week, the department has notified us that our Bullengarook Campus will also be closed on days where the Fire danger rating is Extreme.

Where possible, we will provide parents with up to three days notice of a planned closure following the issue of an Extreme or Code Red warning by the CFA. We will contact you directly by email or letter sent home with your child and SMS 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 be on site on days when the school is closed by the risk of fire.
- School camps will be cancelled if the area where the camp is taking place is 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 these Extreme and Code Red 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 an Extreme or Code Red day is declared may be to leave the night before, or early in the morning of the Extreme or Code Red day.

As part of preparing our school for the threat of fire we have updated our emergency management plan; reprioritised any maintenance works that may assist in preparing for the threat of fire and we will clear our school grounds and gutters.

What can parents do?

- Make sure your family's Bushfire Survival Plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements for your children in the event that our school is closed.
- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters, by checking our website, www.smrss.vic.edu.au, and by contacting Brendan to talk about our emergency plans.
- 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
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/emergencies.aspx>

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

Fire Plan

Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School – Bullengarook Secondary Campus

The incidence of bush fires in the Macedon Ranges highlights the need for schools to be thoroughly prepared for fire danger. The Bullengarook campus has been placed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register as determined by the CFA and DSE. The register is available for viewing at: www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires.

Inclusion on the Bushfire At-Risk Register means that the campus will be pre-emptively closed each time the bureau of meteorology issues an Extreme or Code Red (Catastrophic) fire danger rating for the weather district in which the facility is located. Where possible, up to 3 days notice of a planned closure will be provided, however, parents and carers should expect that in some instances fewer than 3 days notice will be provided. Once the final decision to close is confirmed no later than 12 noon the day prior, this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast.

All warnings of potential and actual closure of facilities will be posted on the DET website: www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires

When the Bullengarook Campus is pre-emptively closed, students at the Bullengarook Campus will NOT attend school. Families will need to be enacting their own individual fire plans on these days. Contracted school transport will not operate when the Bullengarook campus is pre-emptively closed. School bus routes that pass through high risk areas will be closed.

In addition the school's emergency planning and advice from the CFA, this fire plan will be enacted at the earliest possible time.

On Days where the fire danger rating is very high to extreme (Total Fire Ban Days) or Days of fire activity in the local area :

1. The Principal or nominee shall check the CFA website/information line for the latest information on local fires and /or contact the Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667 or Gisborne Police (54282500)
2. Should the Principal or school be made aware of sighted fires in the local area, the Principal or nominee will ring the Bushfire Information Line or check the CFA website to give or receive further information.
3. Parents may choose to keep their children at home on high fire alert days. Parents must advise the school or bus driver of their child's absence.
4. Parents may choose to collect their child from the Bullengarook campus. Collecting children from the campus must be done at the earliest possible time. Parents/guardians will have to sign out their children at the school office. Children will not be handed over to members from different families without verbal contact from parents to the school.
5. Families should ensure that mobile phone communication is available during the fire season.
6. Emergency information is available on ABC 744 AM (9626 1771 Ext 774 for enquires) or 91.1 FM

In the event of fire activity in the local area Sunbury and Macedon Ranges Specialist School – Bullengarook campus will enact the following:

Evacuation Procedure:

1. Based on advice from the CFA, Gisborne Police, and Department of Education and Training (DET) Emergency Management, the Principal/Campus Principal will determine to evacuate or remain at school. The decision to evacuate will be undertaken at the earliest possible time.
2. If evacuating, all students will be transported by Bullengarook staff using available school transport to the Sunbury campus. The Bullengarook buses will undertake their normal routes from the Sunbury campus, if safe to do so.
3. Following the evacuation, students will be held at the Sunbury site until normal bus services resume. Parents will be notified of these arrangements and may choose or be asked to pick up their children from the Sunbury site.
4. Following evacuation, the Gisborne Police (54282500) and the Sunbury Police (9744 8111), DET emergency management (95896266) and ABC 744 radio will be notified of the decision to relocate to an alternate site
5. A sign will be placed at the front of the Bullengarook campus alerting people of the location of the alternate site.
6. Parents will be notified of the evacuation at the earliest possible time. Parents can contact Gisborne Police (54282500), Sunbury Police (9744 8111) or ABC 744 radio (9626 1771 Ext 774)
7. If buses are not available, are delayed or being held due to the situation being dangerous, students and staff will move to the area of the school designated of the Shelter in Place.
8. All students and staff will be accounted for and Emergency Services will be contacted to alert them of our location
9. All students and staff to await emergency vehicles and personnel for emergency evacuation as required
10. Parents will be notified as soon as possible of the situation

Procedures for Drivers/Chaperones who encounter actual fires on their designated routes:

1. Drivers who encounter actual fires (or other dangerous situations) either before dropping students to school (AM run) or after leaving the school (PM run) should first ring 000 seeking advice and offering area specific details. Drivers should then contact Panorama on 9438 3666 and SMRSS 5428 9222 and/or 9744 4879 about those affected routes.
2. If a driver makes a decision not to proceed on their route, they must then decide whether it is safer to return to school or to another safer area. Having a safe turning area for the bus is always a priority.
3. Drivers who decide not to proceed on their route must communicate this information to their depot and SMRSS at the earliest possible time.
4. Drivers may refuse to drop off students if they believe they will be in danger or at risk. Drivers are to contact SMRSS and advise school of details. Families of affected students will be notified as soon as possible. Parents can also contact police or ABC 744 radio or the CFA information Line in the event of actual fires on designated routes.

Brendan Nolan