



ST JOSEPH'S SCHOOL

PETERBOROUGH

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BUSHFIRE POLICY

AIM

The objective of this policy is to provide a safe working environment through the provision of systems and resources related to bushfire safety.

PROCEDURE

Warning System

In the event of a bush fire the Country Fire Service (CFS) has developed an information and warning system to keep the community informed about bush fires. The Principal or designated officer is responsible for keeping up to date records with regards to the local CFS warning system.

Bushfire Information Messages will be issued when there is a potential threat to public safety in the immediate area of the fire.

When a bushfire is burning out of control, the weather conditions are extreme and immediate action is needed by the public to ensure their safety, the CFS will issue a *Bushfire Warning Message*. This warning will also be given on local radio and placed on the CFS website.

Bushfire Information Messages and *Bushfire Warning Messages* are likely to include the following information:

- the location of the fire
- where it is expected to move next
- the risks faced by people in the area
- what the public is advised to do about those risks
- what the CFS is doing about the situation

SAFE REFUGE AREA – Mary MacKillop Hall

Mary MacKillop Hall is the Safe Refuge area at our school. In the event of a bushfire that threatens the school buildings and Mary MacKillop Hall becomes unsafe to use the Principal (or Person in Charge) will direct all people to the middle of the oval as per normal evacuation procedure.

NOTE

In the event of a fire at school please refer to the ***Critical Incident Management Guide*** which is displayed in each room throughout the school.

PRINCIPAL (OR PERSON IN CHARGE)

- It is the responsibility of the Principal in consultation with employees to ensure that they are informed and have practised fire emergency evacuation drills. All information pertaining to emergency drills including contact numbers and evacuation procedures should be in prominent designated places throughout the site.
- In the event of a bushfire alert the Principal notifies staff of bushfire alerts received. In the event of a bushfire being reported in the Peterborough district, the Principal will visit all classes and inform staff of its location.
- The Principal will advise the Catholic Education Office that a bushfire has been reported in the nominated local district.
- The Principal will maintain a visual check of the surrounding area.
- The Principal will liaise with the local CFS Brigade to obtain the latest information and advice about likely effect of the bushfire on the site.
- The Principal will cancel on site outdoor activities for students.
- The Principal will assess if it is safe for students to take outside recess and lunch breaks and notify all classes of the decision.
- The Principal will assess if it is safe to release students from the site at normal dismissal time.
- The Principal will turn on sprinkler and irrigation systems hourly to dampen surrounds.

FRONT OFFICE STAFF

- The front office staff will carefully monitor ABC radio for CFS information and *Warning Messages* and provide site leaders with updates concerning the latest location of the bushfire front and any impact it may have on the site.
- The front office staff will ensure that a mobile phone is charged and accessible.
- The front office staff will ensure that alternative audible warning device is ready for use and operating correctly should power fail.
- Front office staff will alert visitors and volunteers of the situation during the registration process and advise them of action to take should a move to the Safe Refuge become necessary.
- The front office Staff will identify and list all students and staff who live in the area reported to be affected by the bush fire.
- Front office staff will back up all site administration computer records.
- The front office staff will turn on sprinkler and irrigation systems hourly to dampen surrounds.

CLASS TEACHERS

- All class teachers will encourage students to fill up personal water bottles during the day so that they have adequate drinking water should a move to the Safe Refuge become necessary.
- Teachers will organise to have bags packed and have them ready nearby.
- Teachers must be organised and prepared for emergency evacuation or lock-in procedures.

PRINCIPAL (OR PERSON IN CHARGE)

Principal authorises the sounding of the fire bell. The decision to move all personnel into the site Safe Refuge will be made by the Principal or the delegated staff member when any of the following agreed triggers are reached.

- CFS information and warning messages broadcast on the local ABC radio indicate a fire is moving towards Peterborough
 - The Emergency Services advise that a bushfire is likely to impact on site
 - Staff are advised that a bushfire is burning in surrounding areas
 - There is confirmed sighting of nearby smoke and flames.
- Principal to ensure that air conditioners are turned off and doors and windows are closed in Safe Refuge as bush fire front approaches.
 - Principal will ensure all site personnel are accounted for and in Safe Refuge.
 - The Principal will advise Catholic Education Office of the move to the Safe Refuge and provide information about situation

FRONT OFFICE STAFF

- Front office staff notify parents that students have been moved to the Safe Refuge.
- Front office staff monitor visitors and volunteers.
- Front office staff to turn off air conditioners and close doors and windows in Safe Refuge as bush fire front approaches.
- Front office staff will ensure all site personnel are accounted for and in Safe Refuge.
- Front office staff to accurately record:
 - those present when the move to the Safe Refuge takes place
 - those who have left the site before the move
 - those who leave the site after the bushfire emergency has passed

ALL STAFF

- All staff to take fire extinguishers with them from classrooms to the Safe Refuge.
- Staff to close all doors and windows and turn off air conditioners as classrooms are vacated.
- Class teachers do a roll call of students in their care.
- Support students to remain safe and calm.

PRINCIPAL

- The Principal will ensure no one leaves the Safe Refuge until the situation outside has been assessed as safe by the Emergency Services.
- Principal will inform Catholic Education Office of the situation as soon as position becomes clear and it is safe to do so.
- Principal will remain on duty until all students are collected from the site by their parents.
- Principal will ensure that snacks, drinking water, games, books etc are available to meet immediate and extended needs of students waiting to be collected by their parents.
- The Principal will seek support for students and staff from counsellors and social workers when appropriate.
- The Principal will arrange to have fire fighting systems checked and readied for use again.
- Principal will arrange to have the appropriate authorities assess the safety of site buildings once the area is safe from bushfire.
- The Principal will complete an WHS incident report.

FRONT OFFICE STAFF

- Front office ESO to record names of persons leaving the site.
- Front office staff will replenish the Emergency Supplies package.
- The Front office will arrange to have fire fighting systems checked and readied for use again.

ALL STAFF

- Senior First Aid staff will check for and treat any injuries.
- Staff will extinguish small fires in or near the Safe Refuge.
- All staff members will begin to reunite families at a safe location when the situation has been declared safe and vehicles can safely access the site.
- The Principal and staff and students (where appropriate) will undertake a debrief of the bush fire emergency situation and the procedures undertaken at an appropriate time shortly after the incident.

NOTE

On “**CATASTROPHIC**” bushfire warning days the DECD buses will not run.