



Nunawading Christian College Primary

Bushfire Preparedness Policy

Document Control

Revision Number	Implementation Date	Review Date	Description of Changes	Prepared By	Approved By
	February 2017			Ben Thomas	School Council
001	March 2017	2020	Adapted for NCCP	NCCP Amin	School Council

Rationale

Nunawading Christian College Primary is committed to ensuring the highest standards of care, safety and welfare for its students. The College is also committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its employees and contract workers as well as visitors to our school sites. The College recognises that in all its activities it has a duty of care to identify, assess and control risks so that the possibility of harm is minimised or eliminated. The purpose of the bushfire preparedness policy is to detail procedures and management tasks so that the College minimises risks and is in a suitable state of preparedness for any fire related event. The policy should also nominate key personnel and areas of responsibility should the school emergency management plan be enacted due to bushfire.

Bushfire facts

Conditions when bushfires are likely to 'blow up' after being triggered by a source include:

- air temperature 26 degrees or more
- wind speed 30 kph to 70 kph in gusts
- wind direction west-north/west
- previous dry spell or drought lasting some 6 weeks - humidity low, less than 15%-20%

Other factors may include:

- the dryness and denseness of the vegetation
- the angle of slope and topography
- the speed of the fire approaching may be in excess of 100kph
- the front may typically extend 3-5km or more
- spot fires from air borne embers may be ignited up to 30 km away from the fire front fire burns much more quickly uphill than downhill or on the flat.

Never try to outrun a fire uphill.

NB. Fire fighting crews may establish fire-breaks in advance of a fire, so don't get caught between the two (communication with PARKS/CFA/000 is the key to avoiding this)

IMPLEMENTATION

A. Preparation

- Prior to undertaking an offsite activity in a bushfire risk area or season, organising and supervising staff must ensure that there is adequate pre-excursion planning and emergency preparation, including a thorough preparation of students undertaking the activity.
- Preparation should include:
 1. regular checks of the CFA website for alerts;
 2. having a school based person monitor any developments and be in regular contact with those off site in the event of a developing situation;
 3. seeking advice from external activity organisers and checking their own bushfire emergency preparedness;
 4. giving consideration to alternative sites/activities to reduce bushfire risk/hazard;
 5. Complete lists of all students, staff and others participating in an out of school activity and their times and location(s) must be provided to designated contact persons on the school site.

B. Approval

Prior to the excursion the approval of the Principal must be obtained. In approving the excursion, consideration should be given to:

1. contribution of the activity to the school curriculum;

2. adequacy of the planning, preparation and organisation as reflected in the 'EOTC Planning and Procedures' document;
3. school policy, guidelines and advice provided by the DEECD and in the Safety Guidelines for Education Outdoors website;
4. information provided by community groups and organisations that specialise in the activity proposed;
5. appropriateness of the venue;
6. consideration of seasonal and locality factors that might increase risks (i.e. bushfire season);
7. provisions made for the safety and welfare of students and staff;
8. experience and competence of staff relevant to the activities being undertaken;
9. adequacy of student supervision.

C. Offsite activities emergency management

All excursion staff and, where appropriate, students need to be familiar with the procedures for dealing with emergencies on each excursion. Emergency procedures pertaining to campsites should be explained as soon as practicable after arrival and a trial evacuation exercise carried out immediately to familiarise staff and students with emergency evacuation protocols and ensure the procedures are appropriate. On days of extreme fire danger Principals may need to cancel excursions at short notice. Where excursions are not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required.

D. Bushfire protocols

In the event of a fire with a potential to impact on an off-site activity and if it has been established that there is a fire in the vicinity, the level of threat to the group is to be established.

- The group is to be kept together at all times.
- Communication is to be established with PARKS VIC and/or CFA bushfire hotline to ascertain the location and severity of the fire. They are to be informed of both the fire and the group's current location and planned travel route/times. A communications log should be established prior to calling the CFA bushfire hotline.

- If it has been established that the fire does pose a potential threat options are to be explored for complete evacuation or for moving to a much safer location. Open spaces free of forest fuels and vegetation, such as a beach or cleared area are to be located and considered. If these are unavailable shelter amongst rocks, behind huge logs or in very wet gullies/creeks or on rocky outcrops, pre-burnt areas may be considered, keeping in mind that it is generally the radiation of heat that threatens life.
- If necessary students and staff can gather into canoes and raft up on the water. Depending on the location and the conditions the group can paddle to a safer landing. If this is not available, paddle to a safe distance (considering radiant heat and wind direction) and raft up while the fire passes;
- Have group dress in woollens preferably and in long sleeved shirts and pants, gloves, beanies, sunglasses as well as to breathe through a damp cloth held over their mouth/nose;
- The school contact person is to be alerted as per the EOTC planning document;
- Members of the group are not to run unless to a clearly indicated way of escape. Under no circumstance is the group to attempt to outrun the fire uphill;
- Instructions are to be given to all members of the group:

If caught:

CLEAR any leaves or vegetation near you;

STAY in your chosen shelter until the fire has passed;

COVER any exposed skin with clothing, soft earth, etc;

KEEP LOW and breathe air close to the ground.

Only as a LAST RESORT, run through the flames to burnt ground. Wait for a lull and choose smallest flames with area behind that will have little burning material on the ground. Don't attempt flames higher than you!

- If possible keep PARKS or EMERGENCY SERVICES informed of the group's situation and
- inform them, as well as the school, once the fire front has passed.

- Treat burns victims as per 'first aid' procedure and monitor the welfare of the remainder of the group;
- If the Emergency Management Team is called in, manage remaining students until they arrive to take responsibility.

E. Post Incident Management

- Staff are to liaise with emergency crews to organise the remaining students return to base with non-physically injured students to be looked after and reassured by a nominated staff member;
- As soon as practical the Principal, and the Education Director are to be informed of events. Contact should then be made with PARKS VIC and/or CFA;
- bushfire hotline or CFA website to ascertain the severity of the situation;
- Depending on the seriousness of the situation the decision will then be made to contact the Victorian Department of Education 24 hour Emergency Communication Centre.
- The Principal or nominee contact parents of affected students. Parents of affected students are to be kept informed;
- Parents of other students to be reassured that it is not their child that is involved and that everything is being done to help the group;
- Counselling is to be offered to other students & families;
- General media release to be prepared by the Principal and Education Director.