

Bushfire Advice to Families

BUSHFIRE RESPONSE and POSSIBLE TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

As the summer bushfire season approaches, please note the following important information. In the aftermath of the bushfire events of last summer and subsequent to the Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission, the SA Bushfires Taskforce has adopted a number of recommendations, some of which may impact upon our school. Being Bushfire Ready is a shared responsibility and the following are some of the key initiatives that the SA Government is implementing:

Category	Fire Danger Index	Action for Schools
CATASTROPHIC (CODE RED)	100+	<u>CLOSED:</u> Schools and preschools in the affected Fire Ban District with an extreme, very high or high risk rating. <u>CANCELLED:</u> School bus services travelling through the affected Fire Ban District
EXTREME	75-99	Catholic Education SA to take advice of fire authorities for Adelaide Hills and other high risk areas regarding school closures.
VERY HIGH	25-49	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply
HIGH	12-24	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply
LOW-MODERATE	0-11	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply

1. A new telephone and text messaging warning system - alerts relating to the most severe fire threats will be sent to landline and mobile phones based on the owner's billing address or mobile geographical location.

2. The adoption of a new national framework for fire warnings which includes an enhanced Fire Danger Rating system incorporating a new category of Catastrophic (Code Red) and new warning categories.

The new fire danger ratings scale will include 'Severe', 'Extreme' and 'Catastrophic (Code Red)' indicating that the Fire Danger Index (FDI) exceeds 100. The Fire Danger Ratings and the Fire Danger Index will be used in tandem by the Bureau of Meteorology to inform the community about the predicted weather conditions. The new ratings will have the following levels and the attendant possible affects:

3. The introduction of a new theme - PREPARE. ACT. SURVIVE. - to reinforce the message that people won't survive a bushfire unless they are prepared and take the appropriate actions to survive.

4. CFS introducing guidelines and procedures for “directed evacuation” involving Police and other emergency services.
5. Identifying “Neighbourhood Safer Places” to be used as an alternative for shelter from a bushfire. It is likely that each site nominated as a Neighbourhood Safer Place will be carefully considered and have to meet some yet to be finalised criteria. Consideration of these criteria is occurring currently, but it is likely that the Neighbourhood Safer Places will be identified and controlled by local Bushfire Management Committees. It is possible that CESA sites may be nominated.

Possible School Closure

1. The CFS is considering a fire danger rating of Catastrophic (Code Red) as a “trigger point” for their recommendation to the education sectors (including Catholic Education SA) to consider temporary school closures and cancellation of school bus routes in high risk areas. (for St Francis de Sales College, Mount Barker and St. Catherine’s, Stirling – due to the unique nature of the bushfire danger in the Adelaide Hills and on the advice of CFS, our school may be instructed to close on days of Extreme bushfire weather conditions (Extreme is the CFS fire danger rating below Catastrophic Code Red).
2. Should the CFS recommend local school closure and/or the cancellation of school bus routes in our Fire Ban District, the Director of Catholic Education will authorise a temporary closure for our school.
3. If a school closure is authorised we will normally be warned two days prior that such a possibility exists with the closure advice confirmed on the preceding day. We will immediately send a notice informing families and staff of the closure. In the event of a temporary school closure due to bushfire risk, families will need to make alternative arrangements for the care and supervision of their children. No care or supervision will be provided at the school.
4. While it is possible that short notice of a school closure will regrettably inconvenience families, we also hope that you will understand and support such a decision which will only be made in the interests of safety for our students, families and staff and where significant community safety concerns exist.
5. Naturally, we hope and pray that any school closure days in such circumstances would be incident free and that you, your loved ones and property remain safe.
6. I remind you that bushfire information and safety advice is available via; ABC local radio (e.g. 891 AM)
CFS Bushfire Information Hotline 1300
362 361 CFS website www.cfs.sa.gov.au

Please do not hesitate to contact the school on 8238 8238 should any of the above need further clarification.