



# St Joseph's School

## Bushfire Plan 2016-2017

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2017

### INTRODUCTION:

This plan is for St Joseph's School Boulder and has been designed to assist staff to prepare for a total fire ban, catastrophic fire danger rating, or a bushfire. Letters to staff and parents are included in the appendix as well as notices regarding the plans of closures of the school.

The preparation of this plan should be developed in accordance with the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Policy* and the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* with input from local emergency management agencies.

### OVERVIEW:

#### General Information

This Bushfire Plan (BP) has been developed during Term 3 of each year after consultation with:

- families of students attending the School;
- members of the emergency services (e.g. DFES, Local Emergency Management Committee and/or Community Emergency Services Manager).

The BP outlines required actions to prepare the school before the bushfire season as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* (refer Appendix A).

The BP also outlines activities to be undertaken by staff and students at the different levels of a bushfire emergency including:

- on days of Total Fire Ban;
- Catastrophic fire danger rating;
- when there is a fire in the local district;
- when a bushfire is threatening or impacting on the site; and
- during the period immediately after a bushfire has impacted on the site (known as the 'Recovery Phase').

Where applicable, a building is nominated as the **Safer Location** building for this school.

- This building has been prepared for a bushfire emergency and will safely accommodate all persons normally at the school.

#### Distribution

- The Principal will forward a copy of the site BP to the Regional Executive Director to be held in the regional office.
- The Principal or delegated officer will forward a copy of the site BP to the emergency services by Week 2 of Term 3 each year in the region.
- The Principal or delegated officer will publish a copy of the school's bushfire plan on the schools website at the beginning of Term 1 each year.



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## Communication

There are several levels of communication requirements at school level before, during and after bushfire events.

### Preparing for Bushfire Season

- All students and staff are aware of the school's bushfire plan. It is also necessary to ensure that relief staff and parents have been made aware of the school's bushfire plan. A copy of the school's bushfire plan is published on the schools website. Draft text for the school newsletter is available in Appendix A6 of the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*.
- The Principal will establish contact with emergency services, including DFES, the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, the LEMC and CESM.
- Our school is located in a bushfire prone area and we ensure we incorporate key bushfire messages in our curriculum.
- Communication plans (including emergency contacts and a telephone tree) are in place for evacuation or planned closure. See Appendix D for a Communication Plan, Appendix E for sample emergency contacts and Appendix F for a sample telephone tree.
- Our school has an effectively working emergency warning or alert system and emergency communication equipment is available and working.
- Our school has in place systems to account for students, staff and visitors in an emergency, these include class rolls (or equivalent) and visitor registers. Hard copies of all documentation are kept on file on the advent that a loss of power affected the ability to print from electronic sources.
- Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses to be contacted.

### Pre-emptive Closure

- The Catholic Education office will make the decision to close a school based upon advice from Emergency Services and this will be relayed to the Principal.
- The Principal is to notify staff and parents of closure using emergency contacts and the telephone tree of closure. See also the letter to parents in the *Principal's Guide to Bushfires advising of pre-emptive Closure (Appendix A7)*, consideration is given to parent's level of literacy and understanding of English.
- All other necessary parties are advised including (but not limited to) other schools that may have siblings at your school, community users of the school facilities (including before and after school care, community kindergartens or holiday programs), on site contractors and Parents and Friends Association (P & F).
- Bus contractors will be contacted to arrange for the evacuation of students to a designated area.
- Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be posted as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*, both physically at the school and electronically on the website.

### During Evacuation

- The school will contact their Principal Schools Advisor.
- The school will contact parents via phone or email.
- The school will notify bus contractors and out of school programs.
- The school has landlines and the Principal's mobile phone (08 9093 2351 / 0438 207 659). It would be preferable that parents restrict calling the school at this time to emergency calls only.
- The official broadcaster of Emergency Events is ABC radio. Our local station is ABC local radio. They will provide up to date information during a bushfire event in our area.
- The DFES website provides up to date information on fire events. Refer to <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/> .

NOTE: DFES uses the national Emergency Alert system to send community warning messages via mobile telephones in affected areas. (Information can be obtained from <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/pages/default.aspx>).

The Principal communicates directly with the CEOWA personnel including any media communications. Staff should not comment directly to media.

### **Reopening the School**

- The Principal Schools Advisor is to advise the Principal when the school can re-open.
- Parents need to know when the school is reopened. In the event of a pre-emptive closure details are contained in the template letter (*Principal's Guide to Bushfire* advising of pre-emptive Closure – Appendix A7).
- The Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be physically removed from the school premises and website.
- All parties that were advised of closure (e.g. bus contractors, P&F) will be advised of reopening.

## Types of Fire Event

In the event of a Total Fire Ban, catastrophic weather warning, or bushfire, the **BP** will be activated.

### 1. Total Fire Ban

In the event of a Total Fire Ban the **BP** will be invoked: (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures).

This means:

- no fires must be lit or used in the open air;
- all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping are not allowed; and
- 'hot work' such as metal work, grinding, welding, soldering, gas cutting or similar is not allowed unless there is an exemption.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services advice is that chainsaws, plant or grass trimmers or lawn mowers can be used during a total fire ban in suburban or built up areas which are cleared of flammable material, but not in bushland or other areas where their use is likely to cause fire.

It is also necessary to ensure:

- The equipment or machinery is mechanically sound.
- All reasonable precautions are taken to prevent a bushfire starting.

It is recommended postponing the activity altogether to minimise the risk of fire.

If a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban has not been implemented by your Local Government Authority the school is able to harvest or move vehicles across paddocks for agricultural purposes.

Individuals could be fined up to \$25,000 or jailed for 12 months or both if the Total Fire Ban is ignored.

For information on activities that can or cannot be carried out during a Total Fire Ban visit [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/totalfirebans/Pages/TotalFireBanWhatCantIDo.aspx](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/totalfirebans/Pages/TotalFireBanWhatCantIDo.aspx).

If the information required is not available from the website, telephone the Total Fire Ban Information Line 1800 709 355.

This information is also available by visiting [www.dfes.wa.gov.au](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au).

## 2. Catastrophic Fire Danger

The Catastrophic Fire Danger Index (FDR) has been added to the Australia-wide FDR system since the 2009 bushfires in Victoria. If a fire starts in catastrophic conditions, its impact potential includes death or injury to people and destruction of buildings.

Category	Fire Danger Index (FDR)	Action
Catastrophic	100+	Schools on Bushfire Zone Register closed on instruction from Deputy Director General Schools, through Regional Executive Director. School to invoke communication plan and cancel bus services.
Extreme	75-99	Monitor DFES website
Severe	50-74	Monitor DFES website
Very High	32-49	Normal school operations
High	12-31	Normal school operations
Low-Moderate	0-11	Normal school operations

In the event of a catastrophic weather warning the **BP** will be invoked as per the flow chart at Appendix B (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures and sample letters).

### 2.1 Planned Pre-emptive Closure

The CEOWA will contact Principals of affected schools directly when a planned (pre-emptive) closure is to be invoked in a particular part of the State. The lead time for a planned closure varies depending on weather patterns, but every attempt is made to give Principals as much notice as possible to prepare written documentation for parents. Schools should have telephone trees in place to provide this information at short notice or after hours.

Once advised that your school is to undertake pre-emptive closure, you need to notify your school community that a closure is imminent. The Principal needs to send letters to parents and provide each staff member with a memo that clearly states when the closure is planned to occur and that the school is on standby. It may be that between declaration of the closure and the day of closure, weather conditions improve sufficiently to remove the need to close and the school can therefore stand down its pre-emptive closure plans. The Executive Director confirms with the Principal the final decision to close the school no later than 4.30 pm the day before the planned closure. If weather conditions become less severe after 4.30 pm, the closure goes ahead regardless, in order to provide a level of certainty to parents.

The DEFS is the final authority on advice about which schools are in danger and the level of risk at the time. The Executive Director makes the final decision as to whether or not a planned closure of public schools is to proceed, based on DFES's advice.

### 2.2 During a Planned Closure

The principal must stay informed of current fire danger rating and any fire activity by monitoring local media (local radio, especially the ABC, and television) and by regularly checking for updates with DFES.

### 2.3 Re-opening School

Parents need to know when the Catastrophic FDR has been downgraded and that it is therefore safe for their children to return to school after a planned closure. The letter to parents contains advice on how parents can monitor the situation. The school will need to put communication plans in place, such as placing a notice on the school website and providing a phone number for parents to call for information about the reopening of the school. Consideration needs to be given to how parents who do not have internet access or who have diverse needs (e.g. multicultural, special needs) will be provided with information.

### 3. Bushfire

In the event of a bushfire threatening the school, the school will notify DFES and the **BP** will be invoked by way of the school siren (or hand held siren) (***add your school's site specific alert tone***).

#### 3.1. Bushfire – Watch community

During a bushfire, emergency services provide as much information as possible through a number of different channels. There are three levels of warning: **ADVICE**, **WATCH AND ACT** and **EMERGENCY WARNING**. These change to reflect the increasing risk to life and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives.

##### 3.1.1 Advice

If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, activate the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management* Plan immediately. An **ADVICE** provides you with information on a bushfire that is not threatening lives or property, but may be causing smoke near schools. Turn off evaporative air conditioners. Regular checks of the school are to be undertaken paying special attention to the evaporative air conditioners.

##### 3.1.2 Watch and Act

A **WATCH AND ACT** message tells you the fire conditions are changing and there is a possible threat to lives and schools. The Principal's decision to leave or relocate students, staff and visitors off site should be based upon assessment of known information and current circumstances, including advice from emergency services or observations at the time of the event.

The direction to evacuate by the Emergency Services Incident Controller will consider the location of the bushfire, the ability to travel safely to the selected evacuation point and the safest route to get there. In some circumstances, it may not be safe to evacuate.

##### 3.1.3 Emergency Warning

An **EMERGENCY WARNING** is the highest level of warning and indicates **immediate** danger. In some circumstances it may start with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) to get your attention as the fire is about to arrive. SEWS is a distinctive sound that is broadcast immediately prior to major emergency announcements on radio, television and other communication systems. SEWS tells people 'you need to listen – there is an emergency in your area and you need to take action now'. It is used like a siren and is strictly controlled for use by an authorised hazard management agency only.

The School should activate their Bushfire Plan in regards to evacuation. Consideration will include; location of fire and ability to travel safely to the selected relocation point, notify DFES Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point. The Principal is to liaise with the Regional Executive Director. **If it is not safe to evacuate, direct all students, staff and visitors to the school's Safer Location.**

##### 3.1.4 All Clear

An **ALL CLEAR** is issued when the threat has passed and the fire is under control. Fire-fighters will still be working to put out the last remnants of the fire and making the area safe, so it is important to remain vigilant in case the situation changes. It may still not be safe to leave to school to return home. Emergency services will advise when school students and/or staff can be released to go home.

## 3.2. Bushfire – Act

### 3.2.1 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is open

#### 3.2.1.1 Evacuation Procedure

The school has identified an offsite safer location which has been approved (by DFES Kalgoorlie – 8/12/16) it will take approximately 10 minutes to move to this location.

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors and windows must be closed and **evaporative air coolers turned off**. Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes, liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of DFES or emergency services who will then take over.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

#### Parent Access

Parents will be informed when and where to pick up students upon advice from the school or through DFES or the Incident Controller.

#### 3.2.1.2 Safer Location Procedure – if evacuation is not possible

School to remain on site on advice from DFES.

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors and windows must be closed and **evaporative air coolers turned off**. Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes and liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of the DFES or emergency services who will then take over.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

#### Parent Access

Parents advised **NOT** to pick up students and to monitor local media for specific access information.

### 3.2.2 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is closed

If CEOWA makes a decision on school closure based upon advice the Principal will be informed of closure.

The Principal is to notify staff and parents of the closure using the emergency contact list (see Appendix D for Communication Plan).

The CEOWA Incident Controller will, in consultation with the Executive Director identify alternative accommodation of students and staff if required. CEOWA's Media Unit will utilise media outlets to make public announcements of school closures, temporary alternative accommodation and contact number(s) for further information.

The CEOWA will inform the Principal when the school can reopen.

### **3.2.3 Recovery**

The priorities for the school during recovery are

- Health and Safety of individuals;
- Social Recovery; and
- Physical (Structural) Recovery.

#### **General**

- When possible, return to normal routine as soon as possible.
- Attend to staff and student welfare, considering counselling support.
- Provide information for families and the community of any impact (including if there is none) on the school and school routine following the bushfire.
- Undertake a check of any equipment or stock used and arrange for replacement/replenishment.
- Address any physical damage to the school, isolating areas if required and if necessary relocate to alternative accommodation. Contact the Resources Team at CEOWA to commence repairs. The CEOWA should be advised of any damage caused by the bushfire.
- Attend to security if necessary.
- Manage Administrative details including insurance.

#### **Debrief**

- What worked, what didn't?
- Was anything overlooked?
- What could you and your staff do better next time?
- Should roles change?
- If changes are made, incorporate them into the formal plan and advise the appropriate parties including staff and other authorities.
- Share the knowledge with other schools.
- Test the revised bushfire management plan and procedures.

For further details and contacts refer to the Recovery Section of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* and *The Principal's Guide to Bushfire*.