

National Quality Framework

Managing bushfire risks in centre-based services

Fact sheet | January 2015

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The purpose of this fact sheet is to assist centre-based services understand their responsibilities in relation to managing bushfire risks and where a service is placed on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) to understand the additional requirements that must be met. Recognising and understanding a service's risk environment will help to start preparing the service and premises in case of a bushfire.

Emergency and evacuation policy and procedures

All education and care services are required to ensure that every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children being educated and cared for by the service from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury, including responding to potential bushfire risks. Each service must have emergency and evacuation policy and procedures (regulation 168(2)(e)) and ensure that they are based on a risk assessment that is conducted to identify potential emergencies¹ that are relevant to the service. Where appropriate the policy and procedures to effectively manage bushfire emergencies should be developed in consultation with relevant authorities². These must include:

- an emergency and evacuation floor plan.

The service's emergency and evacuation floor plan and instructions must be displayed in a prominent position near each exit of the service premises. The emergency and evacuation procedures must be documented and rehearsed at least every 3 months that the service is operating by the staff members, volunteers and children present at the service on the day of the rehearsal and the responsible person present at the time (regulation 97).

The emergency and evacuation policy and procedures should confirm how emergencies will be managed to reduce the associated risks and maintain children's safety; this may include identifying circumstances when the decision is made to close the service.

The approved provider of an education and care service must ensure that copies of the current emergency and evacuation policy and procedures are available for inspection at the education and care service premise at all times that the service is educating and caring for children (regulation 171(2)).

¹ An 'emergency' refers to all situations or events posing an imminent or severe risk to those present in an education and care service, and may include floods, fire or extreme weather events. Emergencies are sudden, unexpected events or situations that require immediate action to prevent injury to individuals or damage to the service's environment.

² Element 2.3.3

Bushfire At-Risk Register

Victoria has a number of fire-prone areas where there is a higher risk of bushfire activity. Centre-based services located in these areas are placed on the Department's BARR and additional conditions are placed on their service approval.

Centre-based services placed on the Department's **Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR)** are required to meet additional conditions that are imposed on their service approval, these are:

- the approved provider of a service on the BARR must ensure that on any day declared to be a Code Red³ day for the region in which a service is located, that the service is closed and remains closed for the duration of the Code Red day;
- services named on the BARR must submit their current emergency management plan annually to their respective QAR Regional Office by 21 November.

It is a serious offence not to comply with a condition of a service approval (section 51).

The list of services placed on the BARR is available on the Department's website:

www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/bushfirerisk.aspx

Outside School Hours Care Services (OSHC) that are co-located on a school site may choose to work with the school to develop a single emergency management plan. In these circumstances it is advisable that a separate risk assessment is completed for the OSHC service, and any special requirements about operating outside of normal school hours are incorporated in this plan.

Relevant authorities

The Country Fire Authority (CFA) publishes Community Information Guides for communities that have been deemed to be facing risk of bushfire. Community Information Guides may assist services to identify townships and communities at risk of bushfire and may provide information relevant to the development of the emergency and evacuation policy and procedures for services. These guides are updated regularly, so it is advised that services regularly visit the CFA website www.cfa.vic.gov.au to ensure the latest community information guide is accessed.

The local branch of the relevant emergency service (e.g. Country Fire Authority, Metropolitan Fire Brigade) and the Municipal Fire Protection Officer (MFPO) of the relevant local government may also provide useful additional information about identifying education and care services at particular risk of bushfires and managing bushfire risks.






Monitoring fire ratings

Fire ratings are forecast for four days and a total fire ban is declared by the CFA on days when fires are likely to spread rapidly and could be difficult to control. Fire ratings are maintained and updated on a daily basis for each Bureau of Meteorology district in Victoria and published on the CFA website: www.cfa.vic.gov.au. Fire ratings provide information about how dangerous a fire would be if started in the specific district on a specific day.

The CFA website provides information about the locations and boundaries of Bureau of Meteorology districts. This information will assist services in addressing specific considerations within their relevant Bureau of

³ CFA – Fire danger ratings www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/about-fire-danger-ratings/

Meteorology district. Services in identified as high risk locations are advised to monitor the CFA website for declared Code Red days.

 <p>FIRE DANGER RATING</p> <p>The Fire Danger Rating predicts how a fire would behave if one started, including how difficult it would be to put out. The higher the rating the more dangerous the conditions. The rating is your trigger to act, so to stay safe you need to stay aware of the Fire Danger Rating in your district.</p>	What does it mean?	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire; • Buildings are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions; • The safest place to be is away from high risk bushfire areas; • On a code red day services on the BARR must close.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions; • If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and come from many directions; • Buildings that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions; • If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be uncontrollable; • Well prepared buildings that are actively defended can provide safety.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a fire starts, it can most likely be controlled in these conditions and buildings can provide safety; • Be aware of how fires can start and minimise the risk. 	

Source: CFA Fire danger ratings www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/about-fire-danger-ratings/

Closure on Code Red days

Services on the BARR must ensure that on any day declared to be a Code Red day for the district in which a service is located, that the service is closed and remains closed for the duration of the Code Red day. There are nine Bureau of Meteorology districts in Victoria:



If an Extreme or Severe fire danger rating is declared for the district in which a service is located the service should follow the emergency and evacuation policy and procedures to reduce the associated risks and maintain children’s safety; this may include identifying circumstances where a decision is made to close the service.

Updating contact details

Approved providers must ensure that their provider and service contact details including after hours and emergency contact details are up to date at all times, and especially before the fire season. In some districts, the fire season may extend from October to April.

Emergency contact details include: the name of emergency contact person, landline phone number, mobile phone number and email address. Services can update their details online via the [NQAITS system](#) or by emailing licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au using either form [SA12 Notification of change of information about an approved service](#) (for services) or [PA08 Notification of change to information about an approved provider](#) (for approved providers) available on [ACECQA](#) website.

Submission of emergency management plans

Emergency management plans for services on the BARR must be submitted to the Department through the relevant QAR Regional Office by 21 November each year. Plans submitted by email should have details of the name of the service in the subject heading. QAR Regional Office contact details are available on the Department’s website:

www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/regulation/nqfregcontactjuly14.pdf.

Resources

The Department has developed a range of resources to assist education and care services in developing their emergency management plans. A *Guide to Developing an Emergency Management Plan*, an *Emergency Management Plan Template for Early Childhood Services* and short video tutorials are available at: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/support/Pages/emergency.aspx.

Further information

The **Department of Education and Training** is the Regulatory Authority in Victoria. Phone: 1300 307 415

Email: licensed.childrens.services@edumail.vic.gov.au

Web: www.education.vic.gov.au/childhood/providers/regulation

The **Country Fire Authority (CFA)**

Web: www.cfa.vic.gov.au

VicEmergency is the new site for fire and flood warnings and shows emergency incidents in Victoria on a real-time Google map display. Web: www.emergency.vic.gov.au

The **Bureau of Meteorology** issues fire danger warnings.

Web: www.bom.gov.au

