

SCHOOL BUS PROGRAM

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES

MAY 2018



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1. Introduction

While parents/guardians have primary responsibility for transporting their children to and from school, the School Bus Program (SBP) assists families in rural and regional Victoria by transporting students to school. The program services both government and non-government schools.

Students wishing to access a seat on a bus must complete an application form and parents/guardians must agree to the conditions of travel including, if applicable, the payment of a fare. Criteria of eligibility determine whether a student travels at no cost or upon the payment of a fare.

The SBP is guided by the relevant parts of the [Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017](#) and the [Bus Safety Act 2009](#). These documents detail the specific obligations and duty of care for all parties involved in the provision and management of school bus services.

The School Bus Program Emergency Management Operational Guidelines (the Guidelines) outline the roles and responsibilities for the Department of Education and Training (DET), DET Regions and Schools, Public Transport Victoria (PTV) and PTV Contracted Bus Operators and their staff, in relation to the management of forecast and rapid onset emergency events affecting the SBP.

The Guidelines are effective from May 2018 and replace all previously published versions of this document title.

Further information about the SBP and the programs policies, forms and guidance material can be located at: [Student Transport](#)

Out of Scope:

These guidelines do not provide guidance for student transport provided through:

- the Students with Disabilities Transport Program (SDTP), which supports students attending specialist schools.
 - Emergency management guidance for transport services under the SDTP can be found at: [Student Transport](#)
- bus services chartered by schools for excursions, camps and other activities
- bus services provided directly by schools where buses are owned, chartered or leased by the school.

2. Responsibilities

A complete list of the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the SBP is detailed in the School Bus Program Policy and Procedures, January 2016. The following defines stakeholder responsibilities with relevance to emergency management.

Schools:

Coordinating schools are responsible for administering the SBP at the local network level.

Principals of coordinating and client schools, including government and non-government schools, must maintain up-to-date information on students and other approved travellers that utilise the SBP service. Coordinating schools must collate and distribute this information to bus operators.

Regional Emergency Management Staff:

Emergency management staff within each DET Region undertake an operational role in engaging directly with schools.

Security and Emergency Management Division:

DET's Security and Emergency Management Division (SEMD) develops policy, guidelines and resources for schools and Early Childhood Services (ECS) to assist in preparing for the threat of emergencies; these can be found on the DET website/intranet at: [Emergency and Critical Incidents](#)

The SEMD will publish school, children's services and bus cancellations on the DET website located here: [Emergency Closures and Relocations](#)

Student Transport Unit:

The Student Transport Unit of DET oversees the SBP policy and procedures and provides general transport advice to DET regions and schools.

Public Transport Victoria:

The Regional Bus Services area within PTV coordinates the contracted bus services with its bus operators for the delivery of the SBP.

School Bus Operators:

School bus operators operate all bus services under contract with PTV.

3. Preparing for an Emergency

3.1 Emergency Management Plans

Each school and early childhood service must develop an Emergency Management Plan (EMP) that includes emergency preparedness and response procedures. EMPs must be updated annually.

Schools can access their emergency management plan via DET's website at: [Emergency Management Planning](#)

Each school and early childhood service with students that utilise the SBP must undertake a risk assessment for their bus network/s and, in their EMP, outline responsibilities, procedures and actions in an emergency event affecting SBP services.

To ensure consistency, coordinating schools, client schools and bus operators must establish emergency procedures relevant to SBP services in consultation with one another. If required, the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Victoria Police, VicRoads and other emergency services may also be involved in providing advice on emergency response procedures.

Coordinating schools should liaise with the bus operator in developing a plan for managing bus related emergencies and once the plan is finalised, schools should provide a copy of relevant parts of the plan to the bus operator who must comply with the bus related provisions of the plan.

The following should be considered when developing the transport components of a schools EMP:

- out of hours contact details for the coordinating school principal (or their delegate), client school principals (or their delegates), bus operator(s) or driver(s) (subject to operator's own EMP and preferred contact protocols) and PTV's Incident Response Team (see Appendix C for the Network Contacts template)
- complete and up-to-date bus rolls containing emergency contact details for student's parent(s)/guardian(s) families and (and identify where this information is located if required)
- local emergency and risk considerations for transport routes
- transport arrangements for approved school relocations on Severe and Extreme Fire Danger Rating days.

The Student Transport Unit has established the Student Transport 'Emergency Management Checklist' (see Appendix D) to assist schools with the development of the transport components of their EMP.

3.2 Communicating Emergency Management Plans

It is important that all parties involved in the administration of the SBP familiarise themselves with these guidelines and the school's EMP to ensure they can be utilised effectively in the event of an emergency.

Coordinating and client schools should share the transport component of their EMP with each other as appropriate to ensure consistency. Schools should communicate their EMP with the school community to ensure all relevant parties are aware of processes in the event of an emergency.

Schools should aim to regularly practise the transport related emergency procedures outlined in their EMP to ensure school staff, bus drivers, bus operators, PTV, and DET (regional staff and SEMD) are familiar with these procedures.

3.3 Updating SBP Information

Coordinating schools must maintain an updated bus roll template with network, route and student information with assistance from client schools, DET STU and PTV. Reference to the storage location of the bus roll template must be made in the coordinating school's EMP.

3.4 Bus Operator Emergency Preparedness

As per the SBP contract, bus drivers must carry an appropriate communication device to contact emergency services, schools and bus operators in the event of an emergency. This device must be maintained in working order at all times. Bus operators and drivers should also have up-to-date emergency contact information prominently displayed on buses at all times.

4. Forecast Emergency

All Victorian schools and early childhood services listed on the Department's Bushfire-At-Risk Register (BARR) must pre-emptively close if they are located in a Bureau of Meteorology district where a Code Red Fire Danger Rating (FDR) day has been determined. Accordingly, all buses servicing schools that close on a Code Red FDR day will be cancelled.

The BARR is located at: [Bushfire At-Risk Register](#)

Government schools under category 1 and 2 of the BARR may pre-emptively relocate or close when a Severe or Extreme Fire Danger Rating day is forecast. The decision to pre-emptively close or relocate a school can only be made with explicit authorisation from the relevant Regional Director, supported by advice from emergency management staff.

Schools must refer to the Department's Bushfire Preparedness Relocation and Closure Procedures in the event of a forecast elevated FDR day.

Note: This guideline does not address the variation of bus routes when a school relocates in preparedness for an elevated FDR. Schools should determine how they would manage bus services in the event of a relocation and document these arrangements in their EMP.

Schools that close in preparation for a forecast emergency event are required to address the impacts to student transport.

Should an actual emergency event occur, refer to the relevant situations ('rapid onset emergency', 'when students are en route' and/or 'bus services affected overnight or before school') below in section 5. During an Emergency.

The roles and responsibilities of each group in the lead up to a forecast emergency (bushfire or other) are set out below. This process is also outlined in Appendix E – Forecast Cancellation Flowchart.

Coordinating school principals (or delegate) will:

- monitor the VicEmergency website, app or telephone service for emergency forecast warnings
- enact the school's Emergency Management Plan
- complete the following by 3.30pm the day prior to the forecast emergency event:
 - utilise relevant information sources to consider any discretionary cancellations of bus routes travelling through high risk areas in consultation with school bus operators (adhere to the Bushfire Preparedness Relocation and Closure Procedures for FDR forecasts)
 - seek approval from the Regional Director for school bus service cancellations (for category 1 and 2 schools on the BARR, bus cancellation approval is incorporated in school closure or relocation approval for an elevated FDR forecast)
 - notify the following stakeholders of the status of the school bus service:
 - school bus operators
 - client school principals
 - early childhood services (if applicable)
 - parents/guardians of affected students from the coordinating school
 - other approved travellers (which could include teachers, general public, tertiary students and pre-school students)
 - DET regional emergency management staff
- continue to liaise with DET regional emergency management staff to advise of the situation and actions taken.

Client school (government and non-government) principals (or their delegates) will:

- enact the school's Emergency Management Plan
- monitor the VicEmergency website, app or telephone service for emergency forecast warnings
- receive notification of school bus service cancellations from the coordinating principal (or delegate)
- notify parents/guardians of affected students of the bus cancellation(s)
- notify the coordinating principal that parents/guardians of all affected students have been advised of service cancellations
- make alternative transport arrangements for students as required
- seek advice from the SEIL and/or DET regional emergency management staff or CECV/ISV as required.

School bus operators and/or bus drivers will:

- communicate with the coordinating principal(or delegate) to clarify whether the bus service(s) will be cancelled on the forecast day
- make the appropriate operational arrangements to cancel the service
- communicate with the relevant PTV Regional Bus Services Contract Manager as required.

Public Transport Victoria (Incident Response Team) will:

- enact PTV operating procedures
- consider and recommend school bus service cancellations and discuss general public transport cancellations with the coordinating principal (or delegate)
- discuss and confirm school bus cancellation(s) with the coordinating school principal (or delegate)
- consider whether collaboration with neighbouring regions or states is necessary where bus routes cross regional boundaries or state borders
- liaise with DET regional emergency management staff around school bus service cancellation(s) and other school-related public transport complexities
- where required, inform their regulating body (DEDJTR) and relevant response agency Emergency Management Teams of SBP changes
- notify the Regional Emergency Management Team (REMT) and State Emergency Management Team (SEMT) of SBP and school-related public transport cancellation(s)
- communicate with DET (STU) as required.

DET Regional Emergency Management Staff will:

- receive notification from emergency services agencies or SEMD of forecast weather events (for example, forecast Code Red Day or flood warning) that may lead to pre-emptive school closures and associated school bus cancellations
- seek advice from emergency services, REMT, SEMD and PTV on local conditions and the possible effect on school bus routes
- contact coordinating principals within a forecast area to determine whether they plan to cancel a school bus service and to offer information and regional assistance
- notify SEMD of any bus cancellations
- represent DET as a member of the REMT and report on student transport issues and student bus service cancellations
- communicate with the PTV Regional Bus Services Contract Manager to notify of bus cancellations and seek information around any changes to public transport services specifically relating to the carriage of students
- consider whether collaboration with neighbouring regions or states is necessary where bus routes cross regional boundaries or state borders and make contact to facilitate any coordination activities required.

DET Security and Emergency Management Division will:

- provide regions, DET Security Services Unit and/or media with updated warnings from the State Control Centre (SCC)
- receive notification of changes to all school transport arrangements from DET regions
- email ISV and CECV to confirm school closures and SBP cancellations that may affect independent and/or Catholic schools/students
- ensure the SEMT is aware of SBP cancellations and other student transport related issues (in collaboration with PTV)
- update the closures page on the DET website outlining all school bus service cancellations
- provide DET Media Unit with information on school bus service cancellations.

DET Student Transport Unit will:

- provide general student transport policy related advice (i.e. non-sensitive contractual information, operator contact information, route information) to relevant stakeholders as requested
- receive notification of school bus route updates from SEMD.

NOTE: the Student Transport Unit does not provide advice to regions or schools on live emergency management issues. These matters should be addressed through schools' EMPs and through the relevant DET region emergency management staff.

5. During an Emergency

A rapid onset emergency event may affect the safety of a school and/or bus service and will require the coordinating and/or client principal to take immediate action. Explained below are the actions that should be taken during and after a rapid onset emergency that affects school bus services. The guidelines should also be referred to where a forecast emergency event turns into an actual emergency event.

This process is also outlined in Appendix F – Rapid Onset Emergency Flowchart.

Coordinating school principals (or delegate) will:

- enact the school's Emergency Management Plan
- call 000 to request emergency assistance, if required
- use the VicEmergency website, app or telephone service and emergency broadcast information on television or radio to get ongoing emergency information and warnings
- convene an Incident Management Team (IMT) as required
- notify and seek advice from the SEIL and/or DET regional emergency management staff as required
- direct all media enquiries directly to the DET Media Unit
- conduct the following actions as relevant to the situation:
 - when students are at school*
 - make a decision whether to cancel an affected or potentially affected bus route in full
 - hold all students on affected services at the school until the all clear is given from emergency services, either directly or via DET region emergency management staff.
 - liaise with bus operators and drivers regarding school bus services and instruct drivers not to leave the school until the all clear is given
 - when students are en route*
 - advise emergency services of the status and location of bus services and seek assistance if required
 - confirm or provide the bus driver with the final bus stop destination with preference to return to school if safe and practical to do so
 - ensure confirmation of bus's arrival at destination is received from the bus driver
 - when overnight or before school*
 - determine whether the bus service is to be cancelled or not
- notify the following stakeholders of the status of the school bus service:
 - school bus operators
 - client school principals (government and non-government)
 - early childhood services (if applicable)
 - parents/guardians of affected students from the coordinating school
 - other approved travellers (which could include teachers, general public, tertiary students and pre-school students)
 - DET Security Services Unit
 - DET regional emergency management staff
- keep an accurate log of all actions/decisions in relation to the event.

Client school (government and non-government) principals (or their delegates) will:

- enact the school's EMP
- call 000 to request emergency assistance if required
- use the VicEmergency website, app or telephone service and emergency broadcast information on television or radio to get ongoing emergency information and warnings
- receive notification of impacts to the school bus service from the coordinating principal
- hold all students on affected services at the school until the all clear is given by emergency services and the coordinating school principal
- notify parents/guardians of affected students at their school of the situation and if possible advise when and where it is safe for their child to be picked up
- notify coordinating principal that parents/guardians of all affected students have been advised of service cancellations and other relevant information
- seek advice from the SEIL and/or DET regional emergency management staff or CECV/ISV as required
- keep an accurate log of all actions/decisions in relation to the event.

School bus operators and/or bus drivers will:

- *when students are at school:*
 - receive service cancellation instructions from the coordinating principal
 - not leave the school in a bus with students on board without the approval of the principal or their delegate
- *when the bus is en-route:*
 - assume responsibility should an emergency situation arise while a bus service is en-route to or from school
 - call 000 to contact emergency services
 - where practicable, make decisions with guidance from the emergency services
 - drive the bus to safety; the safest location will be determined at the time based on the information that the bus driver receives from the emergency services
 - not allow students to alight from the bus unless parents/guardians are waiting. If no one is waiting, and it is practical and safe to do so, students will be taken back to school; otherwise students are to be taken to the nearest safe place
 - notify the coordinating principal of any emergency event encountered en-route and any anticipated delay
 - receive instruction (where possible) from the emergency services, bus operator and/or coordinating principal with regard to the bus's destination (i.e. return to school or to another safe area)
 - confirm arrival at destination with the coordinating principal and bus operator as soon as possible
- communicate with the relevant PTV Regional Bus Services Contract Manager as required
- record details of actions taken.

PTV Incident Response Team will:

- track incidents at the local level and escalate to the Director, Regional School Bus Services (or delegate) if required
- liaise with DET regional emergency management staff around school bus service cancellations and other school-related public transport complexities
- receive notification of bus service status from bus operators
- consider whether collaboration with neighbouring regions or states is necessary where bus routes cross regional boundaries or state borders
- where required, inform their regulating body (DEDJTR) and relevant response agency Emergency Management Teams of SBP changes
- communicate with DET as required
- keep an accurate log of all communication in relation to the event.

DET Regional Emergency Management Staff will:

- receive notification of emergency status
- liaise with the coordinating principal on status of the emergency and offer information and regional assistance
- communicate with the PTV Regional Bus Services Contract Manager to notify of bus cancellations and seek information around any changes to public transport services specifically relating to the carriage of students
- notify SEMD of service cancellations and future transport arrangements
- consider whether collaboration with neighbouring regions or states is necessary where bus routes cross regional boundaries or state borders and make contact to facilitate any coordination activities required
- represent DET as a member of the Regional Emergency Management Team and report student transport issues and student bus service cancellations
- keep an accurate log of all actions/decisions in relation to the event.

DET Security and Emergency Management Division will:

- liaise with and support DET regional emergency management staff
- notify DET Media Unit of cancellations or changes to bus services and update information on DET website (Closures page)
- notify CECV and ISV of the situation
- ensure the SCC/SEMT is aware of student transport cancellations and other issues (in collaboration with PTV)
- keep an accurate log of all actions/decisions in relation to the event.

DET Student Transport Unit will:

- receive notification of school bus route updates from SEMD
- provide general student transport related advice to relevant stakeholders as requested
- keep an accurate log of all transport related communication in relation to the event.

6. After an Emergency

All parties involved in the emergency should undertake the following actions after the emergency has past:

- participate in post-event debriefs led by either DET or PTV as appropriate
- document learnings from the event
- receive and provide feedback from/to stakeholders as appropriate

In addition:

- schools will update their EMP (as required) with support and advice from DET regional emergency management staff
- DET Student Transport Unit will provide support to DET regional emergency management staff and schools in relation to policy compliance and in relation to updating processes and procedures for emergencies that affect student transport
- school bus operators will update internal processes and procedures as required and liaise with coordinating and client schools to ensure their emergency management plans are consistent with the schools' EMPs.

Appendix A - Glossary

For the purpose of this document, full titles are used initially and thereafter acronyms are used.

The emergency management roles and terminology referred to in this document are based on those used under the Australasian Inter-Service Incident Management System (AIIMS). In Australia, AIIMS is the nationally recognised system of incident management for fire and emergency service agencies.

Term	Description
BARR	Bush Fire At Risk Register
Bus driver	A bus driver may be the bus operator or alternatively may be employed by the bus operator to drive the bus service.
Bus operator	A bus operator is contracted by PTV to operate a school bus service in the SBP.
CECV	Catholic Education Commission Victoria
Client school	A school whose students use school buses provided under the SBP but the school does not manage the bus service (this is the responsibility of the coordinating school).
Client school principal	Principal of a client school
Code Red Day	Code Red is the highest Fire Danger Rating in Victoria. Code Red Days are declared by the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) and cover one or more entire BoM districts.
Coordinating school	A school that is responsible for the management of the local SBP bus network.
Coordinating principal	Principal of a coordinating school. The responsibilities of a coordinating school principal are often delegated to a school bus coordinator.
DET	Department of Education and Training
DET region	In addition to the Central Office DET have four regions in Victoria: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Eastern Victoria Region (SEVR) • North Eastern Victoria Region (NEVR) • South Western Victoria Region (SWVR) • North Western Victoria Region (NWVR)
DEDJTR	Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport, and Resources
SEMD	DET's Security and Emergency Management Division
EMP	Emergency Management Plan. This plan is developed by schools and early childhood services to address risks identified at the site and affecting its students. All schools and early childhood services who have students accessing SBP bus services must address transport risks in their EMP.
Forecast emergency	An emergency event preceded by a notification from the State Control Centre. These may include Code Red Days, flooding or severe weather events.
FDR	Forecast Danger Rating
Director, Regional Bus Services	The PTV staff member responsible for managing SBP bus services.

Term	Description
IMT	Incident Management Team
IRT	PTV Incident Response Team
IRIS	DET Incident Reporting Information Service
ISV	Independent Schools Victoria
PTV	Public Transport Victoria. PTV provides school bus services in rural and regional areas subject to service provision and travel eligibility prescribed by DET (Refer to SBP Policy and Procedures 2016).
Rapid onset emergency	Emergency events that occur with very little or no warning.
Regional Bus Services Contract Manager	PTV staff member responsible for managing SBP contracts in each of the PTV regions.
Regional Director	DET staff member responsible for a DET region and ultimately responsible for all emergency management decisions relating to schools within this region.
REMT	Regional Emergency Management Team. The REMT comprises regional representatives from all agencies (including DET) that have been identified as having an emergency management response or recovery role. The REMT assists the controller in formulating a response strategy and its execution by all agencies.
SBP	School Bus Program
SCC	State Control Centre
SDTP	Students with Disabilities Transport Program
SEMT	State Emergency Management Team
SEIL	Senior Education Improvement Leader
SSU	DET Security Services Unit
STU	DET Student Transport Unit, which sets the SBP policy and provides general transport advice to schools and DET regional offices.

Appendix B – Contact Details

Contact	Phone	Email address
DET Security Services Unit	9589 6266	ssu@edumail.vic.gov.au
DET Media Unit	9637 2871	
North West Victoria Regional Office	5440 3175	
North East Victoria Regional Office	8392 9336	
South West Victoria Regional Office	5337 8429	
South East Victoria Regional Office	8765 5745	
PTV Incident Response (24 hr)	9027 4241	zero@ptv.vic.gov.au
DET Student Transport Unit	9637 2200	student.transport@edumail.vic.gov.au
DET Security and Emergency Management Division (Central Office)	9651 3714	emergency.management@edumail.vic.gov.au

Note: regional emergency management staff members contact details will be populated automatically into school emergency management plans.

Refer to bus roll template for bus service operator contact details.

Appendix C – Network Contacts Table

The following information should be included in your school EMPs.

Section 1 – All Schools

All schools using or coordinating a SBP service must complete the following table for their school:

Contact Information	
School name	
Principal name	
Principal phone contact details (all hours)	
School bus coordinator at your school (if not principal)	
School bus coordinator phone contact details (all hours)	

SBP Coordinating schools: please also complete section 2

SBP Client schools: please also complete section 3

Section 2 – Coordinating Schools

Schools that coordinate bus services must complete the following table for each client school or other approved travellers under their coordination:

Please replicate the table as required.

Contact Information	
Facility name	
Principal/ Director name	
Principal/ Director phone contact details (all hours)	
School bus coordinator at client school (if not principal/ director)	
School bus coordinator phone contact details (all hours)	

Section 3 – Client Bus Schools

Client schools accessing bus services must record their coordinating bus school/s contact details in the following table:

Contact Information	
Coordinating school name	
Coordinating principal name	
Coordinating principal phone contact details (all hours)	
Coordinating school bus coordinator (if not principal)	
Coordinating school bus coordinator phone contact details (all hours)	

Should your school have more than one coordinating school, please replicate the table.

Section 4 – School Bus Services

All schools – please complete the following information regarding bus services. Add rows to the table as required.

SBP Coordinating Schools - all bus routes in your network should be listed here.

SBP Client Schools – all bus routes servicing your school should be listed here.

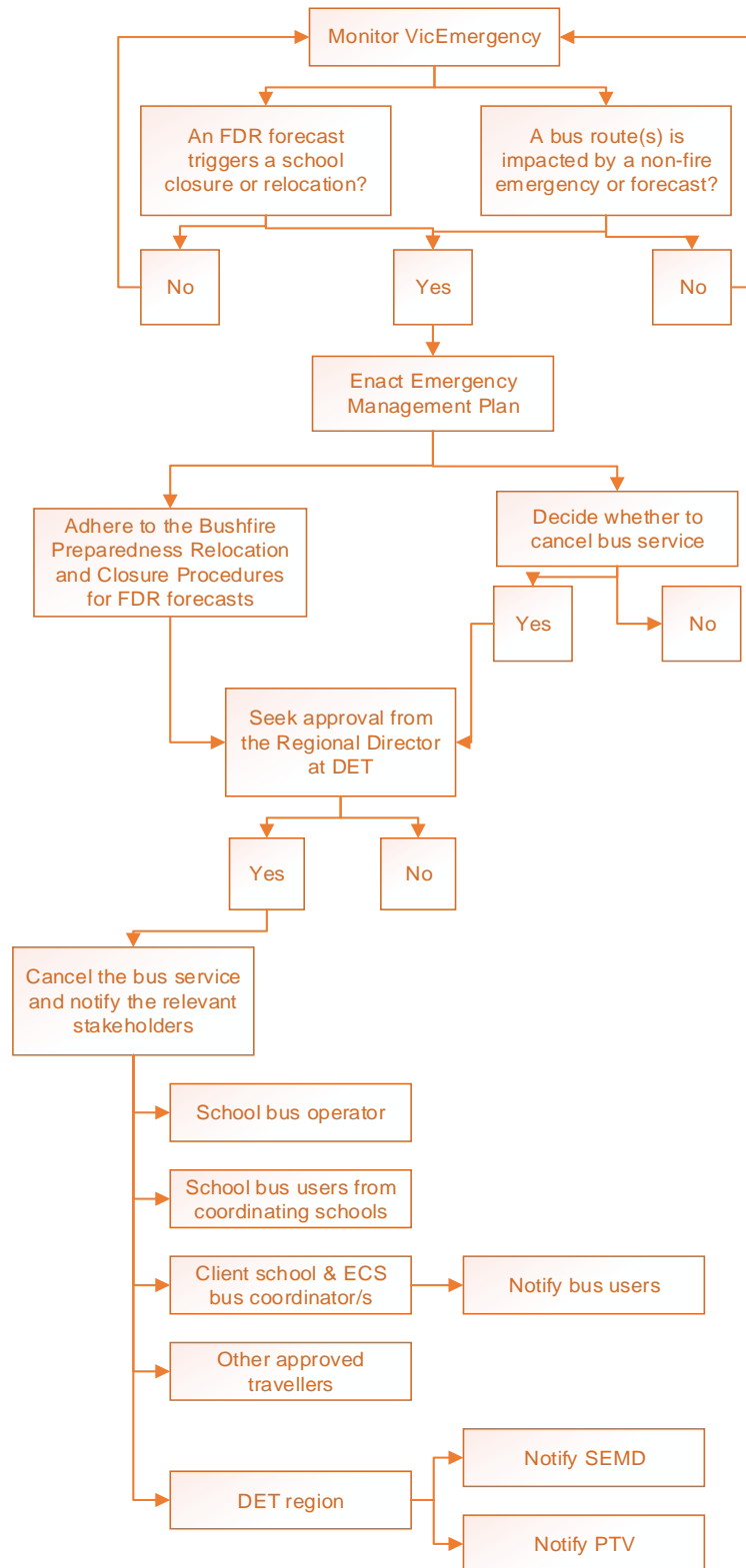
Bus route name	Bus contract number	Service operator name & phone	Bus driver name & phone
Example below			
Johnsville – Janestown	1234-000	ABC Coaches, Jess Smith 0412 345 678	George Smith 0401 010 010

Appendix D – Emergency Management Plan Checklist

Please check box when action item complete. Mark N/A where not relevant.	Completed or N/A	Last reviewed
Emergency Management Plans (EMP) contain all hours contact information for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinating school principal • Coordinating school bus coordinator • Client school/s principal • Client school/s bus coordinator • Bus Operator/s • Bus Driver/s 		
The EMP contains: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known identified local risk to transport routes (as appropriate) 		
All current and up-to-date bus operator emergency management plans and other relevant documents, including bus routes/maps (including stop data and timetables) are attached to the schools EMP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional copy kept off site • Electronic copy maintained and accessible off site • Offsite location is clearly listed for ease of access • ONGOING – ensure bus routes/maps remains current 		
Discussions regarding emergency management planning transport considerations have been held with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client schools • Bus operators/drivers • Any other relevant stakeholders (local police/CFA etc.) as required 		
Transport considerations, as contained in the EMP, align with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department/legal requirements (e.g. BARR) • Client schools • Bus operators 		
The completed EMP has been communicated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Client schools • Bus operators/drivers • DET Regional Emergency Management Staff • Parents/guardians • Any other relevant stakeholders (local police/ CFA etc.) as required 		
Any changes to the bus routes or bus coordinator contact details have been communicated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus service operators • DET EM Region • Bus users/ coordinators 		
Next planned date for transport considerations to be reviewed in the EMP is:		

Appendix E – Forecast Cancellation Flowchart

This flowchart provides a visual guide and does not include all steps to be undertaken for a forecast cancellation. Refer to Section 3 for the detailed procedure.



Appendix F – Rapid Onset Emergency Flowchart

This flowchart provides a visual guide and does not include all steps to be undertaken for a rapid onset emergency. Refer to Section 4 for the detailed procedure.

