# Pre-season bushfire preparedness for schools

Checklists for schools in Categories 0-3 Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and Category 4 to prepare before the fire season.

## Pre-season preparedness for all schools in Categories 0-3 (BARR) and Category 4

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| Steps to prepare before the fire season | Complete | Comments |
| Receive notification of fire risk category by Security and Emergency Management Division during the planning period (June-September). |  |  |
| Emergency Management Plan updated to include pre-emptive action or closure procedures. |  |  |
| Complete the **School Bushfire Site Readiness Review Checklist**. |  |  |
| Arrangements including communication strategy for fire season shared with staff, parents and carers, other users of the school facilities during and outside normal operating hours (such as community groups), contractors (such as builders) and visitors before the fire season.  School community advised that the school must close on a forecasted day of Catastrophic FDR in your fire weather district. **Closure means that no one can attend the school site, and that learning from home cannot be conducted.**  Schools may consider advising their school community to:   1. Review their own [bushfire plan](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-and-during-a-fire/your-bushfire-plan) and alternative care arrangements. 2. Download the VicEmergency application, check the VicEmergency and CFA websites and media coverage. |  |  |
| Posters and communications prepared to use at the school on a Catastrophic FDR day and to send out to the school community. |  |  |
| **If your school is a coordinating bus school notify:**  parents and students before the fire season of potential bus route cancellations if a forecasted day of Catastrophic FDR occurs in the relevant fire district/s.  client school principals before the fire season of potential bus route cancellations if a forecasted day of Catastrophic FDR occurs in the relevant fire district/s.  bus operators and drivers before the fire season of potential bus route cancellations if a forecasted day of Catastrophic FDR occurs in the relevant fire district/s. |  |  |
| **If your school is a client bus school notify:**  travellers and parents before the fire season of potential bus route cancellations if a forecasted day of Catastrophic FDR occurs in the relevant fire district/s. |  |  |
| School staff have determined how school will monitor fire danger forecasts and fire warnings, as well as notifications of potential/confirmed Catastrophic fire danger days from the department. |  |  |
| **If your school is in Category 0-2 use the** [**checklists below**](#_Development_of_pre-emptive) **to develop or update your pre-emptive action plan for elevated fire danger.** | | |

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## Development of pre-emptive action plan (relocation, remote learning or closure) for elevated fire danger ratings for schools in Categories 0, 1 and 2.

Your school’s pre-emptive action plan should be developed in consultation with regional emergency management staff and reviewed by your senior education improvement leader (SEIL) prior to approval by your Regional Director. After approval by your regional director, your plan should be monitored each year to ensure it is still up to date. Any changes to your plan will need to be reviewed and approved by your regional director.

**You must have an approved plan in place by 1 September each year.**

Develop your plan – pre-emptive relocation

Relocation is always the preferred option to ensure safety for staff and students and the continuity of education where possible.

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| Steps to develop the plan | Complete | Comments |
| Assessed the logistics, risks and benefits of relocation to operate on another school site on a day of elevated fire danger (High or Extreme FDR in LGA according to BARR Category and department advice). |  |  |
| Suitable host school identified. Work with regional emergency management staff and SEIL. |  |  |
| Planned relocation discussed and agreed to by key stakeholders, including the host school.  Be aware of individual and family bushfire plans and identify which staff members and students may not be attending a relocated school site. |  |  |
| Transportation options identified and included as part of the proposed relocation. |  |  |
| Relocation plan documented, including the transport arrangements for students and staff to the host school. |  |  |
| Plan submitted to SEIL for review and progression to the regional director for approval. |  |  |
| The regional director approved pre-emptive action plan uploaded into the school’s Emergency Management Plan in the Specific Response Procedures and confirmed with the approved host school.  Host schools to upload a copy of the pre-emptive action plan to school Emergency Management Plan once confirmed. |  |  |
| Approved pre-emptive actions communicated to school community before the commencement of the fire season.  Consider options for practicing your plan.  **Ensure you are prepared to enact your plan.** |  |  |

Develop your plan – learning from home

Learning from home plans should only be considered for pre-emptive bushfire action if relocation has been proven to not be feasible, including when a school and region have not been able to identify a suitable host school, or where there is another inhibiting factor that means relocation is not possible as a pre-emptive action. In these circumstances, schools may consider the suitability of learning from home on days of elevated fire danger.

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| Steps to develop the plan | Complete | Comments |
| Determine the appropriateness and feasibility of learning from home on a day of elevated fire danger (High or Extreme FDR in LGA). Work with your regional emergency management staff and SEIL.  Ensure that learning from home does not place students at greater risk than relocation, taking supervision and the risk posed by location of school community into account. |  |  |
| Learning from home on days of High or Extreme FDR in your LGA discussed and supported by key stakeholders.  Be aware of individual and family bushfire plans and identify which staff members and students may not be able to participate in learning from home due to their own plans.  See the CFA [Bushfire Plan](https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/before-and-during-a-fire/your-bushfire-plan) page for more information. |  |  |
| Learning from home pre-emptive action plan documented. Include staff availability, means of carrying out learning, student health and wellbeing considerations and business continuity arrangements for technology impacts. |  |  |
| Plan submitted to SEIL for review and progression to the regional director for approval. |  |  |
| The regional director approved pre-emptive action plan uploaded into the school’s Emergency Management Plan in the Specific Response Procedures and confirmed with the approved host school. |  |  |
| Approved pre-emptive actions communicated to school community before the commencement of the fire season.  **Ensure you are prepared to enact your plan.** |  |  |

Develop your plan – pre-emptive closure

In some instances, both relocation and learning from home are not possible. A school may then request, or be instructed, that their pre-emptive action is to close on days of elevated fire danger (High or Extreme FDR in LGA according to BARR Category).

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| Steps to develop the plan | Complete | Comments |
| No suitable alternatives (relocation or learning from home) to closure identified. Work with your regional emergency management staff and SEIL to confirm. |  |  |
| Plan to close on days of High or Extreme FDR in your LGA discussed and supported by key stakeholders.  Be aware of individual and family bushfire plans and how closure may impact arrangements on days of elevated fire danger. |  |  |
| Pre-emptive closure action plan documented. |  |  |
| Submit your plan to your SEIL for review and progression to the regional director for approval. |  |  |
| The regional director approved pre-emptive action plan uploaded into the school’s Emergency Management Plan in the Specific Response Procedures and confirmed with the approved host school. |  |  |
| Approved pre-emptive actions communicated to school community before the commencement of the fire season.  **Ensure you are prepared to enact your plan.** |  |  |