



# BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS POLICY



## Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Gembrook Primary School Office.

Ph: 03 5968 1313

email: [gembrook.ps@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:gembrook.ps@education.vic.gov.au)

## Purpose:

Gembrook Primary School is responsible for the well-being and safety of its staff, students and visitors. As the school is located in a high risk bushfire zone, the Bushfire Preparedness Policy ensures that the school is able to implement the necessary emergency procedures should a bushfire occur.

The policy further takes into account the safety of its staff and students in relation to bushfires for offsite activities and ensures that the school complies with the measures introduced in relation to the Bushfire At Risk Register (BARR) on which the school appears.

## Scope:

This policy applies to all school operations during the declared fire season and also when conditions outside this time pose a risk of bushfire. It applies to:

## Implementation:

### Bushfire At-Risk Register

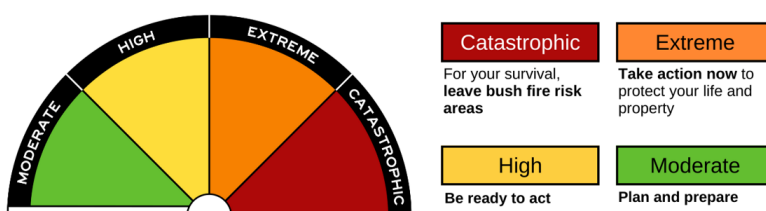
Schools such as Gembrook Primary School that are at the highest risk of fire danger are placed on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register. Inclusion on this register is a trigger for Gembrook Primary School to preemptively close on days declared Catastrophic fire danger in their identified Bureau of Meteorology district.

For information regarding closures of schools, see the [department's Emergency Closures page](#). For general information regarding emergencies or Catastrophic fire danger days, see the Department's Emergencies page.

## Understanding fire risk and fire danger ratings

### Understanding fire risk and fire danger ratings

- The ratings provide information so that people can take action to protect themselves and others from the potentially dangerous impacts of bushfires.
- It is important, especially during the fire season, to stay up to date with conditions, monitor your surroundings and tune in to official sources for warnings.
- Since the 2022-23 fire season, Victoria uses the Australian Fire Danger Rating System which has 4 ratings; Moderate, High, Extreme and Catastrophic.



On **No Rating** days, no action is required because the risk of a dangerous fire is very low.



### **On days of Extreme Fire Danger - onsite**

On days of high fire danger the school will implement the following: -

- Communicate with families Extreme Fire Danger.
- Maintain a heightened state of awareness and readiness
- Be prepared to enact its Emergency Management Plan, this includes implementing the following actions pre-emptively:
  - Students will keep their shoes on throughout the day.
  - Teachers will keep a hard copy roll.
- Ensure it maintains open lines of communication with the local CFA, complying with their instructions as necessary
- If required, all students, staff, and visitors will be evacuated to the Barak Centre which is our Shelter-in-Place location where Principal class will work with the Department of Education's Incident Support and Operations Centre to determine appropriate next steps.

### **On days of Extreme Fire Danger - offsite activities**

All camps and excursions require a Risk Management Form/Assessment to have been submitted before they are authorised. These take into account all manner risks including the hazards posed by season, location and weather.

The Principal and/or Assistant Principal will determine whether or not to cancel any activity in cases of Extreme fire danger.

### **On days of Catastrophic Fire Danger Day – School Closure**

Gembrook Primary School is on the Department's bushfire at-risk register as a Category 3 school and will close on days determined Catastrophic by the Emergency Management Commissioner.

Where possible, four to seven days notice of a planned closure will be provided. Parents and carers should expect that in some instances fewer than four days notice may be provided.

Once a Catastrophic day has been determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. No staff will be onsite on a Catastrophic fire danger day.

### **BARR and Catastrophic Days (prev. Code Red) – School Closure**

As we are in a high risk bushfire zone and on the BARR, Gembrook Primary School complies with the necessary instructions in relation to Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Days. The School does not operate on these days and puts in place the following: -

- Notifies School families via email and newsletter at the beginning of the year that the School is on the BARR and what this means
- Notifies parents of the School's closure on Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Days as soon as the School is made aware by the Department of Education
- Changes the message on the answering machine informing callers of the School's closure due to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day
- Cancels all its bus routes during a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating Day
- Places posters informing of closure due to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating



## **Emergency Management Plan**

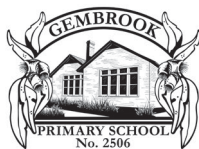
The purpose of the school's Emergency Management Plan (EMP) is to provide a detailed plan of how Gembrook Primary School will prepare for and respond to emergency situations. Our school plans for a range of hazards, such as bushfire, severe weather, medical emergencies, building fires, intruders, etc. We develop specific response procedures to address these risks.

We also conduct drills regularly, ensuring that our core procedures of on-site and off-site evacuation, sheltering-in-place, and lockdown/lockouts are well-rehearsed and understood by staff and students.

This EMP applies to all staff, students, visitors, contractors and volunteers at this school campus. There is an EMP located in the office and in various other locations next to phones.

### **EMP- Bushfire/Grassfire**

- Call 000 for emergency services and seek and follow advice.
- Report the emergency immediately to the Chief Warden (School Principal) who will convene the Incident Management Team if necessary.
- Determine appropriate response strategy (evacuate or shelter-in-place) in consultation with emergency services, if possible.
- Check that all students, staff, visitors and contractors are accounted for.
- Report the emergency to EduSafe+ and School Education Improvement Leader.
- Listen to TV or local radio on battery-powered sets for bushfire/weather warnings and advice.
- Ensure staff and students do not hinder emergency services or put themselves at risk by going near damaged buildings or trees.
- Notify the region and seek advice from your regional Manager, Operations and Emergency Management if required.
- Direct all Media enquiries to DE Media Unit on (03) 8688 7776.
- Contact parents as required.
- In the event of a catastrophic determination prior to the occurrence:
  - make sure you close all doors and windows
  - turn off power and gas.
  - See EMP for specific fire rating actions.



## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff handbook/manual
- Discussed at staff briefings/meetings as required

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- Gembrook Primary School's Extreme Weather Policy

### The Department of Education:

The department's **Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness Policy** guides our activities.

It is available online at: [Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness: Policy | education.vic.gov.au](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfire-and-grassfire-preparedness-policy)

### Country Fire Authority (CFA):

- [Plan & Prepare | CFA \(Country Fire Authority\)](#)
- [Your Guide to Survival | CFA \(Country Fire Authority\)](#)
- [Fire Ready Kit | CFA \(Country Fire Authority\)](#)

### Other sources:

- **VicEmergency** is a great source for information, advice and warnings. You can access it via:
  - The VicEmergency app – that can be downloaded on your android and iOS mobile devices
  - Website - <https://emergency.vic.gov.au>
  - VicEmergency Hotline -1800 226 226
  - Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/vicemergency>
  - Twitter - <https://twitter.com/vicemergency>
- Tune into your **emergency broadcasters** such as the ABC local radio, Sky News and others.

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	October 2024
Approved by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	2025