

BUSHFIRE EMERGENCY POLICY

AIM:

Clarence Family Day Care is committed to:

- Providing a safe environment for all children in care with the service in the event of a bushfire emergency.
- Fulfilling our duty of care to the children in care.
- Responding in a responsible manner to the threat of bushfires in our community.

The primary responsibility of the educator is to ensure the evacuation of children in care to a safe place at the earliest opportunity when a bushfire emergency is likely.

RATIONALE:

In regional New South Wales we face the very real possibility of bushfire impacting upon our service and/or our families. While there are elements of bushfire that you cannot control, like the weather, there is a wide range of planning and preparation activities that you can undertake which will dramatically increase the chances of you, the children in care, your family members and your home surviving in the event of a bushfire.

POLICY:

To effectively plan for and respond to bushfire emergencies, educators operating a service in a designated bush fire zone should:

- **Identify and plan for potential emergencies**, the likely impact to the service and the children in care, take all precautions and be prepared for worst case scenarios.
- **Have a fire extinguisher and fire blanket readily accessible.**
- **Ensure all fire protection equipment is tested** in accordance with Australian Standard *AS 1851.1 (1995)* for level 1 service and kept in proper working condition.
- **Have a hose connected to an outdoor tap at all times.**
- **Ensure all adults are aware of the correct use of a fire extinguisher**, the acronym “PASS” can be used to inform people in the use of fire extinguishers:
 - Pull pin or release lock
 - Aim low at the base of fire
 - Squeeze handle
 - Sweep fire extinguishers from side to side at base of fire.

- **Display current emergency telephone numbers near all telephones**– doctor, hospital, ambulance, pharmacy, public health unit, police, fire brigade, Rural Fire Service, Poisons Information Centre, Clarence Family Day Care, NSW Department of Education & Communities, parents and/or guardians. *(parents/guardians telephone numbers must remain confidential)*
- **Develop, keep up to date and prominently display (at each exit from the premises), fire and emergency evacuation plans and strategies/procedures for evacuation. Educators located in designated bushfire zones must have a documented bushfire emergency plan that includes the location of a safe evacuation place.**
- **Using a range of scenarios, practice emergency evacuation and fire drills, at least every 3 months**, make it a game to reduce panic if emergency occurs, teach children “STOP, DROP, ROLL” - if their clothes catch fire and “GET DOWN LOW AND GO, GO, GO” - in case of a fire evacuation.
- **Keep a record of each practice** that includes the age range of those participating, an evaluation of the procedure and any areas/procedures that can be improved on, and keep these records for at least 2 years.
- **Ensure the evacuation and safety of all children before trying to contain or extinguish a fire.** If the fire is small and you are nearby when it begins it may be appropriate to try to extinguish it or contain it by closing doors and windows, **(only if it is not dangerous)**.
- **If a child is burnt** run cold water over the burnt part of body, or cover the burn with a towel soaked in cool water (not ice or ice water), be careful not to make the child hypothermic (too cold), and arrange for the child to be assessed by a doctor or call an ambulance, **dial 000**.
- **Ensure counselling and debriefing services are available** for all those involved in an emergency situation, if required.
- **Educators operating a service in a designated bush fire zone should have an evacuation pack**, which could include a basic first aid kit, children’s necessities, such as nappies, water, toys, blankets, torch, a hard copy of parent contact numbers, medications and emergency action plans for children with asthma, allergies or other applicable medical conditions.

FIRE DANGER RATINGS

The **Fire Danger Rating** (FDR) is an assessment of the potential fire behaviour, the difficulty of suppressing a fire, and the potential impact on the community should a bushfire occur on a given day. The FDR is an early indicator of potential danger and should act as a trigger for action.

The FDR is determined by the Fire Danger Index (FDI). The FDI is a combination of air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and drought. An FDI of 1 (Low-Moderate) means that fire will not burn, or will burn so slowly that it will be easily controlled, whereas an FDI in excess of 100 (Catastrophic) means that fire will burn so fast and so hot that it will likely be uncontrollable.

You can find out the fire danger rating in your area by:

- Checking the RFS or BOM websites at www.rfs.nsw.gov.au or www.bom.gov.au
- Ringing the RFS Information Line on 1800 679 737
- Monitoring weather reports on the radio, TV and in newspapers
- Contacting your local fire station.

Bushfire Preparation (If you live in a Bushfire Zone)

- Keep a radio in the care area
- Always have an up to date **Bushfire Survival Plan**
- Review and rehearse your Bushfire Survival Plan regularly.
- Involve the whole family so everyone knows what to do.
- Have a contingency plan and know the location of a local safe place.
- Always know the current **Fire Danger Rating** in your area.

Always maintain a defensible space around your home by:

- Mowing your grass regularly.
- Removing excess ground fuels and other combustible material.
- Cleaning leaves from gutters, roofs and downpipes regularly.
- Trimming low lying branches around your home, up to a height of 2 metres from the ground.

You should also:

- Enclose open areas under your decks and floors.
- Install fine steel wire mesh screens on all windows, doors, vents and weep holes.
- Relocate flammable items away from your home including woodpiles, paper, boxes, crates, hanging baskets and garden furniture.
- Seal all gaps in external roof and wall cladding.

Ensure you have prepared and have ready access to your:

- Personal protective clothing
- Bushfire Survival Kit
- Evacuation Pack

On days of **Catastrophic** fire danger rating **leaving is the ONLY option** to ensure survival and on days of **Extreme** fire danger rating leaving is the safest option.

Child care services located in bushfire zones **should close** when the fire danger rating is **Extreme**, and **must close when fire danger rating is Catastrophic.**

EVACUATION

Educators can download the free app, **Fires Near Me**, to stay alerted about current fire risks. Should the educator be advised by police or RFS officers that evacuation is necessary, the educator should contact parents immediately to collect their children and the educator should notify the coordination unit once children have been collected. If parents cannot be contacted take the children to a safe place as per your emergency plan.

A Bushfire Household Assessment Tool can be found at <http://bfhat.rfs.nsw.gov.au/>

Key Contact Details

Emergency fire call: 000

Bushfire information: 1800 679 737

Road closures: 132 701

State Disaster Recovery Centre: 02 8855 5111 or 1800 018 444

www.rfs.nsw.gov.au

www.facebook.com/nswrfs

www.twitter.com/nswrfs

Relevant Legislation:

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011:

- *Part 4.2, Division 5 - Emergencies and communication*
- *Part 4.7, Division 2 - Policies and procedures*
- *Part 4.7, Division 3, Sub-division 1 - Display and reporting of prescribed information*

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010;

- *Part 6, Operating an education and care service*

Key Resources:

NSW Rural Fire Service, www.rfs.nsw.gov.au;

<http://www.nsw.gov.au/bushfires>