

### **PURPOSE**

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.

*"children take 10 times longer than adults to evacuate a building."*

Stephen Burton, Engineers Australia's Society of Fire Safety

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

### **SCOPE**

This policy applies to Family Day Care Educators, Educator Assistants, visitors, people who reside at the FDC residence/venue, staff, volunteers and work placement students, especially those FDC premises located in a Bush Fire Prone Area or bordering/adjoining Bush Fire Prone Area.

### **POLICY**

A bushfire prone area is an area of land that can support a bush fire or is likely to be subject to bush fire attack. Bush fire prone land maps are prepared by local councils and certified by the NSW Rural Fire Service (NSW RFS).

Educators should be aware that even if they are not located in a bushfire prone area, their premise could still be potentially impacted by bush fire. If a premise adjoins bush fire prone areas, for instance, smoke and embers from a bush fire can travel through the air and local traffic conditions can be affected by bush fires.

### **PROCEDURE**

To effectively plan for and respond to bushfire emergencies, educators operating a service in a designated Bush Prone Fire Area and those close by/adjoining Bush Prone Fire Area are to:

- Have an up-to-date Bushfire Survival Plan. A copy of this plan is to be submitted to the office on [admin@cfdc.com.au](mailto:admin@cfdc.com.au)
- Have a fire extinguisher and fire blanket readily accessible.
- Ensure all fire protection equipment is tested in accordance with Australian Standard AS 1851-2012 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:
  - **P**ull pin or release lock
  - **A**im low at the base of fire
  - **S**queeze handle
  - **S**weep fire extinguishers from side to side at base of fire.
- Develop, keep up to date and prominently display (at each exit from the premises), fire and emergency evacuation plans and strategies/procedures for evacuation.
- Have a documented bushfire emergency plan that includes the location of a safe evacuation place.
- 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).
- Ensure counselling and debriefing services are available for all those involved in an emergency, if required.

- Educators 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/guardian contact numbers, medications and emergency action plans for children with asthma, allergies or other applicable medical conditions.
- Have a mobile phone and access to a radio.

## **Bushfire Preparation**

- 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/slashing 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

## **Things to consider**

- What are your onsite and offsite evacuation procedures? Whole neighbourhoods can be impacted by bush fire and services need to identify offsite evacuation sites not in the immediate vicinity of their service.
- What assistance do you need to evacuate the children in your care? If any of your children or staff have special needs or will require assistance to evacuate, services need to have pre-arrangements in place to ensure this assistance can be provided during an emergency.
- If you do evacuate, how will parents know where to find their children?
- Services need to ensure they retain access to parent/carer contact information once offsite. Services should also ensure that parents/carers know what these evacuation procedures are in advance of any emergency.
- What facilities are available at your preidentified evacuation sites?
- How will you ensure that children are only released to persons authorised to collect them?
- If it's not safe to evacuate, are you equipped to shelter-in-place at your usual location?
- What mechanisms do you have in place to ensure the transfer of real-time information, such as weather forecasts, bush fire activity, site closures, and emergency operations?

### **NOTE**

- **Catastrophic Fire Rated Day:**
  - Leaving is the only option to ensure survival.
  - The FDC service is not to open on days when this rating is declared.
- **Extreme Fire Rated Day:**
  - Leaving is the safest option.
  - Educators are to consult with families and the office.
  - The FDC service should not open on days when this rating is declared.

## **EVACUATION**

Should the educator be advised by police, RFS officers or any other emergency personnel that evacuation is necessary, the educator should contact parents/guardians immediately to collect their children. However if there is not enough time for parents/guardians/emergency contacts to collect the child(ren), the educator is to message/contact all the parents/guardians and enough them that they have been advised to evacuate and where they can collect the children from ie the safe place listed in your emergency evacuation plan or the place the emergency personnel have directed you to.

The educator is to contact the office to let them know that they have been advised to evacuate and let them know what is happening with the collection of children.

If parents cannot be contacted take the children to a safe place as per your emergency plan.

Educators can download the free app, **Fires Near Me**, to stay alerted about current fire risks.

## **Prevention strategies**

A number of prevention measures can be undertaken to prepare your service:

- Review and update your emergency management plan to ensure that appropriate response strategies are in place which can be implemented in the event of a bush fire.
- Complete a Bush Fire Response Procedure.
- Communicate to families about specific bush fire preparedness information and arrangements.
- Consult with NSW RFS about your bush fire arrangements, including your evacuation plans and a shelter in place option. If your service will require assistance to evacuate children, please let your local RFS unit know.
- Conduct fire drills.
- Clear gutters of dry leaves and other debris.
- Lock away flammable items such as door mats and garbage skips.
- Consider how you will communicate during an emergency.

## **Further information on bush fire conditions or activity**

- It is important that services stay up to date during periods of increased fire danger and when there is a bush fire in the local area. Educators can do this by:
- Knowing the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) for your NSW Fire Area (especially on hot, dry and windy days)
- Actively monitor information on fire activity through TV, radio and the NSW RFS website [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)
- Be on alert for warnings such as Bush Fire Alert Levels issued by the NSW RFS
- Watch for signs of fire, especially smoke or the smell of smoke
- Call the NSW RFS Bush Fire Information Line on 1800 NSW RFS (1800 679 737)
- Download the free NSW RFS Fires Near Me - Mobile App

## **Terminology**

### Bush Fire Season

- The bush fire season generally runs from 1 October until 31 March annually, however the NSW RFS Commissioner may alter this period in a local government area, dependent on the conditions.
- During the bush fire season additional restrictions apply, such as requiring a permit to undertake certain types of burning in the open.

### Fire Danger Rating (FDR)

- Bush fire danger ratings are issued during the bush fire danger period.
- Fire Danger Ratings give you an indication of the consequences of a fire, if one was to start. The higher the fire danger, the more dangerous the conditions. You should use the Fire Danger Ratings as a trigger to take action.
- Bush fires are more likely to spread and cause damage on days when the weather is very hot, dry and windy. These are usually on very high to extreme fire days.

Total Fire Ban (TOBAN)

- To reduce the risk of fires damaging or destroying life, property and the environment the NSW RFS Commissioner may declare a Total Fire Ban (TOBAN). In a Total Fire Ban no fire may be lit in the open and all fire permits are suspended. This includes incinerators and barbecues (BBQ) which burn solid fuel, e.g. wood, charcoal or heat beads.
- No general purpose welding, grinding, soldering or gas cutting can be done in the open.

To find out the rating for today <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fdr-and-tobans>

Fire Danger Ratings Table from [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)

FIRE DANGER RATING	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
<b>CATASTROPHIC</b>	<p>For your survival, leaving early is the only option.</p> <p>Leave bush fire prone areas the night before or early in the day – do not just wait and see what happens.</p> <p>Make a decision about when you will leave, where you will go, how you will get there and when you will return.</p> <p>Homes are not designed to withstand fires in catastrophic conditions so you should leave early.</p>
<b>EXTREME</b>	<p>Leaving early is the safest option for your survival.</p> <p>If you are not prepared to the highest level, leave early in the day.</p> <p>Only consider staying if you are prepared to the highest level – such as your home is specially designed, constructed or modified, and situated to withstand a fire, you are well prepared and can actively defend it if a fire starts.</p>
<b>SEVERE</b>	<p>Leaving early is the safest option for your survival.</p> <p>Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety – but only stay if you are physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.</p> <p>If you're not prepared, leave early in the day.</p>
<b>VERY HIGH</b>	<p>Review your <u>bush fire survival plan</u> with your family. Keep yourself informed and monitor conditions. Be ready to act if necessary.</p>
<b>HIGH</b>	
<b>LOW MODERATE</b>	

Alert Levels

During a bush fire, Alert Levels are used to give you an indication of the level of threat from a fire. Remember – don't wait for a warning. Some fires start and spread so quickly there may not be any time for a warning. If you get a Bush Fire Alert, you must take it seriously. Failure to take action can result in death or injury to you or your family members.

There are three levels of Bush Fire Alerts:

	<b>Advice</b>	A fire has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.
	<b>Watch and Act</b>	There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.

	<b>Emergency Warning</b>	An Emergency Warning is the highest level of Bush Fire Alert. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.
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### **NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK**

<b>EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS</b>	<b>NATIONAL QUALITY AREA</b>	<b>NATIONAL QUALITY ELEMENT/STANDARD</b>
83, 97, 168	2	2.2.1, 2.2.2
	7	7.1.2, 7.1.3

### **REFERENCE & RELATED INFORMATION**

- Education and Care Services National Law Act
- Education and Care Services National Regulations
- National Quality Standards
- NSW Rural Fire Service – [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au)
- Get Ready for a Bush Fire – Four Simple Steps to Making Your Bush Fire Survival Plan: [https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/36597/GetReadyforaBushFire.pdf](https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/36597/GetReadyforaBushFire.pdf)
- A Guide to Developing a Bush Fire Emergency Management and Evacuation Plan: [www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/29271/DPP1079-Emergency-management-and-evacuation-plan-FORM.pdf](http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/29271/DPP1079-Emergency-management-and-evacuation-plan-FORM.pdf)
- CELA: <https://www.cela.org.au/2018/01/07/bushfire-advice-for-childrens-services/>
- Emergency NSW: [www.emergency.nsw.gov.au](http://www.emergency.nsw.gov.au)
- Live Traffic: <https://www.livetraffic.com/desktop.html>
- NSW Education: <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/latest-alerts/2017/bushfire-preparedness-and-the-national-law/ECE-Bushfires-information-sheet.pdf>
- Fires Near Me: <https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/fire-information/fires-near-me>
- Other fire-related education resources on building, workplace and community fire safety can be accessed on the Fire & Rescue NSW site: [www.fire.nsw.gov.au](http://www.fire.nsw.gov.au)