



Christmas Hills Primary School

FIRE-DANGER RATING CLOSURE AND RELOCATION POLICY and PROCEDURES

March 2020

POLICY STATEMENT

Schools, kindergartens and licensed child care centres that have been identified as being at high fire risk and on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) will close on days declared Code Red.

Christmas Hills Primary School is a BARR school and therefore adheres to this policy. Up to date information on school closures can be found at the DEECD website at <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/closures.aspx>.

In addition, CHPS has been identified as a Category 1 school, meaning additional measures are required to address Severe and Extreme fire-danger rated days.

AIMS:

- To work to provide a safe learning and work environment for our students and staff.
- To endeavour to align procedures with advice from CFA and other Emergency Services providers.
- To ensure the correct procedures are followed where a school day has been declared Code Red, Extreme or Severe fire danger.

CODE RED FDR CLOSURES

- Throughout the Fire Danger Season, the Principal and Staff of Christmas Hills Primary, with support from our School Council, will monitor CFA and DET advice regarding Code Red fire-danger ratings.
- Where possible, up to 3-days notice of a planned closure will be provided; parents, staff and carers should, however, expect that in some instances fewer than 3-days notice may be provided.
- Once the final decision to close is confirmed at 2pm the day prior, this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. This will help limit confusion and help families plan for how their children will be cared for when their school, kindergarten or child care centre is closed.
- The school will contact parents via SMS, email and hard copy notice as early as possible in the case of a planned closure.
- Where possible, the school gates will be locked as staff depart on the day prior to a closure and a sign placed on the gates indicating closure for the following day.
- In the event of a closure, no staff will be in attendance on the day of closure.
- The Principal will attempt to contact the local CFA fire captain to advise them of our closure.
- The Principal and Staff will complete the 'Checklist for Pre-emptive Closure' and notify DET of the steps we have taken in preparing for closure.

SEVERE AND EXTREME FDR RELOCATION

- Throughout the Fire Danger Season, the Principal and Staff of Christmas Hills Primary, with support from our School Council, will monitor CFA and DET advice regarding Severe and Extreme fire-danger ratings.
- Throughout the Fire Danger Season, the Principal will keep informed of the Fire Danger Ratings for the Local Government Area.
- Agreement has been reached with Yering Primary School for the staff and students of Christmas Hills Primary School to have access to a spare classroom on their site at Melba Hwy, Yering, Vic, 3770 for the purpose of relocating our school on days rated as Severe and Extreme fire-danger. The school relocation plan is activated when the Local Government Area (LGA) FDR is Severe or Extreme.
- Where possible, up to 3-days notice of a planned relocation will be provided; parents, staff and carers should, however, expect that in some instances fewer than 3-days notice may be provided.
- Once the final decision to close is confirmed, this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. This will help limit confusion and help families plan relocation days.
- The school will contact parents via SMS, email and hard copy notice as early as possible in the case of a planned closure.
- Where possible, the school gates will be locked as staff depart on the day prior to a relocation and a sign placed on the gates indicating relocation for the following day.
- When a school or children's service is relocated for bushfire, no staff, visitors or contractors will remain on site.
- The Principal will attempt to contact the local CFA fire captain to advise them of our relocation.
- The Principal and Staff will complete the 'Checklist for Pre-emptive Relocation' and notify DET of the steps we have taken in preparing for relocation.
- Parents will be responsible for arranging transport to and from Yering Primary School on relocation days and must ensure they remain with their children until CHPS staff are on site at Yering PS.
- Normal school hours will be in operation and parents will be responsible for ensuring their children arrive at Yering Primary School by 9:00am and are collected by 3:30pm.

Off-site activities

The safety of students and staff is paramount and off-site activities may be cancelled, postponed or relocated if faced with the threat of bushfire.

Off-site activities include any activity undertaken by staff and children away from their normal school facility. This can include, but are not limited to:

- Camps
- Field trips
- Sporting activities
- Training or conferences for staff

Additional Information

Local Government Area (LGA) FDRs are used as triggers for school relocations to avoid unnecessary disruption to schools. LGA FDRs do not replace the official weather district FDRs but provide a more localised representation of risk and is what Category 1 and 2 BARR schools use as a basis for relocation or closure on days of elevated bushfire risk. This is because the weather districts are very large and fire danger can vary a lot within them. For example, in Central Weather District the fire danger rating may be Severe, but on the same day in eastern LGAs the FDRs can be much lower than for western LGAs.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually at the first School Council and Staff Meetings conducted in Terms 1 and 4 or earlier if further advice or direction is received from DET.