



## PURPOSE

Panton Hill Primary School is committed to ensuring the highest standards of care, safety and welfare for our students. Our school is committed to providing a safe and healthy working environment for its employees and contract workers as well as visitors to our site. Panton Hill Primary School recognises that in all its activities it has a duty of care to identify, assess and control risks so that the possibility of harm is minimised or eliminated. The purpose of this policy is to detail procedures and management tasks so that the school minimises risks and is in a suitable state of preparedness for any fire related event.

Panton Hill Primary School is on the BARR (Bushfire at Risk Register) and has been identified as a school with a high risk of bushfire. As a result, our school will close on days rated as CODE RED. On Code Red days, NOBODY will be in attendance at the school.

## POLICY

The Bushfire Preparedness Policy should be read in conjunction with our Emergency Management Plan where details of management tasks, contacts and roles and responsibilities of key personnel are documented should our school emergency management plan be enacted due to bushfire. Any activity or excursion that occurs on a day of extreme fire danger and total fire ban will be cancelled or recalled if deemed necessary by school leadership, even at short notice if necessary. Where excursions are not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required. As a school on the BARR our junior building has been identified as our designated Shelter in Place in case of a bushfire. This building has been inspected by the VSBA (Victorian Schools Building Authority) and made compliant for bushfire readiness.

## KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

All Staff will be responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with the Emergency Management Plan and their responsibilities within it, including the procedures for bushfire response.
- Ensuring they participate fully in all drills conducted.
- Undertaking training provided by the school for any specific roles they have as part of the emergency management plan.
- Ensuring all flammable materials within their area of responsibility are identified on the school chemical register and arranging for appropriate storage in flammable resistant cabinets.
- Ensuring all building exits are continuously kept clear of obstructions via regular workplace inspections.



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All Teaching Staff will be responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with emergency procedures for each excursion they participate in and in particular, emergency procedures pertaining to camps.
- Ensuring that emergency procedures are explained to students as soon as practical after arrival at camps.
- Planning to cover arrangements if an excursion needs to be cancelled or recalled because of bushfire threat.
- Committing to training for specific roles and responsibilities in preparing for, monitoring and executing emergency bushfire procedures, including the effective operation of relevant emergency equipment.

The Principal will be responsible for:

- Working with maintenance staff to regularly monitor and remove materials that may be regarded as bushfire hazards. Completing a schedule of works in October and January of each school year prior to the bush fire season. This would include clearing branches overhanging buildings, debris and rubbish around and under buildings including gutters and dry grass and vegetation.
- Working with the maintenance staff and cleaner to ensure that any flammable substances are stored appropriately.
- Ensuring that staff are aware of the Emergency Management Plan and their roles within this and participate in emergency drills each term.
- Ensuring that staff always cooperate to maintain integrity of classroom and office exit points.
- Ensuring that all visitors to our school are aware of our emergency procedures. This is communicated via our office sign in process, newsletter articles and during OHS Induction for volunteers and contractors.

The Principal and the OH&S representative are responsible for:

- Maintaining a register of bushfire emergency equipment and ensuring it is in working order.

(An updated register of bushfire emergency equipment, in working order, should include water supplies and equipment, fire hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers, alarms, first aid materials and medical equipment, fire blankets and communication systems)



- Ensuring that all gates are kept clear and that there is appropriate access to facilities and grounds for emergency vehicles. Keys are located in the main office for locked gates.
- Ensuring all assembly points designated on the Emergency Management Plan have appropriate access to emergency equipment.
- Ensuring regular checks of all fire equipment by the CFA employed by the school.

## **SITE PREPAREDNESS**

Panton Hill Primary school will ensure site preparedness by regularly managing materials that may easily be ignited around buildings and facilities and by maintaining a current school emergency management plan. Please refer to our Tree and Maintenance Schedule for further detail APPENDIX 1.

## **COMMUNICATION OF BUSHFIRE INFORMATION**

Parents have been notified that they will be contacted in the event of a Code Red day the afternoon before via a note sent home and SkoolBag App notification. This information is provided to parents in the newsletter at the start of each year and again in October prior to the summer/bushfire season. The information provided to parents is provided at the end of this policy.

## **STAFF TRAINING IN BUSHFIRE PREPAREDNESS**

Staff roles and responsibilities in relation to fire preparedness are documented in our Emergency Management Plan. This is presented at the beginning of each year during our day 1 staff information session. Staff also practice their roles and responsibility through regular fire drills – one per term. Our school also maintains up to date evacuation plans in every classroom and office area. The Principal and Leadership team attend regular DET briefings for BARR schools and in relation to Emergency Management Plans and procedures.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

We practice evacuation drills each term as listed in our Emergency Management Plan with those specifically related to fire preparedness practiced in October and February prior to the fire season.

## **ANNUAL VISITS FROM CFA**



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The CFA conducts an audit and safety check of our fire safety equipment twice yearly as per the OHS Activities Calendar. We have also met with the CFA for advice in regards to the development of our Emergency Management Plan and to provide them with a copy for their reference in case of a bushfire. Staff are also provided with training on the use of fire extinguishers. We invite the CFA education truck once a year for an additional fire safety education session for our students.

## **BUSHFIRE EQUIPMENT REGISTER**

As a school on the Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR – BAL 19) we have a building designated to Shelter in Place. This building was audited by the Victorian School Building Authority 2019 for its compliance for bushfire readiness. Modifications were made as required to ensure compliance as per documents on the School Facilities Profile. Further to this there are regular checks to equipment listed on our Fire Safety Equipment Register.

## **EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS**

Emergency numbers are located on evacuation plans located in the entry/exit points of each classroom.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES**

Panton Hill Primary School Emergency Management Plan

[www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires).

[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

## **REVIEW CYCLE**

This policy was updated in November 2019 and is scheduled for review in November 2022.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **TREE SCHEDULE AND MAINTENANCE SCHEDULE**

Panton Hill Primary School has a commitment to keeping our property well maintained to ensure the safety of others and minimise the risk of fire spreading. We have a schedule for monitoring and removing highly flammable materials including:

- branches overhanging buildings and playgrounds
- debris and rubbish around and under buildings



- leaf matter in gutters
- long dry grass and
- over grown vegetation.

We employ an arborist once per year as per our OHSMS Activities Calendar to conduct a tree safety audit. After the audit, the arborist supplies us with a detailed report which identifies any trees that are a potential risk to the safety of others. In this report they make recommendations in regards to the maintenance or removal of trees identifying them according to priority. These issues are addressed either by a tree service or our gardener/maintenance person. Quarterly grounds inspections ensure the continual inspection of trees and monitoring for potential hazards on the property. In addition to this we employ a company to clean our gutters twice per year to ensure they are clear. Our maintenance person works attends on a needs basis to continually clear and maintain the property. She is provided with a job list each visit from quarterly inspections and additional items. Lawns are maintained with the help of parent volunteers who mow lawns within school grounds and around our fence line. In 2019, we have received additional BARR funding which has enabled us to replace fire shutters on our shelter in place building to comply with current regulations and conduct further maintenance of vegetation and trees on our property.

## APPENDIX 2



### School procedures for the bushfire season

Fire danger ratings and warnings are used in Victoria to provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life.



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Schools and children's services listed on the DET Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) will be closed when a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined in their Bureau of Meteorology district. **Our school has been identified as being one of those at high bushfire risk and is listed on the BARR.**

Where possible, we will provide parents with up to four days notice of a potential Code Red day closure by letter Skoolbag app notification. A Code Red day will be determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner no later than 1.00 pm the day before the potential closure. Once we are advised of the confirmation of the Code Red day we will provide you with advice before the end of the school day.

**Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast.** This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child. It is also important to note that:

- No staff will be on site on days where the school is closed due to a forecast Code Red day.
- Out-of-school-hours care will also be cancelled on these days
- School camps will be cancelled if a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the camp is located.

On these Code Red days families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – **on such days children should never be left at home or in the care of older children.**

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the CFA advise that when Code Red days are forecast, the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of the Code Red day.

As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, we have updated and completed our Emergency Management Plan, [reprioritised any maintenance works that may assist in preparing for the threat of fire and cleared our facility's grounds and gutters]

## The Communication Process

- A notice will be sent to all families as soon as we have notification of a code red day. This may be up to four days in advance
- The notice will have a return slip that we request be returned the following day
- Families with absent children or those who do not send back the notification will be phoned directly to ensure they are aware of the closure
- Signs will be erected at several locations around the school announcing the possible closure
- A Skoolbag app notification will be sent to all families



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- On the day prior, a notice will be sent to all families with confirmation of the Code Red closure or with notification withdrawing the Code Red. We will phone families whose children are not in attendance on that day.

Once confirmed, the decision to close will not change, regardless of improvements in the weather forecast. This is to avoid confusion and help your family plan alternative care arrangements for your child. No staff will remain on site when the school is closed by the threat of fire. We will also cancel any offsite activities (such as school camps and excursions) and out-of-school care if the activities are at risk

### ***What can parents do?***

- Make sure your family's bushfire survival plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements in the event that our school is closed.
- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by reading our newsletters or reading the skoolbag notifications.
- Most importantly at this time of year, if you're planning a holiday or short stay in the bush or in a coastal area, you should check warnings in advance of travel and remain vigilant during your stay.
- If your child is old enough, talk to them about bushfires and your family's bushfire survival plan.
- You can access more information about children's services closures on the Department of Education and Training website – see <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx>

For up-to-date information on this year's fire season, visit the CFA website at [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) or call the 24-hour Victorian Bushfires Information Line on 1800 240 667.