



St Peter's  
Blackwood

# Bushfires and Your Child's School: A Guide for Families

November 2019

This guide provides you with important information about how bushfire risk is managed at our school.

Please help us prepare for the fire danger season by:

- familiarising yourself with the information contained in this brochure
- reading all bushfire information provided
- talking to your children about what will happen if a bushfire occurs when they are at school
- making sure your emergency contact details are updated and made available to the front office before the start of the fire danger season
- making a personal bushfire survival plan for your family and letting us know if this will affect your child's attendance at school

By taking the above steps, it will help us to keep your children as safe as possible.

## 1. | Bushfire preparation

Generally, the fire danger season starts on 1 November and ends on 30 April. The Country Fire Service (CFS) ([www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au)) officially announces the specific dates of each fire danger season every October via their website and notification services. Our preparation for the bushfire season commences in August and includes:

- reviewing the latest version of the CFS Bushfire Management Area Plan (BMAP)
- doing a bushfire preparation audit to ensure the school is bushfire ready
- managing vegetation to reduce bushfire fuel loads on and around the site
- reviewing and updating relevant policies and procedures

## 2. | Total fire ban days

During fire danger season, the CFS advises the public of total fire ban days. The rating is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology each day and is an early indicator of the potential danger, should a bushfire start. A fire danger rating is not a predictor of how likely a bushfire is to occur, but how dangerous it could be if it did occur.

There are 3 classifications of total fire ban – 'severe', 'extreme' and 'catastrophic' – and all schools possibly affected may take special measures on these days to make sure that they are ready to respond to a bushfire threat.

## 3. | 'Catastrophic' fire danger days and school closures

On rare occasions, it is necessary to close because of bushfire activity and/or an increased bushfire threat level. The decision to close a school is not made lightly because of the known impact on parents, caregivers and local communities.

It is important that you have arrangements in place if the school is closed, even if your own bushfire survival plan does not involve leaving the area.

It is not advisable for children to be left at home on days of 'catastrophic' fire danger.

## 4. | Notifying parents and caregivers

In the event of a **catastrophic** rating, a text message is sent to parents, caregivers and staff by the administration staff by order of the Principal, after 4.00pm on the preceding day, advising that the school will be closed. Parents are encouraged to take responsibility for using local radio 891 and/or television news reports and/or the CFS website as other means of advice.

In the event of **severe or extreme** bushfire conditions as predicted by the Bureau of Meteorology, the school will operate as normal. Consideration should be given as to whether it is wise for students who have permission to be walking home, to do so on days with such a rating.

Parents and caregivers should only take action in relation to official notifications from school and should contact the school should they require clarification or further details.

## 5. | School excursions and camps

Our school takes into consideration risks associated with the fire danger season when planning any excursions or camps. This includes monitoring daily weather conditions to determine if any planned activities will be cancelled due to fire danger ratings.

If a bushfire is burning on the day of an intended camp or excursion and is likely to threaten the destination or travel routes the excursion or camp will be cancelled.

In the event of a bushfire or grass fire impacting a camp or excursion that is already underway, the school will liaise with the CFS to determine the most appropriate action to take. Parents will be contacted to inform them of any action or changes that will be taken as a result.

## 6. | What you can do to prepare for the fire danger season

Have a personal bushfire survival plan and discuss it with your children. Keep it up to date and make sure that all family members know what to do.

If your bushfire survival plan affects your child's attendance at school, you need to let our administration staff know.

Visit the CFS website ([www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au)) for more information on how to develop your own plan.

Know the school bushfire response plan and:

- provide up to date contact details including mobile phone number, email address and alternative contact numbers
- review the list of key contacts and people authorised to collect your child on your behalf
- like or follow the CFS, SES, SAPOL and St Peters School on Facebook and other social media
- bookmark the CFS, SES, SAPOL websites and [www.stpeterslutheran.sa.edu.au](http://www.stpeterslutheran.sa.edu.au) so you can easily access them in an emergency
- practice your bushfire survival plan with your family
- talk to your child about what will happen if a bushfire emergency occurs.

## 7. | In the event of a bushfire emergency

If a bushfire is approaching, the safety of our students and other school and church occupants is the highest priority. In these situations, we will:

- move students and staff to the designated Safe Place Refuge (Resource Centre building) or other suitable location
- notify parents and caregivers by text message that we have activated our bushfire management plan and all staff and students have moved to our designated Safe Place Refuge
- fill available containers with water
- close windows and doors
- remain inside with students until the main fire front has passed

- listen to local ABC radio (891) and monitor the CFS website
- work with the CFS to manage the situation and keep informed about changing conditions
- divert the school phone to night switch. A message will provide emergency information

It is possible that the school will be without electricity (thereby disabling our phone system). **Therefore, you must rely on the advice on the CFS website, police and local radio about when it is safe to travel on the roads to collect your children.**

In the event of a bushfire after 4.00pm during term or during a holiday period, SPLOSHC staff will receive bushfire information messages via the emergency mobile phone. They will then implement their Bushfire Management Plan.

## 8. | During a bushfire emergency

Consider these important points before you make a decision:

- If your child has been moved to the school's bushfire refuge, they are accounted for and supervised
- If you were to remove them from this location, would you have a safer place to go, is the route safe?
- Is your child safest at the bushfire refuge?
- What information have you received from school?
- What information is available on social media, CFS website, local ABC radio (891)