

BUSHFIRE POLICY

Bushfires are an inherent part of Australia's environment. Bushfires can significantly impact on lives, property and the environment. The basic factors that determine whether a bushfire will occur include the presence of fuel, oxygen, and an ignition source. The intensity and speed the bushfire will spread depends on the current temperature, fuel load (fallen bark, leaf litter, small branches), fuel moisture (dry fuel will burn quickly, damp or wet fuel may not burn at all), wind speed, and slope angle.

Emergency management arrangements for fire safety differ within each state and territory and are determined by the State Emergency Services or combined emergency service agencies. This policy reflects information related to Family Care Service Services located in Victoria.

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- a risk assessment to identify the potential emergencies that are relevant to the service
- instructions for what must be done in the event of an emergency and evacuation procedures
- an emergency and evacuation floor plan, and
- the rehearsal of emergency and evacuation procedures every 3 months.

This policy outlines the strategies and procedures family day care services and educators will adhere to in the event of a bush fire, including information about closures during an emergency evacuation, and forms part of our Family Day Care Service's Emergency Management Plan (EMP). The EMP records the emergency management arrangements to ensure every reasonable precaution to protect children, staff, and visitors from harm and hazard is maintained at all times.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.

QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

12	Meaning of serious incident
51	Conditions on service approval (safety, health and wellbeing of children)
89	First Aid Kits
93	Administration of medication
97	Emergency and evacuation procedures
98	Telephone or other communication equipment
168(2)(e)	Policies and procedures are required in relation to: Emergency and evacuation
169	Additional policies and procedures- family day care service
170	Policies and procedures are to be followed

Victorian Child Safe Standards	
Standard 1	Organisations establish a culturally safe environment in which the diverse and unique identities and experiences of Aboriginal children and young people are respected and valued
Standard 2	Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
Standard 3	Children and young people are empowered about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
Standard 4	Families and communities are informed, and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing
Standard 5	Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice
Standard 6	People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice
Standard 7	Processes for complaints and concerns are child focused
Standard 8	Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training
Standard 9	Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed
Standard 10	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved
Standard 11	Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is regularly reviewed and improved

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Emergency Evacuation Policy Family Communication Policy Health and Safety Policy	Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy Supervision Policy Work, Health and Safety Policy
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PURPOSE

We aim to ensure every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children and educators from harm and hazards likely to cause injury, including potential injury from bushfires. The potential for extreme fire conditions varies greatly throughout Australia, both in frequency and severity. Each state and territory have varying mandatory regulations for implementing policies and procedures for being safe in areas where bushfires occur. Dalas FDC Service will adhere to the regulations outlined by Victorian Regulatory Authority within Dalas state and be familiar with relevant legislation and other special requirements such as building regulations, traffic restrictions or emergency announcements that may apply to the area Dalas family day care services are operating.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, nominated supervisor, coordinator, educators, educator assistants, children, families, and visitors of the Family Day Care Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

It is vital for the FDC Service to be informed and prepared for bush fire conditions and respond appropriately during periods of high fire danger or local bush fire activity. This policy is to be implemented should a bush fire threaten any of Dalas family day care residences or venues. During peak bush fire season, educators will monitor fire ratings through relevant authorities on a daily or hourly basis and communicate with the approved provider and other stakeholders as required. We are aware of Dalas Fire Danger Rating (see Total Fire Bans and ratings - Country Fire Authority attachment) and ensure all educators have appropriate fire safety equipment installed and maintained in their residence at all times. Dalas Emergency Management Plan ensures all educators are trained to use fire safety equipment and through regular training, understand their unique evacuation procedures in case of an emergency at their residence or venue.

DEFINITIONS

The Australian climate is frequently hot, dry, and susceptible to drought. The widely varied fire seasons are reflected in the continent's different weather patterns.

A '**Bush fire prone area**' is an area of land that can support a bushfire or is likely to be subject to bushfire attack. Bush fire prone maps are prepared by local councils and governments within each state and territory. Baseline data for bushfire prone areas is referred to as Bushfire Attack Level (BAL). (see additional information for Victoria's contacts)

Bushfire at-risk register (BARR): a register listing schools, kindergartens and childcare facilities within Victoria. This register is managed through the Department's emergency and natural disasters area. [Bushfire At-Risk Register \(BARR\) | vic.gov.au \(www.vic.gov.au\)](https://www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-at-risk-register-barr)

Fire danger rating (FDR): provides an indication of the possible consequences of a fire. This rating is standardised across all Australian states and territories. The higher the fire danger rating, the more dangerous the conditions. Ratings range from *Low* to *Moderate*, to *Catastrophic*. FDR are maintained and updated by emergency services in each state or territory.

Australian Fire Danger Rating (AFDRS): provides an indication of the possible consequences of a fire. This rating is standardised across all Australian states and territories from September 2022. The higher the fire danger rating, the more dangerous the conditions. The AFDRS uses four tiers of fire danger from *Moderate* to *Catastrophic*. The AFDRS are maintained and updated by emergency services in each state or territory.

Emergency Management Plan (EMP): identifies the nature and range of possible emergencies and hazards to which children and staff may be exposed and the response and procedure in the event of an emergency. Effective planning and preparation of the EMP within the workplace ensures optimal response to emergencies should they occur. A risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that impact the service form the basis of the EMP.

DALAS FAMILY DAY CARE SERVICE WILL:

- ensure the *Emergency Management Plan* (EMP) is updated regularly inclusive of Emergency and Evacuation policies and procedures and copies of these are available for inspection at the FDC residence or venue at all times that the service is educating and caring for children (see Appendix 2 for further information about inclusions)
- consult with relevant authorities for guidance and advice on the management of bushfire risk and emergencies
- communicate with the educator, educator assistant, coordinator and families about bush fire preparation information and provisions
- discuss bush fire response procedures at meetings with FDC educators, Coordinators and responsible persons including decisions to pre-emptively close services on a day forecast as an extreme fire rating
- determine if the Service is listed on the Bushfire-At-Risk-Register or on the at risk of grassfire register (category 4)
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/bushfirerisk.aspx>
- keep a list of FDC educators operating in bushfire at risk prone areas and have emergency contact details available at all times
- ensure a current emergency and evacuation floor plan and instructions for what to do in an emergency are clearly displayed near each exit of the FDC residence and/or approved FDC venue
- ensure FDC educators in residences and or venues, clearly understand how emergencies will be managed in collaboration with the Approved Provider to reduce any associated risks and maintain children's safety
- ensure emergency drills, including a bush fire drill and shelter-in-place on site, are practiced at least every 3 months by the FDC educator and children being educated on that day
- ensure a record is kept of each emergency evacuation drill practiced and a copy kept at the principal office
- ensure each FDC premises and FDC educators are prepared for bush fire conditions and prepared to respond quickly and appropriately during high fire danger periods
- ensure all fire safety equipment is installed and maintained regularly- (fire extinguishers, fire panels, smoke detectors, long hoses with nozzles, buckets etc. See: Appendix 1: Fire and Safety Equipment).
- identify circumstances when the decision is made for one or more FDC residences or approved FDC venues to not operate
- contact families to organise alternative care if a service needs to close due to potential fire risk
- ensure local emergency services have current contact details, including mobile number for emergency contact after hours for each FDC educator/residence
- ensure a clear and effective communication procedure during an emergency is implemented
- organise and communicate with off-site evacuation sites about emergency arrangements
- ensure the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is checked daily through Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology <http://www.bom.gov.au/?ref=hdr> or Country Fire Authority <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings>
- ensure FDC educators regularly clean gutters at their residence/venue so they are free from dry leaves and other debris
- ensure all fire safety equipment is easily accessible, has clear signage and operating instructions displayed and are clear of vegetation or debris
- ensure FDC educators keep emergency exits clear and accessible at all times
- ensure FDC educators keep accurate records of attendance of children, visitors and volunteers each day
- ensure educators keep a current list of emergency contact numbers near the phone and in the contacts of their mobile phone

- monitor the bush fire situation when the rating is above High through internet or radio
- ensure the *VicEmergency* app (CFA emergency services) is installed on FDC educator's designated mobile phones
- be prepared for Code Red or Catastrophic fire ratings and consequent closure of the service if listed on the BARR or at risk of grassfire (Category 4) in Victoria
- notify the Regulatory Authority in the event of any closures or damage to premises within 24 hours or as soon as possible via the NQA ITS or email if there is no access to phones.

FAMILIES DAY CARE EDUCATORS AND EDUCATOR ASSISTANTS WILL:

- conduct a risk assessment to prepare emergency evacuation procedures for bush fires considering:
 - prevention measures the FDC educator will take prior and during the bush fire period
 - procedures to be taken when there is a bush fire in the local district including onsite (shelter-in-place) and offsite evacuation procedures
 - response measures the FDC educator will take if confronted with a bush fire hazard or emergency
 - identified evacuation assembly areas and evacuation routes (it is recommended that the plan contains two external (off-site) evacuation assembly areas if practical to do so)
 - emergency communication arrangements in case of power outages- designated landline, Emergency Positioning Indicator Radio Beacon (EPIRB), satellite phone, designated mobile phone
 - the use of a battery operated radio in its shelter-in-place location or emergency kit
 - whether assistance will be required to evacuate children at the residence or venue (including non-ambulant children and infants, consideration for multi-story homes)
 - when evacuating children, if the weather is hot, do the children need footwear?
 - what to do with sleeping children, babies or children with additional needs during the evacuation?
 - what mechanisms are in place to ensure the transfer of real-time information, such as weather forecasts, bush fire activity, site closures and emergency operations
 - how parents will know where to locate their child if evacuated
 - procedures to ensure children are only released to persons authorised to collect them
 - mechanisms to ensure visitors, other residents in home and contractors are aware of the service's emergency response procedures
 - location of flammable substances/materials (gas storage bottles and fixed tanks)- ensure these are secured and controlled
- examine the grounds of their residence/venue during daily indoor and outdoor safety checks to ensure flammable and/or combustible materials (e.g., dead leaves and bark, chemicals) have been removed
- ensure they are familiar with the daily Australian Fire Danger Rating (AFDRS)
- conduct an 'emergency first aid kit / backpack audit' to ensure emergency contact information and supplies are current. (*See Appendix 3 for suggestions of inclusions*)
- ensure a fire alarm is installed and checked annually
- keep accurate attendance records of children in care each day
- ensure they have ready access to an operating telephone or other similar means of communication to enable immediate communication to and from parents and emergency services at all times education and care is provided
- ensure all contact details of parents/carers and emergency contact details are up to date and a record is provided to the Approved Provider/Responsible Person of the FDC Service
- ensure educator assistants and family members residing in the home are familiar and confident with emergency evacuation policies and procedures and aware of designated assembly areas

- ensure these policies are available for inspection at all times the FDC service is educating and caring for children
- ensure a current emergency and evacuation floor plan of the FDC residence and instructions for what to do in an emergency are clearly displayed in a prominent position near each exit of the service (Reg: 97(4))
- ensure emergency exits are clearly indicated and emergency exits are free from debris and obstructions and are easy to open
- eliminate all papers around the FDC residence, including artwork, posters, displays and emptying garbage bins if advised that bush fires are in the local district
- ensure boundaries, outdoor areas and driveways are clear of dry grass, long grass, dead vegetation, thick and continuous shrubs, leaves, dead limbs/trees and other combustible materials
- consult with neighbouring property/land owners or local council if neighboring properties pose a fire risk
- ensure driveways are accessible for fire emergency vehicles, clear of overhanging branches and archway structures
- ensure flammable items are removed from the residence or venue
- ensure broken or unused equipment are disposed of and not stored at the residence or venue
- ensure rubbish bins are secure with closed lids, emptied on a regular basis and located away from the Shelter-In-Place location
- keep up to date with professional development and training about bush fires and emergency evacuation
- upon advice from relevant authorities (Department of Education or Fire Authority) not accept children for care on days when there is a catastrophic danger rating
- cancel any outdoor activities on days where air quality due to bushfire smoke may cause harm to children [see Bush Fire Smoke Procedure]

EVACUATION PROCEDURE

In the event of a bush fire emergency, notification to evacuate may be issued by emergency services or the Approved Provider. FDC educators will monitor the Fire Danger Ratings daily and take appropriate actions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children at all times.

Fires in local area- Watch and Act

Conditions are changing and action to protect the safety of children and adults at the service is required.

The educator will:

- contact the Approved Provider and request assistance in contacting all parents/guardians or emergency contacts to request them to collect their child from the FDC residence immediately
- move children to indoor play
- close windows and doors
- turn off any gas cylinders
- gather children's personal items into bags
- gather emergency evacuation bag (collect sign in book/record, medication, visitor sign in sheets)
- ensure all exits are clear
- alert family members in the residence of possible evacuation
- keep in contact with the Approved Provider (notification will need to be made to the regulatory authority within 24 hours of the serious incident)

Emergency Warning

This is the highest level of Bush Fire Alert. Immediate action is required.

- Evacuate immediately (this may be directed by emergency services or the Approved Provider)
- inform children and visitors and other residents of the FDC residence to evacuate as per Evacuation Procedures/Policy

- request assistance to move infants or children with disabilities from other adults in the home/ educator assistant or emergency services if unable to complete the evacuation on their own
- check that all children and adults registered in attendance book are accounted for
- once children are safely evacuated, administer first aid if required
- call 000 and provide name, address and nearest cross street, mobile phone contact number, number of children evacuating
- notify the Approved Provider/Coordinator of the evacuation (only if children's safety is not compromised)
- if the identified evacuation assembly area is not accessible, identify an alternative area where children and other adults will be safe. Communicate with emergency services to confirm your assembly area
- remain calm and reassure children
- once emergency services arrive, request assistance with supervision and contact parents/emergency contacts
- ensure that no family members, children, or visitors leave the evacuation area until the considered safe by emergency services
- maintain attendance register with parent signatures when children are collected from evacuation area
- in the event of a fire within or near the residence resulting in damaged phone lines, the educator may evacuate the children and seek assistance from neighbouring residents and / or use the mobile phone as per the Emergency Evacuation Plan
- continue to check the building/evacuation area and surrounds for any other danger
- following the bushfire incident, review the evacuation procedure and Emergency Management Plan
- debrief with the approved provider/coordinator
- complete an *Emergency Evacuation Incident Report* and an *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Record*. The approved provider will make a notification of a serious incident to a regulatory authority (within 24 hours) through the [NQA IT System](#)

RESOURCES

Bushfire Emergency Planning Guideline [A guide to planning for bushfire emergency CFA \(Country Fire Authority\) Rural Fire Service](#) for up-to-date information
VIC EMERGENCY <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>
[Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment](#) – Emergency and natural disaster assistance
[Emerging Minds](#)- Bushfire preparedness for your family
[Be You](#)- resources- Bushfires and mental health
Department of Education Victoria- [Emergency Management Plan 2020-2021 Template](#)

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2014).
Australian Government: Geoscience Australia. Community safety: Bushfire:
<http://www.ga.gov.au/scientific-topics/hazards/bushfire>
Community Early Learning Australia. [Bushfire advice for children's services](#)
Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010. (Amended 2023).
[Education and Care Services National Regulations](#). (2011). (Amended 2023).
National Council for Fire and Emergency Services (afac). 2022. <https://www.afac.com.au>
Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

Victoria State Government Education and Training. Managing bushfire and grassfire risks in early childhood services. (2023). <https://www.vic.gov.au/managing-bushfire-grassfire-risks-early-childhood-services>

Revised National Quality Standard. (2018).

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED	Feb 2024	NEXT REVIEW DATE	Feb 2025
MODIFICATIONS	updated links		
POLICY REVIEW	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS		NEXT REVIEW DATE
August 2022	Added specifications related to Victoria		August 2023
DECEMBER 2020	Policy purchased from childcare desktop		2021

APPENDIX 1

VICTORIA SPECIFICATION

- Early Childhood Services at the highest risk of fire danger are placed on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR).
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/Pages/bushfirerisk.aspx>
- FDC residences and/or venues that have been identified as located in an area considered high risk of bushfire must not operate on any day declared to be a code red day for the district in which the FDC residence/venue is located.
- NQF approved services in Victoria listed on the BARR must submit their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) via the [NQA ITS Online Portal](#) by 1 September each year.
- Inclusion on this register is a trigger for Early Childhood Services to pre-emptively close on days declared **Code Red** in their Bureau of Meteorology district.
- Emergency Management Plan resources:
https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/childhood/providers/support/EmergencyManagementPlan_EarlyChildhood.docx
- Emergency Management Plan [template for early childhood services](#)
- See [Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness](#) for further information
- For information regarding emergency closures and relocations:
<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/closures.aspx>
- Fire Danger Rating updates: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/total-fire-bans-and-ratings>
- Country Fire Authority: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/home>

APPENDIX 2

The purpose of the Emergency Management Plan is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all staff, children and visitors at Dalas Service in the event of an emergency.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN INCLUSIONS

- Name and address of the FDC service/ residence/ venue
- Early childhood service facility profile (description of the FDC service)
- Emergency contact details (including designated mobile phone number)
- Incident Management Team structure and contact details and responsibilities (Approved provider/coordinator/educators)
- Incident Management Team responsibilities- pre-emergency/during emergency/post-emergency
- Communication tree- Process for notifying, alerting and reporting emergencies
- Emergency response procedures (on-site evacuation/relocation procedure; off-site evacuation procedure; lock down procedure; lock out procedure; shelter-in-place procedure)
- Arrangements for children/students and educators/staff with additional support needs
- Parent/family emergency contact details

- Evacuation diagram and procedures including assembly points and transportation arrangement if required to evacuate
- Essential services at residence- location of hydrants and water main
- A site-specific Risk Assessment identifying the particular emergency and hazards, assessing the risks they present and details on how you will manage these
- For Bush Fire Policy the Risk Assessment will detail-
 - prevention measures to be taken prior and during the bush fire period
 - procedures to be taken when there is a bush fire in the local district
 - response measures to be taken if confronted with a bush fire hazard or emergency
- Emergency response drills schedule
- Emergency kit checklist
- Testing of equipment (smoke alarms, fire extinguishers)
- Response procedures for specific emergencies – indicate process for making decisions
 - warning staff and children
 - evacuation
 - shelter and assembly area
 - location of designated emergency exits
 - location of fire hoses/extinguishers/ fire blankets
 - location of first aid kits
- Recovery measures to support the return to the FDC residence/venue and routines
- Notification to Regulatory Authority
- Trauma counselling and description

APPENDIX 3

EMERGENCY KIT CONTENTS CHECKLIST

Use the list below as a guide on what is required to maintain your Emergency Kit

EMERGENCY KIT CONTENTS	✓
Small portable First Aid kit	
Copy of Bush Fire policy & Emergency Management Plan	
Emergency contact details for children	
Emergency contact details for educator/educator assistant	
Details of additional/medical needs of staff and children	
Potentially required medications (e.g. EpiPen, asthma inhaler)	
Fully charged UHF radio (remote locations) with charger (only for Educators at risk of bushfire)	
Portable battery powered radio (Only for educators in risk of bushfire)	
Torch and spare batteries	
Whistle/s	
House keys	
Bottled water and disposable cups	

Non-perishable snacks (such as biscuits/crackers, dried fruit, energy/muesli bars)	
Spare nappies, baby wipes, and gloves	
Tissues	
Sunscreen and spare hats	
Garbage bags	
Other	

APPENDIX 4

Management must ensure emergency equipment and maintenance testing is registered and kept up to date. All fire equipment must be clearly identified and operating instructions displayed.

FIRE AND SAFETY EQUIPMENT

	✓
Portable fire extinguisher/s, including correct colour code	
Fire blanket/s in kitchen and cooking areas	
Fire hose and reels	
Fire hydrants	
Water storage tank – check connections for fire appliances	
Fixed water pressure pumps	
Emergency generator/power system	
Water supplies and equipment	
Sprinklers (including any roof mounted and irrigation systems)	
Alarms	
First aid materials	
Fire blankets	
Communication systems	
Other e.g., Roller shutters on shelter-in-place location	
Nominated staff have been instructed in, and the operation of fire protection equipment practised	

Fire safety equipment, including hydrants are clear of vegetation and are easily accessible and visible	
The service has equipment to safely move children if necessary	
All fire protection equipment has clear signage and operating instructions are displayed.	

Department of Education (VIC) Early Childhood site bushfire readiness review checklist