

Newsletter article: Bushfire At-Risk Register - Schools

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.

Schools and children's services listed on the DEECD Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) will be closed when a Code Red fire danger rating day is determined in their Bureau of Meteorology district. Western Port Secondary College is in the Bureau of Meteorology's CENTRAL 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, website and TIQBIZ. 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.
- 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.
- As a bus co-ordinating school, all school bus routes to the College will be cancelled.

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]

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, using our website, logging into and regularly checking TIQBIZ.
- 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.
- Have a general appreciation of any upcoming increased fire danger that results from severe weather conditions. (Bureau of Meteorology website: www.bom.gov.au)
- 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 Early Childhood Development 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 or call the 24-hour Victorian Bushfires Information Line on 1800 240 667 or the Emergency Management Victoria website www.emergency.vic.gov.au.