

School preparedness and pre-emptive actions for the bushfire season

Fire danger ratings indicate how dangerous a fire would be if one started in those conditions and provide clear direction on the safest options for preserving life. They can be a trigger for action in community and for school and household level fire plans.

Schools and children’s services listed on the Department of Education’s Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and those at some lower risk of bushfire or grassfire on the Category 3 list will be closed when a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast in their Bureau of Meteorology district.

Schools and early childhood services listed on the Department of Education’s Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and those at lower risk of bushfire or grassfire on the Category 4 list take pre-emptive actions on elevated fire danger days to minimise the risk of being caught in a fire in these conditions. The category of risk (per the BARR or Category 4 list) determines the actions that the school or early childhood service will need to take on days of elevated fire danger.



Our school has been identified as being one of these schools at high bushfire or grassfire risk.

The school’s **Nayook Campus** is categorised as Category 1 on the BARR, this means that this site is considered to be at the highest risk from bushfire.

The school’s **Thornton Campus** is categorised as Category 3 on the BARR, this means that this site is at increased risk of grass fire.

Our **Nayook Campus** will enact our pre-emptive action plan for relocating on a day forecasted as **Extreme fire danger ratings** in our local government area (LGA), Baw Baw Shire

Our school campuses will **close** on a day forecasted as **Catastrophic fire danger rating** in either the North Central Fire District (**Thornton Campus closure**) or the West & South Gippsland Fire District (**Nayook Campus closure**)

The department will advise our school of the potential for a **Catastrophic fire danger rating** as information becomes available, however the pre-emptive closure will be **confirmed by 1pm the day prior to Catastrophic fire danger day.**

Fire danger ratings are forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology up to four days in advance. Should a Catastrophic day be forecast, we will notify your child's school of the potential closure by an email and phone call. Closure of the school due to a forecast Catastrophic day will be confirmed on the day prior and your school 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 Catastrophic day.
- School operations will be adjusted if a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast for the Bureau of Meteorology district in which the school is operating, or set to operate an excursion, or if student travel involves passing through areas that have a Catastrophic fire danger.
- Depending on which fire weather district is impacted, bus route cancellations may affect our school.

Families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan on Catastrophic fire danger rating days. **On such days, children should never be left at home alone or in the care of older children.**

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) advises that when Catastrophic days are forecast, the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of the Catastrophic day.

As part of preparing our school for potential hazards such as fire, we have updated and completed our Emergency Management Plan and prioritised maintenance works that assist in reducing the threat of fire.

What can parents do?

- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers. Keep in touch with us by checking our Facebook page or contacting us directly.
- 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.

Multiple sources that offer information on emergencies are listed below:

- VicEmergency app – that can be downloaded on your android and iOS mobile devices
- VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226)
- Website <https://emergency.vic.gov.au>
- Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/vicemergency>)
- Twitter (<https://twitter.com/vicemergency>)
- ABC local radio, Sky News and other emergency broadcasters