



Bushfire and Grassfire Emergency Management Information

Last updated June 2023

Introduction

- Chairo has developed these procedures, following consultation with relevant agencies, in order to deal appropriately with the risk of bushfire or grassfire.
- The school will monitor the declared fire risk in our regions, and other areas where students may be present if off campus, based on the Vic Emergency warnings.
- The school will also receive notification from government sources of any other advice that will determine bushfire or grassfire response decisions.

School Response to a Bushfire or Grassfire Emergency Declaration

- All Chairo campuses are on the Department of Education and Training's register of schools and early childhood services deemed to be at risk of grassfire. Therefore, on days declared as Catastrophic, all campuses will be closed due to their locations and the extent of the high-risk areas that our buses travel through each day.
- Decision-making regarding campus closures on days other than those declared Catastrophic may also consider the following:
 - Road closures and other impacts on transport routes to and from each campus
 - Decisions made by bus contractors regarding the continuation of their service
 - Advice received from the Department of Education and Training
 - Consistency with other schools (incl. government schools) in the local area
 - Air quality in the area, as informed by the Environmental Protection Agency
 - Advice received from local emergency services
 - The extent of evacuations affecting school families
- The factors above may justify a campus closure even if Vic Emergency warnings are not Catastrophic. School leaders will continue to monitor these sources of information in order to decide when a campus will be closed and re-opened.
- At times, the school may choose to make different decisions for kindergarten and school operations, even if they are on the same campus.
- It is not always practicable for the school to provide written communication of a closure or re-opening. Updates will be provided to families and staff by various means, including email, text messages, social media and Linc.
- Students who cannot attend may be provided with schoolwork via Linc.
- During a campus closure, staff members may not be required to attend, and will be expected to work from home if possible. Communication updates for staff members will be via email and/or text message.

Closure Due to Bushfire or Grassfire when Students are in Attendance

- Should a fire emergency threaten a Chairo campus while students are in attendance, students will be moved to pre-determined safe zones on the campus, or off site if necessary. The school has developed an evacuation plan for each site. If there is no danger to students, or the threat passes, classes will then resume as usual.
- If required, the following evacuation locations will apply:
 - **Drouin East and Drouin campuses:** Community Church Warragul (corner of King & Wills Streets) **OR** Bellbird Park Recreation Reserve (270 Settlement Road, Drouin) near the indoor centre
 - **Pakenham Campus:** Nar Nar Goon Recreation Reserve (Spencer Street) **OR** Country Cubbies Pty Ltd (94 Bald Hill Road, Pakenham)
 - **Leongatha Campus:** Mary MacKillop Catholic Regional College (Horn Street) **OR** Leongatha Presbyterian Church (corner of Turner & Bent Streets)
 - **Traralgon Campus:** School oval on the northern boundary or the grassed area across the intersection of Liddiard and Lansdowne Roads on the south-west boundary **OR** Traralgon Showgrounds (entry off Howitt Street)
- During an emergency, parents/guardians are *not* encouraged to attend the school due to congestion and safety concerns, and students will not be dismissed unless the situation is deemed safe. In the event of an evacuation, parents and guardians will be asked to collect their children from the evacuation centre.

Attendance on Extreme Heat Days

- Unless notified otherwise, the school will operate as normal on days of extreme heat. However, a number of heat-management procedures will be implemented, including restricting external student activities, conducting activities in air-conditioned spaces, and reminding students of the need to drink water regularly. The majority of rooms at each campus are now air conditioned.
- While the school encourages attendance, it is at the discretion of parents/guardians whether or not their children attend school on days of extreme heat. This is a decision that should be made in accordance with a family's individual bushfire safety plan. If parents/guardians choose not to send their children to school, it is essential that the school is notified on the day.

Fire Impact on Bus Services

- The school operates buses in a number of areas that have experienced bushfire danger. During high-risk times, the school will monitor bushfire websites. Our bus routes are also on a Victorian State register, which is monitored by authorities to provide warning of bushfire activity. On a day where there is a bushfire or extreme bushfire risk, the phone at the Drouin Campus (5625 4600) will be manned after-hours to ensure communication between home and school as necessary.
- The school will communicate with the bus provider should information be received regarding a bus route being affected by bushfire. If the bus is already on the route, the bus provider will contact the driver. The school will determine the location of all bus students and contact parents/guardians of students who cannot be transported to their bus stop to advise where they can be collected.
- If adequate notice is received during the school day regarding one or more bus routes being affected by bushfire, the impacted bus or buses will be cancelled, and parents/guardians will be notified to collect their children from school. If a bus has already left the school but needs to be cancelled due to bushfire, personnel at bus interchange locations will be notified and advised that students are to remain on the bus. The driver will be instructed by the bus provider to transport the students to the most appropriate local secondary school, where they will be accounted for and supervised until collected by parents and guardians.

Vic Emergency Warning Classifications

Warnings



Evacuation

An evacuation is recommended or procedures are in place to evacuate.



Emergency Warning

You are in imminent danger and need to take action now. You will be impacted.



Warning (Watch and Act)

An emergency is developing nearby. You need to take action now to protect yourself and others.



Advice

An incident is occurring or has occurred in the area. Access information and monitor conditions.

Can also be used as a notification that activity in the area has subsided and is no longer a danger to you.



Community Information

A newsletter containing updates for communities affected by an emergency.

Can also be used as notification that an incident has occurred but there is no threat to community.



Warning Area

Colour area shows the predicted warning area at the time of issue. This colour can be yellow (Advice), orange (Warning / Watch & Act), red (Emergency Warning) or black line with a grey fill (Evacuation).

