



Policy Statement

BUSHFIRE ACTION POLICY

Date: November 2019

Aim

To provide staff and parents with a clear guideline as to the steps and action that the College will take in event of a catastrophic fire danger being announced for the Lower South East District.

Rationale

Keeping all members of the school community safe is a priority.

Implementation

The Government recommends that residents leave a Catastrophic fire risk area the day before the risk day and not return until after the risk has passed. The Government is also recommending that residents not travel on a Catastrophic fire risk day. If there is a significant fire in the area, it will be very unlikely that residents will be able to return to their homes as Police are expected to block all major roads and possibly direct people to leave the area. This could be relevant if a parent leaves a child at home on a Catastrophic fire risk day.

We have therefore reviewed our bushfire policies and have made the following decisions:

- **The College will remain open on catastrophic fire days** for students who live in the town or have evacuated to the town.
- St Martins school buses which travel through catastrophic areas will **NOT** operate on catastrophic fire danger days
- The process for communicating the declaration by the CFS of a Catastrophic Day (CD) to families and therefore the cancellation of any SMLC bus services is as follows –
 - students and families will be notified could be notified by any combination of the following: phone, SMS, SEQTA email, or via SMLC's Facebook page of the potential for such action, where possible, in advance of a CD declaration. Staff will be emailed or are able to check via SMLC's Facebook page;
 - normally, confirmation of a CD will occur between 4pm and 5pm on the day preceding the CD ;
 - to access information regarding the declaration of a CD it is best to access the CFS website www.cfs.org.au.
- If the fire risk escalates during the school day College buses will **not** leave the College and students will be kept at school. Parents will be notified by phone or via SMS and children who normally travel on buses will not be permitted to leave the College without permission from a parent.
- **Parents** need to supply contact details of a relative or friend within the Mt Gambier city area who can collect and care for their child in the event of an extreme situation (**Attachment 1**). Children will not be permitted to leave the school during a bushfire

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emergency with anyone other than their usual carer unless the school has received permission for them to travel with another person.

- Excursions and camps outside of Mount Gambier city limits will be cancelled or postponed.
- Staff who live in a catastrophic fire risk area or have to travel through this area **will not** be expected to attend work on a catastrophic fire danger day. However, staff should notify the College of their absence to ensure they are accounted for.
- In the event that a significant bushfire occurs, DECD officers will attend the CFS State Coordination Centre or the State Emergency Centre and relay instructions and suggestions from emergency services personnel to the corporate incident control centre, nominated contact officers in the Catholic Education South Australia and the Association of Independent Schools of SA. A SMLC representative may also attend local Coordination Centre meetings to gather instruction.
- In the event that an activation of the State Coordination Centre or the State Emergency Centre does not occur and a bushfire threatens to impact the school, the Chief Fire Warden will immediately activate the site's Bushfire Action Plan and prepare to move staff and students into a building that will provide protection from radiant heat unless otherwise directed by emergency services. The Chief Fire Warden may direct students and staff to leave the site and move to a safer location. Emergency warnings issued by fire authorities via SMS will ensure that appropriate action is taken.
- Bushfire Information Brochure for Families will be distributed annually to families in areas of risk or who travel through areas of risk to get to school. (DECD Website)

In most cases we probably will **not** get notice of a **preliminary** warning of a Catastrophic fire risk day until 4pm, two days before the risk day. We will probably not get **confirmation** of the Catastrophic fire risk day until 4pm on the day preceding the risk day.

Parents who arrive at school to collect children during a bushfire emergency are encouraged to stay at the school with their children until it is safe to travel home.

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Definitions

Fire Danger Ratings		
Category	Fire Danger Index	Action for schools and preschools
CATASTROPHIC (CODE RED)	100+	OPEN: Monitor CFS website and communicate with AISSA CANCELLED: School bus services travelling through the affected Fire Ban District
EXTREME	75-99	OPEN: Monitor CFS website and communicate with AISSA
SEVERE	50-74	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply
VERY HIGH	25-49	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply
HIGH	12-24	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply
LOW MODERATE	0-11	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply

References

Country Fire Service

www.cfs.sa.edu.au

Bushfire Information Brochure for Families

<https://www.decd.sa.gov.au/department/media-centre/news/bushfire-brochure-families>

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Attachment 1

SMLC Bushfire Action Management Strategy

We wish to advise you of our plans to cope with any bushfire emergency. St Martins does not want any student or member of the school community to be placed at any risk from a bushfire.

St Martins obtains information on bushfires through the media Management Authorities and the Association of Independent Schools of SA (AISSA). AISSA is normally notified of significant bushfires.

The College will seek to comply with bushfire warnings from emergency management authorities.

When the College is aware of a bushfire in an area, the College will cancel any excursions or trips into that area.

When the College is aware that students may be at risk from an active bushfire if they travel home after school, the College will enable those students to stay at school until arrangements for their wellbeing are finalised. In these situations, the College bus will not travel into the bushfire area and relevant students will stay at the College until other arrangements are made. In the event that students remain at the College because of a bushfire, the College will endeavor to contact parents and the College phone 8725 1430 will be staffed. In the event that communications to the College are not functioning, parents are encouraged to contact the Bushfire Information Hotline on 1300 362 361.

The Mt Gambier city area is regarded by the CFS as a safer settlement or bushfire safer precinct that can be safely accessed from the school. Details of safer settlements or precincts are available at www.cfs.sa.gov.au

If your home is in an area that may be at risk from a bushfire or **your child/ren travel to and from school through an area that may be at risk from a bushfire**, please indicate this and provide details of alternative accommodation to which your child can be directed. To assist the school in determining students who may be at risk if there is a bushfire, please also indicate the road normally used to reach your home. If your child/ren are not at any risk please indicate this on the attached form so that we can be sure that no one is missed.

Please inform us of any changes that may impact on whether it is safe for your child/ren to travel home in the event of a bushfire.

Please complete the attached form and return to the College as soon as possible.

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Bushfire Action: Student Safety Management Details

To be completed and returned to the College as soon as possible.

Names of Students & Class.

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IS YOUR HOME IN AN AREA THAT MAY BE AT RISK FROM FIRE? YES / NO

If yes, please provide the following information:

Student/s at other schools: Name:..... School:
Name:..... School:

DO YOUR CHILDREN TRAVEL AFTER SCHOOL THROUGH AN AREA THAT MAY BE AT RISK FROM FIRE? YES/NO

If yes, please provide details and indicate which routes are used after school:

Roads:.....
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.....
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OTHER INFORMATION

Alternative Accommodation:
Name of contact person:
Phone Numbers most likely to reach them:
Address:
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Any other relevant details:
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Signed _____ Date _____

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