



Bushfire Action Policy

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 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 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm 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 or a fire breaks out (that is near a bus route) 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 Mount Gambier city area who can collect and care for their child in the event of an extreme situation. Children will not be permitted to leave the school during a bushfire 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, Department for Education 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.

In most cases we probably will **not** get notice of a **preliminary** warning of a Catastrophic fire risk day until 4:00 pm, two days before the risk day. We will probably not get **confirmation** of the Catastrophic fire risk day until 4:00 pm 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.

Definitions

Category	Action for schools and preschools
CATASTROPHIC (CODE RED)	OPEN: Monitor CFS website and communicate with AISSA CANCELLED: School bus services travelling through the affected Fire Ban District
EXTREME	OPEN: Monitor CFS website and communicate with AISSA
HIGH	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply
MODERATE	OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply

References

[Country Fire Service - Fire Danger Ratings](#)

[Bushfire Information Brochure for Families](#)