

18 November 2022

Circular to Principals of all Ballarat Diocesan Schools

Emergency Management Preparedness - Summer 2022–23

Reviewing and updating Emergency Management Plans

- In accordance with Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) minimum standards schools must review their Emergency Management Plan (EMP) annually, and after any significant incident. For further details see [Guidelines on Bushfire Preparedness: Registered schools and school boarding premises](#).
- The EMP review should include a risk assessment of the school's facilities, using the [tool](#) available on the CEVN website under *School Improvement / Emergency Management / Self Risk Assessment*.
- Once finalised the EMP should also be shared with your school community to ensure they are familiar with the plan and how it will be activated.
- The Catholic Education Office Ballarat expect to capture each school's completed EMP via the eSORT Notification circulated on the 12th of October, together with information on any incidents/exercises occurring by schools during the year.
- For the remainder of Term 4, the Catholic Education Office Ballarat will follow up with all schools that have not submitted an updated EMP to ensure that all schools are compliant prior to the end of the school year.
- Schools having Governance external to DOBCEL, within the Ballarat Diocese are still expected to submit their EMP for compliance, either by the above-mentioned eSORT notification or sent directly to emergencymanagement@dobcel.catholic.edu.au

School Maintenance

- Schools are also responsible for maintenance such as clearing vegetation, gutters and flammable elements from school areas ahead of the bushfire season.
- Schools on the outskirts of cities and towns are advised to pay attention to their surroundings, as they are most likely to be close to grassland, parks, paddocks or bushland. In this instance, schools are asked to ensure their risk assessment considers the impact of the surrounding landscape.

School Camps and Excursions

- The Victorian Flood event has placed a considerable focus on school camps and excursions into regional Victoria during emergency events. Schools should closely monitor the Emergency Management Victoria website (www.emergency.vic.gov.au) and not proceed into an area with a current emergency warning.
- School excursions and camps must have an appropriate EMP that incorporates all aspects of the activity's location. All excursions, camps and off-site activities must be entered into the Student Activity Locator (SAL) database, available on the CEVN website under *Data Management / Student Activity Locator (SAL)*, at least three weeks prior to the event. This will allow monitoring of activities in case of an emergency.

Introduction of new Australian Fire Danger Rating System

- In September 2022, Australia introduced a new fire danger forecasting system, the Australian Fire Danger Rating System ([AFDRS](#)). This nationally consistent system will more accurately predict fire danger and produce clear, simple messages for communities.
- Schools are advised to check the Fire Danger Rating daily and Total Fire Ban status on warm days. This can be done by subscribing to the [VicEmergency app](#) and monitoring the [VicEmergency website](#).
- Schools are also asked to ensure that their emergency contact numbers are current in the [Emergency Contacts Database](#) section on CEVN.
- Additional guidance for schools in preparing for bushfire season is also available on the CEVN website under *School Improvement / Emergency Management / Bushfire Resources*.

Actions Required

- Schools are asked to:
 - ensure that EMP's have been reviewed, contextualised and updated and submitted via the eSORT Notification (12th Oct 2022)
 - ensure that emergency contact numbers are current in the [School Contacts \(Update\)](#) section of the CEVN website under [Data Management](#)
 - ensure that information is entered into the [SAL](#) prior to any approved camp or excursion, and to monitor current emergency warnings prior to departure on the camp or excursion.

Additional Information

- Schools can check listings on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) via the CEVN website under *School Improvement / Emergency Management / [Bushfire Resources](#)* and on the [Department of Education \(DET\)](#) website.
- For more information on warnings, please visit the following websites:
 - [VicEmergency](#)
 - [Country Fire Authority](#)
 - [State Emergency Service](#)
 - [Bureau of Meteorology](#).
- The emergency broadcaster is [ABC local radio](#).
- Teaching resources are available from the [Australian Institute for Disaster Resilience \(AIDR\)](#).

Contact/Enquiries

- For all general enquiries, please contact Simon O'Brien, on 4344 4350 or sobrien@dobcel.catholic.edu.au.

Tom Sexton
DOBCEL Executive Director