

BUSHFIRE AND GRASSFIRE SAFETY INFORMATION

Essential bushfire and grassfire safety information for schools ahead of the summer fire season

Catholic Education Commission of Victoria (CECV), Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Country Fire Authority (CFA) have collaborated to produce this information sheet for schools on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR) and schools at risk of grassfires, acknowledging that as the summer fire season approaches you may require some extra support to provide fire safety information to your school and possibly your wider community.

About Grassfires

Grassfires can start and spread quickly, especially on days when the Fire Danger Rating is Severe, Extreme or Code Red.

Fire Danger Ratings tell you how dangerous a fire would be if one started. As the ratings increase, so does the risk of uncontrollable fire.

If your educational facility is near grassland, parks or paddocks, you can be at risk, even when your school is on the urban fringe.

Below are the links to available CFA grassfire resources, which whilst principally relating to residential properties, are also relevant to schools.

- [CFA - grassfires- urban messages¹](#)
- [CFA - grassfires - rural messages²](#)

These links also include fact sheets which you can download and share with your school or early childhood service community.

Communication resources

To assist with informing your families about your school relocating or closing on forecast days of elevated fire danger, CECV and DET have produced standardised posters, newsletter articles and other tools of communication that you may choose to adapt and use as appropriate which are available on Catholic Education Victoria Network (CEVN).

Emergency Management Planning

All schools in Victoria must comply with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority's (VRQA) emergency management minimum requirements. These include having a documented Emergency Management Plan (EMP). You can refer to the School Compliance Checklist for a full list of emergency management minimum requirement available on CEVN.

Schools should be further refining their risk assessments and response procedures so that they are site specific and provide the appropriate level of guidance in the event that the school's procedures need to be activated.

Ensuring your school's building, safety equipment and surrounds are as fire ready as possible is critical to reducing the consequences of a bushfire event. Consider using the bushfire readiness checklist ahead of the summer season. To access a copy use the following link:

<http://cevn.cecv.catholic.edu.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=8589942226>

Student participation in bushfire readiness

Research indicates that when students have access to accurate knowledge and information, and are provided with opportunities to actively participate in bushfire planning activities, they can make a valuable contribution to risk reduction at home, at school, and in the broader school community. By actively involving your students in the school's emergency plan, they will also be better equipped to follow the necessary procedures in the event of a bushfire emergency.

The CFA website has lesson plans that teachers can utilise in the classroom to enhance students' understanding of bushfire planning and support student participation in the planning process.

<http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/kids-schools/>

The website has a dedicated section to support schools with information that will assist with the communication of fire related information to students, families and the broader school community.

Essential resources for schools

CFA also has a wide variety of information, programs and tools available to the community on the CFA website, which can assist people to plan and prepare for bushfire and grassfire. This includes 'Your Guide to Survival' which provides essential information for anyone who lives, works or travels throughout Victoria this summer: <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/your-guide-to-survival/>

To assist community members residing in high fire risk areas to prepare their properties and plans, the 'Fire Ready Kit' provides more detailed information on

¹ <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/grassfires-near-cities-and-towns>

² <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/grassfires-rural>



summer fire safety: <http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/plan-prepare/fire-ready-kit>

Additionally, here are some activities that you can undertake to support your school community to plan for bushfire and grassfire:

- Encourage families to download 'Your Guide to Survival' and the 'Fire Ready Kit' from the CFA website. The kit also includes planning templates for people living in high risk areas.
- Talk to your local CFA Brigade and help promote any scheduled fire ready meetings being held locally.
- Talk to parents and children about the school's emergency management planning arrangements.
- Contact your local CFA District Community Education Coordinator to arrange a bushfire planning workshop for staff and/or families.

We wish you a safe summer!