

Guidelines on Bushfire Preparedness Registered Schools

1. Notice

Schools are hereby notified that pursuant to the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* as a component of their registration against prescribed minimum standards they are required to meet the following guidelines on bushfire preparedness.

These guidelines were approved by the Victorian Registration and Qualification Authority (VRQA) Board on 10 February 2010 and revised and approved on 26 June 2017.

2. Guidelines for registered schools on bushfire preparedness

Care, safety and welfare of students

A school must ensure that the care, safety and welfare of students is in accordance with any applicable State and Commonwealth laws and that staff are advised of their obligations under those laws.

Schedule 4 clause 12 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017

In relation to bushfire preparedness and in addition to specified requirements for schools to provide for the care, safety and welfare of students, schools must meet the following guidelines:

2.1 All schools must maintain an Emergency Management Plan (EMP). The EMP must be reviewed at least annually and immediately after any significant incident.

The EMP should include policies and procedures for the planning and approval of off-site activities which consider the risk of bushfire in the activity location.

2.2 Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register must have an EMP that details the school's response to managing bushfire risk including:

- closing the school on days declared Code Red
- on non-Code Red days in the event of bushfire or elevated risk:
 - maintain a heightened state of readiness
 - ensuring open lines of communication from local emergency services
 - be prepared/on standby to enact their EMP by:
 - relocating students and staff to a nominated 'shelter-in-place' within the school site that is compliant with relevant regulations, and/or
 - evacuating students and staff to an off-site safe area
 - responding appropriately to instructions from emergency services.

2.3 Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register must inform students, staff and parents/guardians about their specific bushfire preparedness arrangements and train relevant staff in their bushfire preparedness roles.

There must be records of:

- the provision of information on bushfire preparedness policy and procedures to staff (including relief staff) and parents/guardians
- the school's closure arrangements for Code Red days as per the schools EMP

- training of staff with specific roles and responsibilities in preparing for, monitoring and executing emergency bushfire procedures including the effective operation of relevant emergency equipment
- the practice of evacuation drills at least once per term during the October–April bushfire season. School evacuation drills must involve all students and staff moving to either a nominated on-site ‘shelter-in-place’ or an off-site evacuation point as per the school’s EMP.

2.4 Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register must maintain a register updated at least once per school term during the October–April bushfire season of bushfire emergency equipment and ensure it is in working order.

Required evidence to be compliant or maintain compliance:

- an updated register of bushfire emergency equipment, in working order, which may include water supplies and equipment; fire hydrants, hose reels and extinguishers; sprinkler systems; alarms; first aid materials and medical equipment; fire blankets and; communication systems.

2.5 Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register must maintain notices of bushfire evacuation procedures and bushfire emergency contact numbers and locate them appropriately around the school.

Required evidence to be compliant or maintain compliance:

- notices of bushfire evacuation procedures and updated bushfire emergency contact numbers are appropriately located around the school.

School infrastructure

A school’s buildings, facilities and grounds must comply with any laws that apply to the school including local laws and building, planning and occupational health and safety laws.

Schedule 4 clause 13 of the Education and Training Reform Regulations 2017

In relation to bushfire preparedness, and in addition to specified requirements for schools to ensure that their school buildings, facilities and grounds meet all legal standards and fully comply with health and safety requirements, schools, including their campuses and off-site facilities, must meet the following guidelines:

2.6 All schools must regularly manage materials that may easily be ignited around buildings and facilities.

Required evidence to be compliant or maintain compliance:

- a schedule for monitoring and removal of materials that may be easily ignited including branches overhanging buildings, debris and rubbish around and under buildings including gutters and dry grass and vegetation
- safe storage of flammable materials.

2.7 All schools must regularly monitor emergency access to buildings and grounds.

Required evidence to be compliant or maintain compliance:

- building exits are continuously kept clear of obstructions
- assembly points are designated and have appropriate access to emergency equipment
- there is access to facilities and grounds for emergency vehicles.

2.8 Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register must consult local agencies, where relevant, (the Country Fire Authority, Metropolitan Fire and Emergency Services Board, local Council) on their bushfire preparedness and compliance with local bushfire regulation of buildings, facilities and grounds.

Required evidence to be compliant or maintain compliance:

- a record of annual visitation or consultation with relevant local agencies.

2.9 Schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register with an on-site ‘shelter in place’ must consult with the relevant agency on the building’s compliance with relevant regulations.

Required evidence to be compliant or maintain compliance:

- documentation certifying that any on-site ‘shelter-in-place’ is compliant with relevant agency minimum standards.