

8a – Bush Fire Emergency & Evacuation Children’s Services Procedures

Effective From:	30 October 2020
Contact Officer:	Coordinator of Children’s Services
Next review date:	2 years
File Reference:	1825/29.5
Related Policies/Legislation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010</i>• <i>Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 Cl 97 & 168 (2)(e)</i>• National Quality Standard: QA 2.2.2• <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017 Cl 29 & 30</i> www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/EPI/2017/494• <i>NSW Government and NSW Rural Fire Service - Planning for Bushfire Protection - November 2019</i> www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare/building-in-a-bush-fire-area/planning-for-bush-fire-protection
Related Documents and References:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ACECQA (2018) Guide to National Quality Framework• NSW Rural Fire Service www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/
Superseded Procedures:	8a – Emergency and Evacuation – Bushfire Specific V1.0 Feb 2018


Purpose

Bush fires are a natural part of the Australian environment and occur regularly. The majority of deaths during bush fires result from people trying to leave their homes/ premise workplace at the last moment.

Wingecarribee Children’s Services is committed to planning for the safety and wellbeing of the children, educators and staff working in or with our service following a; prepare, act and survive planning model as outlined by the NSW Rural Fire Service.

- **Prepare** – Make important decisions before the fire season starts
- **Act** – The higher the fire rating the more dangerous the conditions
- **Survive** – Fires may threaten without warning so it is essential to know what to do to ensure survival.

The Bushfire Emergency and Evacuation Procedure is to be used in conjunction with the general



emergency and evacuation procedures and risk assessment documentation. Through thoughtful planning the goal is to have clearly thought out and prepared procedures for managing the risk of bushfire to the Services.

Scope

This procedure applies to:

Wingecarribee Children's Services Staff employed by Wingecarribee Shire Council

Wingecarribee Family Day Care Educators as Agents of the Approved Provider – Wingecarribee Shire Council and the adult Household members residing in their premise.

All children and families accessing care with Council's Children's Services

All students and as required; visitors engaged with Wingecarribee Children's Services.

Definitions

Severe, Extreme and Catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings mean a fire will be unpredictable, uncontrollable and very fast moving. Fire Ratings are forecast at approximately 3pm the day prior by the Bureau of Meteorology.

Catastrophic – no properties in areas where bush fires can start will be defendable. Homes are not designed to withstand fires in catastrophic conditions.

Authorised Personnel – Includes but not limited to: NSW Rural Fire Service (RFS), Wingecarribee Shire Council Officers (WSC), Wingecarribee Children's Services Staff (WCS), Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) and Police,

Neighbourhood Safer Places (NSP) – these are buildings or open spaces that are away from bushland and can provide some protection from the immediate threat of a bush fire. NSP do not guarantee your safety and should only be used as places of last resort. They are not long term options and should not be confused with places like Evacuation Centres.

Evacuation Centre – is a centre, such as an RSL, civic centre, etc. which provides affected people with basic human needs including accommodation, food and water.

Bush Fire Alerts – there are 3 levels of alert, these are:


- 1) **ADVICE** – A fire has started. There is no immediate danger. Stay up to date in case the situation changes.
- 2) **WATCH AND ACT** – There is a heightened level of threat. Conditions are changing and you need to start taking action now to protect you and your family.
- 3) **EMERGENCY WARNING** – An Emergency Warning is the highest level of Bush Fire Alert. You may be in danger and need to take action immediately. Any delay now puts your life at risk.

NSW RFS Area 5 – Includes Councils in Kiama, Shellharbour, Shoalhaven, **Wingecarribee**, Wollondilly and Wollongong. For the purpose of this procedure “**area**” refers to **NSW RFS Area 5**.

Procedure

1. General Procedures – All Service Types (FDC, OOSH and Coordination Unit)

- 1.1 All Wingecarribee Shire Council's Children's Services sites which are in bush fire prone zones or buffer zones have been identified and where applicable have met with the *State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017*. (Refer to the Engagement and Registration of Family Day Care Educators Procedure)

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- 1.2** All Wingecarribee Children’s Services sites have a current Bush Fire Survival Plan which is focused on a “Leave Early” approach. No Children’s Service; Family Day Care or Centre Based Service can “Stay and Defend” whilst children are in care. Bush Fire Survival Plans are developed using the NSW Rural Fire Service guide.
- 1.3** All Services will have access to the “Fires Near Me App”, notifications turned on and will set a watch zone between 25 – 50km of the Service.
- 1.4** In Family Day Care, Bush Fire Survival Plans are developed prior to the Educator providing a Service and will thereafter be reviewed annually in line with the Annual Home Safety and Compliance Inspection.
- 1.5** In Out of School Care, Bushfire Survival Plans are developed and reviewed annually or as circumstances demand
- 1.6** All service types will familiarise themselves with and adhere to the Bushfire Emergency and Evacuation Procedure and/or the advice provided by the relevant authorities in the event of an outbreak of a bushfire with potential to affect a Wingecarribee Children’s Services site/premise.
- 1.7** Where the Bushfire Emergency and Evacuation Procedure is implemented the **Coordination Unit and/or Responsible Person will:**
- Contact all Services in the affected **area**.
 - Provide an updated list of all Family Day Care Educators in the **Area** to NSW RFS and/or the Local Emergency Management Officer (LEMO) at Wingecarribee Shire Council.
 - Provide regular and updated information as it becomes available to the educators and families.
 - Where safe and in the case evacuation is required make the coordination unit facilities available as a relocation site for Family Day Care Educators.
 - Liaise with the designated relevant NSW RFS and/or LEMC representatives
 - Inform and consult with the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment and the NSW Department of Education and Communities (DEC’s) as per legislative requirements.
- 1.8 Bush fire Relocation/Evacuation**
- 1.8.1** See Point 5 - Catastrophic or Extreme Ratings declared on the day – For Services the RFS **area**
- 1.8.2** Educators/Staff will remove all children, staff and visitors from the premises. As far as possible service staff/educators will follow their general evacuation procedure and take with them:
- A suitably stocked first aid kit
 - Device with access to Harmony Web which includes child attendance and Family Contact information
 - Staff/visitor sign in books (as applicable)
 - Food and water (where applicable)
 - Portable radio recommended

- Mobile Phone
- 1.8.3 Staff, educators and children will not return to the premise/ work site without the direct permission of emergency service personnel.
- 1.8.4 FDC Educators may decide to relocate their premise at any time they believe the safety or wellbeing of those on their premise is threatened. In these instances, Educators are to follow requirements in Point 5

2. Severe or Very High Fire Ratings in Area – All Service Types

- 2.1 For Severe or Very High fire ratings all Council Children’s Services (FDC and OOSH) may continue to operate from the site if there are no bush fires in the Shire.
- 2.2 Services to monitor conditions carefully and advice from RFS and through the “Fires Near Me App”.
- 2.3 All Services will close on a “Watch and Act Alert” as per Bush Fire Survival Plans.
- 2.4 If a declared fire zone is established due to an active fire within the proximity of a FDC or OOSH site the Educator or Service Responsible Person is to follow the process for a Catastrophic Fire ratings outlined in point 4 and 5 of this procedure.

3. Extreme Fire Ratings in Area – All Service Types

- 3.1 Where there is no fire in the Wingecarribee Shire, Services may remain open with the following extra provisions in place, unless otherwise advised by Authorised Personnel or Approved Provider:
- 3.1.1 Parents/guardians must remain contactable at all times whilst the child is in care.
- 3.1.2 Where a parent/guardian works out of the Shire, there must be a person authorised (in writing) and available to collect the child at short notice.
- 3.1.3 It is the responsibility of:
- the FDC Educator to ensure this prior to the child being left in care.
 - The Responsible Person (RP) at the Out of School Hours Care prior to the child being left in care.

- 3.2 All Services will close on a “Watch and Act Alert” as per Bush Fire Survival Plans.

4. Forecast Catastrophic Fire Ratings in “Area” – All Service Types

- 4.1 Follow the advice of the relevant authorised personnel
- 4.2 Close or cancel the Service, until such time as the catastrophic rating is no longer declared and the Service has been cleared to reopen.
- 4.2 Educators and Coordination Unit Staff are to notify all families affected by Service closures
- 4.3 **Centre Based - Out of School Hours Service** will implement and follow the directions or request of the Department of Education and/or Principal

5. Catastrophic Rating Declared in Area on the Day, whilst children are in care

- 5.1 Activate Bushfire Survival Plan.
- 5.2 Close Services and cease Service provision on a “Watch and Act Alert” in an “area” where a catastrophic rating is declared on the day.
- 5.2.1 Where safe to do so, parents/guardians will be asked to collect their children immediately.

- 5.2.2 If the situation poses a direct threat Educators/Staff will immediately relocate all the children in care as per bush fire survival plan
- 5.3 Services will follow the directions of the NSW RFS, LEMO or other authorised personnel.
- 5.6 The Children’s Services Coordinator will be notified as soon as practically possible.
- 5.7 The NSW Department of Education and the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Training will all be notified as per legislative requirements, within 24 hours of the incident and relevant documentation will all be completed.
- 5.8 Relocation - Family Day Care
 - 5.8.1 Educators to relocate to the most appropriate relocation point as identified in their Bush Fire Survival Plans. Should these be unsafe or inappropriate the Educator will proceed to the relevant Evacuation Centre.
 - 5.8.2 As a place of last resort the Educator will go to their Neighbourhood Safer Place (NSP). As identified on their Bushfire Survival Plan. Where possible a member of the Coordination team will meet them there.
 - 5.8.3 Where transportation is an issue the Coordination Unit or Educator will liaise with the RFS, LEMO or other Authorised Personnel to determine the safest means of evacuating/relocating the children from the premises.
 - 5.8.4 When safely at the evacuation point families will be contacted.
- 5.9 Relocation - Out of School Hours
 - 5.9.1 Relocate children to the safest and most accessible location. For example, the dedicated Evacuation Centres or the NSP
 - 5.9.2 Where transportation is an issue the Coordination Unit or Responsible Person will liaise with the RFS, LEMO or other authorised personnel to determine the safest means of evacuating the children from the premises.
 - 5.9.3 The Responsible Person will ensure that a roll is taken and all children accounted for, prior to leaving the site. The attendance will be taken again on arrival at the evacuation point and thereafter at regular intervals.
 - 5.9.4 When safely at the evacuation point families will be contacted

Approved by:



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30 October 2020