

# **BUSH KINDER EXTREME WEATHER POLICY**

## **Farm Road Pre-school**

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National Quality Framework – Quality Area 3

### **PURPOSE**

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Farm Road Preschool to cancel Bush Kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and to ensure that parents/guardians understand this framework
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a session
- Provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- Provide appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions
- Impress upon parents/guardians that they may collect their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason.)

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

#### **1. VALUES**

Farm Road Preschool is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children participating in the Bush Kinder program
- Facilitating a Bush Kinder experience in a variety of safe weather conditions including rain, to allow children to experience nature as a broad a spectrum as possible without compromising the safety of the participants
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions
- Facilitating effective and timely communications to parents/guardians regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocations of children in the event of extreme weather
- Respecting the rights of parents/guardians to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to children, parents/guardians, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Farm Road Preschool.

## 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

### Background

Farm Road Preschool's Bush Kinder program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a natural environment. However, extreme weather conditions may arise periodically which can put the well-being and safety of the children, staff and volunteer helpers at risk. This policy provides the parameters within which the kindergarten can make determinations to cancel Bush Kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

### Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation may include but is not limited to:

- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2017
- Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010
- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- National Quality Standard – Quality Area 3

## 4. DEFINITIONS

**Bureau of Meteorology:** Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Website: [www.bom.gov.au](http://www.bom.gov.au)

**Extreme Weather:** Weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of heavy rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions. An extreme weather table is shown below. Bush Kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met.

WEATHER CONDITION	EXTREME WEATHER DETERMINANT CAUSING CANCELLATION
Forecast Temperature	Greater than 34 degrees Celsius and the Kindergarten teacher decided it was appropriate to cancel Bush Kinder. Note: there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (refer to Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	High Winds > 35Km per hour, or otherwise deemed to be unsafe.
Forecast electrical storm activity	Thunderstorm / electrical storm / Warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology of extreme storm conditions, excessive rainfall or hail.
Grounds flooded near or at Bush Kinder site	On inspection of the Bush Kinder site by educators
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

**In addition to the above, Farm Road Preschool Committee and staff have the discretion to cancel a session/s if it views the weather to be poor for Bush Kinder purposes even if the extreme weather determinants in the above table are not reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area would also necessitate cancellation.**

**Protective Clothing:** Refer to Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy.

## 5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### Sources

- Victoria Government “Better Health Channel” website:  
<https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au>
- Victoria State Government Department Education and Training:  
[www.education.vic.gov.au](http://www.education.vic.gov.au)

### Service policies

- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Safety and Hygiene Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Risk assessment versus Benefits (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy
- Excursions & Service Events
- Child Safe Environment Policy

## **PROCEDURES**

### **General**

#### **The Committee of Management is responsible for:**

- Providing an extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a Bush Kinder session/s and provide guidance and procedure for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- All parents/guardians being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy on request
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather.

#### **The Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, and other educators are responsible for:**

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website the day prior to the Bush Kinder session at approximately 6pm, and again the morning of the Bush Kinder session at 8am (for the morning session of Bush Kinder.)
- Making a decision as to whether or not Bush Kinder will be conducted based on best weather forecast information available from Bureau of Meteorology, or on assessment of conditions at the site
- If extra clarification needed, staff will contact the Bureau of Meteorology by phone
- Notifying parents/guardians of bush kinder cancellation via SMS from the Kindergarten's mobile phone by 6pm the night before the Bush Kinder session or by 8am on the morning of the morning Bush Kinder session

#### **Note: A Bush Kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or during a session based on updated weather information or at the discretion of staff.**

- Relocating the Bush Kinder session to Farm Rd Pre-School, 47 Farm Rd, Cheltenham, if the weather conditions are deemed extreme or unsafe.
- Notifying parents/guardians via SMS from the Kindergarten's mobile phone in the event a Bush Kinder session has been cancelled mid-way through, or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions.

WEATHER CONDITION	SAFE ACTIONS
<p>Heat</p> <p>Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke and dehydration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring children for heat exhaustion / heat stroke (see Attachment 1 for symptoms and treatments)</li> <li>Offer water for hydration at regular intervals</li> <li>Establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade</li> <li>Ensure application of sunscreen by parents at the start of the session</li> <li>Ensure appropriate protective clothing, including hats are worn (Refer to Protective Clothing Policy)</li> </ul>
<p>Rain / Hail / Cold</p> <p>Risks include child getting wet, onset of hypothermia, injury from hailstones</p> <p>Bush Kinder will still operate in light rain, but the session will be cancelled if conditions are dangerous, or deemed otherwise unsuitable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor children for wet clothes and change if necessary</li> <li>Ensure appropriate wet weather clothing is worn • Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing, including gloves, beanies, etc.</li> <li>Seek shelter in heavy rain or hail</li> </ul>
<p>Electrical storm activity / lightning</p> <p>Risks include lightning strike, trees / tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike</p> <p>High Winds</p> <p>Risks include falling trees / tree limbs, blowing particles (sand, dirt) into eyes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Move children away from trees</li> <li>Seek undercover shelter</li> <li>Act in accordance with guidelines provided in Attachment 2 in relation to actions if caught in an electrical storm, and first aid for lightning victims</li> <li>Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure</li> <li>Move children away from trees</li> <li>Seek shelter if necessary</li> </ul>
<p>BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall</p>	<p>On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology</p>

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Ensuring they are comfortable at all times with the forecast weather conditions while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session. If a change in weather conditions causes a parent concern during a Bush Kinder session, they are able to collect their child at any time.
- Ensuring that clothing suitable for the weather conditions is always worn and that a change of clothes is provided. Refer to Protective Clothing Policy.

- Ensuring they carry a mobile phone with them at all times, and that they are contactable at all times while the Bush Kinder session is in progress. Where a mobile phone is not available, an alternative reliable contact number must be supplied.
- Reading and being familiar with the policy.
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee.

## **EVALUATION**

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the proprietor (committee) will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual centre survey.
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Better Health Channel – Heat Stress and Heat Related Illness

Attachment 2: Victoria State Government Education and Training – Emergency Response Procedures – Lightning Strike

## **AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Farm Road Pre-School on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022

**REVIEW DATE:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 or as dictated by changes in regulations.

## **ATTACHMENT 1:**

### **BETTER HEALTH CHANNEL - Heat stress and heat-related illness**

Extreme heat can affect anybody. Those most at risk are older people, young children and people with a medical condition.

Heat stress occurs when our body is unable to cool itself enough to maintain a healthy temperature. Normally, the body cools itself by sweating, but sometimes sweating isn't enough and the body temperature keeps rising.

Heat-related illness can range from mild conditions such as a rash or cramps to very serious conditions such as heatstroke, which can kill.

Overexertion in hot weather, sun or bushfire exposure, and exercising or working in hot, poorly ventilated or confined areas can increase your risk of heat stress. Heat can also make an existing medical condition worse, for example heart disease.

### **PEOPLE MOST AT RISK OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS**

Anyone can suffer from heat-related illness, but those most at risk are:

- People over 65 years, particularly those living alone or without air conditioning
- Babies and young children
- Pregnant and nursing mothers
- People who are physically unwell, especially those with heart disease, high blood pressure or lung disease • People on medications for mental illness.

Elderly people are more prone to heat stress than younger people because their body may not adjust well to sudden or prolonged temperature change. They are also more likely to have a chronic medical condition and be taking medication that may interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature.

### **CAUSES OF HEAT STRESS AND HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS**

There are many factors which can cause heat stress and heat-related illness, including:

- **Dehydration** – to keep healthy, our body temperature needs to stay around 37°C. The body cools itself by sweating, which normally accounts for 70 to 80 per cent of the body's heat loss. If a person becomes dehydrated, they don't sweat as much and their body temperature keeps rising.
- **Lack of airflow** – working in hot, poorly ventilated or confined areas.
- **Sun exposure** – especially on hot days, between 11am and 3pm.
- **Hot and crowded conditions** – people attending large events (concerts, dance parties or sporting events) in hot or crowded conditions may also experience heat stress that can result in illness.

- **Bushfires** – exposure to radiant heat from bushfires can cause rapid dehydration and heat-related illness. Bushfires usually occur when the temperature is high, which adds to the risk.

## **SYMPTOMS OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS**

It is important to know the signs and symptoms of heat exposure and how you should respond. Symptoms vary according to the type of heat-related illness. Babies and young children may show signs of restlessness or irritability and have fewer wet nappies. Older people may become lightheaded, confused, weak or faint.

Some heat-related illness and common symptoms include:

- **Deterioration in existing medical conditions** – this is the most common health problem of heat stress.
- **Heat rash** – sometimes called ‘prickly heat’, this is a skin irritation caused by excessive sweating. It can occur at any age, but is most common in young children. It looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters. It is most likely to occur on the neck and upper chest, in the groin, under the breasts and in the elbow creases.
- **Heat cramps** – these include muscle pains or spasms, usually in the abdomen, arms or legs. They may occur after strenuous activity in a hot environment, when the body gets depleted of salt and water. They may also be a symptom of heat exhaustion.
- **Dizziness and fainting** – heat-related dizziness and fainting results from reduced blood flow to the brain. Heat causes an increase in blood flow to the skin and pooling of blood in the legs, which can lead to a sudden drop in blood pressure. There can be a feeling of light-headedness before fainting occurs.
- **Heat exhaustion** – this is a serious condition that can develop into heatstroke. It occurs when excessive sweating in a hot environment reduces the blood volume. Warning signs may include paleness and sweating, rapid heart rate, muscle cramps (usually in the abdomen, arms or legs), headache, nausea and vomiting, dizziness or fainting.
- **Heatstroke** – this is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention. Heatstroke occurs when the core body temperature rises above 40.5 °C and the body’s internal systems start to shut down. Many organs in the body suffer damage and the body temperature must be reduced quickly. Most people will have profound central nervous system changes such as delirium, coma and seizures. The person may stagger, appear confused, have a fit or collapse and become unconscious. As well as effects on the nervous system, there can be liver, kidney, muscle and heart damage.

The symptoms of heatstroke may be the same as for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no sweating and the person’s mental condition worsens.

## **TREATMENT FOR HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS**

Treatment options vary according to the type of heat-related illness. Apply first aid and seek medical assistance immediately if you, or someone you are with, shows any sign of heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

### **HEAT RASH – TREATMENT**

Treatment for heat rash includes:

- Move the person to a cooler, less humid environment.
- Keep the affected area dry.
- Try using unperfumed talcum powder to increase comfort.
- Avoid using ointments or creams, as they keep the skin warm and moist, and may make the condition worse.

### **HEAT CRAMPS – TREATMENT**

Treatment for heat cramps includes:

- Stop activity and sit quietly in a cool place.
- Increase fluid intake.
- Rest a few hours before returning to activity.
- Seek medical help if there is no improvement.

### **DIZZINESS AND FAINTING – TREATMENT**

Treatment for dizziness or fainting includes:

- Get the person to a cool area and lay them down.
- If fully conscious, increase fluid intake.

### **HEAT EXHAUSTION – TREATMENT**

Treatment for heat exhaustion includes:

- Get the person to a cool area and lay them down.
- Remove outer clothing.
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths.
- Increase fluid intake if they are fully conscious. • Seek medical advice.

### **HEATSTROKE – TREATMENT**

Heatstroke is a medical emergency and requires urgent attention:

- Call triple zero (000) for an ambulance.
- Get the person to a cool, shady area and lay them down while you're waiting for emergency medical help.
- Remove clothing and wet their skin with water, fanning continuously.
- Do not give the person fluids to drink.
- Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway.
- If medical attention is delayed, seek further instructions from ambulance or hospital emergency staff.

## PREVENTION OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS

Prevention is the best way to manage heat-related illness. Some tips to prevent heat stress include:

- **Drink plenty of water** – you need to drink more during hot weather, regardless of how active you are, even if you don't feel thirsty (check with your doctor if you are on limited fluids or fluid pills). Avoid alcohol or drinks that contain lots of sugar. Don't have extremely cold liquids, as they may cause stomach cramps.
- **Avoid exposure to heat** – stay out of the sun as much as you can,
- Protect yourself outside – if you must be outdoors, remember to protect yourself from the sun – 'slip, slop, slap' by covering exposed skin with lightweight clothes, using sunscreen and wearing a hat, 'seek' shade and 'slide' on sunglasses.
- **Plan ahead** – too much activity on a hot day can lead to heat stress. If you can, restrict activity to cooler parts of the day. Avoid physical activities like sport, renovating and gardening.
- **Don't leave kids, older people or pets in cars** – even on cool days, cars can heat up to dangerous temperatures very quickly. People or pets that are left unattended in parked cars for even a few minutes are at risk of serious heat-related illnesses and possibly death. Never leave kids, older people or pets in a parked car, even if the windows are left open a fraction.
- **Take it easy** – rest often and, whenever possible, stay indoors or in the shade.
- **Stay cool** – and keep air circulating around you. Draw your blinds or curtains and use a fan or air conditioning if possible (if you don't have air conditioning, consider visiting an airconditioned shopping centre or public library). Keep yourself cool by using wet towels, putting your feet in cool water and taking cool (not cold) showers.
- **Keep up your energy levels** – eat smaller meals more often and cold meals such as salads.
- **Check in on others** – keep in touch with older, sick or frail family, friends and neighbours who may need help coping with the heat, especially those who live alone. Call them at least once on any extreme heat day.

## WHERE TO GET HELP

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- Your doctor – if you, or someone you know, may be suffering from a heat-related illness
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- [Department of Health & Human Services – survive the heat information in community languages.](#)
- Maternal and Child Health Line, Victoria Tel. 132 229 (24 hours)
- [St John Ambulance Australia](#) – for information and resources on first aid

## **THINGS TO REMEMBER**

- Heat kills more Australians than any natural disaster.
- Heatstroke is fatal in up to 80% of cases.
- During the 2009 Victorian heatwave the number of deaths increased by 374 people.
- Heat-related illness can be prevented.
- Keep cool, avoid vigorous physical activity in hot weather, and drink plenty of water and other non- alcoholic fluids.
- Never leave children or pets unattended in a parked car.
- Seek medical assistance if a person shows any signs of heat exhaustion or heatstroke.

## **ATTACHMENT 2:**

### **Victoria State Government Education and Training - Emergency Response Procedures – Lightning Strike**

If thunder happens within 30 seconds of lightning, then the storm is within 10 kilometres of your location. Lightning safety experts consider this the strike danger zone and advise people to follow the 30/30 rule.

#### **THE 30/30 RULE**

Follow the precautions outlined below when thunder is heard within 30 seconds of a lightning flash and wait for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard to resume your activity. If you're unable to take shelter inside, find the safest accessible location and stay there until the storm has passed.

#### **GENERAL PRECAUTIONS:**

- Stay away from metal poles, fences, clothes lines etc.
- Never ride horses, bicycles or drive in open vehicles.
- If driving, slow down or park away from trees, power lines or other objects that may be damaged by storm activity.
- Stay inside metal-bodied (hard top) vehicles or caravans but do not touch any metal sections.
- If undertaking water activities, leave the water immediately.
- If boating, go ashore to shelter as soon as possible. (A bridge or high jetty may offer immediate protection.)
- Discard all metal objects.

#### **IF SHELTER IS NEAR-BY:**

- Seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or solid building. Avoid small structures or fabric tents.
- Keep clear of windows.

#### **IF SHELTER IS NOT AVAILABLE:**

- Crouch (alone, feet together), preferably in a hollow. Make yourself a small target.
- Remove metal objects from head/body.
- Do not lie down (the more of you that is in contact with the ground, the more 'attractive' you are to Lightning) but avoid being highest object.

- If your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing on nearby rocks, fences etc., move immediately. At night, a blue glow may show if an object is about to be struck.
- Stay away from high and low points (hilltops, ridges & gullies), rock overhangs and shallow caves.
- Keep out of, and well away from, water bodies or watercourses.
- Make sure the group is aware of the Lightning Safe Position. This involves:
  - Squatting or crouching with knees drawn up and feet together, preferably on dry insulating material (e.g. foam mat).
  - Keeping hands off the ground.
  - Spread group members out – about ten metres apart, but within calling distance.
  - Never shelter under tree/s.

#### **FIRST AID**

- Apply immediate CPR to lightning victims until medical help arrives. (You won't receive a shock from the victim.)