**Bushfire Policy**

**Overarching this policy is a school position that says it is alright for families who live in at-risk areas to decide on days of fire risk to keep their sons or daughters with them rather than sending them to school.**

**RATIONALE**

Schools that have been identified as being at high fire risk and are listed on the Department’s Bushfire At-Risk Register will close on days declared Code Red and *may* be able to close on days of ‘Extreme’ Fire Danger Rating. BULLARTO PRIMARY SCHOOL IS ON THIS LIST.

The incidence of bushfire in Victoria highlights the need for our School to be thoroughly prepared. BPS’s Emergency Management Plan addresses the risk and procedure for dealing with Bushfire Emergencies and Incidents, and is informed by the DETs Bushfire Checklist . This checklist covers:

* arrangements for the safety and welfare of staff and students, including relocation to pre-arranged sites or rendezvous points;
* readiness levels and “trigger points” for decisions regarding school closure;
* monitoring fire risks and activity on high-risk or total fire ban days;
* notification arrangements to emergency services;
* accessing support, including transportation (e.g. buses) at short notice, in line with “stay or go” planning strategies;
* communications plan and contact lists (including school community, local government and emergency services); and
* roles and responsibilities of school personnel in executing emergency plans.

**AIMS**

* To ensure the safety and wellbeing of the whole school community during incidents of Bushfire or potential Bushfire.

**Bush Fires: Policy**

In the event of a bushfire our prime consideration is the safety of students, parents, staff and visitors. All persons at the School must be aware of these procedures. The School is located in the CFA Wendouree Region 15 and in an area that the DET considers to be an area of possible high-risk and is therefore included on the Bushfire At-Risk Register. The procedures within this policy will be dependent on the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) and the possible risks considered by the relevant authorities and/or the School.

**FDR - Code Red (Catastrophic)**

If the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is considered Code Red (Catastrophic) for this region the School will be given notice of the possible risks and closure. If the risk is imminent the School will enact its Emergency Management Plan and closure notification processes. When possible, DET will give up to 3-days’ notice of possible closures (including warnings about cancelling, changing, rescheduling or recalling out of school or off-site activities such as camps and excursions). The final decision to close will be confirmed no later than 12 noon the day before. As much notice as possible will be given to allow parents to make alternative care arrangements for their children. All warnings of potential or actual closures will be posted on the DET website (www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires) by 10:30 each morning during the bushfire season and letters will be sent home with each student. In addition, the school will send a notification out through ‘Konnective’, our communication channel, and will make every effort to contact every parent to ensure that all are aware of the position.

**FDR – Extreme**

In exceptional circumstances, Bullarto PS may pre-emptively close on days of Extreme FDR. This decision will only be taken with authorisation from the Regional Director supported by advice from Emergency Management Victoria. The decision will be made prior to 12 noon on the day prior to the closure and all families will be positively contacted (via a response from ‘Konnective’, SMS or a phone conversation).

**FDR – High to Extreme**

If the School is forewarned of a possible fire within 15 kilometres (distance will be dependent on weather conditions at that time), the school may be closed for the duration of the risk and parents will be requested not to send students to school. You will be contacted if this is the case. Radio National and ABC 774 provide updates and the ‘Fire Ready’ app. or CFA website are also valuable sources of information.

**Local Outbreak**

In the event of a fire breaking out during the day in our immediate area we would take the advice of the appropriate fire authorities. In cases of local outbreaks where the fire intensity has not built to dangerous levels then the School would be a safe place to stay. All fire risk or emergency information would be distributed via Konnective or SMS. Families are requested in these instances not to travel to school, but wait for information from the school.

**Evacuation**

In most cases, the School would either be closed or would be a safe place to be. In cases not predicted and where conditions may be extreme the school would make every effort to shelter in the least dangerous location, including the classroom with the fire shutters closed or the farm dam across the road. It is important to understand that confusion and possible road blockages during bushfire times can put more people in danger. We have been informed by the CFA that evacuation would not be possible, and we would therefore take a cautious approach to keeping the school open in difficult or dangerous conditions.

**Time Lost**

On rare occasions that the school is forced to close due to high fire risk, students will make-up classes where required at a later date.

Updated December 2016