

EARLY YEARS POLICY

Early Years Services Bush Kinder Extreme Weather	Policy No:	QA 2.26
	Document No:	D15/74476
	Approved Date:	1 October 2015
	Approved By:	Manager Aged and Family
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Responsible Officer:	Coordinator Early Years	
Authorising Officer:	Manager Community Strengthening	

1. Purpose

This policy aims to:

- provide a framework around which well-informed decisions are made by Surf Coast Council to cancel Bush Kindergarten session/s in response to forecast weather conditions.
- ensure the health and safety of all children and staff is maintained when the weather conditions become extreme during a session;
- provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kindergarten session;
- provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions;
- ensure all parents/guardians understand that they may need to collect their child from a Bush Kindergarten 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, volunteers and students on placement working at Surf Coast Shire Kindergartens.

3. Application

All Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff, students, volunteers, Family Day Care (FDC) educators, children and their families accessing the services.

4. Definitions

Bureau of Meteorology: Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Website www.bom.gov.au. Various iPhone/iPad apps use BOM data (e.g. Pocket Weather)

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of 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 of Bush Kinder
Code Red Day / Total Fire Ban	Bush Kindergarten will be closed on a Code Red day. On a Total Fire Ban Day, some areas of the park may be restricted and the Bush Kindergarten sites may close.
Forecast temperature	33 degrees Celsius or greater Note there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	> 40km per hour
Forecast of electrical storm activity	Thunder storm / electrical storm forecast

Flooding at or near the Bush Kindergarten site	Flooding advice from the Surf Coast Shire Council
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	Warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

In addition to the above, the Surf Coast Shire Early Years management and staff has the discretion to cancel session/s if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kindergarten, regardless of whether the extreme weather determinants in the above table are reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area would also necessitate cancellation.

5. Policy

The Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management is responsible for:

- an extreme weather policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a Bush Kindergarten session/s. All parents/guardians are aware of and are provided access to the policy on the Surf Coast Shire website
- ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kindergarten session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions;

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- ensuring protective clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and ensure a change of clothes is provided (including shoes) (Refer to Protective Clothing Policy);
- If a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should withhold their child from the session. Ensuring they are contactable or an alternative contact number is available while their child's Bush Kindergarten session is in progress.
- accessing the policy (located on Surf Coast Shire Website);

In the event of extreme or bad weather

Surf Coast Shire Kindergarten staff will make a decision to cancel the Bush Kindergarten program for the sessions affected. In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', the Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management and staff have the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable. If Bush Kindergarten is cancelled, the kindergarten session will be held at the children's kindergarten service in their nominated kindergarten room.

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session

If conditions necessitate evacuation from the Bush Kindergarten site, follow work instructions for each individual site.

If the Bush Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position in response to the weather conditions, the following procedures are to be followed by staff (with the assistance of volunteers):

- Blow whistle
- Keep children calm
- Notify emergency services if required (Notifying them of the nearest ESTA point)
- Ensure sign-in sheet is in the teacher's backpack along with other necessary items such as medication
- Count/check off children's names against the sign in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for. With the exception of the teacher's backpack, leave Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected later
- En route to new location (see map for appropriate locations), calmly walk children in pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group.
- Teachers/adult volunteers to be positioned at the front and back of the group, and flanking the group where possible
- On arrival at safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for
- Notify Surf Coast Shire Early Years Management Wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities, following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site

- If the weather does not look like it will pass soon, a broadcast text message should be sent to all parents, advising of the new safe location for pickup purposes.

The staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) on the morning of the session;
- Making a decision to cancel or conduct the Bush Kindergarten sessions
- Providing notice to parents/guardians/staff of the status of the Bush Kindergarten session/s as follows:
 - group text to the Bush Kindergarten families at least 30 minutes before session.
 - once families have been notified of cancellation, staff must notify Team Leader Kindergarten Programs
- Receiving notice of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.

Note: a bush kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time by text message or EDUCA based on updated weather information.

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session

- Undertake the following actions in each of the weather conditions listed in the table below:

Weather Condition	Staff Actions
<p>Heat Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke • offer water for hydration at regular intervals • establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade • ensure application of sunscreen every two hours • ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats. [Refer protective Clothing Policy for more information]
<p>Rain/Hail/Cold Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary (with assistance of volunteers) • Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (eg, waterproof clothing, gumboots) • Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing, including coats, gloves, scarves etc • Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail
<p>Electrical storm activity/ Lightning Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike, anxiety/distressed children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move children away from trees • Seek indoor shelter • Implement site emergency evacuation procedures. If no network coverage ring 112 for emergency help
<p>High winds Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder structures blowing down/away etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure • Move children away from trees • Seek shelter if necessary • Any equipment/structures must be moved by at least two staff/volunteer to minimise risk of injury • Implement site emergency evacuation procedures. If no network coverage ring 112 for emergency help

6. Records

Record	Retention/Disposal Responsibility	Retention Period	Location
Not applicable			

7. Attachments

Not applicable

8. References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D15/74634	Bush Kindergarten Play Benefit and Risk Policy
D15/74620	Bush Kindergarten Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
D15/74610	Bush Kindergarten Snake Awareness and First Aid Policy
D15/74606	Bush Kindergarten Protective Clothing Policy
D15/74583	Bush Kindergarten Management of Dogs Policy
D15/74477	Bush Kindergarten Identification and Visibility Policy
D15/74476	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D15/35364	Early Years Sustainability Policy
D18/116438	Code Red and Extreme Fire Danger Policy - MPP021

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Work Instructions and Forms

D17/23581	WHS Bush Kindergarten Risk Assessment Template
D18/71916	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Bellbrae Reserve
D18/71918	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Fishermans Beach
D18/71921	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Jan Juc Bush Site
D18/71923	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Point Roadknight
D18/71928	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Winchelsea Church
D18/71931	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Stribling Reserve
D18/71933	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Torquay Common
Under review	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions – YMCA
D19/111394	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Grass Tree Nature Reserve
D19/111386	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions – Deep Creek Reserve

Approval Date:	01/10/2015	Approved by:	Manager Aged and Family
Amendment/Review 1:	21/09/2018	Approved by:	Manager Aged and Family
Amendment/Review 2:	9/01/2020	Approved by:	Manager Community Strengthening