

Early Years Services – QA2.26 Bush/Beach Kindergarten Extreme Weather

TRIM Reference: D15/74476 Due for Review: 6 December 2025
Responsible Officer: Coordinator Early Years

Purpose

This extreme weather policy gives clear guidelines to Surf Coast Shire staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a Bush/Beach Kindergarten session/s, ensuring safety for all.

This policy outlines Surf Coast Shire Council's commitment to:

- provide a framework around which well-informed decisions are made by Surf Coast Council to cancel Bush/Beach 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/Beach 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/Beach Kindergarten session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

Policy Principles

Evidence of link to Education and Care Services National Regulations (2011) – 87, 97, 100, 168
Evidence of Link to National Quality Standards – 2, 3, 7

Scope

All Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services staff, students, volunteers, children and their families accessing the services.

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 weather conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a Bush/Beach 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/Beach 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 (Refer to Bush/Beach Kinder Protective Clothing and Visibility Policy)
- Ensuring parent/guardians are contactable or an alternative contact number is available while their child's Bush/Beach 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/Beach 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/Beach 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/Beach Kindergarten site, follow work instructions for each individual site.

If the Bush/Beach Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position in response to the weather conditions, the following procedures are to be followed by all staff:

- Blow whistle
- Keep children calm
- Notify emergency services if required (Notifying them of the nearest ESTA point)
- Ensure sign-in tablet is in the emergency backpack along with other necessary items such as medication and first-aid equipment
- Count/check off children, staff, volunteers names against the sign in tablet to ensure all children are accounted for. With the exception of the emergency backpack, leave Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected later
- En-route to new location, calmly walk children in pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group
- Staff 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, staff and volunteers 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/Beach Kindergarten 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 Bush/Beach Kindergarten sessions due to extreme weather, refer to the extreme weather table below - Bush/Beach Kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met.
- Providing notice to parents/guardians/staff of the status of the Bush/Beach Kindergarten session/s as follows:
 - group text to the Bush/Beach Kindergarten families and Kindergarten Team Leader at least 30 minutes before session.
- Receiving notice of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.

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

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/Beach Kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met.

Weather Condition	Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation of Bush Kinder
Catastrophic Day/Total Fire Ban	Bush/Beach Kindergarten will be closed on a Catastrophic day. On a Total Fire Ban Day, some areas of the site may be restricted and the Bush/Beach Kindergarten sites may closed.
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 Bush/Beach Kinder Health and Safety Policy).
Forecast wind speed	> 40km per hour (this does not include wind gusts).
Forecast of electrical storm activity	Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast.
Flooding at or near the Bush/Beach 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/Beach 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.

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 to Sun Protection Policy & Protective Clothing and Visibility Policy)
<p>Rain/Hail/Cold Risks include child getting wet (onset of hypothermia) and injury from hailstones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary • 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 hail
<p>Electrical storm activity/ Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike, anxiety/distressed children</p> <p>Thunderstorm Asthma Risks include asthma, breathing difficulties</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 • Implement children’s asthma management plans if required • Parent to collect affected child • Staff to have Vic Emergency APP on Bush/Beach Kinder phone (thunderstorm asthma – 1 October – 21 December)
<p>High winds Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand, dirt) into eyes, Bush/beach 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 to minimise risk of injury • Implement site emergency evacuation procedures. If no network coverage ring 112 for emergency help

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)

Related Procedure

Nil.

References

Related Surf Coast Shire Council Early Years Services Policies

D15/74634	Bush/Beach Kindergarten Educational Program
D14/94973	Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
D15/74606	Bush/Beach Kinder Protective Clothing and Visibility Policy
D15/74476	Bush/Beach Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation
D15/35312	Early Years Child Safe Environment Policy
D15/35364	Early Years Sustainability Policy
D15/35300	Sun Protection Policy
D18/116438	Fire Danger Preparedness Policy - MPP021

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

D20/3979	Early Years Unit – Catastrophic/ Extreme Fire Danger Work Instructions
D14/87971	WHS 2.2 Early Years Risk Assessment Management Plan
D18/71916	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Bellbrae Reserve
D24/56385	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Taylors Park
D24/56381	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Works Instruction - Cosy Corner
D24/56386	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Works Instruction - Spring Creek
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
D24/56439	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Anglesea Beach
D18/71928	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Winchelsea Church
D18/71931	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Stribling Reserve
D24/56464	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Wild Space (Lorne)
D18/71933	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Torquay Common
D21/76221	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - YMCA
D19/111386	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Deep Creek Reserve
D22/203867	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Distillery Creek
D22/203864	Bush Kindergarten Emergency Evacuation Work Instructions - Eumeralla

Document History

Version	Document History	Approved by – Date
1	Approved	Manager Aged and Family – 1 October 2015
2	Amendment/Review	Manager Aged and Family – 21 September 2018
3	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 9 January 2020
4	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 16 June 2021
5	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 13 December 2022
5	Amendment/Review	Manager Community Strengthening – 6 June 2024