

**ST JOSEPH'S SOUTHERN CROSS
BUSHFIRE PLAN (2018 - 2019)**



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Introduction

This plan is for St Joseph's School Southern Cross and has been designed to assist staff to prepare for a total fire ban, catastrophic fire danger rating, or a bushfire. Letters to staff and parents are included in the appendix as well as notices regarding the plans of closures of the school.

The preparation of this plan has been developed in accordance with the Emergency and Critical Incident Management Policy and the Principal' Guide to Bushfires with input from local emergency management agencies.

Overview

GENERAL INFORMATION This Bushfire Plan (BP) has been developed during Term Four after consultation with:

- Board members
- members of the emergency services (e.g. DFES, Local Emergency Management Committee and/or Community Emergency Services Manager)

The BP is to be reviewed annually during Term Three each year to reflect any changes that may have taken place in:

- Department of Education or government policy
- site facilities
- Personnel normally on site.

The BP outlines required actions to prepare the school before the bushfire season as per the *Principal's Guide To Bushfire*. (refer Appendix 1)

The BP also outlines activities to be undertaken by staff and students at the different levels of a bushfire emergency:

- on days of Total Fire Ban
- Catastrophic fire danger rating;
- when there is a fire in the local district
- when a bushfire is threatening or impacting on the site; and
- during the period immediately after a bushfire has impacted on the site (known as the 'Recovery Phase').

Where applicable, a building is nominated as the **Safer Location** building for this school.

- It has been prepared for a bushfire emergency and will safely accommodate all persons normally at the school.

Distribution

The Principal will forward a copy of the site BP to the Regional Executive Director to be held in the regional office.

The Principal or delegated officer will forward a copy of the site BP to the emergency services by Week 2 of Term 3 each year in the region.

The Principal or delegated officer will publish a copy of the school's bushfire plan on the school website at the beginning of Term 1 each year.

- Details of the website to be provided to families of new students by the Principal or delegated officer during the enrolment process.

- The Principal will ensure that all new staff members, relieving staff and visitors are briefed about the requirements of the BP during the site induction process.

The Principal will include bushfire season reminders and information in site newsletters when applicable. The School's Staff Handbook, updated in Term One each year, includes evacuation information.

All staff members receive pre fire season updates during Term Three and ongoing information and instruction about the contents and requirements of the BP during Term Four and Term One staff meetings.

Bushfire Preparation checklist (to Appendix 1)

The safety and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors to St Joseph's Catholic Primary is at all times the main priority. Staff are not expected to fight bushfires.

The school will review (and update where appropriate) the plan on an annual basis.

Any bushfire advice received by the school from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) or external experts is documented identifying the date and the source of the advice.

| Date of Review | Reviewing Officer | Date submitted | Next Scheduled Review |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 30 th Nov 2016 | Natalia Thomson | 2016 | Term 3 2017 |
| 11 th October 2017 | Rika Andres | 2017 | Term 3 2017 |
| | | | |
| | | | |

COMMUNICATION

There are several levels of communication employed at school level before, during and after bushfire events.

Preparing for Bushfire Season

- The Principal must ensure all students and staff are aware of the School's bushfire response plan. It is also necessary to ensure that relief staff and parents have been made aware of the school's bushfire plan. A copy of the school's bushfire plan should be published on the school website. Draft text for the school newsletter is available in the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire (Appendix A6)*
- The Principal will establish contact with emergency services, including DFES, the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, the LEMC and CESM.
- Our school is located in a bushfire prone area and we ensure we incorporate key bushfire messages in our curriculum.
- Communication plans (including emergency contacts and a telephone tree) are in place for evacuation or planned closure. See *Appendix 4 for a Communication Plan, Appendix 5 for Emergency Contacts and Appendix 6 for a telephone tree*
- Our school has an effectively working emergency warning system and emergency communication equipment (staff mobile phones) is available and working.
- Our school has in place systems to account for students, staff and visitors in an emergency, these include class rolls (or equivalent) and visitor registers. Hard copies of all documentation are kept on file in the event of a power cut affecting the ability to print from electronic sources.
- Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses to be contacted.

Pre-emptive Closure

- The office of Catholic Education W.A. will make the decision to close a school based upon advice from Emergency Services and this will be relayed to the Principal.
- The Principal is to notify staff and parents using emergency contacts and the telephone tree of closure. See also the letter to parents in the *Principal's Guide to Bushfires advising of pre-emptive Closure (Appendix A7)*, consideration is given to parent's level of literacy and understanding of English.
- All other necessary parties are advised including (but not limited to) other schools that may have siblings at your school, community users of the school facilities (including before and after school care, community kindergartens or holiday programs), on site contractors and Parents and Friends Association (P & F).
- Bus contractors will be contacted to arrange for the evacuation of students to a designated area.
- Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be posted as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*, both physically at the school and electronically on the website.

During Evacuation

- The school will contact their School Improvement Advisor.
- The school will contact parents via phone or email or “WhatsApp” App (due to no phone range) (It would be preferable that parents restrict calling the school at this time to emergency calls only).
- The school will notify bus contractors and out of school programs.
- The school has landlines (08 9049 1046). It would be preferable that parents restrict calling the school at this time to emergency calls only.
- The official broadcaster of Emergency Events is ABC radio. Our local station is ABC local radio. They will provide up to date information during a bushfire event in our area.
- The DFES website provides up to date information on fire events. Refer to <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/> .

NOTE: DFES uses the national Emergency Alert system to send community warning messages via mobile telephones in affected areas. (Information can be obtained from <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/pages/default.aspx>).

The Principal communicates directly with the CEWA personnel including any media communications. Staff should not comment directly to media.

Reopening the School

- The school Improvement Officer is to advise the Principal when the school can re-open.
- Parents need to know when the school is reopened. In the event of a pre-emptive closure details are contained in the template letter (*Principal’s Guide to Bushfires advising of pre-emptive Closure- Appendix A7*).
- The Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be physically removed from the school premises and website.
- All parties that were advised of closure (e.g. Bus Contractors, School Board, P&F) will be advised of reopening.

TYPES OF FIRE EVENT

In the event of a Total Fire Ban, catastrophic weather warning, or bushfire, the **Bushfire Plan** will be activated.

1. Total Fire Ban

In the event of a Total Fire Ban the **Bushfire Plan** will be invoked: (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures).

This means:

- you must not light or use any fires in the open air;
- all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping are not allowed;
- 'hot work' such as metal work, grinding, welding, soldering, gas cutting or similar is not allowed unless you have an exemption; and
- You must not undertake any other activities that may start a fire.

The DFES advice is that chainsaws, plant or grass trimmers or lawn mowers can be used during a total fire ban in suburban or built up areas which are cleared of flammable material, but not in bushland or other areas where their use is likely to cause fire.

It is also necessary to ensure:

- The equipment or machinery is mechanically sound.
- All reasonable precautions are taken to prevent a bushfire starting.

It is recommended postponing the activity altogether to minimise the risk of fire.

If a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban has not been implemented by your Local Government Authority you are able to harvest or move vehicles across paddocks for agricultural purposes.

Individuals could be fined up to \$25,000 or jailed for 12 months or both if the Total Fire Ban is ignored.

For information on activities that can or cannot be carried out during a Total Fire Ban visit www.dfes.wa.gov.au/totalfirebans/Pages/TotalFireBanWhatCantIDo.aspx.

If the information required is not available from the website, telephone the Total Fire Ban Information Line 1800 709 355.

This information is also available by visiting www.dfes.wa.gov.au.

2. Catastrophic Fire Danger

The catastrophic Fire Danger Index (FDR) has been added to the Australia-wide FDR system since the 2009 bushfires in Victoria. If a fire starts in catastrophic conditions, its impact potential includes death or injury to people and destruction of buildings.

| Category | Fire Danger Index (FDR) | Action |
|--------------|-------------------------|---|
| Catastrophic | 100+ | Schools on Bushfire Zone Register closed on instruction from Deputy Director General Schools, through Regional Executive Director. School to invoke communication plan and cancel bus services. |
| Extreme | 75-99 | Monitor DFES website |
| Severe | 50-74 | Monitor DFES website |
| Very High | 32-49 | Normal school operations |
| High | 12-31 | Normal school operations |
| Low-Moderate | 0-11 | Normal school operations |

In the event of a catastrophic weather warning the **BP** will be invoked as per the flow chart at Appendix B (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures and sample letters).

2.1 Planned Pre-emptive Closure

The office of CEWA will contact Principals of affected schools directly when a planned (pre-emptive) closure is to be invoked in a particular part of the State. The lead time for a planned closure varies depending on weather patterns, but every attempt is made to give Principals as much notice as possible to prepare written documentation for parents. Schools should have telephone trees in place to provide this information at short notice or after hours.

Once advised that your school is to undertake pre-emptive closure, you need to notify your school community that a closure is imminent. The Principal needs to send letters to parents and provide each staff member with a memo that clearly states when the closure is planned to occur and that the school is on standby. It may be that between declaration of the closure and the day of closure, weather conditions improve sufficiently to remove the need to close and the school can therefore stand down its pre-emptive closure plans. The Executive Director confirms with the Principal the final decision to close the school no later than **4.30 pm** the day before the planned closure. If weather conditions become less severe after **4.30 pm**, the closure goes ahead regardless, in order to provide a level of certainty to parents.

The DEFS is the final authority on advice about which schools are in danger and the level of risk at the time. The Executive Director makes the final decision as to whether or not a planned closure of public schools is to proceed, based on DFES's advice.

2.2 During a Planned Closure

The Principal must stay informed of current fire danger rating and any fire activity by monitoring local media (local radio, especially the ABC, and television) and by regularly checking for updates with DFES.

2.3 Re-opening School

Parents need to know when the Catastrophic FDR has been downgraded and that it is therefore safe for their children to return to school after a planned closure. The letter to parents contains advice on how parents can monitor the situation. The school will need to put communication plans in place, such as placing a notice on the school website and providing a number for parents to call for information about the reopening of the school. Consideration needs to be given to how parents who do not have internet access or who have diverse needs (e.g. multicultural, special needs) will be provided with information.

3. BUSHFIRE

In the event of a bushfire threatening the school, the school will notify DFES and the **Bushfire Plan** will be invoked by way of the school siren (or hand held bell).

3.1. Bushfire- Watch community

During a bushfire, Emergency Services provide as much information as possible through a number of different channels.

There are three levels of warning:

- **ADVICE;**
- **WATCH AND ACT;** and
- **EMERGENCY WARNING.**

These change to reflect the increasing risk to life and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives. Download a copy of DFES bushfire warning table from: http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/bushfire/BushfireChecklists/DFES_Bushfire-Warning_Levels.pdf

If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, activate the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* immediately.

3.1.1 Advice

If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, activate the Emergency Management Plan immediately. Notify DFES Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point.

An **ADVICE** provides you with information on a bushfire that is not threatening lives or property, but may be causing smoke near the school. Turn off evaporative air conditioners. Regular checks of the school are to be undertaken paying special attention to the evaporative air conditioners.

3.1.2 Watch and Act

A **WATCH AND ACT** message tells you the fire conditions are changing and there is a possible threat to lives and the school. The Principal's decision to leave or relocate students, staff and visitors off site should be based upon assessment of known information and current circumstances, including advice from emergency services or observations at the time of the event.

3.1.3 Emergency Warning

An **EMERGENCY WARNING** is the highest level of warning and indicates **immediate** danger. In some circumstances it may start with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) to get your attention as the fire is about to arrive. SEWS is a distinctive sound that is broadcast immediately prior to major emergency announcements on radio, television and other communication systems. SEWS tells people 'you need to listen- there is an emergency in your area and you need to take action now'. It is used like a siren and is strictly controlled for use by an authorised hazard management agency only.

The School should activate their Bushfire Plan in regards to evacuation. Consideration will include; location of fire and ability to travel safely to the selected relocation point, notify DFES Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point. The Principal is to liaise with the Regional Executive Director. **If it is not safe to evacuate, direct all students, staff and visitors to the school's Safer Location.**

3.1.4 All Clear

An **ALL CLEAR** is issued when the threat has passed and the fire is under control. Fire-fighters will still be working to put out the last remnants of the fire and making the area safe, so it is important to remain vigilant in case the situation changes. It may still not be safe to leave to school to return home. Emergency services will advise when school students and/or staff can be released to go home.

3.2. Bushfire- Act

3.2.1 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is open

3.2.1.1 Evacuation Procedure

School to evacuate off-site on advice from DFES

The school has identified an off-site safer location which has been approved – the town oval. It will take approximately 14 minutes to move to this location.

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors and windows must be closed and **evaporative air coolers turned off.**
- Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes, liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of DFES or emergency services who will then take over.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

Parent Access

Parents will be informed when and where to pick up students upon advice from the school or through DFES or Incident Controller.

3.2.1.2 Safer Location Procedure – if evacuation is not possible

School to remain on site on advice from DFES.

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All classes in transportable buildings to be relocated to the school library. See Appendix 3 for a sample safer location evacuation plan.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors, roof vents and windows must be closed and **evaporative air coolers turned off.** Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes and liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of the DFES or emergency services who will then take over.

- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

Parent Access

Parents advised **NOT** to pick up students and to monitor local media for specific access information.

3.2.2 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is closed

If CEWA makes a decision on school closure based upon advice the Principal will be informed of closure.

The Principal is to notify staff and parents using the emergency contact list (see Appendix 4 for a Sample Communication Plan) of Closure.

The CEWA Incident Controller will, in consultation with the Executive Director, identify alternative accommodation of students and staff if required. The Department's Media Unit will utilise media outlets to make public announcements of school closures, temporary alternative accommodation and contact number(s) for further information.

CEWA will inform the Principal when the school can reopen.

3.2.3 Recovery

The priorities for the school during recovery are

1. Health and Safety of individuals;
2. Social Recovery;
3. Physical (Structural) Recovery.

General

- When possible, return to normal routine.
- Attend to staff and student welfare, considering counselling support.
- Provide information for families and the community of any impact (including if there is none) on the school and school routine following the bushfire.
- Undertake a check of any equipment or stock used and arrange replacement/replenishment.
- Address any physical damage to the school, isolating areas if required and if necessary relocate to alternative accommodation. Contact the Resources Team at CEWA to commence repairs. CEWA should be advised of any damage caused by the bushfire.
- Attend to security if necessary
- Manage Administrative details including insurance.

Debrief

- What worked, what didn't?
- Was anything overlooked?
- What could you and your staff do better next time?
- Should roles change?
- If changes are made, incorporate them into the formal plan and advise the appropriate parties including staff and other authorities.
- Share the knowledge with other schools.
- Test the revised bushfire management plan and procedures.

For further details and contacts refer to the Recovery Section of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* and *The Principal's Guide to Bushfire*

APPENDICIES

1. COMPLIANCE: Bushfire Preparation Checklist

Bushfire Preparation Check List for the Summer Months

Principals should be thoroughly familiar with their current plans for dealing with bushfires. All staff members should be aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plans.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Tick when task has been completed, or write NA if not applicable(☐)

Evidence

| | | |
|--|-------------|---|
| <p>The School <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> provides a plan for dealing with bushfires.</p> <p>Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register must also have a separate stand-alone bushfire plan.</p> | <p>Tick</p> | <p>Crisis Management.doc Evacuation Plan.pub Evacuation Policy.doc St Joseph's School Bushfire Plan 2017-2018.docx</p> |
| <p>Principal is thoroughly familiar with the schools current <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> and where applicable the stand-alone bushfire plan.</p> | <p>Tick</p> | <p>St Joseph's School Bushfire Plan 2017-2018.docx Crisis Management.doc</p> |
| <p>Students, staff, relief staff and parents/carers have been made aware of the school bushfire plan.</p> | <p>Tick</p> | <p><i>Staff meeting 11/10/2017 and newsletter sent to parents/carers with bushfire information 13/10/2017</i></p> |
| <p>The bushfire plan has been reviewed prior to the bushfire season (Term 3 each year) and a copy forwarded to the local education regional office.</p> | <p>Tick</p> | |
| <p>Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register have appointed a school emergency liaison officer. The appointed liaison officer may be required to relocate during an emergency, to the Incident Control Point to provide an information conduit between the school and the controlling agency.</p> | <p>Tick</p> | |
| <p>The principal and liaison officer have established contact with local emergency services including DFES, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (if relevant), the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), local government representative or Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) (if there is one for the area), and incorporated their feedback into the plans (as required).</p> | <p>Tick</p> | |

| | | |
|---|------|--|
| Emergency Services, outlined above, are informed of your nominated pre-determined Safer Location as part of your Emergency Critical Incident Management Plan procedures. | Tick | |
| Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register understand the bushfire warning system (refer DFES website page 8) and the Emergency Alert telephone warning system (www.emergencyalert.gov.au). | Tick | |
| Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register need to incorporate key bushfire messages in the curriculum. | Tick | |
| Schools know how to turn off evaporative air conditioner units, including awareness of the location of the switches, and how to close roof vents. | Tick | |
| Communication plans (include telephone tree – see Appendix D1) are in place for directed evacuation or planned closure | Tick | |
| Evacuation drills practised prior to the start of the bushfire season and at least once per term during the bushfire season. The bushfire season typically runs from late October to April in southern WA and June to late October in northern WA. Note this is a minimum of three drills per year. | Tick | |
| School has a correctly functioning emergency warning or alert system. | Tick | |
| Emergency communications equipment is available e.g. mobile telephones, hand-operated fire alarm (portable siren), portable radios and spare batteries. | Tick | |
| Class rolls and visitor register (or equivalent) are readily accessible in an emergency to account for students, staff and visitors. | Tick | |
| First aid equipment is available and staff members trained in first aid have been identified. | Tick | |
| Evacuation kit should be checked at least once per term. | | |
| Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses (notification of contractors if pre-emptive closure is invoked; availability of buses if off-site evacuation is required) | Tick | |
| Procedures are in place to restrict use of machinery (e.g. angle grinders, mowers, and machinery with internal combustion engines) in close proximity to bushfire fuels where they may start a fire on severe fire danger days. | n/a | |
| A Safer Location within the school building should be identified and prepared in the event that an off-site evacuation is not possible (Refer page 4 of the Guide). | Tick | |
| Asset Protection Zone (APZ) (20 metre radius), cleared of all rubbish, long dry grass, bark and flammable materials. | Tick | |

2. CATASTROPHIC EVENT

In the event of a catastrophic weather warning the **Bushfire Plan** will be invoked as per the following (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures and sample letters)

CEWA alerts Principal that a Catastrophic FDR has been declared and to prepare school for pre-emptive closure

Principal activates school action plan, including:

- notifying parents, bus contractors, community kindergartens, tenants, community hirers, out of school hours child care programs, school contractors and construction workers that the school will be closed on the day concerned;
- posting school closure signage; and
- appointing two members of staff to attend from 8.00 am to 10.00 am on the day of the school closure (**only** if safe).

Principal and Executive Director monitor FDR for the next day

PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSE TO Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating

Principal notifies school community of impending planned closure, to be confirmed 4.30 pm on the day prior

Closure to be invoked?

Principal notifies school community closure will not go ahead – school will open as normal

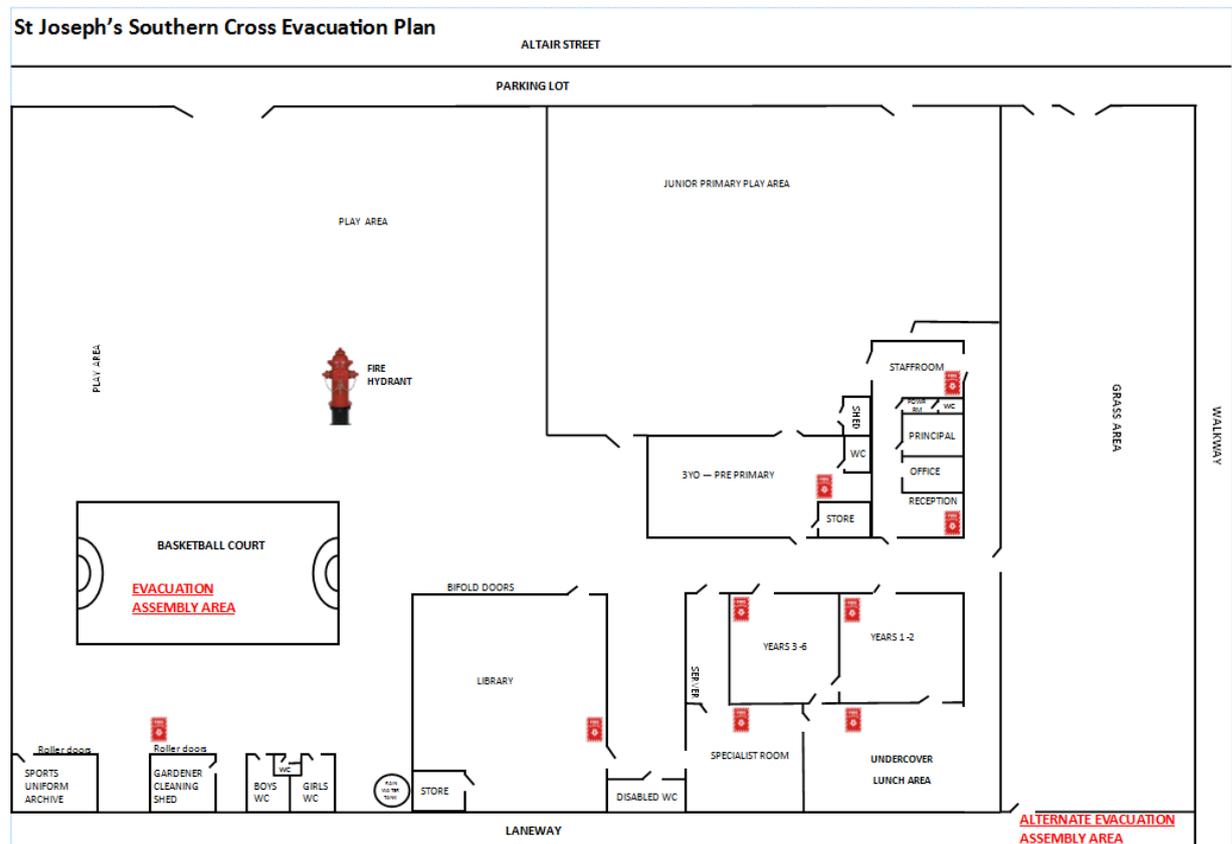
NO

YES

Principal liaises with Executive Director to determine if school reopens next day

Principal notifies

3. School Site Plan and Evacuation Routes



EVACUATION PROCEDURE

Should there be a cause to evacuate the premises, the following procedure will be followed:

Warning will be given as follows:

- (a) The school bell will be rung continuously to draw attention, or
- (b) A whistle will be blown continuously or
- (c) The school evacuation alarm of 1111 will be set off.

GENERAL RULES FOR ALL EVACUATIONS:

1. Teachers with children and class lists (teachers leave last) will vacate the room in an orderly manner and follow the shortest route to the basketball court. If that area is seen to be unsafe, teachers with children are to move to the parking area adjacent to Centaur Street.
2. Class teachers must ensure the evacuation route is safe and free of suspicious objects.
3. When clear of danger, teachers call the roll and ascertain absences. Report anyone not accounted for to the Principal immediately. On no account is the teacher to leave the children in his/her care and return to the school looking for missing children. This is to be done by the Principal.
4. It is the responsibility of the teachers conducting Library, Chinese, Music, Physical Education, support or any other planned activities to follow the same procedure as above and to take the children in their care to the basketball court. The class teacher will get the register only if it safe to do so.
5. Teachers with classes outside must go immediately to the basketball court.
6. All school personnel will follow the same procedure. This includes the office staff.
7. The Registrar will check all the rooms in the Administration area (including the toilet). He/she will contact emergency services, collect first aid equipment, class list and any other pertinent records. If the Registrar does not work on this day, this becomes the responsibility of the Principal.
8. The Principal will check all school buildings and toilets. If he/she is teaching, the Teacher Assistant working in the 123 classrooms will become responsible for that class.
9. Staff who have organised visitors to their rooms are responsible for assisting them to the school basketball court should an evacuation take place. Any other visitors will be the responsibility of the office staff.
10. Once the school has been declared safe, instructions will be given to each teacher to return with the children to the classroom.
11. PLEASE NOTE: On no account are fires to be fought. First responsibility is to safely evacuate the children in your care.
12. The main concern of each classroom teacher is the safety of the children.

FIRE:

If a fire is noticed, alert others in the immediate area then evacuate the building.

4. Communication

Appendix D: Communication Plan

