



PC009	Bushfire Management Policy
Purpose	This policy regulates management of bushfire hazards.
Authority	Dept of Fire and Emergency Services. Guide to the Registration Standards and Other Requirements for Non-government Schools section 4 level of care
National Principles for Child Safe Organisations	Principles: 8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
Policy	JCSA recognises that bushfires may pose a serious threat to its staff and students, particularly when they are on excursions in remote, bushfire-prone areas. This Bushfire Management Policy seeks to promote safe practices for staff and students regarding reasonably expected/foreseeable bushfire threats.
Delegation	Principal
Related Policies	Camps and Excursions (I002) Emergency, Crisis, and Critical Incidents (PC005) Risk Management (PC008)
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Authorised by: Chairman	
Date:	
Author/Reviewer:	C Brearley



VERSION MANAGEMENT

Version	Date published	Changes Made	Author of changes
1	Nov 2014		
2	Nov 2017		
3	Oct 2019		
4	Sept 2023	Add version management table, NPCSO, emergency WA website update, Add Pre-emptive close section & Emergency Services WA bushfire warning stages.	C Brearley



PC009

Bushfire Management Procedure

Procedures:

The Department of Education's document titled "*Principals Guide to Bushfire*" (Updated October 2022) provides valuable information in regard to bushfire preparation and response. Whilst not 100% applicable for JCSA, this document provides very good documentation and guidance for staff and management at JCSA.

Duty of Care

The school has a duty to take reasonable care for the safety of students under its supervision. The school will respond to all or any elements of foreseeable risk and take reasonable steps to ensure that the health of the student is not put at risk.

Parental Responsibility

If an unforeseen event occurs which increases the risk of bushfire to any staff or students, concerned parents are encouraged to contact the school to ensure that staff / management are aware.

In the event of a Bushfire emergency in the school's locality, parents will be notified by the school if a Temporary School Closure, or other action, is to take place.

Parents to refer further enquiries to DFES.

School's Responsibility

Although the JCSA building and grounds are not located in an area of significant risk, we are still located within a region that may be classified as a "bushfire prone area".

Incorporating key bushfire messages into the curriculum may assist in educating students on the risks and management options in regard to bushfire.

Bushfire preparation and response checklists are available in the "*Principals Guide to Bushfire*".

Emergency services WA issue evacuation orders using the four bushfire warning stages below. In the unlikely event of a bushfire threatening the JCSA building, and grounds; staff and students are to evacuate the site as per the current evacuation procedures. The onsite "Safer Building Location" is nominated as the Albany Free Reformed Church Hall.

Advice:

An advice message provides information on a bushfire that is not threatening lives or property but may be causing smoke near the school.

The principal will:

- Ensure any roof vents/windows or evaporative air conditioners are closed/turned off.
- patrol the school regularly to check for bushfire activity.



Watch & Act:

A watch and act message means the fire conditions are changing and there is a possible threat to lives and the school.

The Principal must:

- Prepare to evacuate the school, or prepare to move students, staff, and visitors to the “Safer Building Location” (Albany Church).
- Access bushfire information from official sources and make informed decision to stay onsite or to evacuate.

Emergency:

An emergency warning is the highest level of warning, meaning there is immediate danger. An emergency warning may start with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) to get your attention.

- The principal will either evacuate the school, or prepare to move students, staff, and visitors to the “Safer Building Location” (Albany Church).
- The schools actions should be reported to the DFES Communications centre.

All Clear:

The danger has passed, and the fire is under control, but stay alert in case the situation changes.

- It may not be safe to return to school. The principal will advise staff and parents when it is safe to return.

In the event of bushfire “*watch and act*” and “*emergency*” warnings covering the homes or route homes of students while they are at school, the school will respond in the following way:

- Students who walked/cycled, etc. to school are not allowed to go home. Parents are asked to pick up their child/ren or provide an alternative.
- Parents of students who caught a bus are asked if the bus route is still open, and, if it isn't, to pick up their child/ren or provide an alternative.

Advice from Emergency Services overrides the above response.

Pre-emptive close

Government schools are required to follow pre-emptive close procedures in very high or extreme fire danger areas when the Fire behaviour Index (FBI) is 75 or higher. AISWA is advised when Government schools in the area will be pre-emptively closing and will notify the school. It is expected that the school will also close in these circumstances.



Risk Assessment

The existing Emergency, Crisis and Critical Incidents Policy establishes guidelines for the identification, assessment, and solution of perceived risks in the context of the school environment. This includes assessing potential risks, assessing student capabilities, the qualifications of staff/helpers, transport etc. See the *PC005 Emergency, Crisis, and Critical Incidents Policy* for more detail.

The level of risk of exposure to bushfire for JCSA staff, students, buildings, or grounds is considered to be “low”. JCSA is located in an urban/suburban area which is devoid of native vegetation. Several small pockets of vegetated parklands are located within 1km of the school but are also considered to be low risk. Approximately 77 Hectares of undeveloped “future urban” zoned land is located over 1km east of JCSA. However, this is separated by a very dense residential development which would considerably slow any possible fire threat and therefore also deem this to be low risk.

Numerous excursion destinations may at certain times present a “Extreme Bushfire Hazard” risk due to their location, density of bush and lack of access due to being in areas where there is literally one road in and out. Refer to the Excursions Policy and Procedure for excursion requirements.

Excursions

As per the “*1002 Camp & Excursion*” policy, prior planning is an essential component of a successful and safe activity or excursion. Part of this planning may include preliminary visits and a risk assessment. Staff and students should be adequately prepared before the excursion.

Staff are to take the following measures in the days prior to undertaking an excursion:

- Monitor weather forecasts and determine expected temperatures and wind speed/direction could attribute to risk in the specified destination. Consultation with DFES, Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) and location specific Bush Fire Brigade (as per City of Albany contact details available at www.albany.wa.gov.au) is recommended.
- Consider alternative options for excursion destinations, especially in the possible event of having to cancel.
- Ensure that they have means to monitor bushfire activity and weather alerts (local media - especially ABC Local Radio; DFES – 13 3337 or www.emergency.wa.gov.au.) when at the excursion site.
- Ensure they have resources to contact JCSA or emergency services if/as required.

Recommended references

[The Principal's Guide to Bushfire - Policies - Department of Education](#) – Updated October 2022

Department of Fire and Emergency Services: www.dfes.wa.gov.au or Phone 9845 5000

City of Albany, Volunteer Bushfire Brigades: www.albany.wa.gov.au or Phone 9841 9349

For Fire Behaviour Index (FBI) - [Bureau of Meteorology Western Australia Fire Danger Ratings](#)

For District Fire Danger Ratings - [EmergencyWA Fire Danger Ratings](#)

Alerts & Warnings - <https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au>. Can also be downloaded as a mobile device app.

Further information may be sought from the Department of Education, Department of Fire and Emergency Services and the City of Albany’s Volunteer Bush Fire Brigades.