

# RED HILL CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL



## Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness POLICY and PROCEDURES

### Purpose

Red Hill Consolidated School is located in a high-risk bushfire zone and is listed a Category 3 risk on the Bushfire At Risk Register. The purpose of this policy is to communicate the actions and procedures that take place at school to reduce the risk of bushfire as well outline the steps taken on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger or during a bushfire emergency situation.

### Scope

This policy applies to all students, staff and visitors at Red Hill Consolidated School.

### Key Points

- Red Hill Consolidated School is listed a category 3 risk school on the Bushfire At Risk Register
- Red Hill Consolidated School is closed on a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger
- Red Hill Consolidated School conducts regular maintenance and activities to reduce the threat of bushfire and grassfire.
- Red Hill Consolidated School's nominated Shelter In Place is the school's gymnasium.

### Bushfire at Risk Register (BARR)

Schools around Victoria are at varying risk from bushfire and grassfire. The Department of Education's Bushfire At Risk Register (BARR) records schools and early childhood services that are most at risk from bushfire. The BARR can be viewed at: <https://www.vic.gov.au/bushfire-risk-register-barr#searching-the-register>

Entry onto the BARR considers:

- Bushfire Prone Area designation
- Bushfire Management Overlay
- Victoria Fire Risk Register
- Surrounding terrain and fuel type exposure

Schools on the BARR are further categorised based on their bushfire risk. This categorisation determines actions for individual schools on days of elevated fire danger. Red Hill Consolidated School has been declared a Category 3 risk school. Category 3 schools are required to carry out extensive activities and procedures to reduce the risk of bushfire and grassfire. **Category 3 schools are closed on days of Catastrophic Fire Danger.**

## Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness Activities

Red Hill Consolidated School is required to carry out regular activities to reduce the risk to the health and safety of our community and to our buildings over the summer period.

The following maintenance schedule is in place:

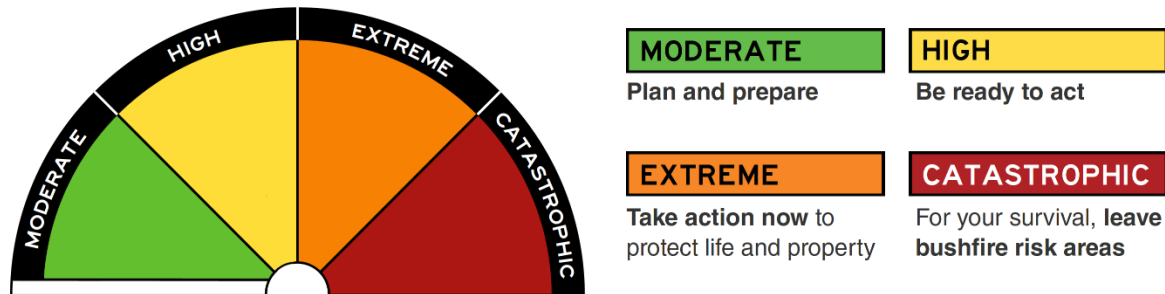
- Regular monitoring and removal of vegetation and other flammable materials within close proximity to our buildings, evacuation routes and emergency service access. For more details on specific requirements please visit:  
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bushfire-and-grassfire-preparedness/guidance/vegetation-management>
- Trees or branches overhanging buildings and sheds have been removed or trimmed to a height of 2 metres from building rooflines and 2 metres clear of buildings
- All stockpiled leaves, prunings, dead limbs and trees and other combustible materials have been removed from the site before the fire danger period is declared.
- Routine slashing of grass over the fire danger period, targeting undergrowth, buildings and evacuation routes and school boundary.
- Gutters cleared twice yearly.
- Routine Essential Safety Measure audits/assessments of all emergency safety equipment and means of egress, including:
  - Fire hoses, extinguishers, hydrants and pumps
  - Emergency lighting
  - Building exits and evacuation routes
  - Evacuation diagram compliance
  - Shelter In Place
- The following routine measures take place in preparation of an emergency:
  - Regular whole school evacuation drills (one per term), simulating different emergency scenarios, for the purpose of training staff and familiarising students to our evacuation procedures as well as identifying any weaknesses
  - Leadership attend annual Bushfire Season briefings, provided by the Department of Education
  - Staff training
  - Staff OH&S inductions, including BARR requirements
  - Annual CFA training drills held at Red Hill Consolidated School
  - Regular review of our evacuation diagrams indicating exit points, evacuation routes and fire safety equipment
  - Regular OH&S meetings that review bushfire and grassfire preparedness procedures and policy
  - Regular communication to families through school newsletters and emails
  - The Guide for planting in Bushfire Prone Areas is used when replanting at Red Hill Consolidated School
  - Vegetation Management Plan developed and assessed by accredited consultant.

## Fire Danger Ratings

A simplified, Australian wide Fire Danger Rating system was introduced in 2022. The bushfire ratings help inform communities the potential level of danger should a bushfire start each day according to

their district/Local Government Area (LGA) and local weather conditions. Red Hill Consolidated School is located in the Central District. Fire Danger Ratings can be checked at:

<https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/warnings-restrictions/fire-bans-ratings-and-restrictions/total-fire-bans-fire-danger-ratings>



### Days of High and Extreme Fire Danger Rating

On days of High and Extreme Fire Danger, Red Hill Consolidated School will implement the following measures:

- Maintain a heightened state of awareness and readiness
- Monitor the Victorian Emergency App and Website for local threats
- Be prepared to enact our Emergency Management Plan
- Maintain open lines of communication with the CFA
- Student and staff attendance rolls are printed at 9:30am in case of power supply issues.
- Staff directed to leave school site as soon as students have departed/accounted for/bus services complete.
- If appropriate, follow the procedures in our Extreme Weather Policy

Families may choose to activate their own bushfire plans on days of Extreme Fire Danger. This can include keeping your child/ren home and leaving the area. We encourage all families to do so to communicate this with the school.

### Days of Catastrophic Fire Danger (Previously known as Code Red)

Red Hill Consolidated school will be closed on all days declared Catastrophic Fire Danger. The school does not operate on these days. No students or staff can attend school on these days.

On Days of Catastrophic Fire Danger, Red Hill Consolidated School will implement the following measures:

- Notify parents and carers that a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger has been declared and the school will be closed by email and SMS as soon as authorised by the Department of Education. This will most likely be communicated the day before a school closure. Once communicated, the school will remain closed even if the Fire Danger Rating improves.
- Cancel school camps and excursions. Update the Student Activity Locator with any cancellations or changes.
- Communicate the school's closure with all school third parties, including bus companies, crossing supervisors, Outside Hours School Care etc.
- Cancel all bus services.
- Answering machine messages will be changed to inform callers of the school's closure due to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating being declared.

- School gates will be locked.
- Posters placed on gates informing our community that the school is closed due to a day of Catastrophic Fire Danger.

## Shelter in Place

Red Hill Consolidated School has identified a number of evacuation points, including our Shelter In Place (SIP) Building which is our school's gymnasium. Our SIP will be used as last resort temporary shelter until the emergency has passed. Our gymnasium has undergone significant upgrades and receives regular maintenance and Essential Safety Measures assessments to qualify as a SIP. More information about Shelter In Place requirements can be found at:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/shelter-place-buildings/policy>

## Fire in the Landscape

If there is a fire in close proximity to Red Hill Consolidated School a decision may be made to activate our Emergency Management plan and evacuate to our Shelter In Place. The Emergency Management Plan documents the roles, responsibilities and procedures in the case of an emergency. This plan is reviewed and updated annually.

The decision will be based on the proximity, location and size of the threat, weather conditions, and advice from CFA and the Department of Education.

If the decision is made to evacuate to our SIP, the following actions will be taken:

- Emergency Management Team convene
- '000' called if immediate emergency assistance is required
- Evacuation alarm sounded with instructions to evacuate to the SIP
- Department of Education Critical Incident/SSU informed
- First Aid and medication packed and taken to the SIP
- Student/staff and visitor rolls printed and taken to the SIP
- Emergency contact lists take to the SIP
- Gas supply turned off
- Toilets checked by staff during evacuation
- Mark all rolls to ensure all students, staff and visitors are present
- Close all SIP doors, windows and shutters
- Advise parents and carers that the school is sheltering in place via SMS (if comms available) and that they should NOT come to the school to collect their children. If parents arrive, encourage parents to remain with their children in the SIP
- Locate (and if appropriate distribute) Emergency kit, fire equipment and water bottles (stored in SIP)
- If safe to do so, relocate any cars parked in the gymnasium car park
- Wait for emergency services to arrive to provide further information and advice
- Once in the SIP, any decision to leave the SIP will only take place under the direction of emergency services
- School must maintain a record of all actions/decisions undertaken and times

## Related Policies

Department of Education: Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness Policy:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/bushfire-and-grassfire-preparedness/policy>

Department of Education: Shelter In Place Building Policy:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/shelter-place-buildings/policy>

Department of Education Emergency Management and Critical Incident Planning Policy:

<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/emergency-critical-incident-management-planning/policy>

RHCS Emergency Management Plan

RHCS Extreme Weather Policy

## Further Resources

CFA Website: <https://www.cfa.vic.gov.au/>

Victorian Emergency Website: <https://www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond/>

**This policy was last updated in February 2024 and is scheduled for review in February 2025.**