

BUSH KINDER EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

Mandatory – Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Rangeview Pre-School to cancel Bush Kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and ensure that parents/guardians understand this framework
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a Bush Kinder session
- Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions
- Impress upon parents/guardians that they may collect their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Rangeview Pre-School is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children and staff participating in the Bush Kinder program
- Facilitating a bush kinder experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across as broad a spectrum as possible and without compromising the safety of the participants
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well-informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions
- Facilitating effective and timely communications with parents and guardians regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather
- Respecting the right of parents/guardians to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management and Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day to day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the Rangeview Pre-School Bush Kinder programs and activities.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Rangeview Pre-School's Bush Kinder Program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing children to experience nature and its elements across the four seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a bush or natural environment. However, extreme weather conditions may arise periodically that can put the wellbeing and safety of the children and staff at risk. This policy provides the parameters within which the pre-school can make determinations to cancel Bush Kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform parents/guardians. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and details procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

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Legislation

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010:*
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011:*
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety; and Quality Area 3: Physical Environment
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007*

The most current amendments to listed legislation can be found at:

- Victorian Legislation – Victorian Law Today: <http://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/>
- Commonwealth Legislation – Federal Register of Legislation: <http://www.legislation.gov.au/>

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM): Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Various smartphone apps use BOM data in their weather forecasts and warnings.

VicEmergency App: The VicEmergency app is the official Victorian Government app for access to community information and warnings for all types of emergencies in Victoria.

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 BOM'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
Forecast temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 34 degrees Celsius or greater • Note – there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (refer to Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organised activities in Whitehorse Bushland Reserves will not be held if the BOM has issued a severe weather warning for damaging winds in the area for the designated time of the activity. A warning is triggered for predicted sustained winds in gale force of 63km/h or more and wind gusts of 90 km/h or more
Forecast of electrical storm activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast
Flooding at or near the Bush Kinder site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On flooding advice from the BOM / Vic Emergency App

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BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On warning issued by the BOM
Extreme Fire Danger/Total Fire Ban/Code Red Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organised activities in Whitehorse Bushland Reserves will not be held on Total Fire Ban Days

In addition to the above, the Rangeview Pre-School committee has the discretion to cancel a session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the extreme weather determinants as listed above have not been met. Weather warnings from the BOM or VicEmergency App for the area would also necessitate cancellation.

Further, the City of Whitehorse has the authority to override the Pre-School's committee determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should they deem the Bush Kinder site to be at risk.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Service policies

- Acceptance and Refusal of Authorisations Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Emergency Management Policy
- Excursions, Incursions and Special Events Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Curriculum Development Policy
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Interactions with Children Policy
- Occupational Health and Safety Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Bush Kinder Delivery and Collection of Children Policy
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy
- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy



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PROCEDURES

GENERAL

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Implementing an Extreme Weather Policy that gives clear guidelines to staff and parents/guardians about extreme conditions that will necessitate the cancellation of a Bush Kinder session, and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- Ensuring all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request
- Bringing any relevant issues to attention of the Committee and/or Whitehorse Council in a timely manner

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, Teachers, Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or mobile phone app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session
- Making a determination to conduct or cancel the Bush Kinder sessions the next day based on the weather forecast in consultation with the City of Whitehorse
- Providing an SMS text, StoryPark announcement or email to parents/guardians/staff detailing the cancellation status of the Bush Kinder session – alerts will be sent where possible, by 6pm the day before the session, or by 8am on the day of the session
- Referring to the BOM or VicEmergency App if weather conditions change during a Bush Kinder session. Moving the group to the Visitor/Information Centre if necessary. Providing an SMS text to parents/guardians advising them that the Bush Kinder session has been cancelled and to collect their child.
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions
- Reminding parents/guardians of the policy content as required.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Reading and familiarising themselves with this policy
- Ensuring they are comfortable at all times with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If for whatever reason, a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session and collect their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during a session
- Making certain they carry a mobile phone with them and be contactable at all times whilst their child's Bush Kinder session is in progress
- 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)
- Bringing any relevant issues to the attention of both Kinder staff and the committee.

IN THE EVENT OF FORECAST OR EXTREME WEATHER

In cases of forecast extreme weather, Rangeview Pre-School will make the decision to cancel the Bush Kinder program for the sessions affected.

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In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', the Rangeview Pre-School Committee has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes, and the City of Whitehorse also has the authority to cancel a session due to extreme weather conditions at Yarran Dheran Nature Reserve.

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the weather forecast is monitored via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior to and the morning of the Bush Kinder session
- Having their mobile phones turned on to receive any notifications from staff about the status of the weather and Bush Kinder session
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of a cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions. Staff will notify parents/guardians of session closures, where possible, the evening prior to the session, or where conditions change, the morning of the session.

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, Teachers, Educators and other staff are responsible for:

- Keeping their mobile phone on them at all times on the day of the session to receive updates in relation to extreme weather forecasts which may necessitate cancellation
- Making a determination to conduct or cancel the Bush Kinder sessions the next day or the morning of based on the weather forecast
- Providing an SMS, StoryPark notification or email to parents/guardians of the status of the Bush Kinder session.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Being mindful of the impending weather forecast for upcoming Bush Kinder sessions, and understanding that a cancellation may occur if weather conditions may be extreme or dangerous
- Keeping their mobile phones with them at all times on the day before and day of a Bush Kinder session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.

IN THE EVENT OF WEATHER BECOMING EXTREME DURING A SESSION

The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day-to-Day Charge, Teachers, Educators and other staff are responsible for:

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

Weather Condition	Staff Actions
Heat <i>Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke (refer Attachment 1 for symptoms and treatment) • offer water for hydration at regular intervals • limit time outside and schedule walk or more strenuous activities earlier in the session • provide opportunities for rest and to take shelter in shade establish activities in

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	<p>shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure application of sunscreen every 2 hours (refer to Sun Protection Policy) • ensure appropriate protective clothing is worn (refer Protective Clothing Policy for more information)
Rain / Hail / Cold temperatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary • ensure appropriate clothing is worn (eg waterproofs, gloves etc.) • seek shelter in heavy rain or hail (refer “Procedures for Relocation to a Safe Position” below)
Electrical storm activity / Lightning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • move children away from trees • seek shelter indoors (refer “Procedures for Relocation to a Safe Position” below) • refer Attachment 2 for Lightning Safety Fact Sheet
<p>High winds</p> <p><i>Risks include falling trees or branches, blowing particles (sand, dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder structures blowing down or away etc.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure structures and dangerous items are secure • seek shelter if necessary (refer “Procedures for Relocation to a Safe Position” below) • any equipment/structure must be moved by at least two staff/volunteers to minimise risk of injury • if the children are being moved, follow “Procedures for Relocation to a Safe Position” below

- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy and Incident and Emergency and Evacuation Policy must be followed.
- Contacting parent/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy, including contacting parents, calling an ambulance etc.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Collecting their child at any time during a session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

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PROCEDURES FOR RELOCATION TO A SAFE POSITION

Weather Conditions	Relocation Safe Zones
Hail, torrential rain	Seek shelter at Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre (refer to map at Attachment 3)
Electrical storm/lightning, extreme winds	Seek shelter at the Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre (refer to map at Attachment 3)

PROCEDURES FOR RELOCATING

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

- Blow whistle
- Keep children calm
- Ensure SISO iPad is carried in a staff backpack along with other necessary items such as medication
- Count all children and check them off against the SISO iPad to ensure all children are accounted for
- With the exception of the staff backpacks, leave all other Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected at a later stage
- En-route to the new location, calmly walk children in pairs, keep groups close together and ensure no child deviates from the group
- Teachers/volunteers are to be positioned at the front, middle and back of the group, and flanking the group where possible
- Notify emergency services if required
- On arrival at the Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for
- 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 during a Bush Kinder session there is an onset of extreme weather, the children will be evacuated as prescribed. Parents/guardians will be notified to collect their child from the Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre. There will be no session offered at the Pre-School in this instance.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, Rangeview Pre-school will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions, surveys and the Pre-School newsletter
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy
- Review the first aid procedures following an incident to determine their effectiveness



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- Regularly review the policy and Pre-School practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures
- Revisit the policy and procedures in light of the above as part of the service's policy review cycle, or earlier if required
- Notifying parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any changes to the policy or its procedures (Regulation 172 of the National Regulations) unless a shorter period is necessary due to a perceived or actual risk.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and treatments

Attachment 2: Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

Attachment 3: Bush Kinder site at Yarran Dheran Reserve

AUTHORISATION

The policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Rangeview Preschool on 1st August 2016.

REVIEW

DATE	NEXT REVIEW DATE (2 YEARLY)
19 Sep 2022	19 Apr 2023
9 Jun 2023	9 Jun 2025

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ATTACHMENT 1

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and treatments

Heat Illness

Heat exhaustion starts slowly and if not quickly treated can progress to heatstroke. In heatstroke, a child's temperature reaches 105° F (40.5° C) or higher. Heatstroke requires **immediate emergency medical care** and can be fatal.



Signs and Symptoms

Of heat exhaustion:

- increased thirst
- weakness
- fainting
- muscle cramps
- nausea and vomiting
- irritability
- headache
- increased sweating
- cool, clammy skin
- elevation of body temperature to less than 105° F (40.5° C)

Of heatstroke:

- severe headache
- weakness, dizziness
- confusion
- rapid breathing and heartbeat
- loss of consciousness leading to coma
- seizures
- may not be sweating
- flushed, hot, dry skin
- elevation of body temperature to 105° F (40.5° C) or higher



What to Do:

For a child with symptoms of heatstroke, **seek emergency medical care immediately**. In cases of heat exhaustion or while awaiting help for a child with possible heatstroke:

- Bring the child indoors or into the shade immediately.
- Undress the child.
- Have the child lie down; elevate feet slightly.
- If the child is alert, place in cool bath water. If outside, spray the child with mist from a garden hose.
- If the child is alert and coherent, give frequent sips of cool, clear fluids.
- If the child is vomiting, turn onto his or her side to prevent choking.



Think Prevention!

- Teach kids to always drink plenty of fluids before and during any activity in hot, sunny weather – even if they aren't thirsty.
- Make sure kids wear light-colored, loose clothing.
- Do not have your child participate in heavy activity outdoors during the hottest hours of the day.
- Teach kids to come indoors immediately whenever they feel overheated.



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Where to get help

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- Your doctor – if you, or someone you know, may be suffering from a heat-related illness
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Department of Health – Survive the heat brochure in community languages:
<https://www.healthtranslations.vic.gov.au/resources/survive-the-heat-brochure>
- Maternal and Child Health Line, Victoria Tel. 132 229 (24 hours)
- St John Ambulance Australia – for more information on first aid

Things to remember

- Heat-related illness can be prevented.
- Keep cool, avoid vigorous physical activity in hot weather, and drink plenty of water and other non-alcoholic fluids.
- Never leave children or pets unattended in a parked car.
- Seek medical assistance if a person shows any signs of heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Source: Kids Health <http://kidshealth.org>

Source: Better Health Channel, Victorian Government

<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/heat-stress-and-heat-related-illness>

Dehydration

Dehydration can occur if a child is not drinking enough fluids. Kids can also become dehydrated when a large amount of fluid is lost through vomiting, diarrhea, or both. In cases of dehydration, it's important to replenish fluid losses as quickly as possible.



Signs and Symptoms

Mild to moderate:

- tongue becomes dry
- few or no tears when crying
- rapid heart rate
- fussiness in an infant
- no wet diapers for 6 hours in an infant
- no urination for 8 hours in children

Severe:

- very dry mouth (looks "sticky" inside)
- dry, wrinkly, or doughy skin (especially on the belly and upper arms and legs)
- inactivity or decreased alertness and excessive sleepiness
- sunken eyes
- sunken soft spot on top of an infant's head
- no urination for 8 or more hours in an infant and 10 or more hours in a child
- deep, rapid breathing
- rapid or weakened pulse



What to Do:

Mild dehydration can often be treated at home. If the child has diarrhea but no vomiting, continue feeding a normal diet.

If the child is vomiting, stop milk products and solid foods and:

- Give infants an oral electrolyte solution (a solution that restores lost fluids and minerals) – about 1 tablespoon every 15-20 minutes.
- Give children over 1 year old sips of clear fluids such as an oral electrolyte solution, ice chips, flat non-caffeinated soda, clear broth, or ice pops – 1 to 2 tablespoons every 15-20 minutes.

Seek Emergency Medical Care if the Child:

- shows **any** sign of severe dehydration
- is unable to keep clear fluids down



Think Prevention!

- Frequent hand washing is key to avoiding many of the illnesses that can lead to dehydration.
- Encourage frequent, small amounts of fluids to avoid dehydration during illnesses.
- If vomiting occurs, use only clear fluids to rehydrate.



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ATTACHMENT 2

Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

LIGHTNING ACTION GUIDE

Source: Emergency Management Australia, Attorney General's Department

Be Prepared

1. Check with your local electrical contractor for advice on surge protectors and lightning conductors.
2. Have an emergency kit on hand, including a battery operated radio, torch and spare batteries.
3. Keep a list of emergency numbers handy.

Act Safe

If caught outdoors:

1. Seek shelter in a hard top vehicle or solid building.
2. Never shelter under a tree or a group of trees.
3. If far from shelter crouch down, don't lie flat.
4. If boating or swimming, leave the water immediately.
5. Avoid metal objects such as ladders, umbrellas, fences and clothes lines.
6. Secure pets in a safe place.

After the lightning

1. Keep your radio tuned to local media for updated weather reports and power outages.
2. Confirm location and safety of family members and immediate neighbours.
3. Check operation of essential household items and check fuse box for surge protection/fuse/circuit breaker impact

For further information contact your local State Emergency Service office.

www.ag.gov.au



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FIRST AID RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIGHTNING VICTIMS

Source: Department of Sport & Recreation, Government of Western Australia

Most lightning victims can survive their encounter with lightning, especially with timely medical treatment. Individuals struck by lightning do not carry a charge and are safe to touch in order to render treatment.

The following First Aid is recommended:

- **First**

Call 000 or nearest Emergency Service and provide directions and information about the likely number of victims.

- **Response**

The first tenet of emergency care is 'make no more casualties'. If the area where the victim is located is a high-risk area (mountain top, isolated tree, open field, golf course etc) with a continuing thunderstorm, the rescuers may be placing themselves in danger.

- **Evacuation**

It is relatively unusual for victims who survive a lightning strike to have major fractures that would cause paralysis or major bleeding complications unless they have suffered a fall or been thrown a distance. As a result, in an active thunderstorm, the rescuer needs to choose whether evacuation from very high-risk areas to an area of lesser risk is warranted and should not be afraid to move the victim rapidly if necessary. Rescuers are cautioned to minimise their exposure to lightning as much as possible.

- **Resuscitation**

If the victim is not breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If it is decided to move the victim, give a few quick breaths prior to moving them. Determine if the victim has a pulse by checking the pulse at the carotid artery (side of the neck) or femoral artery(groin) for at least 20–30 seconds. If no pulse is detected, start cardiac compressions as well. In situations that are cold and wet, putting a protective layer between the victim and the ground may decrease the hypothermia that the victim suffers which can further complicate the resuscitation.

For further information contact your local State Emergency Service office.

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ATTACHMENT 3

Yarran Dheran Visitors Centre

