



Update on our school's bushfire risk category and pre-emptive actions

School preparations for the bushfire season

Each year, we undertake a range of activities to ensure the safety of our school and to prepare for bushfires and grassfires.

An important part of this process is communicating to parents what will happen when certain fire danger ratings are issued to help ensure the safety of students and staff.

Our school had been previously assessed as a Category 3 school for 2024-25, however a recent review of our school's Shelter in Place location has deemed the building unsuitable as a temporary place of last resort in a fire.

Due to this, we have made some temporary changes to help keep our staff and students safe over the summer season.

I apologise for the inconvenience this may cause in the short term but the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students is, as always, our number one priority.

Please be reassured that the Victorian School Building Authority and the Department of Education are helping our school to identify a swift solution to this issue, and we will let you know as soon as we have a resolution.

Change to our school's Bushfire At-Risk Register Category

As a temporary measure to support the safety of our staff and students and to manage this risk while a new Shelter in Place building is identified, **our school has been reassessed to be a Category 0 school** - the highest fire risk category. This therefore lowers the threshold for pre-emptive action to reduce the risk of being caught in a fire in these conditions.

As a Category 0 school, we will action our pre-emptive plan for **relocation** on a day forecasted as **High fire danger rating as well as Extreme fire danger rating** in our **local government area (LGA), Latrobe City**.

On these days, we will relocate to Kurnai College University Campus at 53 Northways Road, Churchill. It will be your responsibility to drop off and pick up your child/children at the Kurnai campus on the days rated High or Extreme.

Please see the attached photos and map of where you will pick up and drop your child/ren off from on a day of Relocation Learning.

Our school will also **close** on a day forecasted as **Catastrophic fire danger rating** in **West and South Gippsland fire weather district**.

We will let you know when we are enacting our pre-emptive action plan by Compass and a text message as early as possible. Please be aware that no one will be on site on days where the school has enacted this plan.

We ask that you RESPOND to the text message so that we know it has been received. 😊

The message received on the day will be:

<p>Yinnar South Primary School will be RELOCATING to Kurnai College University Campus at 53 Northways Road, Churchill today.</p> <p>Parents are asked to drop students off at Carpark C from 8:45am onwards and pick up students 3:15pm.</p>	<p>Yinnar South Primary School will be as NORMAL today.</p> <p>See you all at school.</p>
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As part of preparing our school for the fire season, we have discussed these arrangements with our regional emergency management staff and updated our Emergency Management Plan.

Our school will inform you if these arrangements change.

What can families and the school community do to help us prepare?

- Ensure we have your current contact details, including your mobile phone numbers.
- Keep in touch with us by COMPASS and we will sms you when we have updates to share with you as we prepare for a relocation.
- Please contact the school 5169 1540 or email yinnar.south.ps@education.vic.gov.au with queries
- Make sure your family's bushfire survival plan is up-to-date and includes alternative care arrangements if our school is relocated due to elevated fire danger or closed due to a Catastrophic fire danger rating. Further information can be found on the [CFA's website](#).
- Action your family's bushfire survival plan if your own triggers are met. Our school community may be spread out across many areas and some families may be at higher risk than others. Your family's safety is critical, so please let us know if you are enacting your bushfire survival plan and if your children will be absent on these days.
- If your child is old enough, talk to [them about bushfires](#) and your family's bushfire survival plan.

You can find more information on emergencies, and preparedness actions here:

- VicEmergency app – that can be downloaded on your android and iOS mobile devices
- VicEmergency Hotline (1800 226 226)
- Website <https://emergency.vic.gov.au>
- Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/vicemergency>)
- Twitter (<https://twitter.com/vicemergency>)
- ABC local radio, Sky News and other emergency broadcasters

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the department's policy?

The Department of Education annually assesses the fire risk of all schools and early childhood services with the support of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). They are allocated a category of risk (categories 0 to 6). Schools and services that are categories 0-3 are published on the [Bushfire At-Risk Register \(BARR\)](#). Schools at some risk of bushfire and grassfire are published on the [Category 4 List](#).

The department's [Bushfire and Grassfire Preparedness Policy](#) requires schools at high risk of bushfire to enact pre-emptive action plans based on LGA-level fire danger forecasts. Conditions can vary significantly across the wider weather district, so using local forecasts helps us to respond appropriately to risks in our local area and maintain stability and educational continuity for our students and school community. This policy is consistent for all schools at high levels of risk and this approach is supported by emergency services.

The policy also requires that all schools and early childhood services on the BARR and the Category 4 list close when a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast in their fire weather district. All school bus routes which travel in or through a district with Catastrophic fire danger must also be cancelled.

Why do we use the LGA forecast?

When the Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) provides public fire danger rating forecasts, they use fire weather district areas. In Victoria, there are 9 fire weather districts, which include numerous Local Government Areas.

As conditions can vary significantly across a wider weather district, the department uses BoM LGA forecasts for some pre-emptive actions to respond appropriately to risks in the local area and maintain safe educational continuity for students and the school community. LGA forecasts are a subset of the weather district ratings and while not issued publicly, are provided to emergency services and government departments to support planning and operational activities.

This policy is consistent for all schools at high levels of risk and this approach is supported by emergency services, including the Country Fire Authority (CFA).

What do we do when our LGA has a different fire danger rating to the wider fire weather district?

As we respond to local conditions, there may be days during the fire season when our fire weather district, West and South Gippsland is forecast as High or Extreme fire danger rating, but our LGA is at a lower level of fire danger. On these days our school operations will continue as normal; however, we will be taking action in line with fire services' advice by:

- checking our Emergency Management Plan and taking any necessary preparedness actions
- actively monitoring our local conditions and warnings
- having plans and procedures in place for if a fire starts to support us to take immediate action.

While our school will continue to operate, we encourage our school community to consider their own [bushfire survival plan](#) and reassess any travel through bushfire risk areas. We encourage you to follow your family bushfire survival plan and the advice of emergency services.

There may also be days where our LGA is forecast as High or Extreme fire danger, but West and South Gippsland is not. On these days we **will** enact our pre-emptive action plan.

When will our school be closed due to Catastrophic fire danger?

Our school will also **close** on a day forecasted as **Catastrophic fire danger rating in West and South Gippsland fire district**.

Closure of the school due to a Catastrophic fire danger rating will be enacted when the BOM forecast and related public safety messaging is confirmed. Due to uncertainties in the forecast, the timing of this confirmation may vary. Information regarding potential or confirmed Catastrophic fire danger days will be communicated to you by Compass.

It is also important to be aware that:

- No one will be on site on days where the school is closed due to a forecast Catastrophic day.
- Out-of-school-hours care will also be cancelled on these days.
- All bus routes that travel through the Catastrophic area will be cancelled.

- School camps will be cancelled if a Catastrophic fire danger rating day is forecast for fire weather district in which the camp is located, or if the travel involves passing through areas that have Catastrophic fire danger.

Families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan on Catastrophic fire danger rating days. **On such days, children should never be left at home alone or in the care of older children.**

For those of us living in a bushfire prone area, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) advises that when Catastrophic days are forecast, the safest option is to leave the night before or early on the morning of the Catastrophic day.