

# CODE RED POLICY

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## Mandatory – Quality Area 2

### PURPOSE

This policy will provide a framework for:

- the development of specific Code Red practices and guidelines at Bendigo Pre-School
- raising the awareness of everyone attending Bendigo Pre-School about potential Code Red situations and appropriate responses.

### POLICY STATEMENT

#### 1. VALUES

Bendigo Pre-School is committed to:

- providing a safe environment for all children, staff and persons participating in programs at Bendigo Pre-School
- although Bendigo Pre School is not on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR), Bendigo Pre School has chosen to close the Pre School in the event of a Code Red Day, due to the potential threat of fire to the staff and families that travel to and from the Pre School
- where possible, three (3) days' notice of a planned closure will be provided. However, experience indicates that a Code Red fire danger rating day may be forecast at short notice. Parents and guardians should expect that in some instances less than three days' notice may be provided
- once the final decision to close is confirmed at 12 noon the day prior, this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. This will help limit confusion and help families plan for how their children will be cared for when their pre-school is closed
- when the Pre School is closed in response to bushfire risk, no one, including staff, contractors and other users, will be permitted on site
- on these Code Red days families are encouraged to enact their Bushfire Survival Plan – on such days children should never be left at home or in the care of older children.

#### 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Persons with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Persons in Day to Day Charge, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of Bendigo Pre-school, including during offsite excursions and activities.

#### 3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

##### Background

Schools, kindergartens and child care facilities determined by the DET to be at high-risk of fire danger were placed on a BARR. Inclusion on this register is a trigger for the school, kindergarten or child care facility to close on days declared by fire authorities as being Code Red.

The process of determining which schools, kindergartens and child care facilities are included on the register involves the facilities themselves, the Department's Regional Offices, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria, the Independent Schools Association of Victoria, the Municipal Association of Victoria and information from fire and emergency services.

Schools and services not on the Bushfire At-Risk Register will remain open, unless directly threatened by fire or another emergency. Bendigo Pre School has chosen to close the Pre School in the event of a Code Red Day, due to the potential threat of fire to the staff and families that travel to and from the Pre School.

Where possible, three (3) days' notice of a planned closure will be provided. However, experience indicates that a Code Red fire danger rating day may be forecast at short notice. Parents and guardians should expect that in some instances less than three days' notice may be provided.

Once the final decision to close is confirmed at 12 noon the day prior, this decision will not change – regardless of any changes in the weather forecast. This will help limit confusion and help families plan for how their children will be cared for when their pre-school is closed.

Early childhood services have a duty of care to all attending the facility including the children, staff, volunteers, students, visitors, and contractors. It is also a requirement under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* that employers provide a healthy and safe environment for all persons who access the service's facilities and/or programs.

#### **Legislation and standards**

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* including Regulations 97, 98, 168(2)(e)
- *National Quality Standard*, including Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

#### **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.

**Code Red:** These are the worst conditions for a bush or grass fire. Homes are not designed or constructed to withstand fires in these conditions.

**Country Fire Authority (CFA):** CFA respond to a variety of fire and emergency incidents. They are also involved in a range of other activities including:

- fire safety building inspections
- delivering community awareness, education and safety programs
- post-incident analysis and fire investigation
- fire prevention planning and land use planning at a municipal level.

**Duty of care:** A common law concept that refers to the responsibilities of organisations to provide people with an adequate level of protection against harm and all reasonable foreseeable risk of injury.

**Emergency:** Includes any situation or event that poses an imminent or severe risk to the persons at the education and care service premises e.g. flood, fire or a situation that requires the service premises to be locked down (National Regulations, page 5).

**Extreme:** Expect extremely hot, dry and windy conditions. If a fire starts and takes hold, it will be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving. Spot fires will start, move quickly and come from many directions. Homes that are situated and constructed or modified to withstand a bushfire, that are well prepared and actively defended, may provide safety. You must be physically and mentally prepared to defend in these conditions.

**Planned closure:** services identified as being at high fire risk and on the DET's Bushfire at-Risk Register will close on days determined to have a fire danger rating of Code Red by the Emergency Management Commissioner. Where possible, four to seven days' notice of a planned closure will be provided. Services not on the Department's Bushfire at-Risk Register will remain open, unless directly threatened by fire or another emergency.

**Severe:** Expect hot, dry and possibly windy conditions. If a fire starts and takes hold, it may be uncontrollable. Well prepared homes that are actively defended can provide safety.

## 5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

### Sources

- Country Fire Authority: [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)
- State Emergency Service: [www.ses.vic.gov.au](http://www.ses.vic.gov.au)

### Service policies

- *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Staffing Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

## 6. PROCEDURES

### The Approved Provider and Persons with Management or Control are responsible for:

- developing instructions for what must be done in the event of a Code Red Day
- ensuring all emergency equipment is maintained on a regular basis in accordance with requirements specified by regulations, such as the Australian Standards Building Code e.g. fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, evacuation kits, sprinkler systems and alarm or duress systems
- conducting checks of documentation and practices to ensure all requirements of this policy are being complied with
- engaging with the Country Fire Authority regarding fire safety awareness and training for the service, including demonstrations of fire equipment, basic fire safety, smoke alarm, fire blankets and escape plans
- ensuring that emergency contact details are provided on each child's enrolment form and that these are kept up to date
- ensuring all staff, parents/guardians, children, volunteers and students on placement understand the procedures to follow in the event of Code Red Day
- ensuring there are induction procedures in place to inform new staff, including casual or relief staff, of the Code Red Day policy and procedures
- staff not on pre-arranged leave will be paid for each day they are unable to work as contracted because their pre-school site is closed for a Code Red Day.
- staff will not be expected to apply for the leave as it will be assumed that all staff not on pre-arranged leave would be on Code Red Leave.
- notifying the Department of Education and Training by completing a notification on the National Quality IT System (NQAITs) within 24 hours of the closure of the Pre-School
- notifying the Early Childhood Division (funding team) on email address: [earlychildhood.improvement.LC@education.vic.gov.au](mailto:earlychildhood.improvement.LC@education.vic.gov.au)

### The Nominated Supervisor and Persons in Day to Day Charge are responsible for:

- testing alarms and communication systems regularly, such as on a monthly basis
- supporting the Approved Provider in the communication of closure with families and staff

### All other educators are responsible for:

- implementing the procedures and responsibilities in this policy
- providing support to children before, during and after Code Red Day
- providing feedback regarding the effectiveness of Code Red Day procedures to inform policy and procedures
- communicating with parents about Code Red Day procedures
- raising children's awareness about potential emergency situations and appropriate responses.

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- familiarising themselves with the service's Code Red Day policy and procedures
- providing emergency contact details on their child's enrolment form and ensuring that this is kept up to date
- reinforcing the service's Code Red Day procedures with their child
- following the directions of staff in the event of Code Red Day or when rehearsing emergency procedures.

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

**Evaluation**

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider will:

- review the policy to determine whether it adequately addresses Code Red Day situations
- regularly seek feedback from everyone affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness particularly following a Code Red Day
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required by legislation, research, policy and best practice
- consult with emergency services such as the CFA, to ensure the policy and procedures meet current best practices
- notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any change to this policy or its procedures unless a lesser period is necessary because of a risk.

**Attachment**

- Nil

**AUTHORISATION**

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Bendigo Pre-School on 09/11/2021.

**REVIEW DATE      OCTOBER 2022**