

RATIONALE

The safety of students and staff of Horizon Christian School is always considered a top priority but particularly so during periods of extreme bushfire danger and catastrophic weather conditions

PREAMBLE

Horizon Christian School is committed to caring for its community and providing and maintaining a safe work environment and therefore has developed procedures to ensure as far as is reasonably practical, the safety of staff, students and visitors from risks or injury caused by Catastrophic Weather and the threat of Bushfires.

POLICY STATEMENT

On a day declared 'Catastrophic' in the Mid North area:

- Department For Education (DFE) Schools and preschools in High Risk Fire areas will be closed.
- Each campus of our school and all school bus runs are located in the Mid North Fire Ban District and therefore if a Catastrophic Fire Danger Day is declared in this district, no buses will operate.
- Staff and students are not permitted to travel into the Mid North Fire Ban District.
- In the interests of the safety of Horizon families and students, it would be inappropriate to expect them to travel to and from school in a private vehicle on a Catastrophic Fire Danger Day.
- The Clare campus is in a high risk area and will be closed.
- The Balaklava campus (while not assessed as high risk) will also be closed.

Horizon Christian School will adhere to relevant policies, regulations and procedures local to the Balaklava and Clare districts and the surrounding areas where bushfires may be situated. This may include policies of local Councils through which our buses travel, the CFS or its Fire Command Centre procedures, as directed by SAPOL.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Principal and Executive responsible for induction will ensure that staff are aware of and adhere to this policy.

Horizon parents, students, and all staff from both Balaklava and Clare campuses will be made aware of this policy and its implications. Adhering to this policy will support the safety of all Horizon students including those catching buses.

BUSHFIRE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE SCHOOL

Before allowing any students to leave either campus in the event of a **known bushfire** nearby, the Principal (or delegate) will ensure that an assessment of the risks associated to the students, staff and school community is undertaken and that reasonable steps are taken to mitigate those risks.

Designated staff (members) will check the CFS incident website immediately prior to home group at the end of the day so that teachers can advise students of any affected bus routes or any fires. Bus drivers will be notified regarding any known fires.

In the event of a **known bushfire**, all students who would normally travel into the affected area will be detained at school, preferably inside. The Parents/ Caregivers and/or Emergency contacts will be contacted *if at all possible* to let them know of this arrangement. Parents are also encouraged to check our bus notification system (currently 'Roll Call') to determine the location of their child's bus.

Accurate information will be sourced to maintain the situation.

If the route has been declared safe by the CFS or SAPOL – buses may depart.

Parents/ Caregivers will collect students from school or if safe, at normal bus drop off points.

If notification about a fire comes after the bus has left, bus drivers will be notified not to leave students at their usual pick up/ drop off point, unless their adult caregiver or parent is present. However, adults should not wait at a bus stop if there is a fire in the area, as children will not be left on their own, but returned to school.

A designated staff member will monitor bus routes for the duration of the trip either on the CFS website or RSS feed on mobile phone.

A designated staff member will communicate with bus drivers in the event of a fire development in an area of a bus route.

Should bus drivers encounter a fire event in an area of a bus route, they are to:

- Take action to avoid the fire event and or reverse the bus route and return to the safety of the school. When taking this course of action, the school is to be contacted as soon as it is safe to do so when the reverse route has been started.

Parents/ Caregivers volunteering in the CFS or who cannot pick up their children should notify the school to make alternative arrangements.

In the event buses encounter a **bushfire during their route**, the driver may choose to divert from their usual route and return to school. Where possible drivers will contact the school to



BUSHFIRE AND CATASTROPHIC WEATHER POLICY

notify of their change and likely route to be taken. Parents/ Caregivers and/ or Emergency contacts will be contacted *if at all possible* to let them know which students have returned to school. (Parents are encouraged to check our bus notification system (currently 'Roll Call') to determine the location of their child's bus). Drivers should not drive through smoke if at all possible.

As instructed by the CFS, parents are strongly encouraged to listen to new bulletins for Fire Danger Index updates and to make arrangements for their children as necessary to avoid them being at *home alone if the index forecast is at Very High (25-49) or above.*

PARENT/CAREGIVER RESPONSIBILITY

Parents/Caregivers are responsible for keeping the school updated with all current contact, **and** emergency contact, phone numbers and addresses.