

BUSHFIRE AND CATASTROPHIC (CODE RED) POLICY

RATIONALE

The safety of students and staff is to be regarded as top priority during periods of extreme fire danger 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 Extreme Weather or Bushfires.

POLICY STATEMENT

The *(Code Red) Policy* applies for school days subject to Catastrophic Weather conditions as reported by the Bureau of Meteorology and the CFS.

DECS schools and preschools in High Risk Fire areas will be closed on these days.

Travelling through a bushfire risk area can be very dangerous.

- Our school and all school bus runs are located in the Mid North Fire Ban District and therefore if a Catastrophic Day is declared in this district, no buses will operate.
- On a day declared 'Catastrophic' in the Mid North Fire Ban District, 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 on a Catastrophic Fire Danger Day.

Therefore, while Horizon Christian School has been assessed as a LOW risk school, not located in a recognized bushfire prone area, it will be closed on days declared 'Catastrophic' in the Mid North Fire Ban District.

Horizon Christian School will adhere to relevant policies, regulations and procedures local to our area and the surrounding areas where bushfires may be situated. This may include policies by the Wakefield Regional Council, other local councils through which our buses travel, the CFS or Fire Command Centre procedures, whenever necessary or practicable.

MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

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

Horizon parents, students, bus drivers, the Balaklava Community Children's Centre, Balaklava Primary School and High School will be made aware of our policy and procedures and its

implications. Adhering to this policy will support the safety of all students catching buses who live outside the town area.

BUSHFIRE IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE SCHOOL

Before allowing any students to leave Horizon in the event of a **known bushfire** nearby, the Principal or Executive 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 control 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 on any affected bus routes or any fires. Bus drivers will be notified regarding any 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 – 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 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 and who cannot pick up their children should notify the school to make alternative arrangements.

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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 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 RESPONSIBILITY

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