



## CODE RED DAY FAQ

### What is a planned closure?

Schools identified as being at the greatest risk of bushfires will be pre-emptively closed on days determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner as having a Code Red Fire Danger Rating.

### Why are we pre-emptively closing schools?

The Department's priority is the safety of its staff, students and children. On a Code Red day all facilities on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register will be closed.

### Who makes the decision to close a school?

The decision to pre-emptively close schools and children's services is made by the Department, based on a Code Red day being determined by the Emergency Management Commissioner.

### How will I know if my school or children's service is likely to close this fire season?

Schools and children's services considered to be at risk have been included on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register and informed of their status on the Register.

### How much notice will I have if my school is going to be closed?

It is intended that families will be provided with as much notice as possible of a planned closure. However, if unexpected weather patterns are experienced, closures may happen at short notice. The final decision to close a school will be confirmed no later than 1.00pm the day before the planned closure. Schools are expected to communicate planned closures to families.

Families are encouraged to ensure that their bushfire survival plan always includes alternative care arrangements for children in the event of a planned closure. No child should be left at home alone or under the supervision of older children.

### Who will tell me that my school will be closed?

You will be directly advised by your school. Information will also be published on their website.

### What happens if the forecast changes?

If the Bureau of Meteorology downgrades the risk forecast in the days leading-up to a planned closure, the closure may be cancelled and the school will be allowed to remain open. The final decision to pre-emptively close a school will be confirmed no later than 1.00pm the day before the planned closure. Once the decision to close has been confirmed, there will be no change – regardless of improvements to the weather conditions the following afternoon or overnight. This will help limit confusion and provide time for parents and guardians to make alternative care arrangements for their children.

## **What should my school-age child do if their school is closed?**

Families are encouraged to ensure that their bushfire survival plans include alternative care arrangements for children in the event of a planned closure. Given the expected severity of the weather conditions, children should not be left unattended or under the supervision of older children.

## **Is it likely that my school will be closed for consecutive days? If yes, how will I know?**

It is possible that schools will be closed for consecutive days. Information about ongoing closures will be published on the Department's closures page. Where possible, schools will contact families directly to confirm their ongoing closure(s).

To get warnings and find out what's happening, listen to ABC local radio, call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240 667, go to [cfa.vic.gov.au](http://cfa.vic.gov.au), and/or check the FireReady telephone application.

## **On average, how many days does the government predict that schools will need to close due to Code Red days?**

While we cannot predict the exact number of days, it should be noted that there has not been a determined Code Red day since January 2010.

## **When my school is closed, will any staff remain on site?**

No. The safety of staff and children is our main priority. Schools have been advised that no-one is to remain on site when their facility is closed due to high-bushfire danger risk.

## **Will there be times when my school is closed but another school not far away remains open?**

Yes. If your school is on the Bushfire At-Risk Register then it will close on Code Red fire danger days. Schools not far away may remain open because they are not on the Bushfire At-Risk Register.

## **Can I keep my child away if I'm concerned about the risk of fires - even if my school or children's service remains open?**

Yes. If your family decides to enact its bushfire survival plan, the most appropriate place for your child may be with you and your family, and not at school. You must advise your school as soon as possible of your child's absence.

## **My child travels by bus to school. Will bus routes be closed on Code Red days?**

Similar to Code Red facilities that pre-emptively close on determined Code Red days, bus routes servicing these schools will also be cancelled on Code Red days. Bus routes from schools not on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register that enter high-risk areas will be pre-emptively closed as well.

## **Will school off-site activities (e.g. camps and excursions) continue to operate on high-bushfire risk days? What happens if my child's off-site activity is threatened by fire?**

Yes, off-site activities will continue throughout the year as they are an important part of school programs. However, off-site activities in high bushfire risk areas affected by a predicted Code Red day will be cancelled or rescheduled. Your school will assess the likely threat of fire when organising off-site activities during the summer fire season. If an off-site activity is threatened by fire, your school will enact its emergency management plan.

# What have schools on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register done to prepare for the summer fire season?

Schools and children's services on the Department's Bushfire At-Risk Register have:

- Reviewed and updated their emergency management plans and submitted them to their region
- Held staff training sessions and drills with students and children
- Been offered training in emergency management planning
- Undertaken works, where required, around their facilities to manage vegetation

## What else can I do?

- Ensure that your school has your current emergency contact details
- Review and update your family bushfire survival plan
- Keep in touch with your facility
- If a Code Red Day is put in place when your child is already at school, **DO NOT** just turn up at the school, await details from the school on what to do. Sometimes the school is the safest place for your child. Hundreds of parents arriving to take children will cause chaos.
- Look out for more information about activities your local community is planning
- Go to [www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au) or call 1800 240 667 for more information