

BUSH KINDER EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

NQS: Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a frame work around which well-informed decisions may be made by Wilson Street Kindergarten staff to cancel/re-locate bush kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and ensure that parents understand this framework.
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a session.
- Provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session.
- Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Wilson Street Kindergarten is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children participating in the Bush Kinder program.
- Facilitating a bush kinder experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across as broad a spectrum as possible and without compromising the safety of the participants.
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well informed decisions to be made regarding weather conditions.
- Facilitating effective and timely communication to parents regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather.
- Respecting the right of parents to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to, parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Wilson Street Kindergarten.

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Wilson Street Kindergarten's Bush Kinder Program is preschool education for children held exclusively outdoors. It is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. Children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a bush or natural environment.

Extreme weather conditions may arise periodically which can put the wellbeing and safety of the children and staff at risk. This policy provides the parameters within which the kindergarten can make determinations to cancel bush kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*
- *Education and Care Service National Law 2010*
- National Quality Standard
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

4. DEFINITIONS

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM): Australia’s national weather, climate and water agency. Website www.bom.gov.au, iPhone app available.

Extreme Weather: Weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightening, wind or heat. The risk to individuals’ wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology’s forecast conditions. Bush kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of the following conditions occur:

WEATHER CONDITION	EXTREME WEATHER DETERMINENT CAUSING RELOCATION
Forecast Temperature	35°C or greater and/or kindergarten teacher decided that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder. Note: There is no pre-set minimum temperature. Appropriate clothing should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast Wind Speed	In excess of 45km per hour and kindergarten teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder, based on a final assessment at the site
Forecast of Electrical Storm Activity	Thunder / Electrical storms forecast
Flooding of Landcox park around Bush Kinder site	On inspection of the area by the teacher and if no suitable alternative can be found within the Landcox Park area
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and/or excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of meteorology

In Addition to the above, Wilson Street Kindergarten has the discretion to relocate a session/s if it views the weather to be poor for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the weather determinants in the above table are not reached, this may include an excessively cold day. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area may also necessitate relocation.

5. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Victorian Government “Better Health Channel website

Kindergarten policies

- Excursion & Regular Outing Policy
- Bush Kinder Delivery & Collection of Children Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Spider and Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- Incident, Illness, Trauma & Illness Policy
- Clothing Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Learning through Play Policy
- Learning Spaces Policy
- Child Safe Policy

PROCEDURES

In the event of forecast extreme or bad weather

In the case of forecast extreme weather (see definition above), Wilson Street Kindergarten will make the decision to relocate the Bush Kinder program back to home kinder (11 Wilson Street, Brighton) for the session effected.

The Committee is responsible for:

- Ensuring an extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation/relocation of a bush kinder session/s exists.
- All parents being aware of this policy and are provided with access to the policy.

Staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session and making a determination to cancel/re-locate or conduct the bush kinder sessions the next day based on the weather forecast.
- Providing notice to parents and staff of the status of the Bush Kinder session/s as follows:
 - By broadcast email
 - Note that a bush kinder session may be cancelled at **short** notice or any other time by broadcast email based on updated weather information.
- Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions.

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are comfortable at all times with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If for whatever reason, a parent feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session or collect their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during the session.
- Ensuring that they regularly check emails for late cancellations.
- Ensuring their child is wearing suitable clothing for the weather conditions and ensuring a change of clothes is provided (Refer Protective Clothing Policy).
- Ensuring they carry a mobile phone with them and be contactable at all times while their child's Bush Kinder session is in progress.
- Reading and being familiar with this policy.
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee.

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session

In addition to the responsibilities listed above, staff are responsible for:

- Undertaking the following actions in each of the weather conditions listed in the table below;

WEATHER CONDITION	STAFF ACTIONS
Heat – Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke. (see Attachment 1 for symptoms and treatments) • Offer water for hydration at regular intervals. • Establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade. • Ensure application of sunscreen every two hours. • Ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats.
Rain/Hail/Cold – Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary. • Ensure appropriate clothing is worn including waterproof clothes, hats, coats, gloves scarves etc. • Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail.
Electrical Storm activity / Lightening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move children away from trees. • Seek shelter in the toilet block. • See attachment 2 for lightening safety fact sheet.
High Winds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure. • Move children away from trees. • Seek shelter in public toilet area if necessary.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In children are being moved follow the relocating to safe position instructions below.
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- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Illness policy and Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness policy must be followed.

Parents are responsible for:

- Collecting their child at any time during the session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions.

If the weather during a Bush Kinder session becomes extreme enough for the session to be cancelled and parents notified it will not be re-located back to home kinder.

Procedures for Relocating to a Safe Position

In the event of extreme weather where shelter is required it will be in the public toilet area adjacent to the Bush Kinder area.

If conditions necessitate evacuation from Landcox Park, follow procedures in the Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy.

If the Bush Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position in response to the weather conditions, the following procedures are to be followed by staff (with the assistance of volunteers):

- Keep children calm.
- Ensure sign-in sheet is in the teacher's backpack along with other necessary items such as medication.
- Count / check off against the sign in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Leave Bush Kinder gear at the site, with the exception of the teacher's backpack – all other gear can be collected later.
- En route to new location (see below for appropriate locations), calmly walk children in pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group.
- Teachers/adult volunteers to be positioned at the front and back of the group, and flanking the group where possible.
- Notify emergency services if required.
- On arrival at safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities, following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site.
- If the weather does not look like it will pass soon, a broadcast SMS will be sent to the class Rep who will then contact the other parents.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the proprietor (committee) will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children participating in the Bush Kinder program (This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual parent survey).
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Review the centre's actions in response to extreme weather conditions.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Attachment 2 – Lightening Safety Fact Sheet

Attachment 3 – Bush Kinder site map

AUTHORISATION

Endorsed by the Wilson Street Kindergarten Committee of Management on the 8th October 2020.

REVIEW DATE

This policy will be reviewed every three years and is next due for formal committee review in Term 3 2023, unless deemed necessary earlier.

Attachment 1 – Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Source: Victoria Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

Heat Exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke. Warning signs may include:

- Pale complexion and sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Muscle cramps, weakness
- Dizziness, headache
- Nausea, vomiting
- Fainting

What to do:

- Go to a cool area and lie down
- Fan if possible
- Drink cool water if not vomiting
- Remove outer clothing
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths
- See a doctor

Heat Stroke is a life-threatening emergency. It occurs when the body is unable to prevent its temperature rising rapidly Symptoms may include:

- Same symptoms as heat exhaustion except sweating stops
- Mental condition worsens, confusion
- Seizure
- Stroke-like symptoms or collapsing
- Unconsciousness

What to do

- Call an ambulance - **phone 000**
- Get the person to a cool area and lay them down
- Remove clothing
- Wet skin with water, fanning continuously
- Position an unconscious person on their side and clear their airway

Attachment 2 – Lightning Safety Fact Sheet

Source: Victorian State Government – Education and Training (www.education.vic.gov.au)

If Thunder happens within 30 seconds of lightning, then the storm is within 10 kilometres of your location. Lightning safety experts consider this the strike danger zone and advise people to follow the 30/30 rule.

The 30/30 rule

Follow the precautions outlined below when thunder is heard within 30 seconds of a lightning flash and wait for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard to resume your activity. If you're unable to take shelter inside, find the safest accessible location and stay there until the storm has passed.

General precautions:

- Stay away from metal poles, fences, clothes lines etc.
- Never ride horses, bicycles or drive in open vehicles.
- If driving, slow down or park away from trees, power lines or other objects that may be damaged by storm activity.
- Stay inside metal-bodied (hard top) vehicles or caravans but do not touch any metal sections.
- If undertaking water activities, leave the water immediately.
- If boating go ashore to shelter as soon as possible. (A bridge or high jetty may offer immediate protection.)
- Discard all metal objects.

If shelter is near-by:

- Seek shelter in a hard top vehicle or solid building. Avoid small structures or fabric tents.
- Keep clear of windows.
- In the case of Bush Kinder – seek shelter in the public toilet block

If shelter is not available:

- Crouch (alone, feet together), preferably in a hollow. Make yourself a small target.
- Remove metal objects from head/body.
- Do not lie down (the more of you that is in contact with the ground, the more 'attractive' you are to lightning) but avoid being highest object.
- If your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing on nearby rocks, fences etc, move immediately. At night, a blue glow may show if an object is about to be struck.
- Stay away from high and low points (hilltops, ridges & gullies), rock overhangs and shallow caves.
- Keep out of, and well away from, water bodies or watercourses.
- Make sure the group is aware of the Lightning Safe Position. This involves:
 - Squatting or crouching with knees drawn up and feet together, preferably on dry insulating material (eg. foam mat).
 - Keeping hands off the ground.
- Never shelter under tree/s.

First aid

- Apply immediate CPR to lightning victims until medical help arrives. (You won't receive a shock from the victim.)

Attachment 3 – Bush Kinder site map

In the event of extreme weather conditions that require shelter to be taken. The Staff will lead the children into the public toilet block or the café as shown below

