



BUSHFIRE AND GRASSFIRE POLICY

Be prepared, and prepare yourself, you and all your companies that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them. Ezekiel 38:7

Our Lady of Sion College is committed to ensuring the highest standards of care, safety, and welfare for our students. As a registered school, the College complies with the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA) requirements regarding bushfires and grassfire readiness. The College will comply with Bushfire and Grassfire guidelines as part of the requirements of registration under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006

1. INTRODUCTION

Bushfire and grassfires are not just a concern for schools listed on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR). Student transport to and from school, participation in off-site activities (including camps, excursions and sporting activities) and the risk of localised fire events demonstrate the importance of Bushfire and Grassfire preparedness for all schools. As a bushfire or grassfires may present a threat to student and staff safety, clear and consistent procedures are required for general preparedness for the fire season, different types of Fire Danger Ratings and unpredicted bushfire and grassfire threats.

This document has been designed to ensure that the College implements preventative strategies, and that students and staff are prepared to respond in the event of a bushfire or grassfire.

The preparation of this plan has been developed in accordance with the Our Lady of Sion College Emergency Management Plan (EMP) and Critical Incident Plan (CIP)

2. PRINCIPLES

- The College will maintain policies, procedures, and emergency management plans that support effective preparation for, and response to, bushfire and grassfire emergencies.
- Decisions regarding events and activities must be guided by careful risk assessment.
- Activities conducted during periods of elevated bushfire or grassfire risk will proceed only when they are necessary and appropriate mitigation measures are in place to ensure safety.
- Staff will be committed to maintaining clear and timely communication with parents/carers regarding the safe transport of students through affected areas.
- Staff must be equipped with clear guidance and support to respond confidently and effectively to emergencies.
- The College will ensure that staff understand and follow emergency procedures when off-site activities, excursions, or College events are impacted by an actual or impending bushfire or grassfire.



3. IMPLEMENTATION

3.1 The Risk Management Team is responsible for:

- Developing a thorough understanding of bushfire and grassfire hazard exposure and their associated risks
- Identifying and executing necessary actions for emergency management planning, preparedness, ongoing situational awareness, and response.
- Maintaining an Emergency Management Plan (EMP). The EMP must be reviewed at least annually and immediately after any significant incident.
- In the event of exposure to a bushfire or grassfire threat, have the authority to enact the Emergency Management Plan (EMP).
- Regularly monitoring emergency access to buildings and grounds
- Cancelling or redirecting all excursion or camp buses which travel through fire weather districts that are forecasted to be Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating
- Requesting and assessing the bushfire and grassfire response plans of third-party facilities or venues hosting school activities with oversight of the Risk and Compliance Officer.

3.2 All Staff will be responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with the EMP and Risk Management Documentation, and their responsibilities within them, including the procedures for bushfire and grassfire response
- Ensuring they participate fully in all drills conducted
- Undertaking training provided by the school for any specific roles they have as part of the EMP
- Ensuring all flammable materials within their area of responsibility are identified on the school chemical register and arranging for appropriate storage in flammable resistant cabinets
- Ensuring all building exits are continuously kept clear of obstructions via regular workplace inspections

3.3 All Teaching Staff (including student facing support employees) will be responsible for:

- Ensuring they are familiar with emergency procedures for each excursion they participate in and in particular, emergency procedures pertaining to camps.
- Ensuring that emergency procedures are explained to students as soon as practical after arrival at excursions/camps.
- Following the bushfire and grassfire evacuation plan of a tour or camp organisation.
- Following all documented risk mitigations and treatments during an excursion or camp.
- Supporting the Director of College Organisation for excursions or the Deputy Principal in charge of a camp, retreat or experience with the arrangement to notify students, parents/carers, buses, and venues that the event needed to be cancelled.



- Planning for the running of normal classes if the excursion/camp needed to be cancelled.
- Committing to training for specific roles and responsibilities in preparing for, monitoring and executing emergency bushfire and grassfire procedures.

4. STUDENTS TRAVELLING TO AND FROM OUR LADY OF SION COLLEGE

On days of total fire ban and when the College is aware that students and staff may travel through areas affected by bushfire or grassfires, the Risk and Compliance Officer will monitor Vic Emergency app, for Fire Danger Ratings and advice.

In the event it becomes unsafe for students to travel home from school, the College will:

- notify parents/carers that their child has been kept at school rather than allowing them to travel into an active bushfire or grassfire zone. (an SMS and/or phone call will be the preferred medium of communication)
- ensure students will be supervised by an appropriate number of staff until a parent/carer, or nominee has collected them.

5. CAMPLS, EXCURSIONS AND SPORTING ACTIVITIES

Staff members will need to review planned events ahead of forecast days of significant fire risk or total fire ban days and liaise with the camp/excursion/sporting provider and the Fire Rescue Victoria about whether the event should be cancelled.

If it is not cancelled, special fire safety precautions may be required, depending on the location. These must be acknowledged in the event's Risk Management document.

5.1 Preparation

Prior to undertaking an offsite activity in a bushfire or grassfire risk area or season, organising and supervising staff must ensure that there is adequate pre-excursion planning and emergency preparation, including preparing students for the likelihood of a bushfire or grassfire risk.

Preparation should include:

- entering the event into the Student Activity Locator (SAL) database, available on the CEVN website under Data Management, at least three weeks prior to the event. This will allow monitoring of activities should this be required in case of an emergency.
- regular checks of Fire Rescue Victoria website for alerts and warnings;
- activity based risk assessment to be completed by the organising staff member and reviewed by the Risk and Compliance Officer or member of the Leadership Team;
- having a school-based person monitor any developments and maintain regular contact with those off-site in the event of a developing situation;
- seeking advice from external activity organisers and checking their own bushfire and grassfire emergency preparedness;



- giving consideration to alternative sites/activities to reduce bushfire and grassfire risk/hazard.

Completion of lists of students, staff and others participating in an out of school activity and their times and location(s) must be provided to the designated contact persons on the school site.

5.2. Approval

Prior to the event, the approval of the College Organisation Team must be obtained.

Before approving, consideration should be given to:

- contribution of the activity to the school curriculum
- adequacy of the planning, preparation and organisation in relation to:
 - school policy and guidelines
 - information provided by community groups and organisations that specialise in the activity proposed
 - appropriateness of the venue bushfire and grassfire preparedness for school camps, offsite activities and excursions
 - consideration of seasonal and locality factors that might increase risks (i.e. bushfire and grassfire season)
 - provisions made for the safety and welfare of students and staff
 - experience and competence of staff relevant to the activities being undertaken
 - adequacy of student supervision.

5.3. Offsite activities emergency management

All excursion staff and, where appropriate, students need to be familiar with the procedures for dealing with emergencies on each excursion.

Emergency procedures pertaining to campsites should be explained as soon as practicable after arrival. If the fire rating is Severe or Extreme, or the day has a Total Fire Ban, a trial evacuation exercise may be carried out to familiarise staff and students with emergency evacuation protocols and ensure the procedures are appropriate.

On days of significant fire danger, the Leadership Team may need to cancel excursions at short notice. Where excursions are not cancelled, special fire safety precautions will be required.

When camps or excursion occurs in bushfire or grassfires districts the Risk and Compliance Officer will:

- Inform staff leading the excursion and update them with relevant information as required.
- contact the lead teacher on the camp, check local status and review risk and initiate treatments as required
- Monitor Vic Emergency app for emergency warnings relating to bushfire and grassfire incidents or contact the Victorian Bushfire Information Line.



5.4. Bushfire protocols in the event of a fire with a potential to impact offsite activities

When staff members have established that there is a fire in the vicinity, it will be necessary to confirm whether it poses a threat to the group and ensure that everyone in the group is together in one location.

- When safe to do so, contact a member of the College Leadership Team or Risk and Compliance Officer for support. The College may activate their EMP and /or CIMP.
- If this occurs during a camp, liaise with senior camp staff and emergency services personnel
- Follow the venue's Emergency Management Plan and directions of their staff or emergency services personnel
- If on excursion and communication is possible, telephone PARKS VIC and/or Fire Rescue Victoria Bushfire Hotline on 1800 226 226 to ascertain the location and severity of the fire. Make them aware of both the fire and the group's current location and planned travel route/times.
- Access ABC Radio 774 AM and Vic Emergency app or websites (Fire Rescue Victoria <https://www.frv.vic.gov.au>) and monitor information

5.5 Parent/carer contact

Parents/carers of affected students will be kept informed by a member of the Leadership Team and/or Director of Pastoral Care. Notes should be kept as to who, when and what was said when communicating to parents/carers. At times, a script can be helpful to maintain consistency of message. Parents of other students will be reassured that their daughter is not involved and everything is being done to help the group.

5.6 Support/After care

- Counselling will be set up for affected students by the College Counselling team.
- Staff will be offered support via the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).
- Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools (MACS) may be contacted, including Regional Consultant, who will also provide the College Leadership Team with support.
- A general media release will be prepared by the Leadership Team as required.
- Reports to other agencies will be undertaken as required e.g. WorkSafe

6. FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[Education and Training Reform Act 2006](#)

[Bushfire At-Risk Register](#)

OLSC Emergency Management Plan

OLSC Critical Incident Management Plan

Education Department Website - [Bushfire and grassfires readiness](#)

<https://www.frv.vic.gov.au>



7. BUSHFIRE AND GRASSFIRE POLICY STATUS AND REVIEW

STATUS OF POLICY	
College Leader Responsible	Director of Business, Operations, & Infrastructure
Approving Authority	College Leadership Team
Approval Date	July 2026
Date of next review	July 2030
Publication	Website; Staff Portal, Staff Handbook, Onboarding Documentation, Visitor Sign in

Record of Review

Details of Amendments	By Whom	Date
	Director of Business, Operations, & Infrastructure	July 2026