Hills Grammar

Bush Fire Procedure

Statement

ECEC aims to keep children, educator's, staff and visitors safe at all times. Therefore, in the instance of a bush fire, the Early Childhood Education Centre (ECEC) will act to protect the children, educator's, staff and visitors in line with the recommendations and instruction from relevant authorities.

Rationale

The aim of this policy is to outline the activities to be undertaken by the educators, children, families and visitors in the following circumstances:

- On days of Total Fire Ban.
- When there is a fire in the local district.
- When a bushfire is threatening or impacting Hills Grammar (HG) or the ECEC campus.
- During a period of recovery if a bushfire impacts HG or the ECEC campus.

During peak bush fire seasons, such as summer, educators and staff at ECEC will monitor the Fire Danger rating. In addition, the Nominated Supervisor emails the bushfire rating in the on call email each morning.

Should the rating be above High, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person will monitor the situation in line with the process in our region, such as via the internet or radio, to keep aware of the situation.

Trees will be trimmed around the buildings. Educators will inspect the ground at the beginning of spring and the HG Maintenance Team will arrange for any lopping of branches if necessary. In line with this, gutters and roofs will be cleaned regularly and kept free of leaves.

Each room's Emergency Backpack will be organised and stored in an easily accessible position. This kit will include:

- Emergency contact details for each child
- Emergency telephone numbers
- First Aid Kit
- Gloves
- Evacuation rope

The kit will be checked regularly to ensure detailed equipment are up to date.

Families, educators and staff are encouraged to download the App "Fires Near Me" and to check it regularly for status updates and to follow this information.

Very High, Severe, Extreme or Catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings

- On days where the Fire Danger Rating is Very High, Severe, Extreme or Catastrophic, ECEC will inform families by posting a warning near the reception area where families walk in.
- Children will be transitioned throughout the day at ECEC as usual.
- All educators will monitor conditions when outside. Educators will also check that no art and craft is hung outside.
- Educators and staff at ECEC will check that all hazards are removed from passages and walkways and nothing is blocking emergency exits.

- Families will be reminded to regularly check emails for updates if the rating is Very High or Above.
- Where possible, families, educators and staff will be informed of closure to ECEC by 4pm the day before. If this time frame is not possible, communication will be made as soon as possible.
- When the fire danger reaches Catastrophic, ECEC and Hills Grammar will temporarily cease operating until the rating lowers.
- Communication will be made via email, through a Seesaw post and or on social media as well as a sign placed on the ECEC gate.
- When the fire danger reaches Extreme, the children will not play outside.

Establishing threat Status

In the event a bushfire, natural disaster or other emergencies occurring during business hours at ECEC, the following procedure will be followed:

- The staff member, upon hearing the potential danger, will immediately contact the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person, who will confirm the nature of the event by contacting Hills Grammar Maintenance Department or the relevant agency (Rural fire Service, Police) and will evaluate the possible threat to ECEC.
- The Nominated Supervisor in consultation with the Approved Provider (Principal) or approved delegate will then determine if the nature of the incident is considered a possible, potential or direct threat.

Possible Threat

- The bushfire is not deemed a direct and immediate threat, however may warrant careful monitoring, ECEC Educators will continue to monitor events and remain in contact with the relevant agency until the threat has passed or the ECEC closes at 6:00pm and all children have been collected.

Potential Threat

- The bushfire is of an uncertain or potentially hazardous nature to ECEC children, educators, staff and visitors according to relevant agencies.
- The Nominated Supervisor will continue to monitor events and remain in contact with the relevant agency or agencies until the threat has passed or the centre closes at 6:00pm or all children have been picked up.
- In the event that the potential threat escalates, and families are required to pick their child up earlier than the 6:00pm closing time, the Nominated Supervisor will endeavour to contact all parents who are signed into the centre to update them and ensure that if required, they will be able to pick their children up.
- If there is an issue with a parent returning to pick up a child (ie. The usual route to the centre is closed due to fire) the Nominated Supervisor will ask the parent to nominate another person to pick up their child from ECEC.

Direct Threat

- If Nominated Supervisor / Approved Provider decide, based on the available information from the agency/agencies, that the bushfire is likely to, or has a high likelihood of impacting ECEC educators, staff and children, the Nominated Supervisor will:
    - Establish communications between the agency/agencies and the centre via phone, email or web updates and ensure that these communications are updated to all educators, staff and parents.
    - Meet with educators to discuss the situation.
    - The children will continue to be transitioned through their day as usual.
    - Follow all directives from relevant agencies – Police, Rural Fire Service.

- If a school closure has been authorised for Hills Grammar, the ECEC will also contact ACECQA to organise closure, ensuring where possible that all parents are notified the day before.

Bushfire occurring which allows for parental pickup

- If ECEC is open and the event occurs with time permitting, the Nominated Supervisor will communicate with ACECQA regarding closure. Parents will be notified to collect children from ECEC.
- Should parents not be able to collect their children, the nominated emergency contact on the enrolment form will be called to pick up the child.

Bushfire occurring which does not allow for parental pick up

- If the bushfire occurs during business hours and time does not permit parents to pick up their children, the Nominated Supervisor will communicate with ACECQA. Children will be moved to the Senior Library or another safe space in the Hills Grammar main Campus, and parents will be notified.
- Buses will be available to transport students from the School to a nominated safe place (such as, Dural Leisure Centre)
- Educators will ensure that a roll call is performed on exit of ECEC, arrival at the school, entry and exit on the buses and other appropriate times.
- Where possible, educators will take the rooms emergency backpacks, the children's medical plans and medication will be taken with them in addition to the ECEC mobile phone 0437 761 327. If time permits, the children's bags and possessions will be taken.
- If the plan requires children, educators, staff and visitors to leave the ECEC due to the bush fire, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person will take the ECEC spare Epipen and Asthma medication.
- Children will remain with ECEC educators, who will use the directives of the Department of Education and other relevant agencies as appropriate, ensuring that duty of care obligations continue to be undertaken
- The Nominated Supervisor will remain in contact with the parents provided that the mobile reception is available and it is deemed safe to do so.

Following the Event

- Relevant educators will undertake a debriefing of the fire emergency situation and the procedures undertaken. Educators will be requested to review their own roles, responsibilities and preparation before and during the crisis. The policy will be reviewed to ascertain its effectiveness.

Statutory Legislation and Considerations

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010

Education and Care Services National Regulations

Guide to the National Quality Standard ACECQA

Sources

Kenthurst Rural Fire Service https://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/

Castle Hill Fire Station https://www.fire.nsw.gov.au/page.php?id=9210&station=69

Review

This policy is reviewed by management, employees and families as required or when legislative requirements change. Families and staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review and will be given opportunity and encouragement to be actively involved.