

BUSH KINDER EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

NQS: Quality Area 2

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Surrey Hills Pre-school to cancel 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
- Impress upon parents that they may collect their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

POLICY STATEMENT

1. VALUES

Surrey Hills Pre-school 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 determinations 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 children, parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Surrey Hills Pre-school.

3. Background and legislation

Surrey Hills Pre-school Bush Kinder program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a bush or natural environment. However, 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 Services National Law 2010
- National Quality Standard
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

4. Definitions

Bureau of Meteorology: Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Website www.bom.gov.au various iPhone/iPad apps use BOM data (eg Pocket Weather)

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions. An extreme weather table is shown below.

Bush kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met:

WEATHER CONDITION	EXTREME WEATHER DETERMINANT CAUSING CANCELLATION
Forecast Temperature	Greater than 34 degrees Celsius. Note: there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days
Forecast Wind Speed	>40km per hour
Forecast Electrical Storm Activity	Thunder storm/ electrical storm forecast
Grounds Flooded near or at Bush Kinder Site	On inspection of the Bush Kinder site by educators or alert from Parks Victoria
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions or excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

In addition to the above, Surrey Hills Pre-school has the discretion to cancel a session/s if it views the weather to be poor for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the extreme weather determinants in the above table are not reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area may also necessitate cancellation.

Further, the has the authority to override the Surrey Hills Preschool Boroondara Park Ranger determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should he or she feel the Bush Kinder site be unsafe.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

5. Sources and related centre policies

Victorian Government 'Better health channel website Centre policies

- Excursion & Regular Outing Policy
- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness 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 Environment Policy

Procedures

General

The Committee is responsible for:

- An Extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a bush kinder session/s and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- All parents being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if 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 a session.
- Ensuring protective clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and ensure a change of clothes is provided (including shoes) (Refer to 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 the policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee

In the event of forecast extreme or bad weather

In cases of forecast extreme weather (see definition above), Surrey Hills Pre-school will make the decision to cancel the bush kinder program for the sessions affected.

In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', the Surrey Hills Preschool has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes, and the Boroondara Park Ranger also has the authority to cancel a session due to extreme weather conditions at the site.

Staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session
- Making a determination to cancel or conduct the bush kinder sessions the next day
- based on the weather forecast
- Providing a notice to parent and staff of the status of the Bush Kinder session/s as follows:
 - By broadcast email and/or SMS to the Bush Kinder group (again, by 6pm the day before the session, or by 8am on the day of the session)

- Note that a bush kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time by broadcast email and/or SMS 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

Parents are responsible for:

- 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
- Checking email for any notifications of session cancellation

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session

Staff are responsible for:

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

Weather Condition	Staff Action
Heat Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke and 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 where the UV rating is greater than 3. ● ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats. (Refer Protective Clothing Policy for more information)
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 (with assistance of volunteers) ● Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (eg, waterproof clothing, gloves) ● Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing, including coats, gloves, scarves etc ● Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail
Electrical storm activity / Lightning Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move children away from trees ● Seek indoor shelter [See Relocation Procedures below] ● See Attachment 2 for Lightning Safety Fact Sheet
High winds Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder structures blowing down/away etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure ● Move children away from trees ● Seek shelter if necessary ● Any equipment/structures must be moved by at least two staff/volunteer to minimise risk of injury ● If the children are being moved, follow the 'Relocating to a safe position' instructions below

In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Illness Policy and Incident and Medical Emergency Management Policy must be followed.

- Contacting parent in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy.

Parents are responsible for:

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

Procedures for relocating

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
- With the exception of the teacher's backpack, leave Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected later
- En route to Preschool building, 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

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the 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 centre survey.
- Review the centre's actions in response to extreme weather conditions
- Ask staff to share their experiences in cases of extreme weather (in cases where sessions were cancelled, and in cases where extreme weather arose during a session)
- 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: Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

Authorisation

- Endorsed by the Surrey Hills Preschool Committee of Management on 5 May 2020.

Review Date

- This policy will be reviewed every two years and is next due for formal Committee review in **May 2022**, unless deemed necessary earlier.

ATTACHMENT 1

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Victoria Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/heat)

Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke.

Warning signs may include:

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

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. It occurs when the body is unable to prevent the temperature rising rapidly.

The symptoms may be the same as for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no sweating, and the person's mental condition worsens.

They may stagger, appear confused, have a fit, or collapse and become unconscious.

What to do for heat exhaustion

- Get the person to a cool area and lie them down
- Fan if possible
- Drink cool water if not vomiting
- Remove outer clothing
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths
- Seek medical advice

What to do for heat stroke

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

ATTACHMENT 2

LIGHTNING SAFETY FACT SHEET

Source: Victorian State Government – Education and training

(<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/studentmanagement/excursions/Pages/outdooremergency.aspx>)

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.

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.
 - Spread group members out – about ten metres apart, but within calling distance.
 - 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.)