



**Mid North
Christian
College**

**Hope in
the Living
God**

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BUSHFIRE POLICY & PROCEDURES

POLICY

Mid North Christian College is not in an extreme area for bushfires; however, the College is at risk of being affected by bushfires due to its surroundings. Therefore, the College needs to be prepared in case of a fire.

Bushfire Preparation

Mid North Christian College has a bushfire policy and procedure to follow during such events. There is also a process in place to ensure that the College bus service has appropriate plans in place in the event of a bushfire affecting their usual routes.

The College practises its emergency procedures throughout the year and before the fire danger season and works hard to ensure that all staff and students understand what to do in the event of a bushfire emergency.

Total Fire Ban Days

During fire danger season, the CFS advises the public of total fire ban days. The rating is forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology each day and is an early indicator of the potential danger should a bushfire start. A fire danger rating is not a predictor of how likely a bushfire is to occur, but how dangerous it could be if it did occur.

There are three classifications of total fire ban – ‘severe’, ‘extreme’ and ‘catastrophic’ – and the College may be required to take special measures on these days to make sure that it is ready to respond to a bushfire threat (see Bushfire Threat Flowchart on page 6).

During a designated Fire Ban season, prior to the afternoon bus departure each day, the College’s Bus and Grounds Coordinator is to monitor the CFS website and/or Alert SA app to be updated on bushfire threats in the Mid North that may impact a College bus. The College is notified by text message about any fires that are within the College’s immediate vicinity - this occurs as soon as a fire is reported and prior to the fire appearing on any website. Information about bushfire threats is recorded on the Board Compliance List when relevant.

In the absence of the Bus and Grounds Manager, the Business Manager will monitor or designate a monitor to perform this task.

Catastrophic Fire Days

If the CFS elevates the bushfire threat to ‘catastrophic’ during the school day, the College will remain open unless a closure has been authorised by DfE or AISSA. Warnings will be constantly monitored, and buses will continue unless otherwise advised. Prevailing conditions may result in a bus route cancellation or diversion.

If the CFS gives advance notice of a forecast ‘catastrophic’ fire danger day, the College will be open unless advised by the CFS or AISSA to close, in which case a warning text and email will be sent the night before or in the morning to inform parents/caregivers of the status. The Principal will enact a communications strategy throughout the day, and all bus services will be suspended, with a text sent to parents/caregivers in the



morning. During a bushfire threat, the College will be closed to all staff, students, parents/caregivers, contractors, cleaners, and OSHC, and emergency procedures enforced.

The closure of the College on days of forecast 'catastrophic' fire danger enables families in the district to enact their personal bushfire survival plan more easily.

School Closures

When the College has been directed to close, no person is permitted to be on-site. This means that all services, including out of school hours care, and any scheduled activities by private user groups, will also be cancelled.

Notifying Parents and Caregivers

The College will inform parents and caregivers of potential bushfire threats as soon as the information is provided by the CFS. Contact may be made via telephone, text message or through social media and mobile applications.

Parents and caregivers should only take action in relation to official notifications from the College.

School Excursions and Camps

Teachers in the College need to take into consideration risks associated with the fire danger season when planning any excursions or camps. This includes monitoring daily weather conditions to determine if any planned activities will be cancelled due to fire danger ratings and including potential risks in a risk assessment.

If a Catastrophic rating is declared and/or if a bushfire is burning on the day of an intended camp or excursion and is likely to threaten the destination or bus transit route, the excursion or camp **must be cancelled**.

PROCEDURE

In the event of a bushfire emergency

If a bushfire is approaching, the safety of children and other occupants is the highest priority. In these situations, the College will:

- move students to a designated bushfire refuge or another suitable location;
- close windows and doors, and turn off the air conditioning;
- remain inside with students until the main fire front has passed;
- listen to local radio and monitor the CFS website; and
- liaise with the CFS and Emergency Management unit to manage the situation and keep informed about changing conditions.



Accessing emergency information

The College will liaise with emergency services such as the CFS website, Alert SA app, Metropolitan Fire Service (MFS), State Emergency Services (SES) and South Australian Police (SAPOL).

School Bus Action Plan

Pre-Bushfire Season Planning

Meet with Bus drivers prior to the start of Term 1 and Term 4 each year to discuss and ensure procedure is understood.

- Pre-plan emergency pull off areas, safe refuge locations, noting that arrangements may change during the fire season.
- Ensure bus folders have current emergency contact details listed.

During Bushfire Season

- The Bus and Grounds Manager or delegate will monitor the CFS website and/or Alert SA app for announced Catastrophic Fire Danger Ratings in the Mid North.
- If a catastrophic rating is issued for the following day, the Principal or delegate will have the College website bulletin board and social media sites updated by 7pm to notify parents if services are cancelled.
- Scheduled school buses will not run on days of a forecast 'Catastrophic' Fire Danger Rating.
- The Bus and Grounds Manager or delegate will check for notification of any incidents via the CFS in the morning and afternoon during the bushfire season, for any events that may affect the bus service.
- If the Fire Ban rating changes to 'Catastrophic' during the day, school buses will operate as normal and the Grounds Manager or delegate will monitor the CFS website for new incidents from 2pm and each hour thereafter until 6pm when bus services are completed.
- If a bushfire is reported in the area during the day the Bus and Grounds Manager or delegate will contact the local Emergency Services (SAPOL and/or CFS) to determine if any roads normally travelled by school buses are closed or affected.
- Any bus runs affected will not leave the College until the roads are declared safe by the emergency authorities.
- Parents will be notified and students will be supervised at the College until buses can run or students are collected by their parents (if it is safe for them to do so).
- Drivers must always have a mobile phone with them. If a repeated call is occurring, the driver is to safely pull off the road and respond to the call as it may contain critical information.
- If, during a bus run, a bushfire is noted by the bus driver and there is concern that it may affect the route ahead, then the bus driver has the authority to abandon the bus run and return to school or, if safe, drive to one of the pre-planned emergency pull off areas and put emergency procedures on the bus into place. The driver must then contact the College delegate by mobile phone and advise the Bus and Grounds Manager or delegate of the decision taken.
- If the bus is overtaken by a fire unexpectedly and threatened by flame, ash, embers or thick smoke, the driver should pull off the road in an open area with no overhanging trees and as little roadside vegetation as possible, ensure lights and hazard lights are on, close all windows and air vents, turn off the air conditioner and leave the engine running.
- The bus driver is to instruct students to get down as low as possible (on the floor) and, when safe to



do so, contact the College via mobile phone and advise the Bus and Grounds Manager or delegate of the situation.

- Once the fire front has passed, the driver is to keep the students as calm as possible by reassuring them. The driver is to get out and check the bus for any damage (can use the extinguisher to put out any smouldering embers etc) and must decide whether to get the students out of the bus and get them to a safe spot away from burning trees etc, or to drive away from the fire.
- The driver is to contact the College advising the Bus and Grounds Manager or delegate is to keep the Principal informed.
- Under no circumstances is the bus driver or any staff member on board expected to put themselves at further risk to save/protect school property including the bus. The safety of students, passengers and the bus driver is paramount.

Expectations

In case of a bushfire, parents will be advised to keep their children at home through email, social media, and other sources of communications available. If students are at the College, parents will be contacted to come and collect them immediately if it is safe for them to do so. Students and staff with physical needs will be supported. Staff will be instructed to leave the College premises immediately after most students have been collected.

Reducing Fuel Around the College

- Long grass and dense scrub are trimmed back regularly. Dead material is removed.
- Rubbish is removed frequently.
- Gutters are checked regularly for leaves and other combustible material.
- Fences are non-combustible.

Water

- The College has independent hydrant water supplies.
- Fire hoses and extinguishers are available throughout the College.
- Fire hydrants are located in the primary outdoor learning environment, front western car park, western side of the tennis court adjacent the PAC, and northern corner of the tennis court adjacent the Cornerstone Stadium. These are routinely checked.

On the day the bushfire threatens

- Keep updated with bushfire information.
- Leave early if possible – triggers to go.
- Close all doors, windows and shutters.
- Listen to the radio, check the [SA government website](#) or local police for updates.
- In the event of an emergency evacuation refer to the [emergency evacuation procedure](#). If the
- muster point is deemed unsafe, the College may be directed by the CFS.

Notes

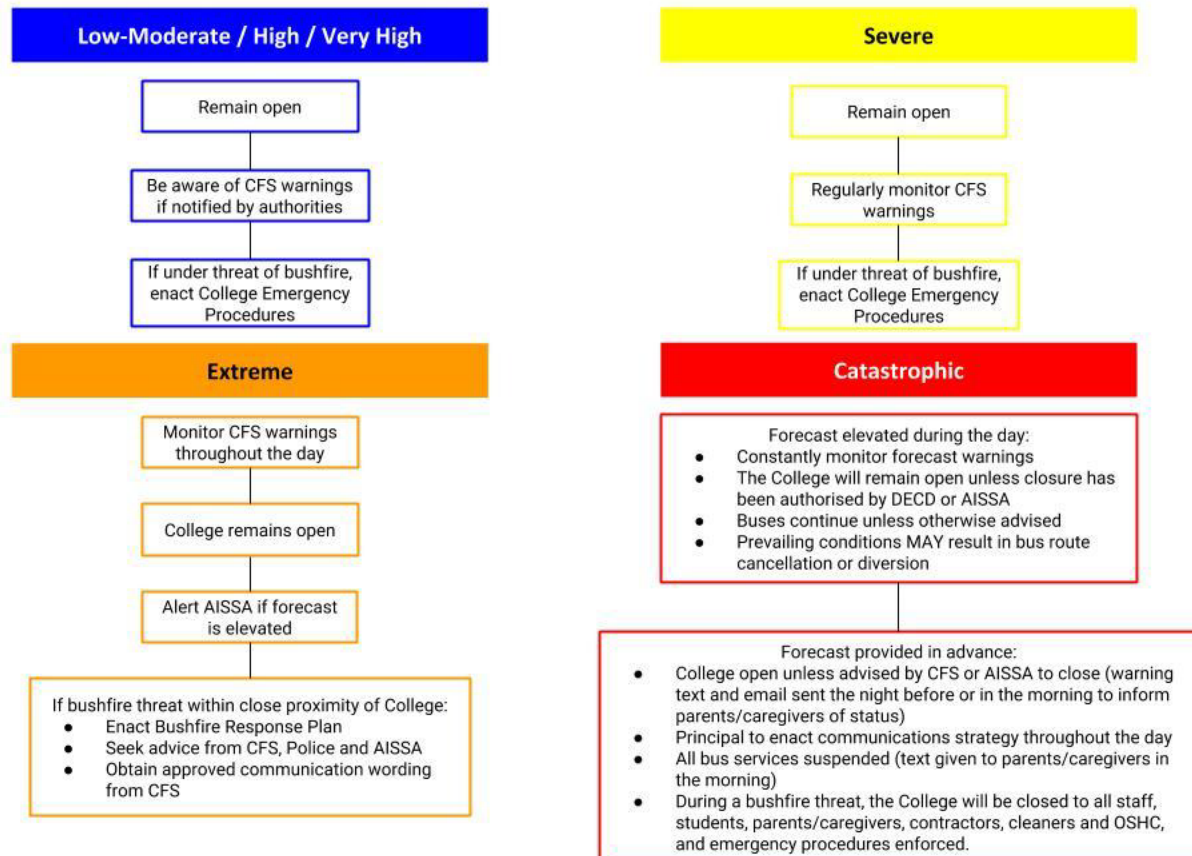
- The plan is reviewed regularly.
- Students and Staff are prepared through discussions about what to do during an emergency.



- Equipment is checked regularly.

Bushfire Action Plan

Bushfire Threat Flowchart



Policy Reviewer: Principal

To Be Reviewed By: Board

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