

Extreme Weather Policy

Quality Area: 2: *Children's Health and Safety*

Standard: 2.3: *Each Child is protected*

Element: 2.3.2: *Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury*

Purpose

Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Heathmont East Preschool to relocate or cancel Bush Kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and ensure that parents/guardians 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 cancellation/relocation in extreme weather conditions
- Impress upon parents/guardians 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

Heathmont East Preschool is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children participating in the Bush Kinder program
- Offering 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 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 and guardians regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather
- Respecting the right of parents/guardians 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 Heathmont East Preschool.

3. Background and Legislation

Background

Heathmont East Preschool's 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 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 or relocate Bush Kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensures appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It provides a framework for staff if extreme weather conditions arise during a session and provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation may include 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, because 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/ or relocated if any of these determinants are met:

Weather Condition	Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation/ relocation
Forecast temperature	34 degrees Celsius or greater AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel/ relocate Bush Kinder Note there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	In excess of 45km per hour AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel/ relocate Bush Kinder; based on a final assessment at the site.
Forecast of electrical storm activity	Thunder storm/electrical storm forecast
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology
Fire Danger Ratings	Severe/ Extreme/Code Red Bush Kinder and Kindergarten (see Attachment)

In addition to the above, Heathmont East Preschool has the discretion to cancel/ relocate 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 or relocation.

Further, Maroondah City Council has the authority to override the Heathmont East Preschool determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should they feel the Bush Kinder site be unsafe.

Heathmont East Pre-School is responsible for:

- Maintaining 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 and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- Ensuring all parents/guardians are aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request
- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior and morning of the Bush Kinder session if possible
- Ensuring parent/guardians' contact details have been obtained to facilitate notification to parents/guardians 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.

Nominated supervisor, Teachers, educators and other staff are responsible for:

- Supervising children at all times and ensuring their safety
- Taking opportunities to reinforce safety routines applicable to play wherever possible
- Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to send notice of cancellation/ relocation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation/ relocation.

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 Actions
<p>Heat</p> <p>Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration,</p>	<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. [Refer Protective Clothing Policy for more information]
<p>Rain/Hail/Cold</p> <p>Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary. Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (e.g., waterproof clothing, gloves) · Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing, including coats, gloves, scarves etc. · Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail [See Relocation Procedures below]
<p>Electrical storm activity / Lightning</p> <p>Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Move children away from trees · Seek undercover shelter [See Relocation Procedures below] · See Attachment 2 for Lightning Safety Fact Sheet
<p>High winds</p> <p>Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand dirt) into eyes,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure · Move children away from trees · Seek shelter if necessary [See Relocation Procedures below] · Any equipment/structures must be moved by at least two staff/volunteer to minimise risk of injury - eg tarps · If the children are being moved, follow the 'Relocating to a safe position' instructions below
<p>Fire</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·
<p>Risks include smoke inhalation, burns, falling branches and being trapped in location.</p>	<p>Move children away from fire as quickly and safely as possible and seek shelter or distance if possible (see relocation procedures below). Call 000</p>

- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Incident, Injury Trauma and Illness Policy must be followed.
- Contacting parent/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Incident, Injury Trauma and Illness Policy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

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

If conditions necessitate evacuation from HE Parker, follow procedures in the Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder specific)

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

- Blow whistle
- 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
- Except for the teacher's backpack, leave Bush Kinder gear at the site – it 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 SMS should be sent to all parents, advising of the new safe location for pickup purposes.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are comfortable always with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If for whatever reason, a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session or collecting their child from a session if extreme weather arises during the session.
- Ensuring protective clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and that a change of clothes is provided (including shoes) (Refer to Protective Clothing Policy)
- Ensuring they carry a mobile phone with them and be contactable always 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
 - Reinforcing appropriate safety and behaviour strategies
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Evaluation

To assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes Heathmont East Preschool 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.
- Ask staff to share their experiences and observations in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

Sources and other related policies

Sources

- Victorian Government 'Better health channel website

Kindergarten policies

- Excursion & Service Events Policy
- Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Mini Beast Sting or Bite First Aid Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Play Benefits and Risk Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Medical Emergency Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Incident, Illness, Trauma & Illness Policy
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy

Attachments

Attachment 1 Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Attachment 2: Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

Attachment 3: Bush Kinder site map showing safe relocation zones in the event of extreme weather.

Authorisation

This policy was approved and passed by the Heathmont East Preschool Committee of Management and adopted by Heathmont East Preschool on:

5/6/2024

Authorised by: Alison Uldrich[President]

Authorised by: Sarah Black [Nominated Supervisor]

Review Date: June 2027

ATTACHMENT 1

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Australian Red Cross:

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
- Remove outer clothing
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths
- Contact family and monitor child.

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 ACTION GUIDE AND FIRST AID GUIDELINES

LIGHTNING ACTION GUIDE

Source: Bureau of Meteorology

If caught outdoors:

- Seek shelter in a hard-top vehicle or solid building.
- Never shelter under a tree or a group of trees.
- If far from shelter crouch down, don't lie flat.
- If boating or swimming, leave the water immediately.
- Avoid metal objects such as ladders, umbrellas, fences and clothes lines.

If indoors:

- Keep clear of windows.
- Avoid metal fixtures, such as roofs, guttering, downpipes and taps.

For further information contact your local State Emergency Service office.

FIRST AID RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIGHTNING VICTIMS

Source: Department of Sport & Recreation, Government of Western Australia

Most lightning victims can survive their encounter with lightning, especially with timely medical treatment. Individuals struck by lightning do not carry a charge and are safe to touch to render treatment.

The following First Aid is recommended:

First

Call 000

Response

The first tenet of emergency care is 'make no more casualties'. If the area where the victim is located is a high-risk area (mountain top, isolated tree, open field, golf course etc) with a continuing thunderstorm, the rescuers may be placing themselves in danger.

Evacuation

It is relatively unusual for victims who survive a lightning strike to have major fractures that would cause paralysis or major bleeding complications unless they have suffered a fall or been thrown a distance. As a result, in an active thunderstorm, the rescuer needs to choose whether evacuation from very high-risk areas to an area of lesser risk is warranted and should not be afraid to move the victim rapidly if necessary. Rescuers are cautioned to minimise their exposure to lightning as much as possible.

Resuscitation

If the victim is not breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If it is decided to move the victim, give a few quick breaths prior to moving them. Determine if the victim has a pulse by checking the pulse at the carotid artery (side of the neck) or femoral artery (groin) for at least 20–30 seconds. If no pulse is detected, start cardiac compressions as well. In situations that are cold and wet, putting a protective layer between the victim and the ground may decrease the hypothermia that the victim suffers which can further complicate the resuscitation.

ATTACHMENT 3 BUSH KINDER SITE MAP SHOWING SAFE RELOCATION ZONES IN THE EVENT OF

EXTREME WEATHER

Evacuation area A - Heathmont Scout Hall

Evacuation area B: HE Parker Pavilion

