

BUSH KINDER: EXTREME WEATHER POLICY

PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Home Road Kindergarten to cancel Bush Kinder sessions 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 cancellations 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

Home Road Kindergarten is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children, staff and volunteers participating in a Bush Kinder program
- Facilitating a Bush Kinder experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across a broad spectrum without compromising the safety of participants
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well-informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions
- Facilitating effective and timely communication to parents/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 children, parents/guardians, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Home Road Kindergarten during all programs (3 and 4 year old Kindergarten and Bush Kinder program).

3. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

Home Road Kindergarten'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 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.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- *Education and Care Services National Law 2010 (Vic)*;
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011 (Vic)*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

4. DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g. Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Bureau of Meteorology: Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Website www.bom.gov.au and BOM app (location: Melbourne)

Bush Kinder Mobile Phone: Phone to be turned on, within hearing capabilities and on an educator at all times whilst the Bush Kinder session is taking place

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 of Bush Kinder session |
|--|---|
| Forecast Temperature | BOM forecasted temperature above 35 degrees at midday on the day of the session Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (refer to <i>Clothing Policy</i>) |
| Forecast wind speed | > 35kms per hour and the educators decide that it would be appropriate to cancel the session |
| Forecast of electrical storm activity | Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast |
| Forecast fire risk | Total Fire Ban days |
| Forecast of hail or torrential rain | Heavy hail or torrential rain predicted |
| Risk of Flood | Flooding advice from HBCC Rangers |

In addition to the above, the kindergarten teacher in charge of the Bush Kinder session has the discretion to cancel a session if they view 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 would also necessitate cancellation.

Further, the HBCC Ranger has the authority to override Home Road Kindergarten's determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should he or she consider the Bush Kinder site to be unsafe.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Clothing Policy

5. SOURCES AND RELATED CENTRE POLICIES

Sources

- Victorian Government 'Better Health Channel Website

Centre Policies

- *Clothing Policy*
- *Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy*
- *Bush Kinder: Play Benefit and Risk Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*

PROCEDURES

The Approved Provider is responsible for:

- Implementing and maintaining this policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents/guardians about extreme weather conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a Bush Kinder session 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

- Providing educators with the necessary equipment and resources to enable them to make informed decisions.

The Kindergarten Teacher/Bush Kinder Leader is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the Bush Kinder mobile phone is fully charged to enable broadcast SMS to all parents/guardians of children in a session, and receive/make calls at all times
- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session
- Making a determination to cancel based on the weather forecast - in cases of forecast Extreme Weather (see definition above), the Kindergarten Teacher/Bush Kinder Leader will make the decision to cancel the Bush Kinder program for the session/s affected
- Cancelling the session if the weather is viewed to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes. The HBCC Ranger also has the authority to request that the service cancel a session due to extreme weather conditions at the site, as stated above
- Notifying parents by broadcast SMS by 7:30am on the day of the session if Bush Kinder is to be cancelled. If cancelled, the Bush Kinder session will take place at Home Road Kindergarten on that day
- Note that a Bush Kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time by broadcast SMS based on updated weather information.

The Nominated Supervisor, Certified Supervisor and all other Bush Kinder Staff are responsible for:

- Keeping the Bush Kinder mobile phone charged, turned on, within hearing capabilities and on an educator at all times whilst the Bush Kinder session is taking place
- Checking their mobile phone on the day of Bush Kinder sessions to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation
- Ensuring that staff and volunteers are aware of this policy as part of their induction

IN THE EVENT OF WEATHER BECOMING EXTREME DURING A SESSION

Bush Kinder Staff are responsible for:

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

| Weather condition | Staff Actions |
|---|---|
| Heat <i>Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke in accordance with the signs/symptoms and treatments set out in the First Aid Training all staff have undertaken • Offer water for hydration at regular intervals • Establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade • Ensure compliance with sun protection measures as outlined in <i>Sun Protection policy</i> • Ensure appropriate protective clothing (refer to <i>Clothing Policy</i> for more information). |
| Rain/Hail/Cold <i>Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones</i> | <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. • Where necessary, undertaking the emergency evacuation procedures as set out in the <i>Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy</i>. |

| Weather condition | Staff Actions |
|---|--|
| Electrical storm activity/lightning <i>Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move children away from trees into open spaces • Evacuate in accordance with the emergency evacuation procedures as set out in the <i>Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy</i> • See Attachment 1 for First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims. |
| High winds <i>Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand/dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder structures blowing down/away etc.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure • Move children away from trees into open spaces • Evacuate in accordance with the emergency evacuation procedures as set out in the <i>Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy</i>. |

- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy* and *Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy* must be followed.
- Contacting parents/guardians in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the *Administration of First Aid Policy* and the *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*.

Session cancellation:

- If, in the very rare event, a Bush Kinder session is cancelled mid-session due to extreme weather, parents/guardians will be contacted via broadcast SMS and requested to collect their children in accordance with the *Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy* and *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*. For parents that are not contactable, staff will then contact other authorised persons in the child's enrolment record in accordance with the *Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy* and *Delivery and Collection of Children Policy*.

Procedures for relocating to a safe position:

- Relocate the session in accordance with the *Bush Kinder: Emergency Evacuation Policy*.

Parents/guardians 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/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session and/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 *Clothing Policy*)
- Ensuring the service has up to date mobile phone numbers for parent/guardian(s), as well as all emergency contacts
- Ensuring the service is notified as soon as possible when contact details change, for parent/guardian(s), as well as all emergency contacts
- Checking mobile phone regularly, prior to and during a session, in case of cancellation and act upon changes to Bush Kinder site or alternative pick up times
- Reading and being familiar with the policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and Committee.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the Committee of Management will:

- Where deemed appropriate, encourage feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program.
- 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.
- Notify parents/guardians at least 14 days before making any substantial changes to this policy, which would impact on the supervision and care of children.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of Home Road Kindergarten on 15 April 2020.

REVIEW DATE: MARCH 2022

ATTACHMENT 1 - FIRST AID RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIGHTNING VICTIMS

Source: Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
(<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/lightning/firstaid.asp>)

HOW TO HELP

Giving first aid to lightning strike victims while waiting for professional medical attention can save their lives. It is safe to touch a lightning strike victim. People struck by lightning DO NOT carry a charge.

Follow these four steps immediately to help save the life of a lightning strike victim:

1. Call for Help

Call 000 immediately. Give directions to your location and information about the strike victim(s) (i.e. how many victims are there, where was the victim struck, is the storm still continuing). It is safe to use a mobile phone during a storm.

2. Assess the Situation

Safety is a priority. Be aware of the continuing lightning danger to both the victim and rescuer. If the area where the victim is located is high risk (e.g. an isolated tree or open field), the victim and rescuer could both be in danger. If necessary, move the victim to a safer location. It is unusual for a victim who survives a strike to have any major broken bones that would cause paralysis or major bleeding complications, unless the person suffered a fall or was thrown a long distance. Therefore, it may be safe to move the victim to minimise possible further exposure to lightning.

3. Respond

Lightning may cause cardiac arrest. Commence cardiopulmonary resuscitation if required following the Basic life support guidelines.

D danger

R responsiveness

S send for help

A open airway

B Check Breathing

C start CPR 30 compressions : 2 breaths

D attach defibrillator (AED) as soon as available and follow its prompts

4. Continue resuscitation efforts until help arrives. If the area is cold and wet, putting a protective layer between the victim and the ground may help decrease hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature).

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Lightning may also cause other injuries such as burns, shock and sometimes blunt trauma. Treat each of these injuries with basic first aid until help arrives. Do not move victims who are bleeding or appear to have broken bones.