

# Bushfire Response Information

## Preparedness

### MDCS

MDCS has an Emergency Management Plan that guides our response to critical incidents such as, by not limited to, bushfires. The Emergency Management Plan has been developed in consultation with and/or using resources provided by Independent Schools Victoria, the Department of Education, the CFA and the Shire of Yarra Ranges. With respect to the school's bushfire preparedness we have a very good water supply feeding our fire hose reels around the property, as well as a 190,000 litres in water tanks beneath and near the rotunda (adjacent to the bus car park) specifically for fire fighting and a storm water dam adjacent to the school exit.

### MDCS Families

A new Fire Danger Index has been introduced to Victoria. It is important to familiarise yourself with this as part of your fire preparedness for this fire season.

It is also very important that you update the school on any changes to your contact details as they occur so that you can be contacted in the event of an emergency event. More information on bushfire preparedness is available at the websites of the CFA and the Victorian education department:

[www.cfa.gov.au](http://www.cfa.gov.au)

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/health/pages/bushfires.aspx>



## Code Red Fire Risk

### MDCS

As a school we monitor Bureau of Meteorology forecasts for the degree of bushfire risk in the Central Fire District that we are a part of during the school year. Earlier in 2009, the Victorian government established a 'bushfire-at-risk' register of schools and educational facilities across Victoria. Schools across the Dandenong Ranges region, including MDCS, are on this register.

On predicted Code Red (Catastrophic) day/s for the Central Fire District the Victorian Department of Education will close their 'bushfire-at-risk' schools with 3 days notice if possible and with final confirmation by no later than midday the day before closure.

**Mountain District Christian School will also close on these days. No students or staff will be at school. Please note that we will inform you of any closures.**

### On Code Red Days



- Families in fire prone areas should enact their fire plans.
- When MDCS is closed, there will be no one present at school so please do not send children or contact the school.
- No MDCS buses will run on Code Red days.
- When MDCS is closed, do not send or bring your children to school; plan ahead for their supervision.

## Unpredicted Fire Risk

### MDCS

If a **bushfire** occurs **unexpectedly** and threatens the school we have several contingencies:

- If there is sufficient warning, and it is safe to do so, students and teachers will be relocated/evacuated to a safe place/ relief centre from which students can be collected. Where this safe place is depends on the direction of the fire and conditions at the time. An evacuation location will be determined based on the best information that can be obtained from the Emergency Service agencies such as the CFA, Police and Shire of Yarra Ranges. After students are relocated we will contact you.
- If there is not enough warning time to evacuate, in accordance with the School Emergency Management Plan students will be taken into the building/s that we have assessed as the safest. The Multipurpose Room (beneath the Library) being in the centre of the school property and being a concrete and brick structure is deemed the MDCS fire refuge.

### MDCS families

In the event of an immediate unexpected bushfire threat please do not come and collect children. This will cause traffic chaos and prevent the rapid evacuation of all children, and may place your own life at risk. It can also hamper our ability to safely keep an account of all students. In any event, police may prevent your access. If you do come (against our advice) and insist on removing your child/ren you will be permitted to do so provided you sign out the child/ren. Only parents or legal guardians will be able to collect children in these circumstances (we will not release any child to another person).

Please do not call school; be patient. Staff will be dealing with the emergency and their priority will be the safety of the students. You will be contacted.

## Questions

### Who makes the decision to close schools because of bushfire risk?

The decision to pre-emptively close schools is made by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development based on warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology and in consultation with fire and emergency services.

### How much notice will I have if MDCS will be closed?

Wherever possible, families will be provided with up to 3-days notice of a planned closure through school notices and/or phone. If unexpected weather patterns are experienced, however, less than 3-days notice may be provided. The final decision to close the school will be confirmed no later than midday the day before the planned closure. Families are encouraged to ensure that their bushfire survival plan always includes alternative care arrangements for children in the event of a planned closure. No child should be left at home alone.

### What happens if the forecast changes?

If the Bureau of Meteorology or the CFA downgrades the risk forecast in the lead-up to a planned closure, the closure may be cancelled and MDCS will be allowed to remain open. But once the decision to close has been confirmed, there will be no change – regardless of improvements to the weather conditions the following afternoon or overnight – this will help limit confusion and provide time for parents to make alternative care arrangements for their children.

### On average, how many days does the Government predict that schools will need to close?

While it is not possible to provide the exact number of days, advice from the CFA and the Bureau of Meteorology suggests that schools in high fire risk areas could expect to close an average of 0-3 days a year.