

Murrayville Community College Bus Procedures for Bushfires Policy

Purpose

This policy is designed to provide guidance for the school and school bus operators in case of bushfire emergencies. To maximise the safety of all students travelling to and from school by bus.

Pre Bushfire Season Planning

The Principal/Bus Coordinator will meet with bus contractors and bus drivers at the start of term 1 and term 4 each year to ensure bushfire procedures are understood and meet current circumstances.

The Principal/Bus Coordinator will carry out emergency bushfire procedures drill with students and drivers of each bus.

Ensure that contact details are current for each bus – including mobile and satellite phone numbers.

Ensure that the school has a quick access to bushfire related websites and phone numbers. Ensure that each bus has an onboard list of key emergency phone numbers – including the Principal's contact details.

- CFA website : www.cfa.vic.gov.au
- CFS website : www.cfs.sa.gov.au
- Police, Fire, Ambulance 000

Ensure that bus route maps, student lists and parent contact information are up to date on the buses emergency management planning board.

During Bushfire Season

EVERYDAY

The bus duty teachers ensure that the bus rolls have been marked off before the bus leaves the school, including the recording of extra passengers.

CODE RED DAYS

On days that have been forecast CODE RED for the fire district of Mallee, our school will be closed for that day. The school will be informed by 12 noon the day prior and this declaration will not change, regardless of changes to the weather forecast.

School buses will not operate on these days. Bus contractors and parents will be advised by note, phone or text of school closures.

If the fire danger rating changes to 'CODE RED' during the day, school buses will operate as normal.

WHEN A BUSHFIRE IS BURNING BEFORE THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY

If a bushfire is reported in the local area during the day, the Principal will contact the local emergency services (Police and CFA/CFS) to determine if any roads normally travelled by school buses are closed, affected or likely to be affected.

Any bus runs affected or likely to be affected **will not leave the school** until roads are declared safe by the emergency authorities.

Parents will be notified and students will be supervised at school until buses can run or students are collected by their parents.

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WHEN A BUSHFIRE BEGINS BURNING WHILE THE BUSES ARE ON THEIR RUN

If, during a bus run, a bushfire or severe smoke is noted by the bus driver and there is concern that it may affect the route ahead, then the bus driver:

- Should if safe, abandon the bus run and return to school. Having a safe turning area for a bus is always a priority.
- If returning to school is not safe, the bus should proceed or retreat to the closest inhabited farmhouse for shelter. The bus driver is to instruct students to get down as low as possible on the floor and away from windows.
- Call 000.
- Drivers have the authority to refuse to drop off students if they believe they will be at risk.
- Must contact the school by mobile or satellite phone and advise the Principal of the decisions taken.

If the bus is overtaken by a fire unexpectedly and threatened by flame, ash embers or thick smoke, the driver should:

- Pull up in an open area, either a clear driveway or on the opposite side of the road to the fire, 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 the air-conditioner to recirculate and leave the engine running at fast idle.
- The bus driver is to instruct students to get down as low as possible on the floor and away from windows.
- Call 000.
- When safe to do so, contact the school via mobile or satellite phone and advise the Principal of the situation.

Once the fire front has passed, the driver:

- Is to keep the students as calm as possible by reassuring them.
- Is to get out and check the bus for any damage (can use a fire extinguisher to put out any smouldering embers etc).
- Must decide whether to get the students out of the bus and get them to a safe spot away from burning trees etc, contact emergency services and await assistance. Roads may be affected by burning and falling timber.
- Is to contact the school advising the Principal of the current situation

Under no circumstances is the bus driver or any staff member on board expected to put themselves at further risk to save/protect property ie the bus. The safety of the students, passengers and the bus driver is paramount.

When First Approved: 16th September 2013

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