



**St Francis de Sales**  
**COLLEGE**

## **BUSHFIRE RESPONSE PLAN**

**(Supporting document to College Critical Incident Policy and Procedures)**

**Principal: Andrew Baker**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Baker', written in a cursive style.

**Date: 01 November 2024**

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## **VISION STATEMENT**

St Francis de Sales College aspires to be a leader in education serving the Adelaide Hills community. Grounded in our Catholic values and in partnership with families, all community members are known and loved as an individual made in the image of God.

Providing a contemporary and inclusive education, relationship and engagement empowers students to be self-motivated, creative and courageous learners.

Our students' growth mindset inspires them to achieve their personal best in all aspects of their school life and develops confident graduates eager to impact their local and global community.

## **OUR MISSION**

St Francis de Sales College is a community in which faith is nurtured in a Catholic Christian tradition. It does this by recognising each individual's skills and talents while appreciating and accepting their uniqueness.

The College is committed to promoting community and personal fulfilment through life enhancing relationships.

St Francis de Sales, as patron, symbolises the high hopes that are held for every St Francis de Sales student, so that, inspired and guided by his example, each child may:

- Promote a culture of life through courage un responding to the challenges that life brings
- Foster the engagement of faith and reason
- Develop a love of learning and independent thinking
- Be an ethical leader by valuing and respecting each individual, irrespective of position, wealth, racial or ethnic origin and religious beliefs
- Become socially responsible contributor in their community and to society
- Acquire virtue and wisdom and respond generously to others, throughout their life

## **POLICY**

In accordance with the organisation's policy, Catholic Education SA will provide a safe workplace for all employees and the organisation shall as reasonably practicable ensure that all employees are safe from injury and risks to health in the event of a major bushfire.

## **DEFINITIONS**

CFS – Country Fire Service

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this policy is to provide a safe working environment through the provisions of systems and resources related to bushfire safety.

## **RATIONALE**

On days of extreme category or higher, staff should have suitable nonflammable clothing including enclosed shoes and long sleeved shirts etc. available as protection.



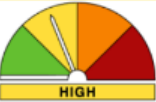
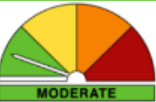
The College is notified by Catholic Education Office on days of extreme or catastrophic fire risk.

Being Bushfire Ready is a shared responsibility and the following are some of the key initiatives that the SA Government has been implemented:

1. [A telephone and text messaging warning system](#) - alerts relating to the most severe fire threats may be sent to landline and mobile phones, based on the owner's billing address being within the defined emergency area.
2. The adoption of a national framework for fire warnings which includes an enhanced Fire Danger Rating system incorporating a category of Catastrophic (Code Red) and warning categories. The fire danger ratings scale includes 'High', 'Extreme' and 'Catastrophic (Code Red)'.

The Fire Danger Ratings will be used in tandem by the Bureau of Meteorology to inform the community about the predicted weather conditions.

The ratings have the following levels:

Category	General Advice	Action for schools
	<b>For your survival, leave bushfire risk areas</b> <b>If a fire starts and takes hold, lives are likely to be lost</b>	<b>SCHOOL CLOSURE and CANCELLATION OF SCHOOL BUS SERVICES for schools in the affected Fire Ban District which have an extreme, very high or high risk rating.</b>
	<b>Take action now to protect your life and property</b> <b>Fires will spread quickly and be extremely dangerous</b>	<b>Catholic Education SA to take advice of fire authorities for Adelaide Hills and other high-risk areas regarding potential for school closure.</b>
	<b>Be ready to act</b> <b>Fires can be dangerous</b>	<b>SCHOOL OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply</b>
	<b>Plan and prepare</b> <b>Most fires can be controlled</b>	<b>SCHOOL OPEN: normal bushfire plan procedures apply</b>

## ARRANGEMENTS FOR STAFF

1. On days of temporary school closure due to catastrophic fire danger, teaching staff may be considered to be “working from home” and therefore expected to undertake any professional duties they can reasonably perform at home.
2. On days when school is open and a bushfire presents significant risk (actual fire), staff members who are emergency service volunteers (CFS, SES) or whose family members or properties might be at risk may be released from school duties (with pay) providing that such release does not compromise the school’s duty of care to students or unduly disrupts the operation of the school.
3. Staff members who decide to remain away from school due to bushfire risk, as distinct from an actual fire, should apply for special leave (without pay) in the usual way.
4. Staff must not travel through or to areas rated as Catastrophic.
5. Staff should not put themselves at risk to travel to work. If there is a risk, staff should discuss this with their Principal or delegate.
6. The CFS recommends that community members living in bushfire prone areas, develop a personal bushfire survival plan. If such a plan impacts on a staff member’s ability to attend, or remain at work, it should be made know in advance to the principal.

## POSSIBLE COLLEGE CLOSURE

1. The CFS have confirmed a fire danger rating of Catastrophic (Code Red) as a “trigger point” for their recommendation to the education sectors (including Catholic Education SA) to consider temporary school closures and cancellation of school bus routes in high risk areas. (For **St Francis de Sales College** – due to the unique nature of the bushfire danger in the Adelaide Hills and on the advice of CFS, our school **may** be instructed to close on days of **extreme** bushfire weather conditions (‘Extreme’ is the CFS fire danger rating below ‘Catastrophic’ Code Red).
2. Considering CFS advice, school closure or the cancellation of school bus routes in our Fire Ban District may be made by the Director of Catholic Education.
3. If we have been advised of the possibility of school closure, we will send a notice informing families and staff of the closure. Closure advice may be communicated by a variety of means, depending on the circumstances. These may include: social media posts, letter, SMS text message, College website or signs placed at College entrances.  
**In the event of a temporary school closure due to bushfire risk, families will need to make alternative arrangements for the care and supervision of their children. No care or supervision will be provided at the school, unless the closure occurs after the start of the school day. Families must not travel through or to areas rated as Catastrophic.**
4. Further information, resources and advice available from:
  - CFS website: [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au)
  - Alert SA website: [www.alert.sa.gov.au](http://www.alert.sa.gov.au)
  - DfE website: <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/sites-and-facilities/bushfires-and-emergency-closures>
  - CFS 24 hour Emergency Hotline: **1300 362 361**
  - DfE Emergency Information Hotline: **1800 000 279**

## WHO MAY REMOVE A CHILD FROM THE COLLEGE?

Only an enrolling parent or carer may remove a child from the school during a **MODERATE** or **HIGH** alert. If **EXTREME** or **CATASTROPHIC** alert is reached while children are at school, students will remain at the College until after the fire has passed. At this time the College will be under direction of Police and Emergency services.

A College Leadership Team member's or delegate's authority (in the absence of the Principal) is required before any substitute person may take a child from the school. This person is termed an "*authorised substitute*" which means that he or she is authorised as a result of a note from a parent, a phone call from a parent or an Executive member's or delegate's decision (in the absence of the Principal).

## REFUGE SITES

In the event of a bushfire threatening the immediate vicinity of the school – students, staff and visitors will gather in:

**St Francis de Sales Community Sports Centre.**

### **(A) PROCEDURE FOR DAYS OF HIGH FIRE DANGER OR ABOVE IN THE MOUNT LOFTY RANGES**

#### **Staff Checklist**

- Please mark rolls carefully on SEQTA for every lesson.
- Teachers should note and take particular care if individual students are leaving classes for any reason to ensure accountability of their whereabouts.
- Check that there is free access to all exit doors. Unlock all external doors.
- Notify students that a **Level 1 alert** has been declared and explain. Remind students of fire drills.

### **(B) WHEN THERE IS A BUSHFIRE IN THE GENERAL VICINITY OF THE COLLEGE AND THE SCHOOL BUS ROUTES**

**Note:** This area has been defined as the area bounded by Nairne, Oakbank, Echunga, Wistow, Strathalbyn and Murray Bridge

- The school buses will not run.
- Only a parent or “authorised substitute” may collect a child from the school during the day.
- Children will not be dismissed from school, so parents must collect their children at dismissal time or
  - arrange an “authorised substitute”.

#### **Staff Checklist**

- Please mark rolls carefully on SEQTA for every lesson.
- Teacher should note and take particular care if individual students are leaving classes for any reason to ensure accountability of their whereabouts.
- Notify children of change of alert status and its meaning.
- No class or individual may be dismissed.
- All staff are expected to remain on duty unless authorised by a College Leadership Team member or delegate (in the absence of the Principal) to leave.
- Monitor whereabouts of each child (toilet visits etc.) and check them in and out.
- A member of staff will monitor the CFS website, Alert SA or the ABC.

### **(C) WHEN THE COLLEGE IS THREATENED BY A BUSHFIRE**

Planned excursions and events are cancelled.

#### **CLASS TEACHERS TO TAKE CHARGE OF CLASSES**

- a) Same expectations as (A) and (B)
- b) In the event of a bushfire threatening the immediate vicinity of the school – students, staff and visitors will gather in:

**St Francis de Sales Community Sports Centre.**

### **Staff Checklist**

- Please mark rolls carefully on SEQTA for every lesson.
- Teachers should note and take particular care if individual students are leaving for any reason to ensure accountability of their whereabouts.
- Notify children that an **alert** has been established and they will be moving calmly to the above designated areas.
- Year Level Leaders to collect first aid boxes and Homeroom teachers to wear first aid bum bags.
- Collect fire extinguishers from inside each classroom.
- Collect fire blankets (if present in room).
- Gather any other protective materials (other than acrylic or nylon) and take with you to reduce radiant heat.
- Medication bags and medical management plans will be taken to you by the First Aid Officer or Front Office staff to the refuge site.
- Close doors and windows (do not lock doors).
- Move children to designated refuge site. On arrival at refuge site, seat children in area separate from other classes.
- Keep children calm.
- Mark student roll and mark staff off staff list. Notify Year Level Leader of any students/staff that are unaccounted for.
- Check all children evacuated to refuge site.
- Buckets and cloths will be brought to refuge site by Front Office staff

### **PASSING OF THE FIRE FRONT**

- Keep children calm. Never leave children unattended.
- Use extinguishers if necessary.
- Cover all with protective materials if available.
- Restrict movement
- All students/staff to lie flat on floor if smoke is present.
- Place hand with damp cloth over nose and mouth to filter air.
- Stay in refuge until front passes even if roof and window frames etc. are alight.

### **AFTER THE FIRE PASSES**

Wait in refuge site until a message from a College Leadership Team member or delegate (in the absence of the Principal) is received, with instructions to move outside. In most cases this will be towards the soccer pitches, however if the fire is in this area another area will be nominated and advised to you. If such a message is received children should go in lines with the teacher at rear by the safest appropriate route. Children should stay in lines and teacher mark roll. Report to a College Leadership Team member or delegate (in the absence of the Principal).



## **STAFF ACTIONS IN THE EVENT OF A BUSHFIRE**

1. In the event of a bushfire being reported in the Mount Barker District, the College Leadership Team will communicate to all classes to inform students and staff of its location.
2. Members of the College Leadership Team will be called together to put into place the pre-determined bushfire emergency procedures.
3. The Principal or delegate will maintain a visual check of the surrounding area.
4. The WH&S Officer (or Coordinator R-12 Support Team) will carefully monitor ABC radio and CFS website /app for CFS information and Warning Messages and provide the College Leadership Team with updates concerning the latest location of the bushfire front and any impact it may have on the site.
5. The R-12 Support Team must ensure that all college mobile phones are charged and accessible.
6. In the event of a power/communication outage. The college mobile for communication will be 0428 892 801 and will be managed by the Deputy Principal, Community and Wellbeing.
7. The R-12 Support Team will ensure that alternative audible warning device is ready for use and operating correctly should power fail.
8. The Principal will advise the Catholic Education Office that a bushfire has been reported in the nominated local district.
9. The WH&S Officer (or Coordinator R-12 Support Team) will obtain the latest information and advice about likely effect of the bushfire on the site through the CFS website and the DfE.
10. The Principal will cancel on site outdoor activities for students, and all camps and excursions.
11. All class teachers will encourage students to top up personal water bottles so that they have adequate drinking water should a move to the refuge site become necessary.
12. Teachers will organise to have bum bags, protective clothing, etc. packed and have them ready nearby.
13. Reception and R-12 Support Team staff will alert visitors and volunteers of the situation during the registration process and advise them of action to take should a move to the refuge sites become necessary.
14. The Reception and R-12 Support Team staff will identify and list all students and staff who live in the area reported to be affected by the bush fire.
15. The Principal will assess if it is safe for students to take outside recess and lunch breaks and notify all classes of the decision.
16. The Principal will assess if it is safe to release students from the site at normal dismissal time.
17. The Business Manager will advise the grounds staff to turn on sprinkler and irrigation systems hourly to dampen surrounds.
18. The IT Team will back up all site administration computer records.

## Catastrophic Fire Danger Response and Planning

St Francis de Sales College is one of only 5 Catholic schools risk rated such that they are subject to **automatic closure** on days where there is a Catastrophic fire danger rating in their Fire District. Mt Barker, Stirling, Clare Yorketown and Gladstone are the equivalent as those DfE schools designated as R1/R2 and are regarded as having a high/very high/extreme risk of bushfire affecting their school on Catastrophic fire danger days in their respective Fire Districts.

Specific procedures apply to these five schools as follows:

1. Catastrophic Fire Danger Day **declared in advance** of a school day  
The CFS advises the CEO on the next day's Fire Danger Rating for each Fire Ban District at 4pm each day. Where a Catastrophic Fire Danger rating is advised to the CEO as affecting the school on the next day, this will be advised to the Principal who will communicate that the school will be closed on the next day and that no one is to attend the site.
2. Catastrophic Fire Danger Day **declared during** a school day  
Although Catastrophic days are usually declared in advance, it is possible for this to be declared or escalated on a day when staff and students are already on the way to, or present at school. In this case the Principal will liaise with the SPL and Manager: System Safeguarding regarding keeping the school open until such time as all students can be safely taken off site, if it is safe to do so by a parent/ caregiver. An authority for an alternative adult to collect a child must be obtained, preferably in writing (eg. via email or text message).

*All extra-curricular activities (OSHC, sports, drama/music etc) should be cancelled and this action should be communicated to all those affected.*

- **School bus operations on days of Catastrophic Fire danger**

On days where a Catastrophic fire danger rating is forecast bus & taxi services, including private transport contractors, travelling through affected fire district will be cancelled.

- **Travel/Excursions/Camps on days of Catastrophic or Extreme fire danger**

**If a bushfire is burning prior to departure or likely to threaten the intended camp/excursion site or path of travel to/from the site, then the excursion/camp must be cancelled.**

The following strategies should be adopted by all schools if camps or excursions are conducted in bushfire prone areas during fire danger season:

- i. Travel through areas of high risk should not occur on days of Catastrophic fire danger in the specific Fire District and should be avoided on days of Extreme fire danger.
- ii. In advance of departure – Inform the nearest CFS or MFS station of the dates the group will be in the area, identify nearby or campsite safe bushfire refuge locations, when seeking parental consent for the camp/excursion inform them of the procedures that will be adopted on Total Fire Ban days or in the event of a fire.

- iii. Prior to and on arrival at the excursion/camp – Give instructions to all participants about fire precautions and procedures in the event of a fire, identify the alarm signal that will be used in the event of a fire and make known the assembly area on the hearing of the alarm, listen to CFS broadcasts or use the 24 hour information hotline: 1300 362 361.
- iv. On declared Total Fire Ban days in the district and/or if a fire is burning – Cancel trips into bushfire-prone areas. If already on camp, maintain close contact with CFS, seek advice from emergency services on evacuation to a safe area, maintain close contact with the Principal and school.
- v. Communication – If a party deviates from an itinerary lodged with the school or relevant authorities, then these changes must be made known. Emergency services may need to respond in the case of an incident and this information is vital for the safety of staff and students.

## Staff Responsibilities

### Principal

- Will be alerted by CEO of any information from authorities or DfE regarding specific threat to the school
- Remains in close contact with Schools Performance Leader (SPL)
  - Any relevant information provided by DfE or CFS to CEO will be communicated to the Principal when it is available
  - Use own local sources of information to be apprised of local conditions and keep SPL and Manager: System Safeguarding and Development informed of any changes to circumstances
- Notify staff of intended closure
  - Including cancellation of extra-curricular activities to be communicated to those affected
- Coordinate text and email communication to families with assistance of Marketing and Communications Coordinator and Coordinator R-12 Administration Support.
- Coordinate notification to 3<sup>rd</sup> party users on site with Business Manager
- Develop action plans to ensure the availability of staff to care for children on days when Catastrophic fire danger is declared **during** a school day

### Business Manager

- On the direction of the Principal with the assistance of R-12 Administration Coordinator /Support/Daily Org/ Marketing and Communications Coordinator
  - Notify hirers/contractors/OSHC/canteen and other on site services of closure
  - Notify bus companies of cancellation of services and site closure

## APPENDICES

### Fire Wardens

Paul Wadsworth	James Gill	Paul McCabe	Oreste Farrugia
Felicity Duffield	Denise Bergamin	Jackie Hargreaves	Jane Hosking
Chester Messenger	Simon Miller	Sarah Mitchell	Anna Nelligan
Harry Cates	Daren Porter	Sarah Sims	Bianca Evans

## LETTER 1 TEMPLATE: WARNING OF POSSIBLE COLLEGE CLOSURE DUE TO BUSHFIRE ALERT



*Date*

Re: **BUSHFIRE SAFETY ADVICE**  
**POSSIBLE SCHOOL CLOSURE ON .....DAY**

### IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES, STUDENTS and STAFF

Dear parents, caregivers and staff

We have been advised of the **possibility** of a College closure day on (*....day / date*).

This possibility has arisen as a result of the Bureau of Meteorology and Country Fire Services predictions of extreme bushfire weather conditions in our Fire Ban District. At this stage (*....day*) may be rated as a day of Catastrophic (Code Red) fire danger.

Confirmation of a College closure will be provided to us tomorrow afternoon and, should this occur, we will immediately distribute a temporary College closure advice message via SMS and the College website.

**Should a temporary College closure be confirmed for (*.....day*), families will need to make alternative arrangements for the care of their children on that day. No supervision or care for students will be able to be provided at our College.**

Naturally we hope that a College closure will not be necessary and that the fire weather conditions improve.

Further information, resources and advice about bushfire response is available via:

- ABC local radio (e.g. 891 AM)
- CFS Bushfire Information Hotline **1300 362 361**
- CFS website [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au) (click on 'Bans and Ratings' and then select 'Mount Lofty Ranges')
- Alert SA website [www.alert.sa.gov.au](http://www.alert.sa.gov.au)
- Parent Bushfire Information Hotline 1800 000 279

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A Baker", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

**Andrew Baker**  
Principal

## LETTER 2 TEMPLATE: NOTIFICATION OF COLLEGE CLOSURE DUE TO BUSHFIRE ALERT



*Date*

**Re: BUSHFIRE SAFETY ADVICE – COLLEGE CLOSURE  
IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES, STUDENTS and STAFF**

Dear parents, caregivers and staff

*(if relevant) Further to yesterday's early notification of a possible temporary College closure.*

The Bureau of Meteorology is predicting extreme bushfire weather conditions for the *name of area* Total Fire Ban District tomorrow *day/date* and has rated it as a day of Catastrophic (Code Red) *(n.b. for Mount Barker and Stirling this may occur on a day rated as extreme) fire danger.*

Due to the extreme conditions and in the interest of safety for all students and staff, the Department for Education has instructed a number of DfE sites in the affected areas to close. As a consequence the Director of Catholic Education, has authorised the closure of St Francis de Sales College.

**As a result, families will need to make alternative arrangements for the care of their children tomorrow. No care or supervision will be provided at the College.**

I understand and regret that this late notice may result in inconvenience for families, however I am confident that you will understand and support this decision which has been made taking into account the significant community safety concerns which now exist.

Naturally we all hope that tomorrow will be incident free and I wish you and your family every blessing and God's care.

Further information, resources and advice about bushfire response is available via:

- ABC local radio (e.g. 891 AM)
- CFS Bushfire Information Hotline **1300 362 361**
- CFS website [www.cfs.sa.gov.au](http://www.cfs.sa.gov.au) (click on 'Bans and Ratings' and then select 'Mount Lofty Ranges')
- Alert SA website [www.alert.sa.gov.au](http://www.alert.sa.gov.au)
- Parent Bushfire Information Hotline 1800 000 279

Yours sincerely

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**Andrew Baker**  
Principal