NATURE OF HAZARD

Every year New South Wales experiences a large number of bushfires, usually caused by lightning or humans. Several can and do occur in the Sutherland Shire from time to time. Most are not disasters, however, if not quickly detected and extinguished, bushfires can become an emergency that threatens both life and property.

RISK FACTORS

Bushfire prone areas are those that can support a bushfire or are likely to be subject to bushfire attack. These are generally areas consisting of or close to bushfire hazards such as forest or grasslands. Heathcote East Public School is adjacent to the Royal National Park and is therefore in an area subject to bushfire attack. Heathcote East PS is at most risk of bushfire during the spring and summer months. The season now runs from October 1 through to March.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Before the bushfire season:

- Have school grounds maintained and garden rubbish, native shrubs and tree branches kept well clear of buildings
- Conduct fire drills
- Liaise with emergency services about emergency procedures or vegetation management in the vicinity of the school and any other issues that are appropriate.
- Discuss with emergency services other issues where appropriate e.g. hazard reduction burning in bush area adjacent to the workplace
- Arrange for contractors to clear gutter of dry leaves and other debris at the end of April, end of September and mid December
- Ensure that all items that may be flammable such as door mats and garbage skips are locked or put away prior to leaving the school premises unattended.
- Monitor the RFS website or fires near me Smart Phone application, phone the Emergency Centre at Heathcote or listen to ABC 702 (preferred) or the local radio station 2SSR for bushfire or weather warnings and advice during the time of year when the risk of bushfire is highest
- Outline bushfire response procedures at a staff meeting in September each year.

During the bushfire season

- During the bushfire season, the school listens to the local radio station and/or monitors the NSW Rural Fire Service for information about bush fire activity.
- The school will cooperate with the NSW Rural Fire Service and NSW Fire and Rescue as they work with the Local Emergency Management Committees to plan for managing bushfire risk and activity or follow their instruction during a bushfire event.
- If bushfires are burning the Principal will discuss the school’s specific circumstances with local emergency service agencies and the Director NSW Public Schools
- If there is a threat of bushfire, the Principal will contact emergency services and seek urgent advice. Where required, the school will implement their Emergency Management Plan.
RESPONSE

General Points …

In the event of a bushfire:
- Contact NSW Fire and Rescue on 000. Do not assume that the fire has been reported
- Check that taps are working and fill available containers with water
- Leave sprinklers on, where possible
- Bring hoses and tap fittings indoors
- Remove flammable items from windows
- Stay clear of windows
- Listen to ABC 702 or the local radio station 2SSR for information and advice.

If you decide to … STAY! (Shelter in Place Procedure)

If the organised movement of students to Heathcote High School is not practical, the following procedures should be followed:

SAM will ring the lockdown horn: a continuous long blast on the hooter. (Switch located in the office)

- The Communications Officer (SAM) will inform the Fire Control centre by phone of any action being taken.
- The Chief Warden (Principal) will direct students and staff to remain within their home class. If it is believed that there is a serious threat to the buildings adjoining the Royal National Park (RNP) then students and staff will gather in the admin/library block G. This building is large enough to contain all students, it is set back from the RNP and trees, it has internal access to water and toilets, it contains multiple phone lines and a first aid area. Rolls will be called when inside. Tune battery radio (cars) to ABC 702 for emergency information or ABC web/news.
- All windows and doors should be closed and blinds drawn (if fitted) and the base of doors should be covered to prevent smoke entry
- Air conditioning (Kinder block) should be turned off
- Students should be assembled away from the part of the building which will be initially exposed to the fire, in accordance with established evacuation procedures
- When the fire front has passed, the students and staff should remain in the building as smoke, radiant heat and embers will still be present. Only leave a building if it has caught fire: follow the fire (building) plan.
- A roll call should be conducted by each class teacher.
- Attempts may then be made to extinguish spot fires external to the building which may have been ignited, provided personal safety is not endangered.
- This action will remain in place until the threat has passed or authorities have instructed the Principal to do otherwise.
- Parents will not be able to collect their children from school until the emergency has passed as emergency vehicles have top priority accessing the area.
- When the threat has passed, the students and staff should leave the building in an orderly manner by the nearest, safest exit and assemble away from the initial exposure area.
- A roll call should be conducted in a safe area away from the building. The visitor’s book should be used in accounting for the safety and evacuation of all visitors.

Note 1: Bushfires can change direction with a change of wind. The safe area needs to be away from trees and other items capable of sustaining a flame.
Note 2: The special needs of the students who suffer breathing conditions, eg. asthma, will need to be carefully managed. (see Asthma Management Plans)

If you decide to … GO! EVACUATION PROCEDURE

In the case of bushfire, evacuation of students and staff should ideally take place under the direction of an officer of Fire & Rescue NSW, Rural fire Service or NSW Police and in consultation with the Director NSW Public Schools. However, if it is apparent that the lives of students and staff may be endangered unless they are relocated immediately, and the workplace manager is unable to contact the appropriate emergency services, the workplace manager (Principal) should make immediate arrangements to evacuate to the offsite assembly area at the gymnasium at Heathcote High School. In such cases, transport arrangements as outlined in the workplace emergency evacuation procedures will be implemented in consultation with local police. Students will not be permitted to proceed unsupervised to their homes because of possible exposure to the threat of bushfires.

The Evacuation

1. Principal will ring manual outside bell: continuous ringing.
   SAM will ring hand held bell continuously.
2. Stop work
3. Line up at the door
4. Leave property behind
5. Teachers take keys
6. Teachers turn off lights and computers
7. Teachers shut door
8. Students quietly leave building with teacher
9. Students and teachers will assemble on the top grass area (Area 1), unless directed to Area 2 at front of school.
10. Sit in class lines, teacher to call roll and report to Principal
11. SAM will collect rolls, first aid kits, Epipens, asthma medications, health care plans and mobile phones. If the bush fire impact is expected to be imminent, then Shelter in Place procedure should be considered.

It is unlikely that a bus evacuation from Heathcote East PS will be viable due to its isolation and the tight streets and the lead time required. The school will need to be evacuated by foot, each student remaining with their class teacher and each class moving with the whole school group.

- Due to possible exposure to the threat of bush fires, students will not be permitted to proceed unsupervised to their homes. Parents only will be permitted to collect and sign out their own children but will not be allowed to sign out other children from school.
- Senior classes would take up positions at the front and rear of the group while juniors eg. Kinder and Year 1 would walk in the middle.
- The group will travel with class rolls, mobile phones, puffers and first aid kits.
- Identified students (Jenna K, Nathan W, Hallie P) will be moved by car.
- Notices will also be placed on each school gate, noting the evacuation details (if possible).
- Students will only be released to identified/authorised person/parent/carer from off-site evacuation point.

Evacuation Routes

Evacuation Route One is the preferred opinion. Evacuation Route Two will be taken if Route One is inappropriate due to certain conditions (position of fire, wind direction, etc).

Evacuation Route One (see map below)

From South Gate
- Right into MIMOSA ST
- Left into PARKLANDS AVE
- Right into BOTTLE FOREST RD

Evacuation Route Two (see map below)

From North Gate
- Left into PARKLANDS AVE
- Right into lane way
- Left into THE AVENUE
PRE-EMPTIVE CLOSURE

In accordance with department policy, the school will be non-operational on days of forecast fire danger Catastrophic within the Greater Sydney Area.

Should fires be burning in the area, the School may also become non-operational. This decision will be made in consultation with the School, emergency services and the department.

In the event of Heathcote East Public School being declared non-operational (closed) for safety reasons prior to the next school day commencing, the following measures will be put in place:

☐ Principal or nominee will notify parents, staff, OSHC coordinator and any community users of the school site via SMS, email through School E-News App and the school website will be updated. Students will be requested to stay home on these days. The school will only receive notification of a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating after school hours the day before the forecast is issued.

☐ Signs will be displayed on the gate entrances of the school at the front of the school (Mimosa St) and at the back gate (Parklands Ave) indicating that the school is non-operational (closed).

☐ Parents/carers are to take responsibility for their children. Where students arrive at school without parents/carers, staff will contact the parents/carers to collect their child(ren) from the school.

☐ Parents should keep regular checks on the fire ratings by accessing:
   RFS website
   NSW RFS Fires Near Me Smart Phone application
   RFS Bushfire Information Line 1800NSW RFS (1800 679 737)
   Emergency Centre at Heathcote
   ABC 702 (preferred) or the local radio station 2SSR for bushfire or weather warnings and advice.

☐ The school staff will remain on site whilst safe to do so (with any students still at school) and then evacuate to a specific location when directed by emergency services.

☐ Staff will be at school gates if safe to do so.
Once an SMS is sent to declare the school non-operational (closed) due to bushfire conditions, the school will remain closed until further advice is sent via SMS and email.

RECOVERY ACTIONS

Implement the workplace emergency management plan recovery strategy. For example:

- Decide when to re-open the workplace, in consultation with local emergency services
- Normally, the NSW Fire and Rescue will check that utilities (water, electricity and natural gas) are either safe to use or are disconnected before they leave the site. Do not attempt to turn on utilities yourself
- Implement procedures to resume workplace activities, which include providing counselling and support to those affected by the incident
- Where property has been damaged, liaise with the emergency services and Asset Management
- Review the emergency management plan.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- Fire & Rescue NSW and fire.nsw.gov.au
- NSW Rural Fire Service
- Emergency Management Australia
- Emergency NSW and emergency.nsw.gov.au