



Department of
Education

Shaping the future

Principal's guide to bushfire:

Prepare your school for the bushfire season

This document must be read in conjunction with the Incident Management Manual.

Updated July 2021.

The Department of Education acknowledges the contribution of the following organisations in the preparation of this document.

- Department of Fire and Emergency Services, Western Australia
- Education Directorate – ACT Government
- Department of Education and Training, Victoria

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1 Introduction

The *Risk and Business Continuity Management policy* requires all staff to manage risks that threaten to adversely impact upon employees, students, school infrastructure and the Western Australian community.

Principals or site managers are responsible for the management of onsite and offsite school related incidents as required in the *Incident Management Manual*.

Where the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) identifies that a school is located in an area that is exposed to a risk of bushfire, it will be placed on the bushfire zone register available on [Ikon](#).

All schools placed on the bushfire zone register must develop an individual *Standalone bushfire plan* for their school site as part of their incident management planning process.

Principal's must read and understand their requirements before the start of the bushfire season. The *Principal's guide to bushfire* (Principal's guide) provides schools with the relevant information and resources to manage bushfire risk and prepare the *Standalone bushfire plan* template. The guide should be used in an online format to access the related hyperlinks and copy important websites and phone numbers before the start of the bushfire season.

The safety, survival and wellbeing of students, staff and visitors is the Department's main priority. Staff are not expected to fight bushfires.

This guide aligns to the Department's risk management process to prevent, mitigate, prepare, respond, recover, review and continuously improve our response to bushfire risk.

Before the bushfire season starts each year, each principal must:

- understand the Incident Management Manual
- read this guide and prepare the school site for the bushfire season
- complete an individual *Standalone bushfire plan* and lodge it through "*Prepare for bushfire season at your school*" on [Ikon](#) before 31 August
- schools will receive a notification before the start of the bushfire season of the requirement to lodge the plan. This is a requirement for all public schools (including Independent Public Schools, Private Public Partnership schools and offsite Education facilities) located in a designated bushfire risk area
- brief staff, students and parents of what to do if a bushfire threatens their school or facility.

This Guide has been developed in close collaboration with DFES. It is shared with:

- Catholic Education Western Australia
- The Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia.

For further advice on this guide, contact:

Department of Education
Manager Security and Emergency Management
T: (08) 9264 4825
E: bushfire.plans@education.wa.edu.au

2 Risk assessment and the bushfire zone register

DFES identifies schools located in proximity to bushfire prone vegetation and in a bushfire risk area.

The bushfire zone register is a Department document that identifies all public schools located in a designated bushfire risk area. This includes Independent Public Schools and Private Public Partnership Schools.

The DFES determines the level of risk at each school site on the likelihood and consequence of a bushfire event based on the bushfire attack level. A risk rating is assigned to schools on the Bushfire zone register as follows:

EXTREME
VERY HIGH
HIGH
MODERATE
LOW

Table 1 shows the actions required to be undertaken to prepare for the bushfire season based on a school's assigned risk rating.

Table 1 - Action principals need to take at their school

Action	Risk Rating Level				
	Extreme	Very High	High	Moderate	Low
Complete <i>Standalone bushfire plan</i> for their school site.	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Must maintain a 20-metre asset protection zone around all buildings.	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Complete a separate <i>Standalone bushfire plan</i> for offsite facilities (i.e. community kindergarten) where there are school staff working at these sites.	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Review and return the approved site specific <i>Bushfire assessment and treatment plan</i> developed by DFES.	☑	☑			
Initiate the pre-emptive closure process when an advanced warning of a 'Catastrophic' fire danger rating is invoked.	☑	☑			

All schools regardless of their risk rating must:

- have a completed a *Standalone bushfire plan* specific for their site
- maintain a 20-metre asset protection zone around all buildings.

Schools with a risk rating of Extreme or Very high

- Must follow the treatment strategies developed by DFES in the *Bushfire assessment and treatment plan* for their site, and mitigate the risk by monitoring and maintaining the bushfire treatment strategies once the works have been completed.
 - Follow the pre-emptive closure procedures when advance warning of a 'Catastrophic' fire danger rating is invoked. The Director of Education or delegated officer will notify affected schools that pre-emptive closure is required.
-

Note: Principals are informed when their school is no longer on the bushfire zone register.

3 Prevent and mitigate

Bushfire prevention and mitigation is an ongoing requirement that minimises the impact of a bushfire event and the risk to normal operations of the school.

3.1 Asset protection zone

Schools must maintain a 20-metre asset protection zone around the school to protect it from a fire event (refer to Figure 1).

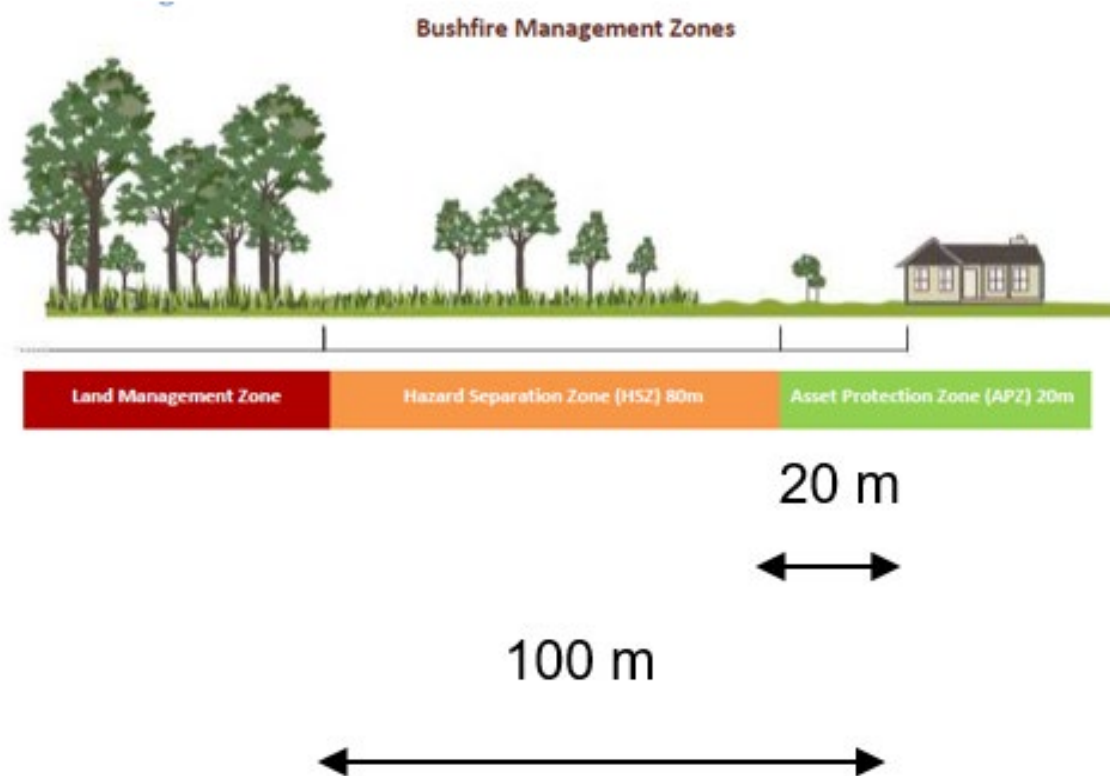


Figure 1 – asset protection zone

To manage the asset protection zone, the following activities must be completed:

- Clear a 20-metre asset protection zone around each building by removing all:
 - rubbish;
 - long dry grass;
 - bark on the ground; and
 - flammable material.
- Remove any garden mulch or wood piles from around buildings.
- Clear obstacles and overhanging branches from driveways and access points.
- Cut and semi-cultivate grass in and around the school to at least 100mm or below.
- Cut dense scrub around the school.
- Prune lower tree branches up to two metres off the ground. This stops a ground fire spreading into the tree canopy.
- Create and maintain a minimum two metre gap between school buildings and tree branches.
- Maintain a distance between shrubs and building of three times the height of the shrub at maturity.

- Remove from under trees any:
 - leaf litter and twigs; and
 - shrubs and small trees.
 - Secure liquid propane gas cylinders to the side of the school furthest away from the likely direction of bushfires. Vent them away from the building.
-

Note:

- For information about mulch refer to the Ikon service [Use mulch in your school gardens](#).
 - For information about maintaining gardens at your school refer to the Ikon service [Maintain gardens at your school](#).
 - Department properties subject to bush fire risk may receive central funding for fire breaks. Refer to the Ikon service [School fire breaks](#).
-

3.2 Treatment plan and mitigation

DFES will undertake a physical inspection of your school site and prepare a *Bushfire risk assessment and treatment plan* for school sites that have a risk rating of Extreme or Very High.

The *Bushfire risk assessment and treatment plan* identifies and recommends actions required to be undertaken by the Department and the school to reduce risk.

Download and use the '[Bushfire mitigation management register](#)' template to:

- record completed works you have undertaken for your school based on your *Bushfire risk assessment and treatment plan*
 - record any other mitigating actions you take, including ongoing actions
 - record activities planned for each year
 - support continuity and 'corporate knowledge' when staff changes occur.
-

Note: Include a copy of the register in your *Standalone bushfire plan*.

4 Prepare

Thorough preparation through planning and developing response strategies is key to minimising the adverse impact of a bushfire event at a school. This section outlines the preparation process.

4.1 Bushfire risk planning

Principals should add their completed individual *Standalone bushfire plan* to their school's Incident Management Plan. If they are responsible for multiple school sites, each site must have its own plan. Develop the plan in consultation with:

- school staff
- members of your local emergency services (for example, fire brigade and regional DFES office)
- your local government emergency management committee and local government representatives
- other school sites.

This document must be read in conjunction with the *Incident Management Plan*.

4.2 Onsite 'safer building location'

Schools must identify a 'safer building location' if a sudden bushfire event is a threat to a school and it is not safe to evacuate offsite, staff, students and visitors.

An onsite 'safer building location' is:

- used when there is no time to organise offsite evacuation
- an enclosed building on the school grounds
- reasonably sealed from external environmental hazards
- not an open area such as a school oval or non-enclosed building
- to be identified, prepared and ready for a sudden fire event.

When selecting an onsite 'safer building location', principals must consider:

- the construction of the building
- risk of ember attack and smoke
- capacity to accommodate students and staff
- ease of entry and exit during an emergency – where possible, location should have multiple exits and/or double doors
- proximity to the school's nominated evacuation sites
- the ability to defend the 'safer building location'
- ease of access to the building for emergency services with firefighting vehicles
- the proximity to flammable and combustible materials
- that it has toilets and drinking water
- that it has a first aid kit.

Schools may need to identify multiple 'safer building locations' if one location cannot meet capacity needs.

Preferred safer building requirements

The area is:

- surrounded by an asset protection zone of 20-metre radius
 - clear of all rubbish, long dry grass, bark and flammable materials
 - free of tree crowns overhanging buildings that are greater than two metres in height
 - a minimum distance of two metres between the building and tree branches
 - of brick construction
 - the distance of shrubs from the building is three times the height of the tree at maturity
 - not less than six metres from other buildings
 - able to accommodate all staff and students
 - no more than five tonnes per hectare of fuel in the hazard separation zone
 - no more than two tonnes per hectare of fuel in the asset protection zone
 - not upslope from predominant vegetation.
-

Note: Your local government authority and regional DFES office must be informed of your school's pre-determined onsite safer building location.

4.3 Offsite evacuation location

Schools must identify a minimum of two safe offsite evacuation locations so that alternatives are available if one of their offsite location(s) are under threat from a bushfire.

Principals should seek advice on the use of offsite evacuation locations from the local emergency services. These should be documented/recorded in section 9 in the *Standalone bushfire plan*.

When selecting offsite evacuation locations, principals must consider:

- Does the plan include other offsite locations if one is under threat from the bushfire?
- Is the offsite location away from the threat of bushfire?
- Are there amenities (such as toilets and water) available?
- Is the offsite location big enough to accommodate all staff and students?
- Is transport required to get there?
- Are there sufficient numbers of vehicles available?
- Can the vehicles accommodate students with special needs?
- Is the route to the offsite location safe and away from the threat of bushfire?

4.4 Lodge the Standalone bushfire plan for your school

The *Standalone bushfire plan* assists you and your staff to prepare for a catastrophic fire danger rating or a bushfire. The plan contains a bushfire preparation checklist that you must complete annually. Use this guide to help you complete the plan.

Access the template you fill out to complete your plan on the Ikon service [Prepare for bushfire season at your school](#). (You can enter 'bushfire' into the search box on the Ikon homepage.)

5 Respond

This section contains information on how principals need to respond to:

- changes to the fire danger ratings triggering pre-emptive closure; or
- a sudden bushfire event triggering onsite or offsite evacuation.

5.1 Fire danger ratings







The [fire danger ratings](#) are based on weather condition forecasts by the Bureau of Meteorology and are the warning issued based on:

- the level of bushfire threat on a particular day
- how difficult and dangerous conditions will be if a fire starts.

The principal needs to know what the fire danger rating is for the area, monitor local conditions and keep informed. Understanding the fire danger rating categories and what they mean will help in making decisions about what to do if a bushfire starts.

At each rating the fire behaviour and potential impact will be different. Table 2 lists the planned responses for the various fire danger warnings.

Table 2 – Planned responses for the various fire danger ratings

Forecast fire danger ratings	Fire danger index (FDI)	Action
 Catastrophic	100+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools on bushfire zone register close on instruction from Deputy Director General Schools or Manager, Security and Emergency Management via the Director of Education. • Action procedures in <i>Standalone bushfire plan</i> (refer to Appendix C) • Cancel bus services.
 Extreme	75-99	Maintain normal school operations but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor Emergency WA and DFES websites as the Fire Danger Rating can increase • know the triggers and be ready to act.
 Severe	50-74	Maintain normal school operations but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor Emergency WA and DFES websites as the Fire Danger Rating can increase • know the triggers and be ready to act.
 Very High	32-49	Maintain normal school operations but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor Emergency WA and DFES websites as the Fire Danger Rating can increase • know the triggers and be ready to act.
 High	12-31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain normal school operations.
 Low/Moderate	0-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain normal school operations.

Principals should monitor current fire danger ratings and fire activity from a range of official information sources:

- 1) [Emergency WA website](https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/) - <https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/>
- 2) **Department of Fire and Emergency Services**
Information line – 13 33 37
[DFES on Twitter](https://twitter.com/dfes_wa) - https://twitter.com/dfes_wa
- 3) **Local radio**
 - [ABC Emergency WA](#)
 - ABC local radio
 - 6PR

5.1.1 Pre-emptive (planned) closure

In response to predicted **catastrophic** fire conditions the school site may be required to initiate the planned closure process.

The lead time for a pre-emptive closure varies depending on weather patterns. Principals are given as much notice as possible to inform parents, staff and students:

- that the school is on standby
- the date of pre-emptive closure.

Table 3 – Pre-emptive (planned) closure process

Summary of process when advance warning of a ‘Catastrophic’ fire danger rating is given by the DFES	
1	Pre-emptive closure is directed by either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Director General Schools or • Manager Security and Emergency Management
2	Director of Education phones the school to inform of pre-emptive closure
3	DFES monitors weather patterns to keep the Department informed of any change to the forecast for the declared day
4	Pre-emptive closure confirmed by Department of Education via Director of Education to the Principal on the day or day before declared closure
5	The deadline for the decision will be made by 4.30 pm on the day before pre-emptive closure
<p>Note:</p> <p>Refer to section 5.1.2 for a Flow chart - Principal’s response to ‘Catastrophic’ fire danger rating</p> <p>If the forecast changes after the 4.30pm deadline, the school remains closed to limit confusion for parents and give them time to make alternative arrangements for their children.</p> <p>If weather conditions improve between the announcement of pre-emptive closure and the 4.30pm on the eve of closure, pre-emptive closure may be cancelled.</p>	

Refer to Appendix C in your school’s *Standalone bushfire plan* for the procedures.

If a Catastrophic fire danger rating has been declared in a school's locality and they are not on the bushfire zone register, principals should:

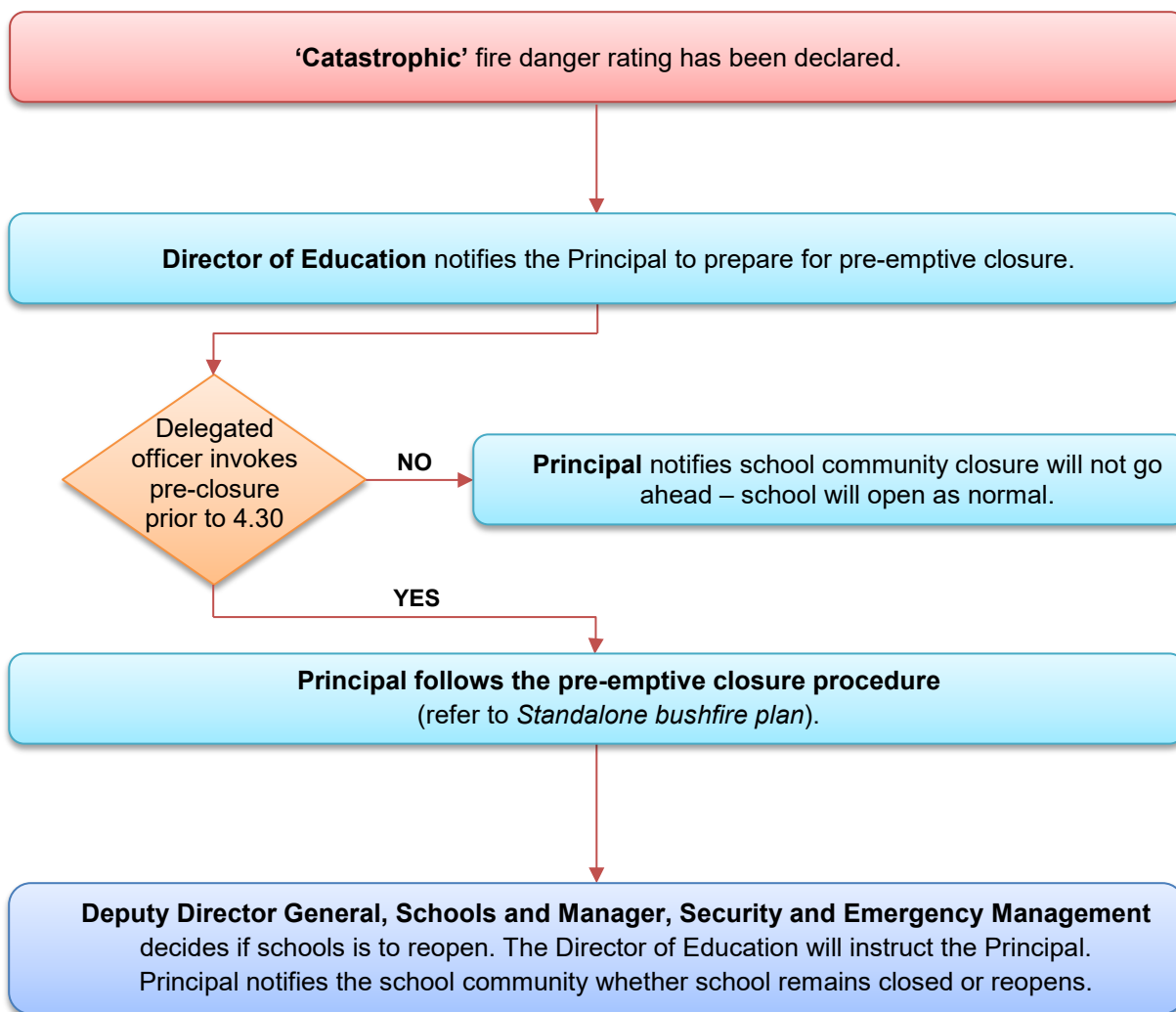
- Continue normal operations but monitor bushfire activity and weather alerts (refer to Table 2).
- Contact their Director of Education with any concerns.
- Direct parent enquiries to the [Emergency WA website](#), [DFES website](#) and the DFES information line.

Residential and Agricultural Colleges remain open on a Catastrophic fire danger rating day and must have procedures in place:

- to move into onsite 'safer building location'; or
- action an offsite evacuation if safe.

Parents need to be informed when the Catastrophic fire danger rating has been downgraded and when it is safe for their children to return to school. Principals should communicate with parents referring to the bushfire response telephone call tree and use the communication templates in their *Standalone bushfire plan*.

5.1.2 Flow chart - Principal's response to 'Catastrophic' fire danger rating



5.2 Response to a sudden bushfire event

Community alerts and warnings for bushfires that threaten lives and property are issued by:

- DFES
- Parks and Wildlife (P&W) Service of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.




The warnings are only issued once firefighters have arrived at the scene and determined the level of threat. The alert level changes reflect the increasing risk to life.

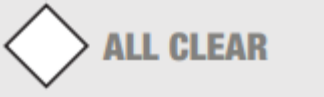
The Principal must prepare to move students, staff and visitors to the onsite 'safer building location' or offsite evacuation location.

Evacuation orders are directed by the Emergency Services.

The Emergency Services uses the four bushfire warning stages displayed below as a guide on how to respond to a bushfire event that may impact a school.

Table 4 – Bushfire warning stages

Bushfire warning stages		
1	 ADVICE	<p>A fire has started but there is no known danger.</p> <p>This is general information to keep principals informed and up to date with developments.</p> <p>Principals must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • turn off evaporative air conditioners and ensure roof vents are closed. • check and patrol school regularly for bushfire activity, paying special attention to the evaporative air conditioners.
2	 WATCH AND ACT	<p>There is a possible threat to lives and property. Conditions are changing.</p> <p>Principals must prepare to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evacuate; or • move students, staff and visitors to their pre-determined onsite 'safer building location'. They must not be moved to an open area. <p>Evacuation orders are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issued by the Incident Controller or Emergency Services if required. • relayed via a variety of official sources such as the DFES website and Emergency WA website. <p>It is vital that the principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accesses bushfire information from official sources. • makes an informed decision to stay onsite or evacuate offsite based on advice from the Incident Controller or Emergency Services.
3	 EMERGENCY WARNING	<p>A school is in danger as its area will be impacted by fire. Take immediate action to survive.</p> <p>Principal will be advised whether staff, students and visitors can leave the area or if they must shelter where they are as the fire burns through the area.</p> <p>An emergency warning may be accompanied by a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS).</p> <p>Evacuation orders are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directed by the Incident Controller or Emergency Services. • relayed via a variety of official sources, such as the Bushfire warning system, DFES website and Emergency WA website. <p>It is vital that the principal:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accesses bushfire information from official sources • makes an informed decision to stay onsite or evacuate offsite based on the advice.

4		<p>The danger has passed and the fire is under control, but stay alert in case the situation changes.</p> <p>It may not be safe to return to school yet.</p>
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Further information on the bushfire warning system is available:

- on the [DFES website](#)
- in the video [Bushfire Warnings Explained](#).

Note: Total fire ban is declared on days of extreme weather or when widespread fires are seriously stretching firefighting resources. Emergency WA after 6.00pm to see if a ban has been declared for the next day. Refer to Terminology (section 10) for further info.

5.3 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is open

If a 'Watch and Act' or 'Emergency' bushfire warning alert has been issued by DFES, the Principal must prepare to move students, staff and visitors to the:

- onsite 'safer building location'
- offsite evacuation location (to be directed by the Incident Controller or Emergency Services)

Use your school's *Standalone bushfire plan* for the procedures (Appendix B) and the bushfire action plan maps for your site (Section 7)

5.4 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is closed

Use your school's *Standalone bushfire plan* for the 'After hours or school holiday procedures' (Appendix D).

5.5 Incident Management Responses

5.6 Level 1 incidents

Principals or site managers manage level 1 incidents using local resources or with support from their education regional office or central services. External agencies such as the WA Police Force or medical professionals may be involved where required.

5.7 Level 2 incidents

Principals or site managers manage level 2 incidents at a local level with support from their education regional office or central services. However, if increased complexity or additional resource requirements necessitate further support and coordination, an executive director or above may appoint an incident support coordinator.

5.8 Level 3 incidents

Level 3 incidents involve a high degree of complexity. The Director General will appoint an incident commander. Level 3 incidents are managed under the direction of an incident commander.

6 Recover

After a bushfire event at a school, the Department priorities are:

- health and safety of individuals
- social recovery
- structural recovery.

To ensure a strong recovery, Principals and site managers should:

- debrief with staff, student and parents as soon as possible after the bushfire event
- return to normal operations as soon as possible
- attend to staff and student welfare, considering counselling support
- inform families and the community of any impact to normal school operations and routine
- check off any equipment or stock used and arrange for replacement/replenishment
- address physical damage to the school, isolating areas if required
- relocate to alternative accommodation if necessary
- advise the Department if any damage has been caused by the bushfire
- contact the Department of Finance to commence repairs
- attend to security, if necessary, through Security and Emergency Management (9264 4825)
- manage administrative details including insurance.

In the event of a Level 2 Incident Support Team or Level 3 Incident Management Team being activated, recovery may be facilitated with the assistance of the Incident Support Coordinator or direction of an Incident Commander.

7 Review

After recovery, Principals should undertake a review to establish:

- what worked
- what did not work
- what was overlooked
- what could be improved
- if a delegation should be reassigned.

Principals should also:

- incorporate changes into the *Standalone bushfire plan*
- advise the appropriate parties including staff and other authorities
- share the knowledge with other schools
- test the revised *Standalone bushfire plan* and procedures.

Refer to the Recovery Section of your Incident Management Plan. For further assistance and information contact:

- the relevant Education Regional Office
- Local Emergency Services
- Department of Education – Incident Management Team or Incident Support Team (if activated)
- Department of Education – Manager, Security and Emergency Management on (08) 9264 4825
- Department of Education – Incident Support Unit on (08) 9264 4768
- Local Government - Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC).

Additional information and resources:

- [Bushfire risks and dangers](#)
- [Travelling during a bushfire](#)

8 Communication templates

Principals and their staff are required to communicate with parents, carers and staff about school closure, school re-opening or student relocation due to a bushfire.

Note: Refer to the *Standalone bushfire plan* – ‘Communication templates’ (Appendix E)

9 Sample bushfire action plan map

9.1 Onsite 'safer building location(s)' sample

Below is a sample of an onsite 'safer building location(s)'. Do not use an open area such as a school oval or a non-enclosed building.

Map Instructions

Your map should include the following:

- Onsite 'safe building location(s)'
- Routes to access this building'
- location of fire hydrants
- electrical switchboards
- phones and communication board
- first aid kits
- evacuation kits; and
- any other relevant details.

Note:
List all onsite 'safer building location(s)' including the name of the building (for example Library, Gym).

9.2 Offsite evacuation locations sample

Below is a sample of an offsite evacuation action plan map.

Map Instructions

Your map should include the following:

Assemble area(s) such as:

- Main oval (staging area)

Two offsite evacuation points such as:

- Flashpoint Library (A)
- Phoney Community Centre (B)
- Suitable routes to access these offsite locations.

Note:
List all offsite evacuation locations including addresses in your Standalone bushfire plan.

10 Terminology

Term	Description
Asset protection zone	<p>The asset protection zone is a defined area surrounding a school that must be managed to an acceptable level to reduce the bushfire hazard.</p> <p>The management of the asset protection zone is about reducing direct flame contact on the building during a bushfire. This involves managing and reducing the fuel load to a minimum distance of 20 metres around building.</p>
Bushfire attack level	A measure of the severity of a building's potential exposure to ember attack, radiant heat and direct flame contact. The assessment process is based on the calculations presented in AS3959:2018 to determine the Bushfire attack level at a school site.
Bushfire behaviour	All fires require three elements: fuel, air and heat to start and grow. Bushfires in particular can be unpredictable, behaving in a number of ways depending on the amount of these elements. The majority of severe bushfire threats generally occur in high temperatures, strong winds and lightning from thunderstorm activity.
Bushfire hazard	Many schools in Western Australia are located in areas that may be impacted by a bushfire. The level of risk to which schools in these areas are exposed can vary considerably and is dependent on the bushfire landscape surrounding a school and also on how well a school is prepared and able to respond in a bushfire emergency.
Bushfire mitigation management register	A register to assist you to monitor and maintain the bushfire treatment works after these have been completed.
Bushfire risk area	An area that has been designated by the Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner as an area that is subject, or likely to be subject, to bushfire.
Bushfire zone register	<p>This is a Department of Education list of all public schools identified as being in a bushfire risk area.</p> <p>This means a school has been assessed as being in or close to bushfire prone vegetation.</p> <p>Schools included on the register are assessed as: Low, Moderate, High, Very High or Extreme depending on the risk rating.</p>
Bushfire warning system	Refer to this Factsheet .

<p>'Catastrophic' fire danger rating</p>	<p>This fire danger rating means that if a fire was to occur, it would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncontrollable • unpredictable • very fast moving • very aggressive, with flames extending high above treetops and buildings.
<p>DFES website</p>	<p>Emergencies: https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/ https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/newsandmedia/Pages/NewsHome.aspx</p> <p>Warning systems: https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/warningsystems</p> <p>Bushfire Warnings: https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/warningsystems/Pages/BushfireWarningSystem.aspx</p> <p>Bushfire risks and dangers: https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/bushfire/BushfireFactsheets/DFES-Bushfire-Factsheet-Bushfire_risks_and_dangers.pdf</p> <p>Education Resources: https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/schooleducation/Pages/default.aspx</p> <p>Travelling during a bushfire: https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/bushfire/BushfireFactsheets/DFES-Bushfire-Factsheet-Travelling_during_a_bushfire.pdf</p>
<p>Direct flame contact</p>	<p>When materials close to a school catch fire, flames can touch the outside of school buildings. The length of time that flames are in direct contact with school buildings depends on the amount of fuel to be burnt.</p>
<p>Ember attack</p>	<p>Even if the fire front does not reach a school, the school can still be damaged by burning embers carried by strong winds. Embers can get into a school through gaps in roofs, walls, evaporative air-conditioners, windows and doors. They can land on materials that easily burn and this can start a fire. Research has shown that ember attack is the main reason that buildings catch fire during a bushfire. Embers can continue to threaten a school even after the fire front has passed.</p>
<p>Fire danger rating</p>	<p>A fire danger rating is the expected fire danger on a particular day and is determined by considering a combination of factors including air temperature, relative humidity, wind speed and drought. The ratings range from low, moderate, high, very high, severe, extreme and catastrophic.</p>

Fuel	Vegetation around a school such as dry grass, leaves, twigs and bark, provide fuel for a fire. This fuel plays a part in how hot a fire can be and how fast it can spread. If fuel is removed, the fire will starve.
Fuel load assessment	A measurement of the accumulation of available bushfire fuels within a specific area.
Hazard reduction	A range of risk treatment options that are available to reduce bushfire risk which include but are not limited to burning, slashing, mulching, clearing and chemical spraying.
Hazard separation zone	This is a defined area which extends 80 metres from the outer edge of the asset protection zone and improves fire protection of assets by reducing the intensity and rate of spread of bushfires within the zone. Fuel load management within the Hazard separation zone will reduce the likelihood of crown fires developing and spot fire ignition potential within the zone.
Incident controller	An incident controller assesses the level of danger to the community and if lives and homes are under direct and imminent threat. He or she will request an Emergency Alert be issued within that specific geographical area.
Local emergency management committee (LEMC)	Also called the LEMC, this committee is established by the local government authority to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advise and assist the local government in ensuring that local emergency management arrangements (LEMAs) are established for its district • liaise with public authorities and other persons in the development, review and testing of the LEMA • carry out other emergency management activities as directed by the LEMC or prescribed by the regulations.
Prescribed burn	The burning of a percentage of available bushfire fuels to reduce the available fuel load and therefore reduce the potential intensity and risk of a bushfire.
Pre-emptive closure	This is a planned closure of the school in response to predicted catastrophic fire conditions. It is advised by DFES and relayed via the Department to the school, or directly by DFES.
Standard emergency warning signal (SEWS)	This is a warning signal that is broadcast immediately prior to major emergency announcements on the radio, television and other communication systems.

	<p>The purpose of SEWS is to alert the community that an official emergency announcement is about to be made concerning an actual or imminent emergency that has the potential to affect them.</p> <p>School staff are strongly advised to become familiar with the sound. To listen to the SEWS sound, click here (MP3 – 126 KB).</p>
<p>Total fire ban</p>	<p>Means:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no fires must be lit or used in the open air • all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping are not allowed • ‘hot work’ such as metal work, grinding, welding, soldering, gas cutting or similar is not allowed. <p>DFES advises that chainsaws, plant or grass trimmers or lawn mowers can be used during a total fire ban in suburban or built up areas which are cleared of flammable material, but not in bushland or other areas where their use may cause a fire.</p> <p>It is also necessary to ensure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the equipment or machinery is mechanically sound; and • all reasonable precautions are taken to prevent a bushfire starting. <p>Postpone the activity altogether to minimise the risk of fire.</p> <p>For information on activities that can or cannot be carried out during a total fire ban visit:</p> <p>DFES website - https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/totalfirebans/pages/whatisatfb.aspx.</p> <p>Emergency WA - https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/#totalfirebans.</p>