



Bush Kinder Extreme Weather Policy

NQS: Quality Area 2

Attachments

Attachment 1: Extreme Weather Table

Attachment 2: Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Attachment 3: Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

Attachment 4: Bush Kinder site map showing safe relocation zones in the event of extreme weather.

Purpose

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Maribyrnong Kindergarten to cancel bush kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and ensure that parents understand this framework.
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a session.
- Provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session.
- Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions.
- Impress upon parents that they may collect their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

Policy statement

1. Values

Maribyrnong Kindergarten is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children participating in the Bush Kinder program.
- Facilitating a bush kinder experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across as broad a spectrum as possible and without compromising the safety of the participants.
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well-informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions.
- Facilitating effective and timely communication to parents regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather.

- Respecting the right of parents to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

Scope

This policy applies to children, parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at Maribyrnong Kindergarten.

Background and legislation

Maribyrnong Kindergarten's Bush Kinder program is intended to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring and learning in a bush or natural environment. However, extreme weather conditions may arise periodically which can put the wellbeing and safety of the children and staff at risk. This policy provides the parameters within which the kindergarten can make determinations to cancel bush kinder sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- National Quality Standards, including Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety and Quality Area 3 – Physical environment
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

Definitions

Bureau of Meteorology : Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Various iphone/ ipad apps use BOM data (eg Pocket Weather, Accuweather)

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions. An extreme weather table is shown below.

Bush kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met:

Weather Condition Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation

Forecast temperature 36 degrees Celsius or greater AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder

Note there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)

Forecast wind speed In excess of 45km per hour AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder, based on a final assessment at the site.

Forecast of electrical storm activity Thunder storm/electrical storm forecast

Pipemaker's Park flooded at or near the Bush Kinder site

On flooding advice from the Ranger.

BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall

On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

In addition to the above, Maribyrnong Kindergarten has the discretion to cancel a session/s if it views the weather to be poor for Bush Kinder purposes, even if the extreme weather determinants in the above table are not reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area may also necessitate cancellation.

Further, the Pipemaker's Park Ranger has the authority to override the Maribyrnong Kindergarten determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should he or she feel the Bush Kinder site may be unsafe.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

Sources and related centre policies

Centre policies

- Bush Kinder Delivery Collection of Children Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Play Benefits and Risk Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy (including First Aid)
- Supervision of Children Policy

- Excursion and Service Event Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy

Procedures

General

The Committee is responsible for:

- An Extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a bush kinder session/s and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Bush Kinder session
- All parents being aware of this policy and provided access to the policy upon request
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents in the event of cancellation of a Bush Kinder session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions.

Parents are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are comfortable at all times with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If for whatever reason, a parent feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session or collecting their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during a session.
- Ensuring protective clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and ensure a change of clothes is provided (including shoes) (Refer to Protective Clothing Policy)
- Ensuring they carry a mobile phone with them and be contactable at all times while their child's Bush Kinder session is in progress
- Reading and being familiar with the policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of both staff and committee

In the event of forecast extreme or bad weather

In cases of forecast extreme weather (see definition above), Maribyrnong Kindergarten will make the decision to cancel the bush kinder program for the session(s) affected.

In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', the Maribyrnong Kindergarten has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes, and the Pipemaker's Park Ranger also has the authority to cancel a session due to extreme weather conditions at the site.

Staff are responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior and on the day of the Bush Kinder session.
- Making a determination to cancel or conduct the bush kinder sessions at any time based on the weather forecast.
- Providing a notice to parent and staff of the status of the Bush Kinder session/s as follows:
- By broadcast email and/or SMS to the Bush Kinder group as soon as possible the determination is made.
- ***Note that a bush kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time*** by broadcast email and/or SMS based on updated weather information.
- Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.

Parents are responsible for:

- Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.
- Checking email for any notifications of session cancellation In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session.

Staff are responsible for:

- Undertaking the actions in the each of the weather conditions listed in the extreme weather table (Attachment 1).

Weather condition Staff Actions:

Heat - Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration

- monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke (see Attachment 2 for symptoms and treatments)
- offer water for hydration at regular intervals
- establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade
- ensure application of sunscreen every two hours

- ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats. [Refer Protective Clothing Policy for more information]

Rain/Hail/Cold - Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones

- Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary (with assistance of volunteers)
- Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (eg, waterproof clothing, gloves)
- Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing,

Relocating to a safe position' instructions

- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Illness Policy and Incident and Medical Emergency Management Policy must be followed.
- Contacting parent in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy.

Parents are responsible for:

- Collecting their child at any time during the session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions
- Collecting their child as soon as possible where staff have determined and communicated to parents the extreme weather event and action taken

Procedures for Relocating to a Safe Position

Relocation Safe Zones

Hail, torrential rain Seek shelter under the BBQ shelter (Refer Map at Attachment)

Electrical storm/lightning, extreme winds - Seek shelter in Rotunda (adjacent to BK site) (Refer Map at Attachment 3)

If conditions necessitate evacuation from the Pipemaker's Park, follow procedures in the Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder specific)

Procedures for relocating

If the Bush Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position in response to the weather conditions, the following procedures are to be followed by staff (with the assistance of volunteers if possible):

- Keep children calm.

- Ensure sign-in sheet is in the teacher's backpack along with other necessary items such as medication.
- Count / check off against the sign in sheet to ensure all children are accounted for.
- With the exception of the teacher's backpack, leave Bush Kinder gear at the site – it can be collected later.
- En route to new location (see below for appropriate locations), calmly walk children in pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group.
- Teachers/adult volunteers to be positioned at the front and back of the group, and flanking the group where possible.
- Notify emergency services if required.
- On arrival at safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for.
- Wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities, following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site.
- If the weather does not look like it will pass soon, a broadcast SMS should be sent to all parents, advising of the new safe location for pickup purposes.

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual centre feedback survey.
- Review the centre's actions in response to extreme weather conditions.
- Ask staff to share their experiences in cases of extreme weather (in cases where sessions were cancelled, and in cases where extreme weather arose during a session).
- Regularly review the policy and centre practices to ensure they are compliant with any new legislation, research or best practice procedures.

ATTACHMENT 1

WEATHER CONDITION	EXTREME WEATHER DETERMINANT CAUSING CANCELLATION
Forecast temperature	36 degrees Celsius or greater <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Note there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)</i>
Forecast wind speed	> 40km per hour
Forecast of electrical storm activity	Thunder storm/electrical storm forecast
Flooding at or near the Bush Kinder site	On flooding advice from the Bureau of Meteorology, or on advice fro the Ranger
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology
Code Red Day	The service is deemed high risk and on code red days must close
Air Quality	If EPA Airwatch suggests the quality is poor, very poor or hazardous, staff will cancel sessions.

ATTACHMENT 2

LIGHTNING SAFETY FACT SHEET

Source: Victorian State Government – Education and training (www.education.vic.gov.au)

If thunder happens within 30 seconds of lightning, then the storm is within 10 kilometres of your location. Lightning safety experts consider this the strike danger zone and advise people to follow the 30/30 rule.

The 30/30 rule

Follow the precautions outlined below when thunder is heard within 30 seconds of a lightning flash and wait for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard to resume your activity. If you're unable to take shelter inside, find the safest accessible location and stay there until the storm has passed.

General precautions:

- Stay away from metal poles, fences, clothes lines etc.
- Never ride horses, bicycles or drive in open vehicles.
- If driving, slow down or park away from trees, power lines or other objects that may be damaged by storm activity.
- Stay inside metal-bodied (hard top) vehicles or caravans but do not touch any metal sections.
- If undertaking water activities, leave the water immediately.
- If boating go ashore to shelter as soon as possible. (A bridge or high jetty may offer immediate protection.)
- Discard all metal objects.

If shelter is near-by:

- Seek shelter in a hard top vehicle or solid building. Avoid small structures or fabric tents.
- Keep clear of windows.

If shelter is not available:

- Crouch (alone, feet together), preferably in a hollow. Make yourself a small target.
- Remove metal objects from head/body.

- Do not lie down (the more of you that is in contact with the ground, the more 'attractive' you are to lightning) but avoid being highest object.
- If your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing on nearby rocks, fences etc, move immediately. At night, a blue glow may show if an object is about to be struck.
- Stay away from high and low points (hilltops, ridges & gullies), rock overhangs and shallow caves.
- Keep out of, and well away from, water bodies or watercourses.
- Make sure the group is aware of the Lightning Safe Position. This involves:
 - Squatting or crouching with knees drawn up and feet together, preferably on dry insulating material (eg. foam mat).
 - Keeping hands off the ground.
 - Spread group members out – about ten metres apart, but within calling distance.
- Never shelter under tree/s.

First aid

- Apply immediate CPR to lightning victims until medical help arrives. (You won't receive a shock from the victim.)

For further information contact the State Emergency Service office. www.ses.vic.gov.au

Heat Illness

Heat exhaustion starts slowly and if not quickly treated can progress to heatstroke. In heatstroke, a child's temperature reaches 105° F (40.5° C) or higher. Heatstroke requires **immediate emergency medical care** and can be fatal.



Signs and Symptoms

Of heat exhaustion:

- increased thirst
- weakness
- fainting
- muscle cramps
- nausea and vomiting
- irritability
- headache
- increased sweating
- cool, clammy skin
- elevation of body temperature to less than 105° F (40.5° C)

Of heatstroke:

- severe headache
- weakness, dizziness
- confusion
- rapid breathing and heartbeat
- loss of consciousness leading to coma
- seizures
- may not be sweating
- flushed, hot, dry skin
- elevation of body temperature to 105° F (40.5° C) or higher



What to Do:

For a child with symptoms of heatstroke, **seek emergency medical care immediately**. In cases of heat exhaustion or while awaiting help for a child with possible heatstroke:

- Bring the child indoors or into the shade immediately.
- Undress the child.
- Have the child lie down; elevate feet slightly.
- If the child is alert, place in cool bath water. If outside, spray the child with mist from a garden hose.
- If the child is alert and coherent, give frequent sips of cool, clear fluids.
- If the child is vomiting, turn onto his or her side to prevent choking.



Think Prevention!

- Teach kids to always drink plenty of fluids before and during any activity in hot, sunny weather – even if they aren't thirsty.
- Make sure kids wear light-colored, loose clothing.
- Do not have your child participate in heavy activity outdoors during the hottest hours of the day.
- Teach kids to come indoors immediately whenever they feel overheated.

ATTACHMENT 3



Evacuation Point 1: BBQ shelter / Rotunda

Group to wait here until torrential rain and/or hail has passed and it is safe to resume normal activities.

Shelter may be sought in the Melbourne's Living Museum of the West if the weather shows no signs of abating (see Evacuation Point 2 below).

Route: Take the shortest, safest route possible

SEVERE STORM, EXTREME WINDS

Evacuation Point 2: Melbourne's Living Museum of the West

Group to wait here until storm passes and safe to resume activities (recommend 30 minutes after electrical storm activity has ceased)

Route: Take shortest safe route possible

If it is necessary to evacuate Pipemaker's Park altogether:

Depending on the emergency, staff will make an informed decision as to where they will evacuate the park. Parents will be notified of the exact location via SMS.