



Department of
Education

The Principal's Guide to Bushfire

Preparing Your School for the Bushfire Season

This document must be read in conjunction with the
Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan

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

Fire and Emergency Services Authority, Western Australia

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T & Z Pty Ltd

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INTRODUCTION

Bushfires happen every summer. They usually start suddenly and without any warning. If your school is in or near a bushland area, bushfires are a real risk to you, your students and staff, and your school buildings and grounds.

Before summer starts each year, all staff, students and parents need to know what to do if a bushfire threatens (see pages 8 to 13) and you need to make sure that, if your school is on the Bushfire Zone Register (see below), you are prepared to act in the event that a pre-emptive closure is required. A checklist to help you to prepare your school for a possible bushfire starts on page 5.

Preparing your school is your responsibility. You need to understand the risks so you can make decisions now on what you will do if a bushfire starts and is a threat to your school. You need to include the 20 metre Circle of Safety (refer to page 7) in your assessment. This document is designed to assist schools with the development of a bushfire risk management strategy. For further advice or assistance when preparing or updating your plan, contact your FESA Regional Office (Refer to Sections C1 and C2).

Schools that are located in bushfire prone areas need to incorporate key bushfire messages in their curriculum.

Any advice received by the school from FESA or external experts needs to be documented identifying the date and source of the advice.

The survival of students and staff is always the Department's main priority.

Consistent with the Department's *Emergency and Critical Incident Management* policy, **all** principals are required to implement strategies to eliminate or reduce the likelihood of the occurrence of emergencies and critical incidents. All schools are expected to have an *Emergency and Critical Incident Management* plan, a template for which is available from the Policies website at <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/policies>.

The process for emergency management as it pertains to bushfire is that outlined in the Department's *Emergency and Critical Incident Management* policy:

- prevention and mitigation of;
- preparedness for;
- response to;
- recovery from; and
- review of emergencies and critical incidents.

Your *Emergency and Critical Incident Management* Plan should include your school's plans for dealing with bushfires. The safety and wellbeing of students and staff is at all times the Department's main priority and staff are **not** expected to fight bushfires.

When acting to minimise the bushfire risk to your school, you need to be aware that there will be some factors you can change, such as clearing leaf litter from gutters and safe storage of flammable materials. The information on pages 4 to 14 provides useful prompts for actions you can take to minimise risk from bushfire.

BUSHFIRE ZONE REGISTER

In conjunction with FESA, the Department has compiled a list of its high risk schools that are in areas of high bushfire risk when there is a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating (FDR). The Catastrophic FDR has been added to the Australia-wide FDR system since the 2009 bushfires in Victoria. If a fire starts in catastrophic conditions, its impact potential includes death or injury to people and destruction of buildings. Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register are advised through their Coordinator of Regional Operations, and need to include appropriate emergency management procedures in their *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plans*.

Inclusion of schools on the Bushfire Zone Register has been determined by consideration of such factors as the geographical and physical characteristics of the school and its environment, and design, construction and age of buildings.

Any principal who feels that his or her school should be added to, or removed from, the Register should call the Head of Security on 9264 4825.

Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register

Appendix A provides checklists, suggested text for school newsletters, letters to parents and memos to staff for use by schools on the Bushfire Zone Register. The following sections provide an outline of the processes involved in the Department's planned response to Catastrophic FDR forecasts.

Planned (pre-emptive) closure

Regional Executive Directors contact principals of affected schools directly when a planned (pre-emptive) closure is to be invoked in a particular part of the State¹. The lead time for a planned closure varies depending on weather patterns, but every attempt is made to give principals as much notice as possible.

Once advised that your school is to undertake pre-emptive closure, you need to notify your school community that a closure is imminent. The principal needs to send letters to parents and provide each staff member with a memo that clearly states when the closure is planned to occur and that the school is on standby. It may be that between declaration of the closure and the day of closure, weather conditions improve sufficiently to remove the need to close and the school can therefore stand down its pre-emptive closure plans. Your Regional Executive Director confirms with the principal the final decision to close the school no later than 1.30 pm the day before the planned closure. If weather conditions become less severe after 1:30 pm, the closure goes ahead regardless, in order to provide a level of certainty to parents.

FESA is the final authority on advice about which schools are in danger and the level of risk at the time. The Department makes the final decision as to whether or not a planned closure of public schools is to proceed, based on FESA's advice.

¹ Principals of Independent Public Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register will be contacted by personnel from the Regional Education Office geographically closest to the school.

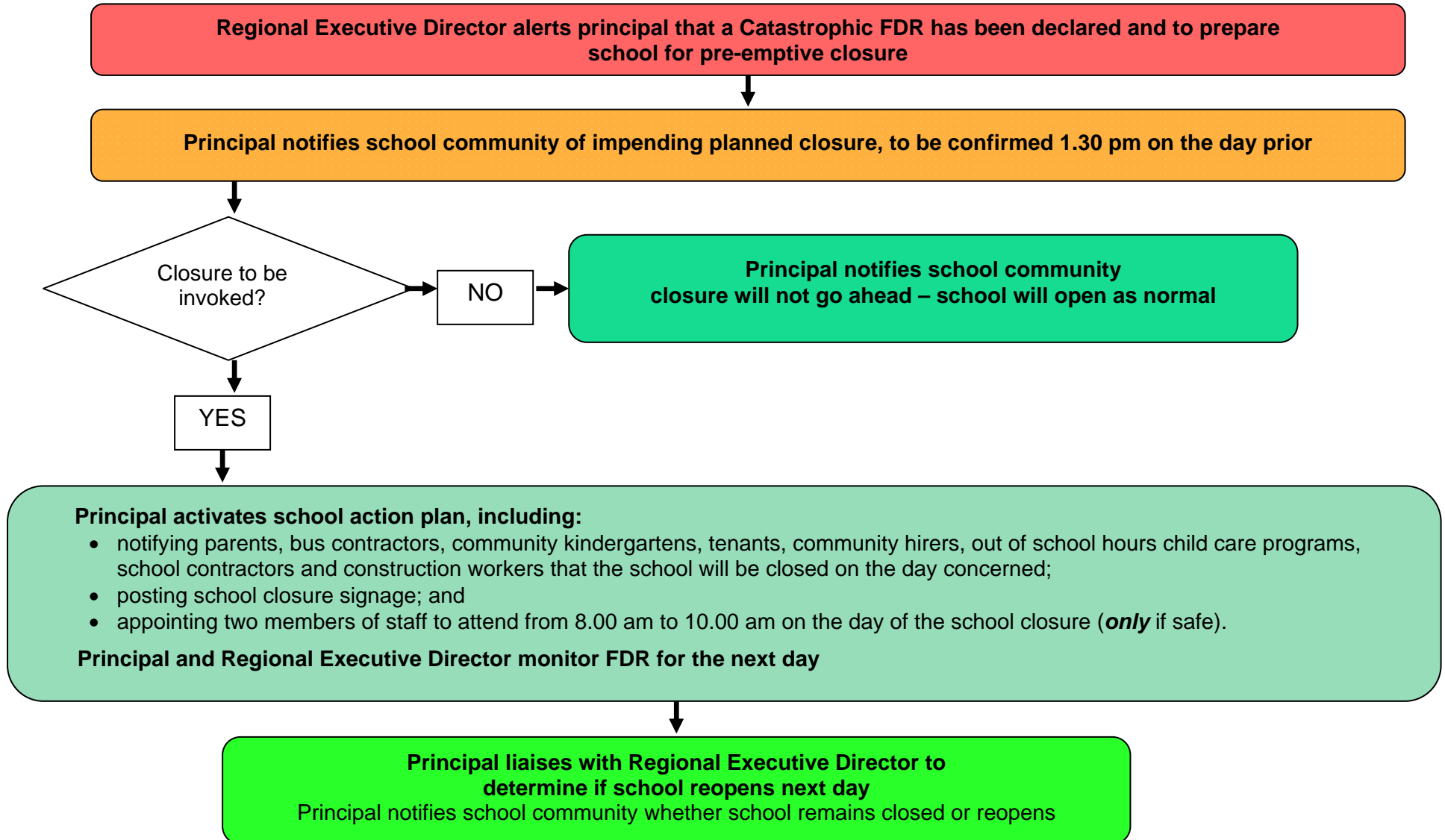
During a planned closure

Principals are required stay informed of current fire danger ratings and any fire activity by monitoring local media (local radio, especially the ABC, and television) and by regularly checking for updates with FESA (see Appendix A).

Reopening the school

Parents need to know when the Catastrophic FDR has been downgraded and that it is therefore safe for their children to return to school after a planned closure. The template letter to parents (page A7 of Appendix A) contains advice on how parents can monitor the situation. You need to put communication plans in place, such as placing a notice on the school website and providing a number for parents to call for information about the reopening of the school. Consideration needs to be given to how parents who do not have internet access or who have diverse needs (e.g. multicultural, special needs) will be provided with information.

PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSE TO Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating



 <p>Department of Education</p>	<h2 style="color: red;">Bushfire Preparation Check List for the Summer Months</h2>
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Principals should be thoroughly familiar with their current *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* and all staff members should be aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plan.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Tick when task has been completed, or write NA if not applicable

School's <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> includes bushfire response plan, and students and staff have been made aware of it. Confirm that relief staff and parents have been made aware of the school's bushfire plan.	
If school is in a bushfire-prone area, principal (or a nominated staff member) has established contact with emergency services, including FESA Career Fire and Rescue Services ² , the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police and your Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC). School registered with State Alert (www.statealert.wa.gov.au).	
Schools that are located in bushfire prone areas need to incorporate key bushfire messages in their curriculum.	
Communication plans are in place for evacuation or planned closure ³ .	
Practice evacuation drills prior to October and at least once per term during the bushfire season, October to March.	
School has a correctly functioning emergency warning or alert system.	
Emergency communications equipment is available (e.g. mobile telephones, hand-operated fire alarm (portable siren), portable radios and spare batteries).	
Class rolls and visitor register are readily accessible.	
First aid equipment is available and staff members trained in first aid have been identified.	
Evacuation kit should be checked at least once per term.	
Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses (notification of contractors if pre-emptive closure is invoked; availability of buses if off-site evacuation is required)	
Procedures are in place to restrict use of machinery (e.g. angle grinders, mowers, and machinery with internal combustion engines) in close proximity to bushfire fuels where they may start a fire on severe fire danger days.	

² Appendix C provides contact details for FESA Regional Offices.

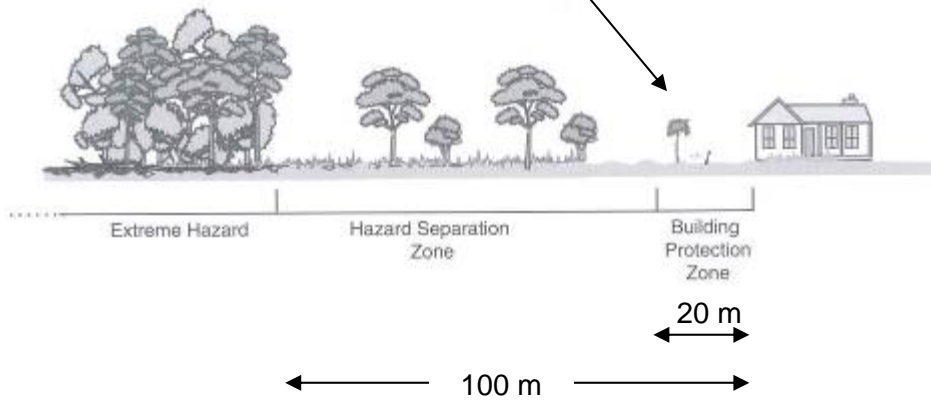
³ Refer to Section 4 'Emergency Contacts' of the template *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* for more information and a sample telephone contact tree.

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<h2 style="color: red;">Bushfire Preparation Check List for the Summer Months</h2>
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MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES (Continued)

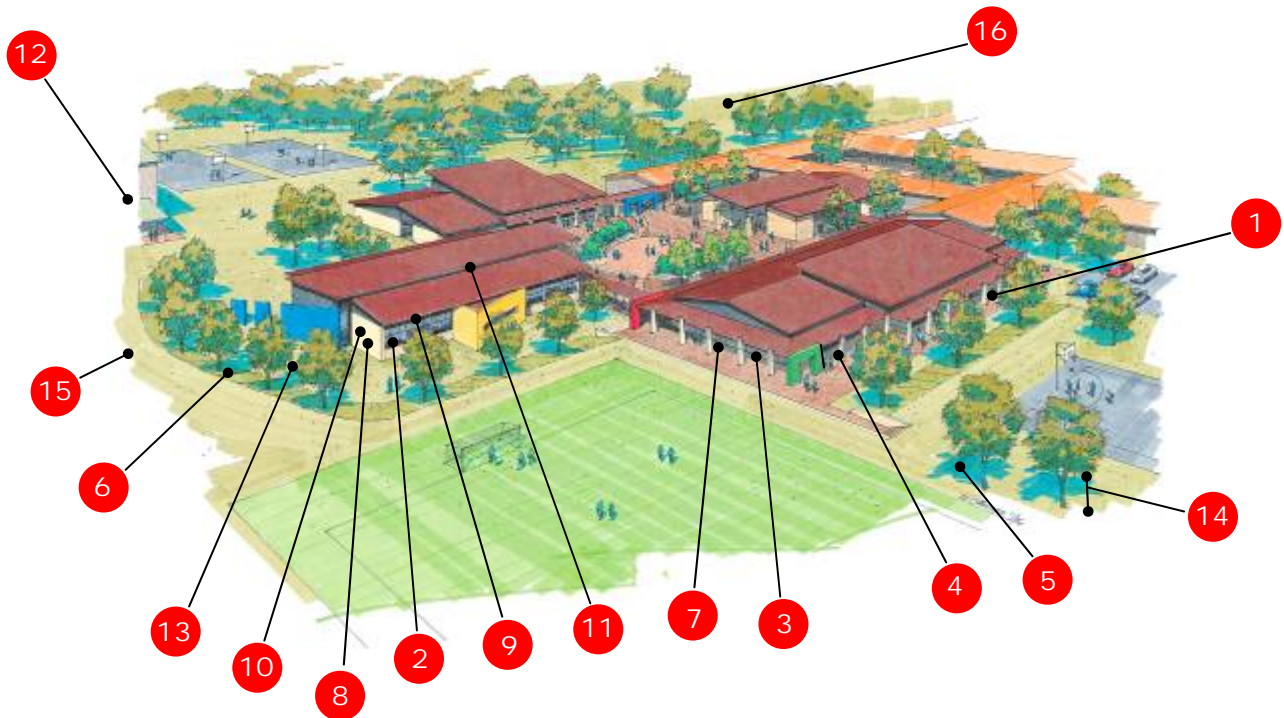
Tick when task has been completed, or write NA if not applicable

20 m 'Circle of Safety' created in the Building Protection Zone. (Refer to graphic on next page.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
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CIRCLE OF SAFETY

1. Do not pile wood against or near school buildings
2. If possible place metal fly wire mesh on all windows or vents to keep sparks and embers out
3. If possible block any gaps under floor spaces, in the roof space, under eaves, external vents, skylights, evaporative air conditioners, chimneys and wall cladding
4. Create and maintain a minimum two metre gap between school buildings and tree branches
5. Rake up leaf litter and twigs under trees
6. Remove shrubs and small trees under and between larger trees
7. Keep garden mulch away from buildings and grass is kept short
8. If possible all gaps in external wall claddings are sealed
9. Keep roof gutters and valleys clear of leaves and bark
10. Keep LP gas cylinders on the side of the school furthest away from the likely direction of bushfires (where bush is)



11. If possible block any gaps in the roof space
12. Remove flammable materials and store them away from school buildings
13. Create a 20 metre circle of safety around your school. This area needs to be cleared of all rubbish, long dry grass, bark and material that may catch fire
14. Prune lower branches (up to two metres off the ground) to stop a ground fire spreading into the canopy of the trees
15. Make sure you meet your local government's firebreak requirements
16. Cut long grass and dense scrub
17. Clear obstacles and trees from driveways and access points

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Preparation and Response if your School is Open when a Bushfire Starts</p>
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PREPAREDNESS – In place prior to bushfire season and maintained

Tick when task has been completed, or write NA if not applicable

Principal is thoroughly familiar with their current <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> and all staff members aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plan.	
Principal has tested <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> .	
Principal (or a nominated staff member) has established contact with emergency services, including FESA Career Fire and Rescue Services ⁴ , the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police and your Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC). School registered with State Alert (www.statealert.wa.gov.au).	
Communication plans are in place for evacuation or planned closure ⁵ .	
Emergency contact ⁵ list for parents, staff, other agencies, etc. is up to date and readily available.	
School has a correctly functioning emergency warning or alert system.	
Emergency communications equipment is available (e.g. mobile telephones, hand-operated fire alarm (portable siren), portable radios and spare batteries).	
Evacuation kit is established and readily available (check at least once per term).	
Class rolls and visitor register are readily accessible (part of evacuation kit).	
First aid equipment is available and staff members trained in first aid have been identified.	
Alternate assembly areas and buildings within the school where students and staff can be located safely have been identified.	
Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses (availability of buses if off-site evacuation is required)	
Mobile telephones' batteries charged throughout the bushfire season.	Ongoing
Turn off evaporative air conditioners.	

⁴ Appendix C provides contact details for FESA Regional Offices.

⁵ Refer to Section 4 'Emergency Contacts' of the template *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* for more information and a sample telephone contact tree.

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<h2 style="color: red;">Bushfire Preparation and Response if your School is Open when a Bushfire Starts</h2>
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RESPONSE

<p>If you notice a bushfire before having received any advice from FESA, emergency services should be notified (000) and provided with details. If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, activate the Emergency Management Plan immediately. Notify FESA Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point.</p>	
<p>School to inform Regional Executive Director of the situation.</p>	
<p>If ADVICE⁶ stage warning received by principal from Regional Executive Director or delegate (or from FESA):</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situation assessed by principal; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information sought on level of threat from FESA on 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.gov.au; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assistance sought from Regional Executive Director on availability of resources to transport and relocate students and staff off-site if required; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC local radio broadcasts (updated at quarter to and quarter past the hour in addition to news bulletins) monitored for change in level of warning to WATCH AND ACT or EMERGENCY WARNING. www.fesa.wa.gov.au monitored for updates. • Assign a member of staff to monitor local radio, TV, websites for bushfire or weather alerts. 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • class rolls checked to confirm absentees and visitor register checked for visitors currently in the school; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mobile telephones charged; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency contacts list for parents, staff, other agencies, etc accessed; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • evacuation kit accessed; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assembly areas and buildings within the school where students and staff can be located safely prioritised (relative to the prevailing conditions); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • turn off evaporative air conditioners. 	
<p>If FESA warning upgraded (WATCH AND ACT⁶ stage):</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • update sought from FESA regional office⁷ or 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au; 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • directions issued by Emergency Services Incident Controller managing the fire emergency followed; 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency Services Incident Controller updated on location of students, staff and visitors within the school; 	

⁶ See page 15 for an explanation for the three levels of warning for FESA

⁷ Appendix C provides contact details for FESA Regional Offices.

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Preparation and Response if your School is Open when a Bushfire Starts</p>
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RESPONSE (Continued)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal's decision to leave or relocate students, staff and visitors off-site should be based on assessment of known information and current circumstances. This may include advice from emergency services or observations at the time of the event. If the decision is made to activate relocation aspects of their Emergency Management Plan. Notify FESA Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point. Principal to liaise with Regional Executive Director. 	
<p>If FESA warning upgraded (EMERGENCY WARNING⁸ stage):</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school should activate their Emergency Management Plan in regards to evacuation, if it is safe to do so. Consideration will include; location of fire and ability to travel safely to the selected relocation point. Notify FESA Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point. Principal to liaise with Regional Executive Director. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class roll and visitor register rechecked after relocating staff, students and visitors off-site, and Emergency Services Incident Controller advised of anyone missing. 	

⁸ See page 15 for an explanation for the three levels of warning for FESA

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Preparation and Response if your School is Closed when a Bushfire Starts</p>
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PREPAREDNESS – In place prior to bushfire season and maintained

Tick when task has been completed, or write NA if not applicable

Principal thoroughly familiar with their current <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> and all staff members aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plan.	ongoing
Principal has tested <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> .	
Principal (or a nominated staff member) has established contact with emergency services, including FESA Career Fire and Rescue Services ⁹ , the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police and your Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC). School registered with State Alert (www.statealert.wa.gov.au).	
Communication plans are in place for evacuation or planned closure ¹⁰ .	
Emergency contact ¹⁰ list for parents, staff, other agencies etc up to date and readily available (Part of Evacuation kit).	
Emergency communications equipment is available (e.g. mobile telephones, hand-operated fire alarm (portable siren), portable radios and spare batteries).	
Class rolls and visitor register are readily accessible (Part of Evacuation kit).	
Alternate schools where students and staff can be relocated safely have been identified.	
Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses (availability of buses if alternate school location is required)	

⁹ Appendix C provides contact details for FESA Regional Offices.

¹⁰ Refer to Section 4 'Emergency Contacts' of the template *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* for more information and a sample telephone contact tree.

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Preparation and Response if your School is Closed when a Bushfire Starts</p>
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RESPONSE

If you notice a bushfire before having received any advice from FESA, emergency services should be notified (000) and provided with details.	
Central Office to inform Regional Executive Director of the situation.	
If ADVICE ¹¹ warning received by principal from Regional Executive Director or Central Office or from FESA:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> situation assessed and monitored by principal or Regional Executive Director or Central Office or FESA ; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> information sought on level of threat from FESA on 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.gov.au; 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ABC local radio broadcasts (updated at quarter to and quarter past the hour in addition to news bulletins) monitored for change in level of warning to WATCH AND ACT or EMERGENCY WARNING. www.fesa.wa.gov.au monitored for updates; 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> turn off evaporative air conditioners. 	
If FESA warning upgraded (WATCH AND ACT ¹¹ stage):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> update sought from FESA regional office¹² or 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au; 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> directions issued by Emergency Services Incident Controller managing the fire emergency followed; 	ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education Incident Controller to make decision on school closure based on advice from Emergency Services; Regional Executive Director to inform principal of closure; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal to notify staff and parents using emergency contact¹³ list of school closure. (Part of Evacuation kit); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education Incident Controller in consultation with Regional Executive Director to identify temporary alternative accommodation of students and staff if required; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education Media Unit to utilise media outlets to make public announcements of schools closures, temporary alternative accommodation and contact number for further information. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Department of Education Incident Controller in consultation with FESA informs Regional Executive Director when school can re-open. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Executive Director to inform principal when school can re-open; Principal to inform parents when school can re-open; Department of Education Media Unit notified 	

¹¹ See page 15 for an explanation for the three levels of warning for FESA

¹² Appendix C provides contact details for FESA Regional Offices.

¹³ Refer to Section 4 'Emergency Contacts' of the template *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* for more information and a sample telephone contact tree.

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Preparation and Response if your School is Closed when a Bushfire Starts</p>
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RESPONSE (Continued)

If FESA warning upgraded (EMERGENCY WARNING¹⁴ stage):	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education Incident Controller to make decision on school closure based on advice from Emergency Services. Regional Executive Director to inform principal of closure. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education Incident Controller in consultation with FESA informs Regional Executive Director when school can re-open. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Executive Director to inform principal when school can re-open: • Principal to inform parents when school can re-open. 	

¹⁴ See page 15 for an explanation for the three levels of warning for FESA

RECOVERY

Refer to the Recovery section of your *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan*.

General

- Return workplace to normal.
- Attend to staff and student welfare, consider counselling support.
- Relocate to alternative accommodation if necessary.
- Attend to security: contact Head of Security at Central Office on 9264 4825.
- Manage administrative details, including insurance.

Debrief

- What worked, what didn't?
- Was anything overlooked?
- What could you do better the next time?
- Should roles change?
- Communicate changes with staff and other authorities concerned.
- Share knowledge with other schools.
- Test revised bushfire crisis management plan and procedures.

For further assistance and information contact:

- Regional Education Office
- Fire & Emergency Services Authority
- Local Government for Bushfire Brigades
- Department of Education – Head of Security (9264 4825) or the Principal Consultant in the Office of the Deputy Director General, Schools (9264 4062)
- Local Emergency Management Committee

FESA WARNINGS

During a bushfire, emergency services provides as much information as possible through a number of different channels.

There are three levels of warning, **ADVICE**, **WATCH AND ACT**, and **EMERGENCY WARNING**. These change to reflect the increasing risk to life and the decreasing amount of time you have until the fire arrives.

ADVICE

If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, activate Emergency Management Plan immediately. Notify FESA Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point.

An **ADVICE** provides you with information on a bushfire that is not threatening lives or property but may be causing smoke near schools.

WATCH AND ACT

A **WATCH AND ACT** message tells you the fire conditions are changing and there is a possible threat to lives and schools.

The principal's decision to leave or relocate students, staff and visitors off-site should be based on assessment of known information and current circumstances. This may include advice from emergency services or observations at the time of the event. If the decision is made to activate relocation aspects of their Emergency Management Plan, notify FESA Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point. Principal to liaise with Regional Executive Director.

EMERGENCY WARNING

An **EMERGENCY WARNING** is the highest level of warning and tells you of immediate danger. In some circumstances, it may start with a siren sound called the Standard Emergency Warning Signal (SEWS) to get your attention as the fire is about to arrive. SEWS is a distinctive sound that is broadcast immediately prior to major emergency announcements on radio, television and other communication systems. The signal sounds like '**whoop, whoop, whoop**' and is broadcast for up to ten seconds before the broadcast of emergency information. SEWS tells people 'you need to listen - there is an emergency in your area and you need to take action now'. It is used like a siren and is strictly controlled for use by an authorised hazard management agency only.

The school should activate their Emergency Management Plan in regards to evacuation, if it is safe to do so. Consideration will include; location of fire and ability to travel safely to the selected relocation point, notify FESA Communication Centre of your decision and relocation point. Principal to liaise with Regional Executive Director.

TOTAL FIRE BAN

When a **TOTAL FIRE BAN** is declared it prohibits the lighting of any fires in the open air and any other activities that may start a fire. For further details, refer to the FESA website.

Appendix A

Planned Closure Package for Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Zone Register Schools: Checklist for Action <u>in Advance of Declaration</u> of Pre-emptive Closure</p>
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Tick when task has been completed

Principal familiar with school's <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> , and is aware of sources for staying informed of current fire danger ratings or fire activity (local media – television and radio, especially ABC Local Radio; FESA - 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au .)	
Staff members aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plan, including that they are not to be on school sites during a day which has been declared a Catastrophic FDR.	
Staff aware media enquiries are to be directed to the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821).	
Stand-down and leave arrangements discussed with staff.	
Two staff members (usually principal and one other) identified to be at the school from 8.00 am to 10.00 am on the day of Catastrophic FDR to communicate the school closure to the community. (These people should only attend if there is no fire in progress at the time.)	
Contact lists for staff and parents up to date.	
School community informed that your school is on the Bushfire Zone Register (see draft text for school newsletter on page A6).	
Letter to parents and memo to staff advising of planned closure prepared (see templates on pages A7 and A9).	
Approved signage laminated ready for placement on external school access points.	
Communication plan established, including telephone tree to notify school community of pre-emptive closure where lead time is too short for notification by letter.	
School Action Plan includes mechanisms for advising the following of planned closure:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools in close proximity and/or with siblings of your students; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents, including making provision for parents from diverse backgrounds (e.g. multicultural, special needs); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • any staff, students, part-time staff, volunteers and parents of students who are absent on the day of declaration or confirmation of planned closure; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • visitors planning to visit school on the day of planned closure; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Council and P&C; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community kindergartens and community hirers (community use including before and after school care and holiday programs); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school contractors (bus contractors, grounds maintenance, cleaners); and 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • building construction workers. 	
Bushfire Preparation Check List for the Summer Months on page 5 of The Principal's Guide to Bushfire acted on.	

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Zone Register Schools: Check List for Action <u>Upon Declaration</u> of Pre-emptive Closure</p>
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Tick when task has been completed

School Action Plan activated immediately upon declaration of pre-emptive closure.	
All necessary people informed:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools in close proximity and/or with siblings of your students; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents, including making provision for parents from diverse backgrounds (e.g. multicultural, special needs); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> any staff, students, part-time staff, volunteers and parents of students who are absent today; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> visitors planning to visit school on the day of planned closure; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Council and P&C; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community kindergartens and community hirers (community use including before and after school care and holiday programs); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school contractors (bus contractors, grounds maintenance, cleaners); and 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> building construction workers. 	
<p>Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure signs placed on the main notice board (at the front of the school), on main administration entrance doors and other entry/exit doors throughout the buildings, including kindergarten and pre-primary.</p>	
<p>Two staff members (usually principal and one other) who are to be at the school from 8.00 am to 10.00 am on the day of the planned closure briefed, attendance confirmed and reminded to secure the facility and activate the electronic security system when leaving the site at 10.00 am.</p>	
<p>Regional Executive Director informed of actions taken.</p>	
<p>Fire danger ratings or fire activity monitored (local media – television and radio, especially ABC Local Radio; FESA - 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au.)</p>	ongoing
<p>If plan to close is reversed, Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure signs removed from the main notice board (at the front of the school), on main administration entrance doors and other entry/exit doors throughout the buildings, including kindergarten and pre-primary.</p>	

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Zone Register Schools: Check List for Action <i>Prior to Leaving</i> before the Day of Closure</p>
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Tick when task has been completed

<p>BUSHFIRE ALERT Notice of Temporary School Closure sign placed on the main notice board (at the front of the school), on main administration entrance doors and other entry/exit doors throughout the buildings, including kindergarten and pre-primary.</p>	
<p>Notice of Temporary School Closure notice placed prominently on school website.</p>	
<p>All money removed from the school premises.</p>	
<p>Expensive items of equipment secured.</p>	
<p>Data backed up and at least one copy, and preferably two, taken off-site.</p>	
<p>All non-essential electrical equipment switched off (leave on server, router and alarms).</p>	
<p>Evaporative air conditioners turned off.</p>	
<p>School premises secured and security system activated.</p>	
<p>School Security contacted (9264 4632) prior to departure, to confirm that all security systems have been armed and the site secured.</p>	
<p>Regional Executive Director informed of actions taken.</p>	

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Bushfire Zone Register Schools: Actions to be Taken <i>on the Day</i> of Closure</p>
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Tick when task has been completed

Principal liaison with Regional Executive Director to be maintained.	ongoing
Media enquiries directed to the Department's Media Unit (9264 5821).	ongoing
Fire danger ratings or fire activity monitored (local media – television and radio, especially ABC Local Radio; FESA - 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au .)	ongoing
When advised by Regional Executive Director either to re-open on the following day or to remain closed, all necessary people informed:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools in close proximity and/or with siblings of your students; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents, including making provision for parents from diverse backgrounds (e.g. multicultural, special needs); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff and volunteers; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> visitors who had been planning to visit school on the day of closure; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Council and P&C; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> community kindergartens and community hirers (community use including before and after school care and holiday programs); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school contractors (bus contractors, grounds maintenance, cleaners); and 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> building construction workers. 	
Evaporative air conditioners turned off.	
Notice of Temporary Closure notice on school website updated or revised to advise school reopens tomorrow.	
When school reopens, BUSHFIRE ALERT Notice of Temporary School Closure signs removed from all doors and main notice board.	

 <p>Department of Education</p>	<p>Information for Schools <u>Not</u> on the Bushfire Zone Register</p>
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The following is information for schools *not identified* for temporary closure when a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating has been declared in the locality

<p>Continue normal operations and monitor bushfire activity and weather alerts (local media – television and radio, especially ABC Local Radio; FESA - 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au.)</p>
<p>If concerned, principals should contact their Regional Executive Director.</p>
<p>Refer parents to FESA for enquiries.</p>
<p>Refer to The Principal's Guide to Bushfire for more information.</p>

ADVICE AND WARNINGS

<p>FESA provides emergency information, advice and warnings to the community in a number of ways, including:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABC TV and Radio services for Western Australia www.abc.net.au/reception/freq/wa.htm
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FESA's website www.fesa.wa.gov.au
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FESA's <i>Prepare. Act. Survive</i> booklet for information and advice to householders.

DRAFT TEXT FOR SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Bushfire Zone Register

The Department of Education (the Department) is concerned to maximise the safety of its students and staff. <Insert name of school> has been added to the Bushfire Zone Register. Inclusion on this register means that the school may be required to invoke pre-emptive closure on a day for which a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating (FDR) has been declared for the <City/Town/Shire> of <insert the name of the Local Government Area in which your school is located>. A Catastrophic FDR means that if a fire starts, it is likely to be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving.

What does this mean for our school?

When given advance warning by FESA that a Catastrophic FDR has been forecast for a given day, the Deputy Director General, Schools may direct the pre-emptive closure of <insert school name>. If the school receives such a direction, you will be informed of the possible planned closure by a letter sent home with your child. Parents of students absent on the day this letter is sent home will be contacted by telephone, so please ensure the school has up to date contact details for you.

In the intervening period between the declaration of the pre-emptive closure and the day of planned closure, FESA will monitor weather patterns to keep the Department informed of any change to the forecast for the declared day. The final decision to pre-emptively close the school will be confirmed by the Department with the principal no later than 1.30 pm on the day before the declared day. If the forecast changes after that deadline, the closure will stand, regardless of improvements to the weather conditions later in the afternoon of the day before the declared day or overnight. The intention is to limit confusion or uncertainty for parents and to allow you ample time to make alternative child care arrangements.

Parents will be advised of the confirmation of closure, or its reversal, by a note sent home with your child on the day before the planned closure. Again, parents of students absent on this day will be contacted by telephone.

How will I know when the school is reopening?

It is anticipated that the school will only be required to close for a single day at a time, but this will depend on the weather. <If your school uses SMS to advise parents of student absences: You will receive an SMS to advise you whether the school will reopen the day after the planned closure, or whether it will remain closed.> The school website will contain a notice to advise you of the current status of the school closure and when it is expected to reopen.

I ask that you monitor local media for current information about fire danger ratings and notification of schools reopening. Staying tuned to ABC Local Radio in your locality is advisable. You can also check with FESA on 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au. Alternatively you can call me on <insert principal's mobile phone number> or <insert region name> Regional Education Office on <insert number>. If any of the options listed above for finding out when to send your child back to school will prove problematic, please contact the school to arrange for us to phone you to advise you when the school will reopen.

Questions?

Please contact the school on <school phone number> if you have any questions about planned closures during the bushfire season.

<Name>
Principal

TEMPLATE LETTER TO PARENTS ADVISING OF PRE-EMPTIVE CLOSURE

BUSHFIRE ALERT NOTIFICATION OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Dear Parent

Based on advice from FESA, the Deputy Director General, Schools has directed the temporary closure of <insert school name>, on <insert day, date>, due to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating (FDR) for the <City/Town/Shire> of <insert the name of the Local Government Area in which your school is located>. A Catastrophic FDR means that if a fire starts, it is likely to be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving.

FESA will monitor weather patterns to keep the Department of Education (the Department) informed of any change to the forecast for <insert date>. The final decision to pre-emptively close the school will be confirmed by the Department with me no later than 1.30 pm on <insert date of the day before the declared day>. If the forecast changes after that deadline, the closure will stand, regardless of improvements to the weather conditions on the afternoon of <insert date of the day before the declared day> or overnight. The intention is to limit confusion or uncertainty for parents and to allow you ample time to make alternative child care arrangements.

You will be advised of the confirmation of closure, or its reversal, by a note sent home with your child on <insert day and date of the day before the planned closure>. If your child is absent on that day, the school will phone you to advise whether the closure will go ahead as planned. Please ensure that we have up to date phone contact details for you.

It is anticipated that the school will only be required to close for a single day at a time, but this will depend on the weather. <If your school uses SMS to advise parents of student absences: You will receive an SMS to advise you whether the school will reopen the day after the planned closure, or whether it will remain closed.> The school website will contain a notice to advise you of the current status of the school closure and when it is expected to reopen.

I ask that you monitor local media for current information about fire danger ratings and notification of schools reopening. Staying tuned to ABC Local Radio in your locality is advisable. You can also check with FESA on 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au. Alternatively you can call me on <insert principal's mobile phone number> or <insert region name> Regional Education Office on <insert number>. If any of the options listed above for finding out when to send your child back to school will prove problematic, please contact the school to arrange for us to phone you to advise you when the school will reopen.

Children may experience some anxiety as a result of this closure. You are encouraged to reassure your children of the safe environment we will provide for them on their return. We will be taking measures, consistent with advice from FESA, to make the school safe before children return.

While no formal education program is available during this time, children are encouraged to:

- continue unfinished work;
- undertake research;
- complete due assignments;
- review recent school work;
- play educational games; and
- read.

This precautionary measure will maximise children's safety.

Thank you for your cooperation.

<Name>
PRINCIPAL

TEMPLATE MEMO TO STAFF ADVISING OF PRE-EMPTIVE CLOSURE

BUSHFIRE ALERT NOTIFICATION OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

MEMO TO STAFF

Based on advice from FESA, the Deputy Director General, Schools has directed the temporary closure of <insert school name>, on <insert day, date>, due to a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating (FDR) for the <City/Town/Shire> of <insert the name of the Local Government Area in which your school is located>. A Catastrophic FDR means that if a fire starts, it is likely to be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving.

FESA will monitor weather patterns to keep the Department of Education (the Department) informed of any change to the forecast for <insert date>. The final decision to pre-emptively close the school will be confirmed by the Department with me no later than 1.30 pm on <insert date of the day before the declared day>. If the forecast changes after that deadline, the closure will stand, regardless of improvements to the weather conditions on the afternoon of <insert date of the day before the declared day> or overnight. The intention is to limit confusion or uncertainty for parents and to allow you ample time to make alternative child care arrangements.

You will be advised of the confirmation of closure, or its reversal, by me on <insert day and date of the day before the planned closure>. If you are absent on that day, the school will phone you to advise whether the closure will go ahead as planned. Please ensure that we have up to date phone contact details for you.

It is anticipated that the school will only be required to close for a single day at a time, but this will depend on the weather. The school website will contain a notice to advise you of the current status of the school closure and when it is expected to reopen.

I ask that you monitor local media for current information about fire danger ratings and notification of schools reopening. Staying tuned to ABC Local Radio in your locality is advisable. You can also check with FESA on 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au. Alternatively you can call me on <insert principal's mobile phone number> or <insert region name> Regional Education Office on <insert number>.

During this period of closure you will be considered to be on duty and are to undertake professional duties from home (e.g. preparation, planning, assessment and reporting). Measures will be taken, consistent with the advice from FESA, to make sure the school is safe before you return.

This precautionary measure will maximise staff and student safety.

Thank you for your cooperation.

<Name>
PRINCIPAL

NOTICE OF PLANNED TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Please be advised that as a result of a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating for <day, date>, it is planned to temporarily close this school on that day.

The final decision to close the school will be confirmed by the Department with the Principal no later than 1.30 pm on <insert date of the day before the declared day>. If conditions have improved sufficiently by that time, the school will open as normal on <day, date>. If not, closure will go ahead.

For further information please contact the Principal on <insert contact details> or the <insert Region> Regional Education Office on <insert contact number>.

Thank you for your cooperation.

<Name>
PRINCIPAL

TEMPLATE LETTER TO PARENTS CONFIRMING PRE-EMPTIVE CLOSURE

BUSHFIRE ALERT CONFIRMATION OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Dear Parent

The planned pre-emptive closure of <insert school name> on <insert day, date of planned closure> of which I advised you on <insert date that initial letter was sent> **will** go ahead as planned. The Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating for that day has not changed, so the safest option remains to close the school for the day.

It is anticipated that the school will only be required to close for the single day, but this will depend on the weather. <If your school uses SMS to advise parents of student absences: You will receive an SMS to advise you whether the school will reopen the day after the planned closure, or whether it will remain closed.> The school website will contain a notice to advise you of the current status of the school closure and when it is expected to reopen.

I ask that you monitor local media for current information about fire danger ratings and notification of schools reopening. Staying tuned to ABC Local Radio in your locality is advisable. You can also check with FESA on 1300 657 209 or www.fesa.wa.gov.au. Alternatively you can call me on <insert principal's mobile phone number> or <insert region name> Regional Education Office on <insert number>.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to make our school as safe as possible for your children.

<Name>
Principal

TEMPLATE LETTER TO PARENTS REVERSING PRE-EMPTIVE CLOSURE

BUSHFIRE ALERT REVERSAL OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Dear Parent

The planned pre-emptive closure of <insert school name> on <insert day, date of planned closure> of which I advised you on <insert date that initial letter was sent> will **not** go ahead. The Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating for that day has been downgraded. Accordingly, the school will open and operate as normal.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to make our school as safe as possible for your children.

<Name>
Principal

BUSHFIRE ALERT

NOTICE OF TEMPORARY SCHOOL CLOSURE

Please be advised that as a result of a Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating, this school has been temporarily closed.

The school will re-open on advice from FESA.

If you have any further questions or concerns about bushfire, please call the FESA Hotline on 1300 657 209 or visit the FESA website at www.fesa.wa.gov.au or stay tuned to ABC Local Radio.

For further information please contact the Principal on <insert contact details> or the <insert Region> Regional Education Office on <insert contact number>.

Thank you for your cooperation.

<Name>
PRINCIPAL

Appendix B
Information about Bushfires

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 dependant on the bushfire hazard surrounding a school, and also on how well a school is prepared and able to act in a bushfire emergency.

The Fire and Emergency Services Authority (FESA) has grouped bushfire hazards into four levels. These are: Low, Medium, High and Extreme. These levels can also be used to determine the severity of bushfire hazards adjacent to schools, and within school grounds.

Low bushfire hazard areas

This typically includes urban and suburban areas with maintained gardens, parklands and street verges. These areas are generally devoid of native vegetation. Farm pasture and cropping areas would normally be included in this category. It should be noted that severe bushfires may still impact on schools which are located within low bushfire hazard areas.

Medium bushfire hazard areas

This level includes areas where standing native vegetation occupies no more than about 30% of the total vegetation spread across the area. Suburban areas with some native vegetation cover would also fall into this category. Shrub land and open heath on moderate slopes with a gradient of less than 10° are included in this category.

High bushfire hazard

Forested and well treed areas where the leaf litter and understorey has been reduced, as well as plantations, which are located on moderate slopes less than 10°, fall into this category. Shrub land and open heath on steeper slopes may also be included in this hazard category.

Extreme bushfire hazard

This category includes forests with a dense understorey, heavy leaf litter, as well as timber plantations where the fuel hazard has not been reduced. Hazard-reduced forests and plantations on slopes with a gradient greater than 10°, as well as dense heath and shrub land, are placed into this category.

Generally, only flammable vegetation covering an area greater than about 10 000 m² should be assessed. Isolated single trees and small groups of trees and shrubs would not normally be included in an assessment. However, if these add to the fire hazard in the general area, or if they are close to buildings, some work would be required to reduce the hazard. This can often be achieved through gardening or landscaping activities.

HOW BUSHFIRES BEHAVE

All fires need fuel, air and heat to start and grow. Bushfires in particular behave in a number of ways depending on the amount of these elements, and most severe bushfire threats generally occur in summer when high temperatures, strong easterlies and lightning from thunderstorm activity combine.

Fuel

Vegetation around your 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.

Heat and radiant heat

Bushfires generate enormous heat. Much of this heat goes up into the air but significant heat also radiates at ground level. This radiant heat spreads the fire by drying out vegetation so it will burn. Radiant heat is the main cause of people dying in a bushfire. Radiant heat may not set fire to your school but it can crack and break windows that will allow embers in that can start fires inside school buildings.

Embers

Even if the fire front does not reach your school, it can still be damaged by burning embers carried by strong winds. Embers can get into your 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 your school even after the fire front has passed.

Direct flame contact

When materials close to your school catch fire, flames can touch the outside of your school buildings. How long flames are in direct contact with school buildings depends on the amount of fuel to be burnt.

Oxygen

Bushfires need oxygen in the air to keep going and the more there is, the faster the fire burns. Strong winds not only force the fire along but also increase air circulation and provide more air. Any change in wind direction or speed can rapidly increase the rate of spread and the direction of the fire.

Wind

Strong winds usually come with bushfires and as the wind increases so does the fire's temperature. The wind pushes flames closer to fuel making the fire travel faster. Embers and other burning materials are also carried by the wind which can damage buildings kilometres from the fire front.

Fire spread

Fires usually spread faster in grassland than in forests, because winds are stronger and the fuels are less dense. Bushfires will move faster when travelling uphill. The speed of a fire front advancing will double with every 10° increase in slope. On a 20° slope, bushfire speed is four times faster than flat ground. Buildings located on tops of hills or ridges are particularly vulnerable to fires burning in a valley below.

Appendix C
FESA Regional Offices

COUNTRY

REGION	CONTACT PERSON	Office Location and Contact Details
Kimberley	Regional Director	Cnr Carnarvon and Frederick Sts BROOME WA 6725 Tel: 9158 3200 Fax: 9193 6744
		32 Poincettia Way KUNUNURRA WA 6743 Tel: 9169 1370 Fax: 9169 1373
Pilbara	Regional Director	1/5 Warambie Road KARRATHA WA 6174 Tel: 9159 1400 or 1800 631 227 Fax: 9143 1236
		Cnr Anderson & McKay Sts PORT HEDLAND WA 6721 Tel: 9158 1300 Fax: 9173 2170
Midwest Gascoyne	Regional Director	1 Vulcan Way GERALDTON WA 6530 Tel: 9956 6000 Fax: 9964 4617
Goldfields- Midlands	Regional Director	Dugan Street KALGOORLIE WA 6433 Tel: 9026 4100 Fax: 9021 5577
		79 Newcastle Street NORTHAM WA 6401 Tel: 9690 2300 Fax: 9622 5178
Great Southern	Regional Director	5 Hercules Crescent ALBANY WA 6330 Tel: 9845 5000 Fax: 9841 6719
		10 Williams Road NARROGIN WA 6312 Tel: 9881 3892 Fax: 9881 3894
		Shop 1a Esperance Business Centre Dempster Street ESPERANCE WA 6450 Tel: 9071 3393 Fax: 9071 7304
South West	Regional Director	South Western Highway BUNBURY WA 6230 Tel: 9780 1900 Fax: 9725 4320
Lower - South West	Regional Director	30 Giblett Street MANJIMUP WA 6258 Tel: 9771 6801 Fax: 9770 6888

METROPOLITAN

REGION	REGIONAL DIRECTORS	Office Location and Contact Details
Perth North Coastal	Regional Director	1/108 Winton Road JOONDALUP WA 6027 Tel: 9301 3900 Fax: 9301 2098
Perth South Coastal	Regional Director	20a Philimore Street FREMANTLE WA 6160 Tel: 9431 0800 Fax: 9335 2692
Perth Central Metro	Regional Director	91 Leake Street BELMONT WA 6104 Tel: 9479 9358 Fax: 9477 6297