

St Patrick's Catholic School, Katanning



Bushfire Plan 2024 – 2025

(updated August 2024)

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Introduction

This plan is for St Patricks Primary School and has been designed to assist staff to prepare for a total fire ban, catastrophic fire danger rating, or a bushfire. Letters to staff and parents are included in the appendix as well as notices regarding the plans of closures of the school.

The preparation of this plan should be developed in accordance with the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Policy* and the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* with input from local emergency management agencies.

Overview

General Information

This Bushfire Plan (BP) has been developed during Term 3 of each year after consultation with:

- families of students attending the School;
- members of the emergency services (e.g. DFES, Local Emergency Management Committee and/or Community Emergency Services Manager).

The BP outlines required actions to prepare the school before the bushfire season as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* (refer Appendix A).

The BP also outlines activities to be undertaken by staff and students at the different levels of a bushfire emergency including:

- on days of Total Fire Ban;
- Catastrophic fire danger rating;
- when there is a fire in the local district;
- when a bushfire is threatening or impacting on the site; and
- during the period immediately after a bushfire has impacted on the site (known as the 'Recovery Phase').

Where applicable, a building is nominated as the **Safer Location** building for this school.

- This building has been prepared for a bushfire emergency and will safely accommodate all persons normally at the school.

Distribution

The Principal will forward a copy of the site BP to the Catholic Education Western Australia to be held in the central office.

The Principal or delegated officer will ensure a current copy of the school's bushfire plan is published on the school's website at all times.

- Details of the website to be provided to families of new students by the Principal or delegated officer during the enrolment process.
- The Principal will ensure that all new staff members, relieving staff and visitors are briefed about the requirements of the BP during the site induction process.

The Principal will also include bushfire season reminders and information in newsletters at appropriate times of year.

All staff members are to receive ongoing information and instruction about the contents and requirements of the BP.

Bushfire Preparation checklist (refer to Appendix A)

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

The school will review (and update where appropriate) the plan on an annual basis.

Any bushfire advice received by the school from the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES), the Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) or external experts needs to be documented identifying the date and source of the advice.

Date of Review	Reviewing Officer	Date Submitted	Next scheduled Review
13/4/14	Christopher Smith (Principal)	TBA	March 2015
	Chris Quartermaine Chief Fire Officer	TBA	March 2015
1/12/16	Christopher Smith	5/12/2016	March 2017
7/12/18	Andrew Gammon	7/12/18	March 2021
March 2019	Cindy Pearce Community Emergency Services Manager Shires of Katanning, Broomehill – Tambellup and Woodanilling Mob 0417 071 567	7/12/18	March 2021
August 2022	Brett Wilkie (Principal)	TBA	August 2023
August 2023	Brett Wilkie (Principal)	TBA	August 2024
August 2024	Brett Wilkie (Principal)	TBA	August 2025

Communication

There are several levels of communication requirements at school level before, during and after bushfire events.

Preparing for Bushfire Season

- The Principal must ensure all students and staff are aware of the school's bushfire plan. It is also necessary to ensure that relief staff and parents have been made aware of the school's bushfire plan. A copy of the school's bushfire plan should be published on the school's website. Suggested draft text for the school newsletter is available in Appendix A6 of the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*.
- The Principal should establish contact with emergency services, including DFES, the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, the LEMC and CESM.
- Schools located in bushfire prone areas need to incorporate key bushfire messages in their curriculum. (*Research shows that if students develop and undertake drills as part of the emergency planning the message is more meaningful and transfers to the home environment. Additional benefits can be realised by taking activities home that need to be completed and returned. This can serve to increase families' level of awareness and preparedness in regards to bushfire survival plans or household preparedness assessments.*)
- Communication plans (including emergency contacts and a telephone tree) need to be in place for evacuation or planned closure. See Appendix D for a Communication Plan, Appendix E for sample emergency contacts and Appendix F for a sample telephone tree.
- The school has an effectively working emergency warning or alert system and emergency communication equipment is available and working.
- Schools have in place systems to account for students, staff and visitors in an emergency, such as class rolls (or equivalent) and visitor registers. Consideration should be in place for situations such as a loss of power affecting the ability to print from electronic sources.
- Arrangements are in place in relation to school buses if appropriate (notification of contractors if pre-emptive closure is invoked; the availability of buses if off-site evacuation is required).

Pre-emptive Closure

- The CEWA Incident Controller will make the decision to close a school based upon advice from Emergency Services and this will be relayed to the Principal via the Regional Officer.
- The Principal is to notify staff and parents of closure using emergency contacts and the telephone tree. See also the draft letter to parents in Appendix A7 of the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* advising of pre-emptive closure, being mindful of parents' level of literacy and understanding of English.
- All other necessary parties are advised including (but not limited to) other schools that may have siblings at your school, community users of the school facilities (including before and after school care, community kindergartens or holiday programs), on site contractors and Parents and Friends Association (P & F).
- If appropriate, bus contractors will be contacted to arrange for the evacuation of students to a designated area.
- Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be posted as per the *Principal's Guide to Bushfire*, both physically at the school and electronically on the website.

During Evacuation

- The school will contact their Regional Officer and the CEWA Media Unit.
- The school will contact parents via phone or email, ensuring they have a mobile phone contact number for the school (It would be preferable that parents restrict calling the school at this time to emergency calls only).
- The school will notify bus contractors and out of school programs.
- The official broadcaster of Emergency Events is ABC radio. Your local station will be ABC local radio. They will provide up to date information during a bushfire event in your area.

- The DFES website provides up to date information on fire events. Refer to <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/> .

NOTE: DFES uses the national Emergency Alert system to send community warning messages via mobile telephones in affected areas. (Information can be obtained from <http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/pages/default.aspx>).

The Principal communicates directly with Regional and Central Office personnel including any media communications. Staff should not comment directly to media.

Reopening the School

- The Regional Officer is to advise the Principal when the school can re-open.
- Parents need to know when the school is reopened. In the event of a pre-emptive closure details are contained in the template letter (*Principal's Guide to Bushfire* advising of pre-emptive Closure – Appendix A7).
- The Notice of Planned Temporary School Closure should be physically removed from the school premises and website.
- All parties that were advised of closure (e.g. bus contractors, out of hours' users, P&F) should be advised of reopening.

Types of Fire Event

In the event of a Total Fire Ban, catastrophic weather warning, or bushfire, the **BP** will be activated.

1. Total Fire Ban

In the event of a Total Fire Ban the **BP** will be invoked: (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures).

This means:

- no fires must be lit or used in the open air;
- all open fires for the purpose of cooking or camping are not allowed; and
- 'hot work' such as metal work, grinding, welding, soldering, gas cutting or similar is not allowed unless there is an exemption.

The Department of Fire and Emergency Services advice is 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 is likely to cause fire.

It is also necessary to ensure:

- The equipment or machinery is mechanically sound.
- All reasonable precautions are taken to prevent a bushfire starting.

It is recommended postponing the activity altogether to minimise the risk of fire.

If a Harvest and Vehicle Movement Ban has not been implemented by your Local Government Authority, the school/college is able to harvest or move vehicles across paddocks for agricultural purposes.

Individuals could be fined up to \$25,000 or jailed for 12 months or both if the Total Fire Ban is ignored.

For information on activities that can or cannot be carried out during a Total Fire Ban visit www.dfes.wa.gov.au/totalfirebans/Pages/TotalFireBanWhatCantIDo.aspx.

If the information required is not available from the website, telephone the Total Fire Ban Information Line 1800 709 355.

This information is also available by visiting www.dfes.wa.gov.au.

2. Catastrophic Fire Danger

The Catastrophic Fire Danger Index (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.

Category	Fire Danger Index (FDR)	Action
Catastrophic	100+	Schools on Bushfire Zone Register closed on instruction from Deputy Director General Schools, through Regional Officer. School to invoke communication plan and cancel bus services.
Extreme	75-99	Monitor DFES website
Severe	50-74	Monitor DFES website
Very High	32-49	Normal school operations
High	12-31	Normal school operations
Low-Moderate	0-11	Normal school operations

In the event of a catastrophic weather warning the **BP** will be invoked as per the flow chart at Appendix B (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures and sample letters).

2.1 Planned Pre-emptive Closure

Regional officers will contact principals of affected schools directly when a planned (pre-emptive) closure is to be invoked in a particular part of the State. 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 to prepare written documentation for parents. Schools should have telephone trees in place to provide this information at short notice or after hours.

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. The Regional Officer confirms with the principal the final decision to close the school no later than **4:30pm** the day before the planned closure. If weather conditions become less severe after **4:30pm**, the closure goes ahead regardless, in order to provide a level of certainty to parents.

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

2.2 During a Planned Closure

The principal must stay informed of current fire danger rating and any fire activity by monitoring local media (local radio, especially the ABC, and television) and by regularly checking for updates with DFES.

2.3 Re-opening 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 contains advice on how parents can monitor the situation. The school will need to put communication plans in place, such as placing a notice on the school website and providing a phone 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.

3. Bushfire

In the event of a bushfire threatening the school, the school will notify DFES and the **BP** will be invoked.

3.1. Bushfire – Watch community

During a bushfire, emergency services provide 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. Download a copy of DFES bushfire warning table from:

http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/safetyinformation/fire/bushfire/BushfireChecklists/DFES_Bushfire-Warning_Levels.pdf

If the school is likely to be threatened by the fire, activate the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* immediately.

3.1.1 Advice

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

The actions required are to, turn off evaporative air conditioners, undertake regular checks, patrol of the school for bushfire activity and pay special attention to the evaporative air conditioners.

3.1.2 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 or delegate should contact the controlling agency to seek instruction as to whether to move students, staff and visitors to their pre-determined Safer Location on the site or evacuate.

The direction to evacuate by the Emergency Services Incident Controller will consider the location of the bushfire, the ability to travel safely to the selected evacuation point and the safest route to get there. In some circumstances, it may not be safe to evacuate.

3.1.3 Emergency Warning

An **EMERGENCY WARNING** is the highest level of warning and indicates **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. 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 Principal or delegate should contact the controlling agency to seek instruction as to whether to move students, staff and visitors to their pre-determined Safer Location on the site or evacuate.

The direction to evacuate by the Emergency Services Incident Controller will consider the location of the bushfire, the ability to travel safely to the selected evacuation point and the safest route to get there. In some circumstances it may not be safe to evacuate.

3.1.4 All Clear

An **ALL CLEAR** is issued when the threat has passed and the fire is under control. Fire-fighters will still be working to put out the last remnants of the fire and making the area safe, so it is important to remain vigilant in case the situation changes. It may still not be safe to leave

to school to return home. Emergency services will advise when school students and/or staff can be released to go home.

3.2. Bushfire – Act

3.2.1 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is open

3.2.1.1 Evacuation Procedure

School to evacuate off-site on advice from DFES

Has the evacuation to the off-site safer location been approved and how long will it take to get there?

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors, roof vents and windows must be closed **and evaporative air coolers turned off**.
- Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of DFES or emergency services who will then take over.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

Parent Access

Parents will be informed when and where to pick up students upon advice from the school or through DFES or the Incident Controller.

3.2.1.2 Safer Location Procedure – if evacuation is not possible

School to remain on site on advice from DFES.

- All classes remain with their teachers and allocated education assistants.
- All other staff and visitors report to the Front Office.
- Teachers account for each child and identify students and support staff with known respiratory conditions.
- Doors, roof vents and windows must be closed and **evaporative air coolers turned off**. Students and staff are to remain in classrooms unless directed otherwise by their fire warden.
- Fire wardens are designated to manage evacuation routes and liaise with staff.
- The Principal and fire wardens, will control this response until the arrival of the DFES or emergency services who will then take over.
- Students and adults with known respiratory conditions will be identified and given special consideration.

Parent Access

Parents advised **NOT** to pick up students and to monitor local media for specific access information.

3.2.2 Response when a bushfire starts and the school is closed

If the CEWA Incident Controller makes a decision on school closure based upon advice from Emergency Services, the Regional Officer will inform the Principal of closure.

The Principal is to notify staff and parents of the closure using the emergency contact list (see Appendix D for a Sample Communication Plan).

The CEWA Incident Controller will, in consultation with the Regional Officer, identify alternative accommodation of students and staff if required. The CEWA Media Unit will utilise media outlets to make public announcements of school closures, temporary alternative accommodation and contact number(s) for further information.

The CEWA Incident Controller in consultation with DFES will inform the Regional Officer when the school can reopen, who will inform the Principal accordingly.

3.2.3 Recovery

The priorities for the school during recovery are

- Health and Safety of individuals;
- Social Recovery; and
- Physical (Structural) Recovery.

General

- When possible, return to normal routine as soon as possible.
- Attend to staff and student welfare, considering counselling support.
- Provide information for families and the community of any impact (including if there is none) on the school and school routine following the bushfire.
- Undertake a check of any equipment or stock used and arrange for replacement/replenishment.
- Address any physical damage to the school, isolating areas if required and if necessary relocate to alternative accommodation. Make arrangements to commence repairs. CEWA should be advised of any damage caused by the bushfire.
- Attend to security if necessary.
- Manage Administrative details including insurance.

Debrief

- What worked, what didn't?
- Was anything overlooked?
- What could you and your staff do better next time?
- Should roles change?
- If changes are made, incorporate them into the formal plan and advise the appropriate parties including staff and other authorities.
- Share the knowledge with other schools.
- Test the revised bushfire management plan and procedures.

For further details and contacts refer to the Recovery Section of the *Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan* and *The Principal's Guide to Bushfire*.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: COMPLIANCE: Bushfire Preparation Checklist

	Department of Education	Bushfire Preparation Check List for the Summer Months
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Principals should be thoroughly familiar with their current plans for dealing with bushfires.

All staff members should be aware of their responsibilities in accordance with the plans.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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

Evidence

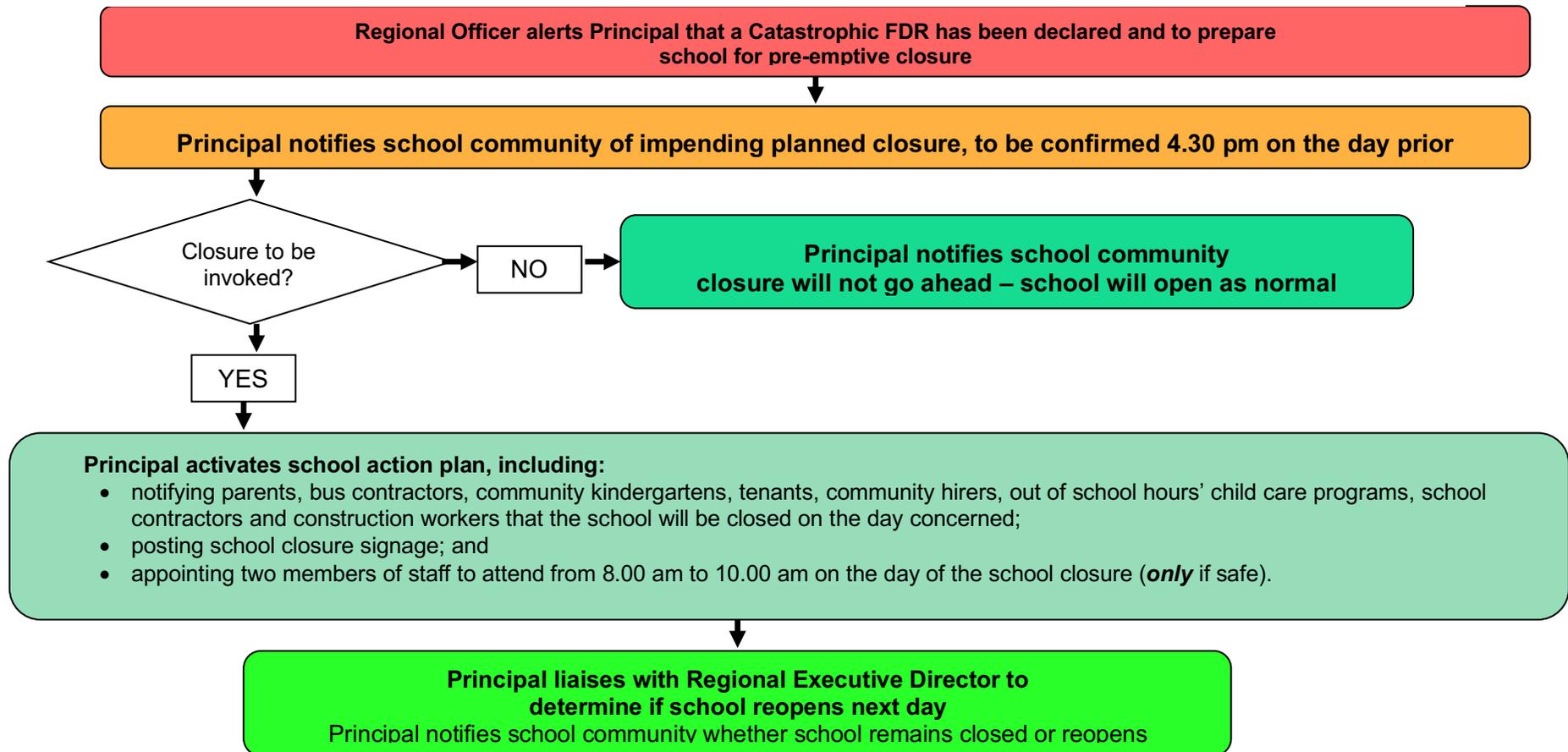
<p>The School <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> provides a plan for dealing with bushfires. Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register must also have a separate stand-alone bushfire plan.</p>	✓	
<p>Principal is thoroughly familiar with the schools current <i>Emergency and Critical Incident Management Plan</i> and where applicable the stand-alone bushfire plan.</p>	✓	
<p>Students, staff, relief staff and parents/carers have been made aware of the school bushfire plan.</p>	✓	<p>Once approved it will be placed on school website and notifications will be sent home in newsletter</p>
<p>The bushfire plan has been reviewed prior to the bushfire season (Term 3 each year) and a copy forwarded to the local education regional office.</p>	✓	
<p>Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register have appointed a school emergency liaison officer. The appointed liaison officer may be required to relocate during an emergency, to the Incident Control Point to provide an information conduit between the school and the controlling agency.</p>	✓	<p>Helen Robinson Cindy Pearce 0417 071 567 Cindy.pearce@dfes.wa.gov.au</p>
<p>The principal and liaison officer have established contact with local emergency services including DFES, the Department of Parks and Wildlife (if relevant), the local volunteer fire brigade, WA Police, Local Emergency Management Committee (LEMC), local government representative or Community Emergency Services Manager (CESM) (if there is one for the area), and incorporated their feedback into the plans (as required).</p>	✓	
<p>Emergency Services, outlined above, are informed of your nominated pre-determined Safer Location as part of your Emergency Critical Incident Management Plan procedures.</p>	✓	
<p>Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register understand the bushfire warning system (refer DFES website page 8) and the Emergency Alert telephone warning system (www.emergencyalert.gov.au).</p>	✓	
<p>Schools on the Bushfire Zone Register need to incorporate key bushfire messages in the curriculum.</p>	✓	

Schools know how to turn off evaporative air conditioner units, including awareness of the location of the switches, and how to close roof vents.	✓	
Communication plans (include telephone tree – see Appendix D1) are in place for directed evacuation or planned closure	✓	
Evacuation drills practised prior to the start of the bushfire season and at least once per term during the bushfire season. The bushfire season typically runs from late October to April in southern WA and June to late October in northern WA. Note this is a minimum of two drills per year.	✓	
School has a correctly functioning emergency warning or alert system.	✓	Evacuation plus lockdown alarms
Emergency communications equipment is available e.g. mobile telephones, hand-operated fire alarm (portable siren), portable radios and spare batteries.	✓	Mobile phone
Class rolls and visitor register (or equivalent) are readily accessible in an emergency to account for students, staff and visitors.	✓	Evacuation kits outside each classroom
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.	✓	
A Safer Location within the school building should be identified and prepared in the event that an off-site evacuation is not possible (Refer page 4 of the Guide).	✓	School Oval and Church carpark
Asset Protection Zone (APZ) (20 metre radius), cleared of all rubbish, long dry grass, bark and flammable materials.	✓	Roads and verges surrounding school

Appendix B: Catastrophic Event Flow Chart

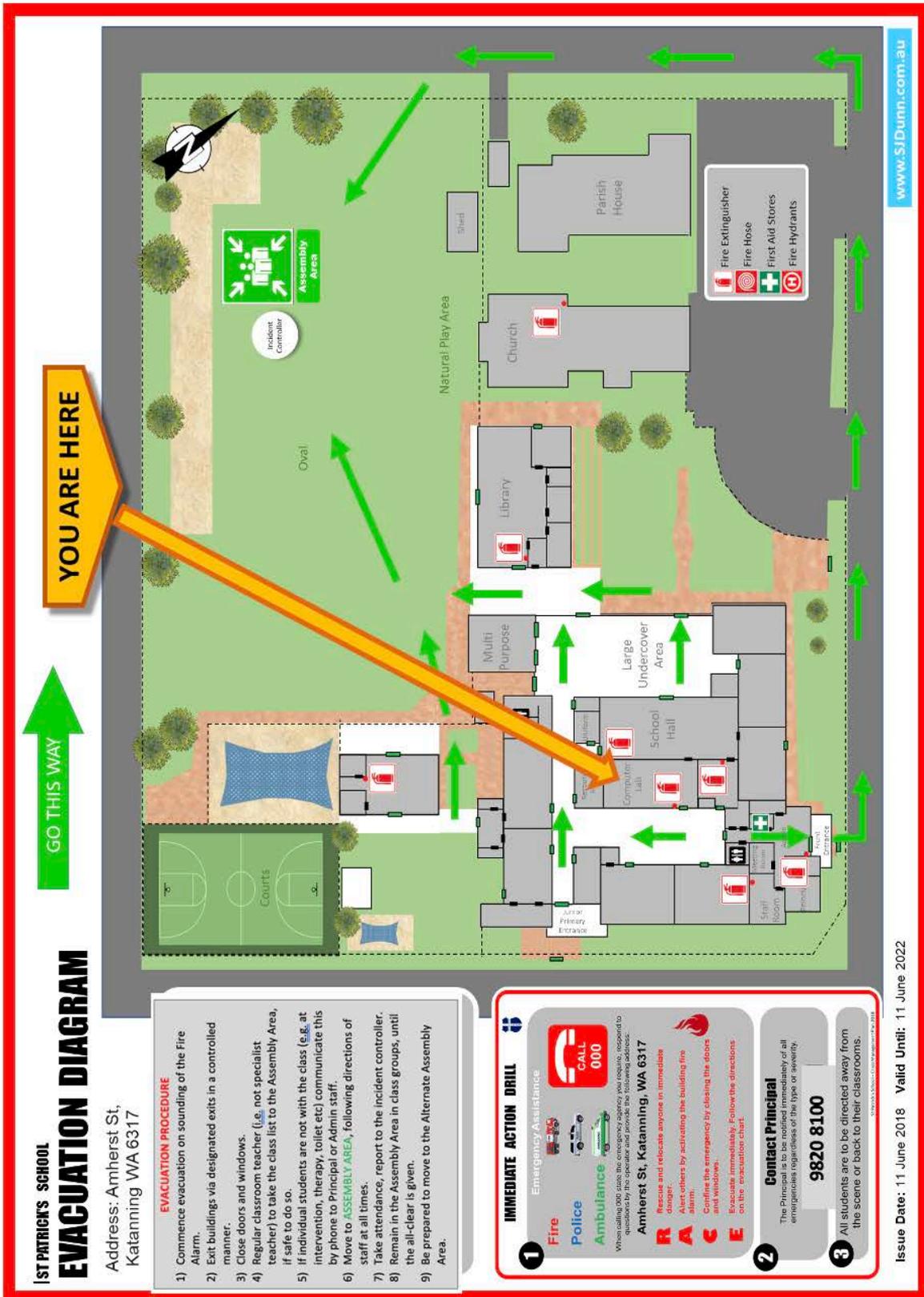
In the event of a catastrophic weather warning the **Bushfire Plan** will be invoked as per the following flow chart: (refer to *Principal's Guide to Bushfire* for all procedures and sample letters)

PRINCIPAL'S RESPONSE TO Catastrophic Fire Danger Rating

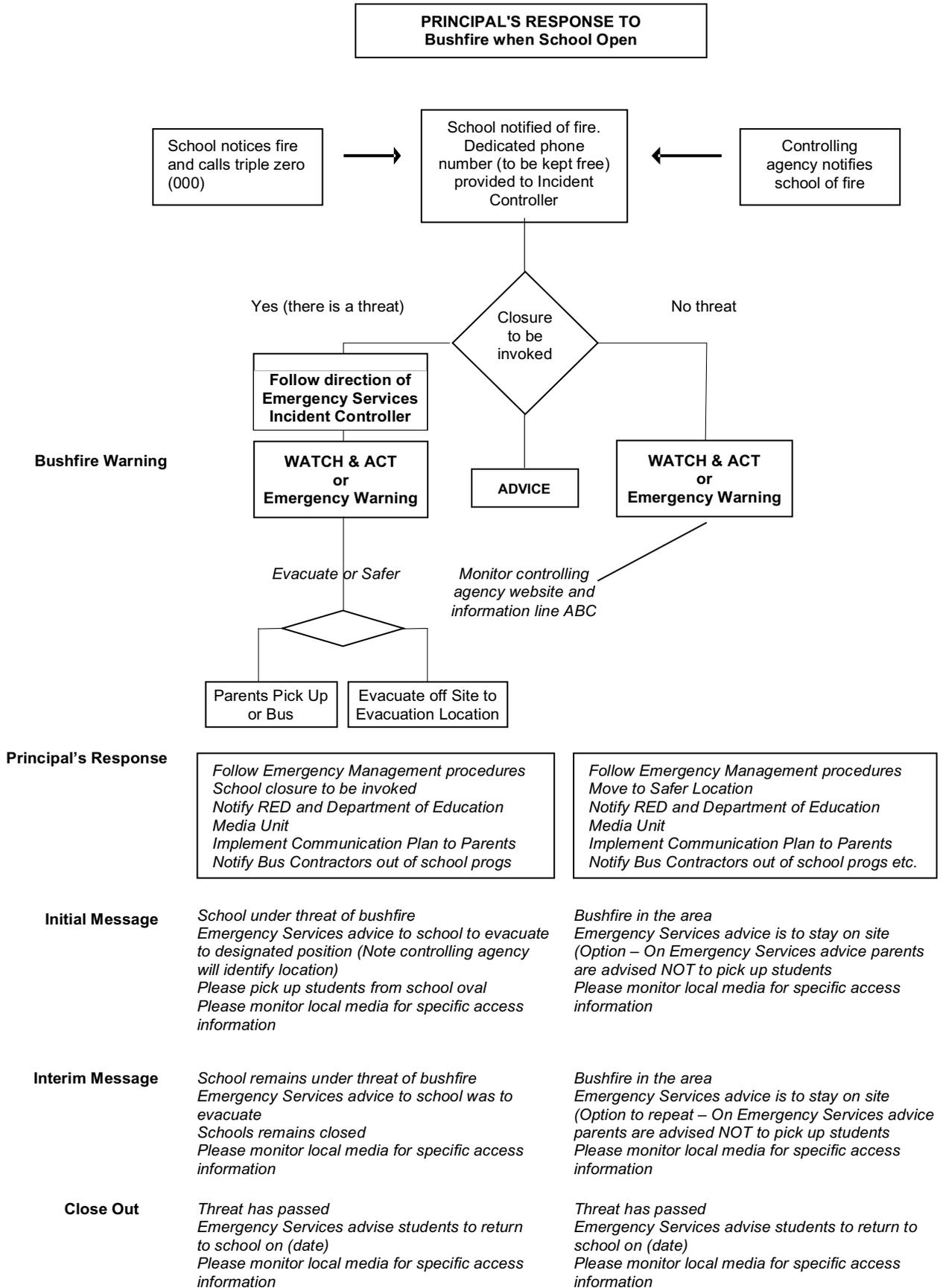


Appendix C: Sample School Site Plan and Evacuation Routes

Insert your school's map here – include the safer location/s, location of fire hydrants, electrical switch boards, phones and communication board, first aid and evacuation kits.



Appendix D: Communication Plan



Appendix E: Sample Emergency Response Contact List

 Assess
  Evacuate
  Inform
  Organise
  Undertake

EMERGENCY CONTACT & PHONE NUMBERS		ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES	
Police	Local: 9821 3800	Evacuation: Principal	Siren/Pause x 3 or Continuous handbell Continuous siren or short whistle blasts
Ambulance / Hospital Local Ambulance	Emergency: 000 St John Katanning: 9841 4212 Katanning Hospital: 9821 6222	Invacuation: Principal	Registrar /Principal
Fire	W: 9821 2785 UHF (if appropriate) Emergency Services Coordinator Cindy Pearce 0417 071 567 Cindy.pearce@dfes.wa.gov.au	Marshalling Evacuation: oval Invacuation: classrooms	Teachers Teachers
Bus Contractors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kojonup Bus service – 9831 1166 /0438445539 2. Heather & Trevor McCarley – 0401194282 3. Ray Chapman 0409 059 616 4. Vivien Strickland 0419859405 5. Troy Hamon 0419039100 6. Kym Hamon 0448434691 		
Power Outage	13 13 51	Accredited FIRST AID Officers	Staff member Name(s) Helen Robinson Julie Poett Keira-Jane Willey
State Emergency Service	132 500 Address: 74 Scadden Street, WAGIN WA 6315 Phone: 0409 503 811 Mobile: 0409 102 332	Communication	Principal /Registrar
Poisons Information	131 126	Next of Kin Notification	Principal (Police if death)
REGIONAL DIRECTOR Name	<i>Kerrie Merritt</i> mobile: 0417 917 513	Reporting and Review	Principal
PRINCIPAL	Name: Brett Wilkie	9820 8100 mobile: 0400 759 675	
REGISTRAR	Name: Helen Robinson	9820 8100 mobile: 0429 982 171	

In the case of an EMERGENCY
Call
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Appendix F: Sample Communication Tree

