



Extreme Weather Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)

Policy

The 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.

This policy aims to:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Bush Kindergarten staff to cancel bush kinder session/s in response to forecast weather conditions, and ensure that parents/guardians 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/guardians 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)

Bush 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 and guardians regarding weather conditions, cancellations or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather
- Respecting the right of parents/guardians to remove their child from a Bush Kinder session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason)

Guidelines

General

Approved Provider - Shine Bright EYM 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

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- All parents/guardians being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request
- Ensuring that the weather forecast is monitored via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior to the Bush Kinder session.
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians 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. Staff will notify parents of session closure, where possible the evening prior to the session or where conditions change, the morning of the session. This notice will confirm the cancellation of the Bush Kinder sessions.
- In cases of forecast extreme weather (see definition); Shine Bright EYM staff will make the decision to cancel the bush kinder program for the sessions affected.
- In addition to the extreme weather determinants detailed in the table under 'Definitions', Shine Bright EYM has the discretion to cancel the session if it views the weather to be unsuitable for Bush Kinder purposes.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are aware of and approve of their child's attendance at all times with the forecast weather conditions, while their child is attending a Bush Kinder session. If for whatever reason, a parent/guardian feels concern for the wellbeing of their child due to the weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session and collect their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises.
- Ensuring appropriate 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 to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation or where parents may need to collect their child due to injury, serious incident or at any time where staff need to contact the parent.
- Reading and being familiar with the policy
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of staff

Shine Bright EYM staff is responsible for:

- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior to the session
- Making a determination to cancel or conduct the bush kinder sessions the next day based on the weather forecast in consultation with Shine Bright EYM.
- Providing a notice to parents/guardians/staff of the status of the Bush Kinder session/s as follows:
Staff will notify families via SMS on their nominated mobile phone number to inform them when sessions will be cancelled due to forecast weather conditions. This notice will confirm the cancellation of the Bush Kinder sessions.
AND if the session is cancelled:
- By broadcast SMS to the Bush Kinder group where possible, by 6pm the day before the session, or by 8am on the day of the session.
- Note that a bush kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time by broadcast SMS based on updated weather information.
- Keeping their mobile phone with them on day of the session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session

Staff is responsible for:

- Undertaking the following actions in the each of the weather conditions listed in the table below:

Weather condition	Staff Actions
<p>Heat</p> <p>Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke (see Attachment 1 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]
<p>Rain/Hail/Cold</p> <p>Risks include child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary (with assistance of volunteers) • Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (eg, waterproof clothing, gloves) • Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail [See Relocation Procedures below]
<p>Electrical storm activity / Lightning</p> <p>Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move children away from trees • Seek indoor shelter [See Relocation Procedures below] • See Attachment 2 for Lightning Safety Fact Sheet
<p>High winds</p> <p>Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand dirt) into eyes, Bush Kinder structures blowing down/away etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure • Seek shelter if necessary [See Relocation Procedures below] • Any equipment/structures must be moved by at least two staff/volunteer to minimise risk of injury • If the children are being moved, follow the 'Relocating to a safe position' instructions below

- 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/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Illness Policy and Incident and Medical Emergency Management Policy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Collecting their child at any time during the session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions

Procedures for Relocating to a Safe Position

Relocation Safe Zones

Hail, torrential rain	Seek shelter under verandah of old school room (Refer Map at Attachment 3)
Electrical storm/lightning, extreme winds	Seek shelter under verandah of old school room (Refer Map at Attachment 3)

If conditions necessitate evacuation from the Bush Kindergarten, 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):

- Blow whistle
- 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.

2. Scope

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

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

- The Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004

3. Definitions

Bureau of Meteorology: Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Website www.bom.gov.au
various iphone/ipad apps use BOM data (e.g. Pocket Weather)

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat, e.g. Code Red days. 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 36 degrees Celsius or greater • 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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • > 40km per hour
Forecast of electrical storm activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thunder storm/electrical storm forecast
Flooding at or near the Bush Kinder site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On flooding advice from the Bureau of Meteorology
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology
Code Red Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The service is deemed high risk and on code red days must close.

In addition to the above, Shine Bright EYM 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 would also necessitate cancellation.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

4. Sources and related centre policies

Centre policies

1. Protective Clothing (Bush Kinder specific)
2. Emergency Evacuation (Bush Kinder specific)
3. Play Benefit & Risk Policy (Bush Kinder specific)
4. Incident and medical emergency management
5. Communication
6. Excursions and centre events

Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the Approved Provider Shine Bright EYM will:

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents/guardians of children participating in the Bush Kinder program. This can be facilitated through discussions and the annual centre 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.

Attachments

Attachment 1 Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Attachment 2: Lightning Action Guide and First Aid Guidelines

Attachment 3: Bush Kinder site map showing safe relocation zones in the event of extreme weather.

Authorisation

This policy was approved Shine Bright EYM

Review date: February 2017

ATTACHMENT 1

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 2

LIGHTNING ACTION GUIDE AND FIRST AID GUIDELINES

LIGHTNING ACTION GUIDE

Source: Emergency Management Australia

Be Prepared

1. Check with your local electrical contractor for advice on surge protectors and lightning conductors.
2. Have an emergency kit on hand, including a battery operated radio, torch and spare batteries.
3. Keep a list of emergency numbers handy.

Act Safe

If caught outdoors:

1. Seek shelter in a hard top vehicle or solid building.
2. Never shelter under a tree or a group of trees.
3. If far from shelter crouch down, don't lie flat.
4. If boating or swimming, leave the water immediately.
5. Avoid metal objects such as ladders, umbrellas, fences and clothes lines.
6. Secure pets in a safe place.

After the lightning

1. Keep your radio tuned to local media for updated weather reports and power outages.
2. Confirm location and safety of family members and immediate neighbours.
3. Check operation of essential household items and check fuse box for surge protection/fuse/circuit breaker impact

For further information contact your local State Emergency Service office.

www.ema.gov.au

FIRST AID RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LIGHTNING VICTIMS

Source: Department of Sport & Recreation, Government of Western Australia

Most lightning victims can survive their encounter with lightning, especially with timely medical treatment. Individuals struck by lightning do not carry a charge and are safe to touch in order to render treatment.

The following First Aid is recommended:

First

Call 000 or nearest Emergency Service and provide directions and information about the likely number of victims.

Response

The first tenet of emergency care is 'make no more casualties'. If the area where the victim is located is a high-risk area (mountain top, isolated tree, open field, golf course etc) with a continuing thunderstorm, the rescuers may be placing themselves in danger.

Evacuation

It is relatively unusual for victims who survive a lightning strike to have major fractures that would cause paralysis or major bleeding complications unless they have suffered a fall or been thrown a distance. As a result, in an active thunderstorm, the rescuer needs to choose whether evacuation from very high-risk areas to an area of lesser risk is warranted and should not be afraid to move the victim rapidly if necessary. Rescuers are cautioned to minimise their exposure to lightning as much as possible.

Resuscitation

If the victim is not breathing, start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If it is decided to move the victim, give a few quick breaths prior to moving them. Determine if the victim has a pulse by checking the pulse at the carotid artery (side of the neck) or femoral artery (groin) for at least 20–30 seconds. If no pulse is detected, start cardiac compressions as well. In situations that are cold and wet, putting a protective layer between the victim and the ground may decrease the hypothermia that the victim suffers which can further complicate the resuscitation.