



DAME NELLIE MELBA
KINDERGARTEN
EST 1915

Bush Kindergarten Program

Extreme Weather Policy



PURPOSE

This policy aims to:

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

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Values

DNMK is committed to:

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

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to parents, staff, committee members, authorised persons, volunteers and students on placement working at **DNMK**.

1. BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

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

Relevant legislation includes but is not limited to:

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

4. DEFINITIONS

Bureau of Meteorology: Australia's national weather, climate and water agency.

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions. An extreme weather table is shown below. Bush kinder sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met:

Weather Condition	Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation
Forecast temperature	36 degrees Celsius or greater AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder Note there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days (Refer Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	In excess of 45km per hour AND kinder teacher decides that it would be appropriate to cancel bush kinder, based on a final assessment at the site.
Forecast of electrical storm activity	Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast
Forecast of electrical storm activity	On flooding advice from the council or BOM
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	On warning issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

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

Further, Yarra Council has the authority to override the DNMK determination on safety and request cancellation of a session should they feel the Bush Kinder site may be unsafe.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Protective Clothing Policy

2. SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- Bush Kinder Delivery & Collection of Children Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Protective Clothing Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Identification and Visibility Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Emergency Evacuation Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Snake Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Bush Kinder Dog Awareness Policy (Bush Kinder Specific)
- Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy (including First Aid)
- Supervision of Children Policy
- Excursion & Regular Outing Policy
- Sun Protection Policy
- Water Safety Policy
- Occupational Health & Safety Policy

Procedures

The Committee and director are responsible for:

The Committee is responsible for:

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

Staff are responsible for:

Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website (or via mobile phone app) the day prior and on the day of the Bush Kinder session

- Making a determination to cancel the bush kinder sessions at any time based on the weather forecast
- Providing a notice to parent and staff of the status of the Bush Kinder session/s as follows:
- By broadcast Story Park message and/or SMS to the Bush Kinder group as soon as the determination is made
- Keeping the DNMK mobile phone and their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to contact families

Parents are responsible for:

- Being aware that a Bush Kinder session may be cancelled at short notice or any other time by broadcast email and/or SMS based on updated weather information.
- Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation
- Checking Story Park for any notifications of session cancellation

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session

Staff are responsible for:

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

Weather Condition	Staff Action
Heat Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke, dehydration,	<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]
Rain/Hail/Cold Risks include child getting wet (and onset of	Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary.

hypothermia), injury from hailstones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where possible ensure appropriate clothing is worn (eg, waterproof clothing, gloves) • Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing, including coats, gloves, scarves etc • Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail as per Emergency Evacuation Policy
<p>Electrical storm activity / Lightning</p> <p>Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike</p>	<p>Move children away from trees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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>	<p>Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move children away from trees • Seek shelter if necessary <p>If the children are being moved, follow the 'Relocating to a safe position' instructions below</p>

- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, contact parents/carers in accordance with the Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy.

Parents are responsible for:

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

Procedures for relocating

If the Bush Kinder group is required to relocate to a safe position in response to the weather conditions, see Bush Kinder Evacuation Policy for evacuation points. The following procedures are to be followed by staff.

- Keep children calm
- Ensure sign-in sheet is in the teacher's backpack along with other necessary items such as medication and DNMK mobile phone
- 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
- Calmly walk children in pairs, keep group close together and ensure no child deviates from the group.
- Teachers to be positioned at the front and back of the group, and flanking the group where possible
- Notify emergency services if required
- On arrival at safe assembly point, conduct a full count/roll call to ensure all children are accounted for
- Wait for the extreme weather to pass and when it does, resume normal activities, following same relocation procedures to return to the Bush Kinder site
- If the weather does not look like it will pass soon, a broadcast SMS should be sent to all parents, advising of the new safe location for pickup purposes.

EVALUATION

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

- Seek feedback regarding this policy and its implementation with parents of children participating in the Bush Kinder program.
- Seek feedback from staff in relation to the effectiveness of this policy.
- 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

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Approved Provider of DNМК September 2020

REVIEW DATE: SEPTEMBER 2022

ATTACHMENT 1

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke – Symptoms and Treatments

Victoria Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/heat)

Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke.

Warning signs may include:

- Pale and sweating
- Rapid heart rate
- Muscle cramps, weakness
- Dizziness, headache
- Nausea, vomiting
- Fainting

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. It occurs when the body is unable to prevent the temperature rising rapidly.

The symptoms may be the same as for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no sweating, and the person's mental condition worsens. They may stagger, appear confused, have a fit, or collapse and become unconscious.

What to do for heat exhaustion

- Get the person to a cool area and lie them down
- Fan if possible
- Drink cool water if not vomiting
- Remove outer clothing
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths • Seek medical advice

What to do for heat stroke

- Call an ambulance
- Get the person to a cool area and lie them down
- Remove clothing and wet skin with water, fanning continuously
- Position an unconscious person on their side and clear the airway

ATTACHMENT 2

LIGHTNING SAFETY FACT SHEET

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

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

The 30/30 rule

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

General precautions:

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

If shelter is near-by:

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

If shelter is not available:

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

First aid

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

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