This policy is directly associated with what we need to do as a school as a result of the Government positioning us within the area of high risk. The policy is dynamic in that as we all learn through this season there will be modifications and fine-tuning from both Government and ourselves.

Our commitment is to ensure that all staff in each section of the school is conversant with the policy and the procedures that we will follow. We also are in contact with CFA and Nillumbik Shire in terms of reducing fuel in the local area.

While all information will be on the website, College families will always be emailed information as it becomes available and in a timely manner.

Overarching this policy is a school position that says it is alright for families who live in at-risk areas to decide on days of fire risk to keep their sons or daughters with them rather than sending them to school. Very clearly also, is our position that says in no circumstance should parents decide at a time of high risk to manage an evacuation of their children from school themselves.

All relevant daily information will be posted at www.elthamcollege.vic.edu.au

Bush Fires: Policy

In the event of a bushfire our prime consideration is the safety of students, parents, staff and visitors. All persons at the College must be aware of these procedures. The College is located in the CFA Yarra Region 13 and in an area that the DEECD considers to be an area of possible high-risk and is therefore included on the Bushfire At-Risk Register. The procedures within this policy will be dependent on the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) and the possible risks considered by the relevant authorities and/or the College.

FDR - Code Red (Catastrophic)

If the Fire Danger Rating (FDR) is considered Code Red (Catastrophic) for this region the College will be given notice of the possible risks and closure. If the risk is imminent the College will enact its Emergency Management Plan and closure notification processes. When possible, DEECD will give up to 3-days notice of possible closures (including warnings about cancelling, changing, rescheduling or recalling out of school or off-site activities such as camps and excursions). The final decision to close will be confirmed no later than 12 noon the day before. As much notice as possible will be given to allow parents to make alternative care arrangements for their children. All warnings of potential or actual closures will be posted on the DEECD website (www.education.vic.gov.au/bushfires) by 10:30 each morning during the bushfire season and a notice will be posted on the front page of the College internet site at www.elthamcollege.vic.edu.au and also the College Intranet. Radio National and 774 also provide updates and it would have appropriate school information.

FDR – High to Extreme
If the College is forewarned of a possible fire within 15 kilometres of the campus (distance will be dependent on weather conditions at that time), the campus may be closed for the duration of the risk and parents will be requested not to send students to school. A notice will be posted on the front page of the College internet site at www.elthamcollege.vic.edu.au and also the College Intranet. We would ask that you check this notice if there is a threat of bushfires in and around the north and east of Melbourne. Radio National and 774 provide updates and it would have appropriate school information. Year 9 would go to the City unless families decided to keep their son or daughter home or families were in risk areas that precluded normal travel.

Local Outbreak

In the event of a fire breaking out during the day in our immediate area we would take the advice of the appropriate fire authorities. In cases of local outbreaks where the fire intensity has not built to dangerous levels then the College would be a safe place to stay. All fire risk or emergency information would be posted immediately on the Internet and the College Intranet. Families are requested in these instances not to travel to school, but wait for information from the school.

Evacuation

In most cases, the College would either be closed or would be a safe place to be. In cases not predicted and where conditions may be extreme the College may evacuate to a more suitable location should the smoke be excessive or if there was any other risk (Panorama Buses are on standby during bushfire season). This information would be posted immediately on the Internet. We would advise parents not to attempt travelling to the school to pick up their children unless advised by the College. It is important to understand that confusion and possible road blockages during bushfire times can put more people in danger. The College will advise parents as to the appropriate pick-up location and pick-up times etc..

Time Lost

On rare occasions that the College is forced to close due to high fire risk, students will be provided with materials for home study and make-up classes where required will be arranged. In the event of a closure being during VCE exams then an alternative venue will be used to continue all exams. As with any risk that changes normal school procedures the details will posted on the College internet and intranet sites.

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