

Since 2009 the Directorate has implemented protocols during bushfire seasons to notify schools when an elevated fire danger rating is declared. These protocols include the authority to 'temporarily' close a number of schools when the ACT Emergency Services Agency (ACT ESA) declares an elevated ('catastrophic' or 'extreme') fire danger rating.

In consultation with the ACT ESA and ACT Rural Fire Service (ACT RFS), the Directorate annually reviews its bushfire arrangements and prepares a package for each bushfire season. This includes a list of schools which have been identified for 'temporary' closure under an elevated fire danger rating.

The Directorate's *Temporary School Closure during an Elevated Fire Danger Rating* policy implements temporary school closures on days of a declared elevated fire danger rating. This includes situations where no bushfires are present in or around the ACT.

In the event that bushfires do occur under these or any other fire danger ratings, the ACT RFS or ACT Fire Brigade may direct schools to close immediately if there is a risk of fire to the site.

With no changes to existing whole-of-government bushfire arrangements and planning, the Directorate's bushfire package, including schools identified as 'high risk', will remain the same for the 2011-2012 bushfire season.

Elevated Fire Danger Rating

Five public school sites will temporarily close when an 'extreme' fire danger rating is declared (Stage One).

Seven ACT public school sites (this includes the five identified in Stage One) and three non-government schools will temporarily close if a 'catastrophic' fire danger rating is declared (Stage Two).

Outside of the ACT ESA/ACT RFS recommendations, the Directorate has been notified that a further twelve non-government schools have chosen to close on such days.

An '**extreme**' fire danger rating means fire will threaten suddenly and without warning. It is likely to be uncontrollable, unpredictable and fast moving.

A '**catastrophic**' fire danger rating means fire will threaten suddenly and without warning. It is likely to be uncontrollable, unpredictable and very fast moving.

Temporary School Closures

The ACT ESA will notify the Directorate of an elevated ('extreme' or 'catastrophic') fire danger rating at 4:00pm each day, effective for the following day. Schools Network Leaders will contact affected schools to inform them of the elevated warning, however, schools should remain informed of current 'fire activity' through the media and the ACT ESA website, www.esa.act.gov.au.

Schools will close using the procedures detailed in the attached 'On the Day Checklist for Schools Identified for Temporary Closure'. A list of the schools identified for temporary closure under an elevated fire danger rating is listed over the page:

Stage One Schools — EXTREME

ACT Public Schools

- Birrigai Outdoor School (Paddy's River)
- Black Mountain School
- Fraser Primary and Preschool
- Hall Preschool (Gold Creek School)
- Tharwa Preschool (Charles Conder Primary School)

Stage Two Schools — CATASTROPHIC

ACT Public Schools

- Birrigai Outdoor School (Paddy's River)
- Black Mountain School
- Bonython Primary and Preschool
- Fraser Primary and Preschool
- Hall Preschool (Gold Creek School)
- Jervis Bay Primary School (when a 'catastrophic' fire danger rating is declared for the Shoalhaven region of NSW)
- Tharwa Preschool (Charles Conder Primary School)

ACT Non-Government Schools

- Brindabella Christian College
- Burgmann Anglican School (Valley Campus)
- Burgmann Anglican School (Forde Campus)
- Canberra Christian School
- Canberra Girls' Grammar School
- Canberra Grammar School
- Canberra Montessori School
- Covenant College
- Daramalan College
- Islamic School of Canberra
- Marist College Canberra
- Orana Steiner School
- Radford College
- St Edmund's College
- The Galilee School

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies for days on which the ACT ESA declares an elevated ('extreme' or 'catastrophic') fire danger rating include:

- school communities, prior to the start of the bushfire season, should be informed that their school has been identified for temporary closure if an elevated fire danger rating is declared
- the ACT ESA will notify the Directorate of a declaration of an elevated fire danger rating for the following day
- the Media and Communications Unit will liaise with local media outlets, ACT ESA Media and Canberra Connect regarding public messages relating to school closures
- School Network Leaders should be the first point of contact for School Principals
- schools should refer members of the public to Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 or www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au for information on temporary school closures
- The ACT ESA will provide public messages to the ACT community regarding bushfire and bushfire preparedness as well as material to assist the public to understand warning arrangements
- all public enquiries regarding bushfires and emergency management should be referred to the ACT ESA on 6207 8444 or at www.esa.act.gov.au or to Canberra Connect on 13 22 81 or at www.canberraconnect.act.gov.au.