



Extreme Weather Policy and Procedure

Preamble

Extreme weather can present risks and hazards for students and members of staff, to the detriment of health and wellbeing. This policy seeks to define extreme weather and provide guidelines for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of students and staff, and other visitors to St Francis Catholic College (SFCC).

Purpose

- To ensure the health and wellbeing of students and staff on campus and in all off-campus locations.
- To provide guidelines and processes to accommodate extreme weather conditions and mitigate their impact on health and safety.

Scope

The Extreme Weather Policy applies to all students and staff at St Francis Catholic College. This policy is for implementation throughout the year, with particular emphasis on extreme wet weather and extreme hot weather conditions.

Definitions

Extreme weather: includes weather conditions of:

- Extreme cold – in this setting refers to temperatures below 0°C, or freezing point, or temperatures under 5°C with added wind-chill factor;
- Extreme heat – in this setting, refers to temperatures in the shade of 35°C or above;
- Heavy, consistent rain;
- Extreme storm – high winds, lightning, hail, dust, or asthma-causing thunderstorms;
- Extreme fire danger (usually a combination of heat, prolonged dry conditions and wind);
- Extremely hazardous Air Quality: smoke, haze or other air pollution.

General Principles

SFCC provides infrastructure provisions that reduces exposure to extreme weather including room ventilation, blinds, access to additional fans, shade provision (shade sails, planted trees and building structures), and sourcing alternative venues for outdoor activities.

SFCC considers the severity of impending weather conditions to determine the appropriate response and action by:

- Drawing upon the Department of Education and Bureau of Meteorology Warnings

- Refer to radar images, ambient temperature, thermal comfort, pollen and ultraviolet (UV) indexes to inform decision making.
- Working with staff to make appropriate decisions in regard to the type of, and location of activities, on days of extreme weather or impending extreme weather.

In the event of extreme weather:

- SFCC shall modify or suspend normal school activities, outdoor and sporting events based on risks to health and safety.
- Special functions and events where there are large gatherings of students and staff in the same indoor space, modifications may include, but not limited to starting the event at an earlier time of the day, or spreading the students and staff into multiple smaller rooms and conducting the event online.
- Not work in, or expose students to, areas of risk or exposure to extreme weather.
- In the event of an extreme weather event that significantly affects school programs or events, the school will communicate the implementation of the Extreme Weather Policy and Procedure and extreme weather arrangements with the school community.

Extreme weather arrangements

Melton campus

Under extreme weather conditions including, but not limited to, heavy rain, heat above 35°C, high winds or thunderstorms, Melton campus students are to move to the following buildings:

- GADAL, CLAIRVAUX, OSMA and SIENA for Year 7 to 11 students.
- PADUA for Year 12 students

Students will move to these areas with their friendship group rather than year level. Staff on yard duty will move to these buildings along with House Leaders and members of the Leadership Team. Refer to the Appendix of the map of the college.

Gadal: Area 1, Area 2 + Leadership – Deputy Principal – Operations, Staffing and Strategic Intent

Clairvaux: Area 2A, Area 3 + Leadership – Deputy Principal – Student Wellbeing

Siena: Area 4, Area 6 + Leadership – Deputy Principal – Learning and Teaching

Osma: Area 7, Area 13 (Courts) + Leadership – Director of Student Wellbeing

Padua: Area 14 (Stadium) + Year 12 Coordinator

Staff will not be required to carry out yard duty responsibilities when extreme weather arrangements take place.

Cobblebank campus

All Cobblebank campus students are to move to B Block.

First listed staff member on yard duty to watch rooms 1, 2 and 3.

Second listed staff member on yard duty to watch rooms 5, 6, 7, 8.

Third listed staff member on yard duty to roam between the two spaces.

Deputy Principal – Head of Cobblebank Campus and House Leaders to move between both spaces.

Extreme heat

SFCC does not close because of hot weather, unless exceptional circumstances, such as a local power outage makes it unsafe for students to remain at school. Rooms are air-conditioned and safe places for students and staff to remain indoors.

On days of extreme heat, students are reminded and encouraged by teachers to increase their fluid intake throughout the day. All food and drink should be kept in the classroom during hot weather, and/or in cool areas. When P.E lessons are scheduled, outside activities will be substituted with indoor activities.

Ensure students with additional support needs are appropriately supervised, including the monitoring of the student's hydration.

Students are also not required to wear their school blazer to and from school if the forecasted temperature is over 30°C.

Wet Weather – Heavy or Consistent Rain

Heavy rain or hail may leave the ground wet and lead to potential slips, trips and falls. In the event of heavy rain or hail that may leave the ground hazardous and unsafe, outdoor activities should initially be suspended. If necessary, the extreme weather arrangements shall be activated.

Storms – Wind, Dust, Hail, Thunder/Lightening

The response to storm events is the same as for wet weather as defined above. College leadership will determine when or if to activate extreme weather arrangements based on the timing and severity of the event. Thunderstorms, with associated hail, heavy rain, high dust/pollen counts or lightening are significant risks and students should not be outside during such events. Windows and doors should be closed. Great care must be exercised when opening external doors. Monitor students who are known asthma sufferers, or who are anaphylactic.

Extreme Fire Danger

SFCC is not a designated bushfire-prone zone and will not close on days of Extreme or Catastrophic fire danger. College leadership will determine appropriate responses to fire danger and activate the SFCC Emergency Management Plan if required.

Extreme Air Pollution

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regularly monitors the quality of air for Greater Melbourne. There are five categories of air quality: Good; Moderate; Poor; Very Poor; Hazardous. When air quality is good or moderate, activities can continue as usual. Activities will need to be modified when air quality is poor, very poor or hazardous, and guidelines are provided for each category. In most cases it is possible to visually observe Very Poor or Hazardous air quality. If the EPA classifies the air quality as Very Poor or Hazardous on its website, then this will trigger the Extreme Weather Policy. This hazard is extremely dangerous to asthma sufferers or those with other kinds of respiratory issues. In this case, the principal or delegate will make an announcement that extreme weather arrangements are activated.

Stay indoors and close all doors and windows. To avoid outdoor smoky air from coming indoors, turn evaporative coolers off. Air conditioners that do not take in air from outside, such as split systems, are fine to use. Older style air conditioners may have the option to recirculate or reuse air. If they do not have that function, turn them off. When smoky conditions have cleared, or there is a break in smoky conditions, open window and doors to air out rooms.

Emergency management

Where there is an immediate threat to life, an indiscrete lockdown takes place and the Incident Controller will call a “Shelter in Place” in which all staff and students will move indoors if safe to do so as per the SFCC Emergency Management Plan.

Roles and responsibilities

Students

- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated.
- Wear sunscreen of SPF 30 or above
- Report to a teacher if unwell
- Seek shelter and shade under extreme weather conditions.
- Comply with the Extreme Weather Policy and Procedure and the extreme weather arrangements outlined in this document.

Staff

- Staff shall make themselves aware of and inform themselves of current impending weather conditions and associated school response and action to the extreme weather event.
- Staff shall be aware of impending weather conditions throughout the scheduled breaks in the school day and the impact on all outdoor activities in and outside school grounds.

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- When planning outdoor activities, staff will make allowances for extreme weather conditions based on predicted weather conditions.
 - Staff who work outside (gardeners, PE teachers, yard duty teachers etc), should ensure they follow SunSmart guidelines, including appropriate SunSmart hats, sunscreen use (SPF 30+) and have adequate hydration.
 - Ensure risk assessments for planned off-campus activities and events, and on-campus outdoor activities consider the risks of extreme weather conditions and have strategies in place to mitigate the immediate risks to students and staff health and safety.
 - Staff should stay hydrated and encourage students to drink plenty of water and to stay out of the sun.
 - Staff should avoid drinks containing caffeine such as coffee and tea.
 - Watch for initial signs of heat-related illness (dizziness, tiredness, irritability, thirst, lost of appetite, fainting, heat rash) and if mild, remove student from heat and initiate cooling, if more severe send student to the Sick Bay.

School nurse

The School nurse is responsible for monitoring the weather forecast for extreme weather conditions and inform the Principle and/or the Leadership team if the need to activate the environmental controls are required.

Principal or delegate

- Ensure there are appropriate provisions and strategies to manage extreme weather conditions.
- Activate the extreme weather arrangements based on advice from the School nurse and in consultation with relevant staff and communicate to all staff by email.
- Determine appropriate responses to fire danger.
- Ensure this policy is adhered to by all staff and students.

References

School Anaphylaxis Policy

OHS Policy

MACS Duty of Care Guidelines

[Bureau of Meteorology](#)

[SunSmart website](#)

[EPA Air Quality Categories](#)

[1816.1: Air Quality and outdoor activity: guide for school and early childhood centres](#)

SFCC Emergency Management Plan

Document Information

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V2.0	June 2023

Appendix

