

Extreme Weather Policy

Introduction

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

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to ensure:

- 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

This policy applies to all staff involved in handling cash on behalf of St Francis Catholic College.

Definition

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.

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 guidelines
- Monitoring the fire danger ratings and air quality on the VicEmergency app and [EPA AirWatch](#) respectively.
- 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.

Extreme weather arrangements

- 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.
- Staff shall not work in, or expose students to, areas of risk or exposure to extreme weather.
- Scheduled sports, physical education classes or other outside activities will be adjusted or rescheduled to ensure students and staff are not exposed to risks of extreme weather.
- The school will communicate the implementation of the Extreme Weather Policy and the extreme weather arrangements with the school community where school programs or events are significantly affected.
- Students may be relocated to designated College buildings for break times and yard duty teachers will supervise these areas. Records and receipt

Extreme heat

Extreme heat or heatwave is a period of unusual and uncomfortable hot weather that can negatively affect health.

SFCC does not close because of extreme heat, 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.

The College shall:

- Assess the weather forecast for the coming three-day period and identify the peaks of extreme weather.
- Assess the school's activities during the hotter weather to identify activities that may need adjustment. This may include:
 - Restricting outdoor activities
 - Moving planned outdoor activities (e.g. physical education lessons) to earlier in the day before extreme heat sets in
 - Moving activities to approved and suitable alternative venues (e.g. sports programs moved inside)
 - Relocating classes from rooms with direct exposure to sunlight or no cooling
- Monitor staff and students for early signs of heat stress.

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. Staff who work outside (gardeners, P.E teachers, yard duty teachers etc.) should ensure they follow the SunSmart Policy. Alternative working arrangements should be available for non-teaching staff who work outdoors where possible.

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.

Severe Storms – Wind, Dust, Hail, Thunder/Lightening

Severe storms include but are not limited to high winds, lightening, hail, dust, or asthma-causing thunderstorms.

The response to storm events is the same as for wet weather as outlined 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 lightning 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.

The College shall:

- remove loose objects and debris from around the school grounds. These objects may become missiles in high winds.
- Ensure no persons are sheltering under trees, shade sails or other non-permanent structures.
- Close all windows and doors
- Monitor external entry points and external drains for signs for flash flooding.
- Call the State Emergency Service (SES) if the immediate damage from the storm outstrips the College's ability to manage, which may lead to further damage

Catastrophic Fire Danger

A fire danger rating is issued by the Bureau of Meteorology and describes the potential level of danger should a bushfire start, which will subsequently increase the risk of exposure to extreme heat and affect air quality. The four levels of fire danger rating are Moderate, High, Extreme and Catastrophic. The school will activate its extreme weather arrangements as required.

In addition, Cobblebank Campus is on the Bushfire At-Risk Register (BARR), and will close on days forecast as Catastrophic fire danger rating and maintain a heightened state of readiness on non-Catastrophic, elevated fire danger days.

Melton Campus is not in a designated bushfire-prone zone and will not close on a day of Catastrophic fire danger rating. College leadership will determine appropriate responses to fire danger and activate the 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 to describe air quality: Good; Fair; Poor; Very Poor; Extremely Poor. If air quality is categorised as 'Poor' or worse, the College shall follow the EPA's [Air quality and outdoor activity: guide for schools and early childhood centres](#). If the EPA classifies the air quality as 'Poor' or worse, 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 Chief Warden will call a “Shelter in Place” in which all staff and students will move indoors if safe to do so as per the 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.
- 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.

Senior First Aid Officer

The Senior First Aid Officer is responsible for monitoring the weather forecast for extreme weather conditions and informing the principal and/or the Leadership team if the need to make extreme weather arrangements is required. This includes monitoring the VicEmergency App and [EPA AirWatch](#).

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 Senior First Aid Officer 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

[Department of Education Heat Health Policy](#)

School Anaphylaxis Policy

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy

MACS Duty of Care Guidelines

[Bureau of Meteorology](#)

[Country Fire Authority Fire Danger Ratings](#)

[SunSmart website](#)

[EPA Air Quality Categories](#)

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

SFCC Emergency Management Plan

Staff Handbook

SunSmart Policy

Document Information

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