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## **CONTEXT**

Eco-Logic operates its business and activities primarily around the coastal townships of Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne, which are also bordered by the Great Otway National Park. Due to the large area, topography and nature of these bushland environments, we acknowledge the bushfire risks associated with the region we operate within.

We are also aware of predictions by agencies such as the Bureau of Meteorology (BOM), Department of Sustainability & Environment (DSE) and Country Fire Authority (CFA) that the intensity, scope and conditions associated with our experience of bushfire in Australia is changing. It is predicted that we will experience a higher occurrence of extreme weather conditions, and that the traditional bushfire season is extending in both directions, ie beyond the summer months.

Eco-Logic has prepared this document in addition to our existing Risk Management Plans in order to outline a comprehensive, clear and co-ordinated plan to take in the event of a bushfire or extreme weather event.

## **PREPARING FOR BUSHFIRE RISK**

### **Local Townships**

The Surf Coast Shire is within Region 7 of the CFA's zones in Victoria, with CFA depots in Torquay, Anglesea, Aireys Inlet and Lorne. Aireys Inlet, Anglesea and Lorne are also among the towns that have publicly accessible 'Town Protection Plans', prepared by the CFA.

Over the past 5 years, DSE has conducted extensive controlled burns to protect these coastal townships. Anglesea is particularly well prepared for a bushfire event, with much of the surrounding bushland burnt by DSE in recent years, and the Alcoa Coal Mine providing a further buffer to the north west. DSE have also been preparing the Otway National Park for the threat of bushfire by holding controlled burns and clearing barriers of vegetation to create fire breaks.

All of these towns have direct access to beaches as well as the rivers, creeks and estuaries that meet on the coast near these townships. These places provide a barrier to fire movement and offer reasonable safety in the event of a bushfire.

### **Eco-Logic Education & Environment Services**

Eco-Logic is well prepared for identifying bushfire risk, and managing these circumstances.

#### **Our activities:**

- Eco-Logic's standard activities are only 2 hours in duration, requiring only short term management of groups in outdoor environments
- Most activities are conducted very close to townships, within good communication range and road access
- Most activities are conducted in riverine and coastal environments
- Eco-Logic has prepared a range of activities following the same themes as our outdoor activities that may be conducted indoors when environmental conditions are deemed unsafe

**Eco-Logic's Risk Management:**

- Management maintains up-to-date *Risk Management Plans* for all activities conducted by Eco-Logic in the environments we visit
- Being licensed tour operators and permit holders with Parks Victoria, Department of Sustainability & Environment, the Great Ocean Road Coast Committee (GORCC) and Surf Coast Shire, we receive email alerts from these land management agencies in regards to weather, limitations to site access and warnings for our region
- Eco-Logic holds memberships with industry associations including the Victorian Outdoor Education Association (VOEA) and Tourism Alliance which are also involved in planning for and managing bushfire risk. Management attended VOA's 'Pre Bushfire Season Forum' in September 2009
- Management refers to industry bodies for best practise and policies regarding risks associated with weather and outdoor environments, eg the Outdoor Recreation Centre's *Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions 2009* and *Adventure Activity Standards*
- Management regularly checks the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development's website for updates on policies and procedures relating to the bushfire season and other weather conditions
- Eco-Logic regularly checks the CFA, DSE, Parks Victoria and Bureau of Meteorology websites for up-to-date information regarding the local area
- Eco-Logic has met with local camps and activity providers in order to take a coordinated approach to managing the risk and potential threat of a bushfire or severe weather event in the local area
- Eco-Logic has developed a Response Plan in relation to the CFA's Fire Danger Ratings (see below)

**Eco-Logic staff:**

- Eco-Logic staff are residents of the Surf Coast shire, and have a good understanding of the local environment including it's geography, weather and risks associated with fire
- Staff are experienced at working with groups in outdoor environments and managing the associated risks
- Staff are familiar with *Eco-Logic's Bushfire/ Extreme Weather Plan & Policy* and *Risk Management Plans*, as well as the Outdoor Recreation Centre's *Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions 2009* and *Adventure Activity Standards*
- Staff attended a 'Preparing for the Bushfire Season' presentation by CFA in December 2009

## RESPONDING TO HIGH FIRE RISK CONDITIONS

Camps and activity providers in Anglesea and Aireys Inlet are taking a co-ordinated approach to planning for a bushfire (or other severe weather or emergency) situation.

We aim to provide a consistent approach to our operations in the event of Catastrophic, Extreme and Severe CFA Fire Danger Ratings as summarized in the tables below.

The Actions listed below will be applied for all visiting groups taking part in activities with Eco-Logic, including public schools, private schools, universities and other private groups and organizations

### Eco-Logic's Response Plan:

CFA Fire Danger Rating	Actions
CODE RED- Catastrophic FDI 100+  (state-wide ruling)	DEECD: where the visiting school or Surf Coast region is listed as High Risk, all excursions will be cancelled (rescheduled). The notification will be made between 3 days prior and 12pm the day before the excursion/ activity DSE/ other land managers: will close access or parks in high risk areas Local camps: closed to guests Eco-Logic: no activities conducted in the outdoor environment for any group and Eco-Logic office closed
EXTREME FDI 75-99  (local/ district CFA ruling*)	DEECD: individual schools may decide to cancel/ reschedule activities DSE/ other land managers: may close access or parks in high risk areas Local camps: no groups to leave camp, activities must be conducted on site, except Coastal Forest Lodge where groups will be required to do activities at the beach (due to its bushland/ farm location) Eco-Logic: at camp's request activities will be modified to be conducted in the camp environment, or at the beach for groups staying at Coastal Forest Lodge For all groups, Eco-Logic will not conduct Rockpool Rambles or Coastal Hikes at Point Addis, or activities in the Great Otway National Park (eg Distillery Creek Picnic Ground) or Coogoorah Park. These activities and/ or locations will be modified
SEVERE FDI 50-74  (local/ district CFA ruling*)	DEECD: individual schools may decide to cancel/ reschedule activities Local camps: activities for the group must be conducted at the beach or river, or on site at camp DSE/ other land managers: may close access or parks on days of Total Fire Ban Eco-Logic: at camp's request, activities will be relocated For all groups, Eco-Logic will not conduct Coastal Hikes at Point Addis or in the Great Otway National Park
VERY HIGH /  HIGH/  LOW-MODERATE	DEECD: individual schools may decide to cancel/ reschedule activities Local camps: may prefer to hold activities at camp, the river or the beach if risk is present Eco-Logic: activities may still be modified depending on local wind, temperatures and warnings/ advice from CFA, DSE and BOM. See Eco-Logic's Trigger Conditions below

--DSE: Department of Sustainability & Environment

--DEECD: Department of Education & Early Childhood Development

--BOM: Bureau of Meteorology

\* Anglesea CFA are piloting a system for informing locals on an area-specific Fire Danger Rating, based on data from the Aireys Inlet weather station. We will refer to these ratings where possible as they provide the most realistic grounding for modifying or cancelling our activities in the Anglesea- Aireys Inlet region. Where these cannot be accessed, we will be guided by the district rating/ warning as applied by the CFA.

## EVACUATION POINTS & ACTIONS

The Evacuation Points detailed below have been deemed the safest places to assemble groups in the event of a bushfire occurring while groups are taking part in Eco-Logic's outdoor activities. These Evacuation Points have been selected for their open space qualities, proximity to water where possible, and accessibility for large buses if an evacuation is required.

Eco-Logic staff will assemble all client groups in the following Evacuation Points if smoke is seen or smelt during activities at the site, or the Eco-Logic office makes contact to inform staff of a bushfire in the area.

All local camps in Anglesea and Aireys Inlet have copies of Eco-Logic's Evacuation Points and Actions, and will co ordinate their response with ours as necessary. Eco-Logic first aid kits contain a map of these Evacuation Points and a complete list of local camp phone numbers.

Activity Location	Evacuation Point	Actions
Anglesea Rivermouth	On the beach at the ocean end of the river (90W)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Entire group to be gathered together at the Evacuation Point, staff to perform a head count and account for all participants</li> <li>-Eco-Logic staff member to contact the office, and phone the camp to arrange an evacuation or make plans to stay at the Evacuation Point. Staff member must text or phone the office to inform of the plan</li> <li>(-Office to report fire to '000' and seek more information about the fire/ risk and stay in touch with staff in the field)</li> <li>-Camp to arrange bus transport back to camp where possible</li> <li>-Group to stay together at Evacuation Point until the bus driver/ other staff come to the beach and guide the group back to the bus</li> <li>-If transport/ evacuation cannot be arranged, camp staff will provide support to the group at the Evacuation Point</li> <li>-Eco-Logic staff's responsibility ends here, being transferred to the camp and teachers/ group leaders</li> </ul>
Coogoorah Park	Open grass patch between the ship playground and carpark (if bushfire is approaching in this direction, the group may be moved to the Wray St carpark, walking across the bridges)	Actions as above
Point Roadknight	On the beach at the main access point from the carpark (95W)	Actions as above
Point Addis	<p>Eastern side (Rockpools)- On the beach, close to the base of the Koori Walk steps (83W)</p> <p>Western side (Anglesea side)- On the beach, at the base of the access steps (85W)</p>	<p>Actions as above</p> <p>* Point Addis is a more remote site, in the case where transport cannot reach the group, they will stay at the Evacuation Point until danger passes and an evacuation can be arranged</p>
Aireys Inlet Rivermouth	On the beach at the ocean end of the river (106W)	Actions as above

Activity Location	Evacuation Point	Actions
Distillery Creek Picnic Ground	<p>Move to open paddocks 50-100m south of main picnic ground</p> <p>-move through the fence where 'The Glen' Cottages sign is attached (visible from picnic ground) towards the cottages</p> <p>-Keep group together in the paddock, use cottages to shield from fire if safer</p> <p>-Bus to pick up from corner of Old Coach &amp; Bamba Rds if safe</p> <p><i>*Water available in toilet block</i></p>	<p>-Entire group to be gathered together at the Evacuation Point, staff to perform a head count and account for all participants</p> <p>-Eco-Logic staff member to contact the office, and phone the camp to arrange an evacuation or make plans to stay at the Evacuation Point. Staff member must text or phone the office to inform of the plan</p> <p>(-Office to report fire to '000' and seek more information about the fire/ risk and stay in touch with staff in the field)</p> <p>-Camp to arrange bus transport back to camp where possible</p> <p>-Group to stay together at Evacuation Point until the bus driver/ other staff come to the beach and guide the group back to the bus</p> <p>-If transport/ evacuation cannot be arranged, camp staff will provide support to the group at the Evacuation Point</p> <p>-Eco-Logic staff's responsibility ends here, being transferred to the camp and teachers/ group leaders</p> <p><i>*If the group is staying at Angahook Camp, it may be arranged for them to be transported back to camp or to the Rivermouth, depending on the fire conditions</i></p>
Lorne	<p>-Lorne Pier (125W)</p> <p>-Surf Club (122W)</p>	Actions as above
Torquay	<p>-Beach in front of Surf Club (72W)</p> <p>-Point Danger ANZAC memorial (between 65W-66W)</p>	Actions as above
Barwon Heads	<p>Access steps to Barwon Bluff carpark, rivermouth side of Bluff (27W)</p>	Actions as above

On days of Extreme and Severe Fire Danger Ratings, Eco-Logic will ensure that a staff member will be in the office or reliably contactable for the duration of all activities. This person will be responsible for knowing where all groups are, gaining up-to-date information about the state and risk of the fire, passing on information to staff in the field, and providing support as needed.

In some instances, telecommunication equipment may be damaged by fire, making it impossible to communicate in this way. If communication cannot be made between a group at an activity site, and the Eco-Logic office, groups must remain at the Evacuation Point until physical contact is made by Eco-Logic staff or school staff/ the driver of the evacuation bus.

For groups undertaking Eco-Logic activities as part of a day trip, ie not staying at a local camp:

- Groups should have a comprehensive plan and reliable transport for evacuation in the case of a bushfire or other event of extreme weather
- Eco-Logic staff will gather the group together at the Evacuation Point and make contact with our office
- Teachers/ group leaders will be responsible for arranging transport from this point, and take responsibility for the wellbeing of participants under their care

Following any event of fire in our region, Eco-Logic will seek advice from land management agencies on when it is safe to return to burnt sites, considering the risks relating to access, falling branches, erosion, flooding etc

## RESPONDING TO OTHER RISK CONDITIONS

In addition to the CFA's Fire Danger Rating, Eco-Logic will apply a set of Trigger Conditions to ensure that environmental conditions are appropriate for running our activities at all other times. This may include days of extreme heat, high winds or thunderstorms during the year, which will result in Eco-Logic modifying activities and/ or locations.

### Additional conditions that will result in changes to our programs:

Trigger Condition	Actions
Temperature 40° C+ (measured at Aireys Inlet weather station)	DSE: may close access or parks in high risk areas
	Local camps: may reschedule activities to a cooler time of day or will cancel all outdoor programs at these temperatures
	Eco-Logic: session times may be changed to a cooler part of the day or activities will be modified to be conducted at camp, perhaps for a shorter time
Temperature 36- 39° C (measured at Aireys Inlet weather station)	DSE: may close access or parks in high risk areas
	Local camps: YMCA will make changes to outdoor programs
	Eco-Logic: activities and/ or locations will be modified, session times may be shortened or changed to a cooler part of the day
Wind & weather warnings for Central District or Cape Otway to Wilson's Promontory declared by BOM	DSE: may close access or parks in these areas
	Eco-Logic will cancel/ reschedule Snorkelling activities, and may modify Canoeing and Hiking activities/ locations
Swell 4'+ predicted/ occurring locally	Eco-Logic will cancel/ reschedule all Snorkelling activities
Total Fire Ban declared by CFA	DSE: may close access or parks in these areas
	Local camps: may request changes to activities and/or locations
	Eco-Logic will change the location of any activities planned for bushland environments

--DSE: Department of Sustainability & Environment

--BOM: Bureau of Meteorology

In addition to the way that these Trigger Conditions affect our activities, Eco-Logic will consider their impact/s on site access, geography and vegetation and may modify our activities/ locations accordingly.

## ECO-LOGIC'S CANCELLATION POLICY

The following rates apply when a school/ group cancels an activity planned with Eco-Logic:

Activity cancelled 14 days prior to program	Full refund provided
Activity cancelled 7-13 days prior to program	10% cancellation fee payable
Activity cancelled 48 hours- 7 days prior to program	25% cancellation fee payable
Activity cancelled less than 48 hours prior to program	100% cancellation fee payable
Activity cancelled less than 48 hours prior to program, due to the DEECD's decision	50% cancellation fee payable

In the event of adverse weather or unsafe conditions, Eco-Logic will always offer an alternative activity at the same time as programmed. This may be an activity at camp using the same themes as the planned activity. If Snorkelling or Canoeing were planned, Eco-Logic may be able to reschedule the day or time to when conditions are appropriate. When a reschedule is not possible due to limitations from either party, a \$55 administration fee is payable to Eco-Logic.

We understand that schools or programs may be affected at short notice by decisions made by the Department of Education & Early Childhood Development or school principals/ councils in regards to Fire Danger Ratings in the Summer months. In this situation our standard cancellation policy will apply, unless

the cancellation is made less than 48 hours prior, when a 50% cancellation fee will apply for the program. Eco-Logic will do it's best to reschedule the activity/ program at a later date as required, though full fees for the new program will apply in addition to the cancellation fee charged.

On days of CFA's Code Red/ Catastrophic rating, Eco-Logic will be completely closed for business. Any groups booked for activities on these days will be rescheduled when possible, or a full refund will be made to the group.

## **CAMPS CONSULTED BY ECO-LOGIC**

Anglesea: Camp Wilkin, Burnside Camp, Araluen, Anglesea Recreation Camp (YMCA), Coastal Forest Lodge

Aireys Inlet: Angahook Holiday Camp

## **BUSHFIRE INFORMATION**

Victorian Bushfire Information Line 1800 240667

Radio- ABC 774 AM (Melbourne), ABC 107.9 FM (Regional)

[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

## **REFERENCES**

Country Fire Authority  
[www.cfa.vic.gov.au](http://www.cfa.vic.gov.au)

Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, Bushfire Resources  
[www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/default.htm](http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/bushfires/default.htm)

Victorian Outdoor Education Association  
[www.voea.vic.edu.au](http://www.voea.vic.edu.au)

Outdoor Recreation Centre, 'Management of Outdoor Activities for Severe Weather Conditions'  
[www.orc.org.au/activity\\_standards\\_resources.php](http://www.orc.org.au/activity_standards_resources.php)

Parks Victoria  
[www.parkweb.vic.gov.au](http://www.parkweb.vic.gov.au)

Department of Sustainability & Environment  
[www.dse.vic.gov.au](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au)

Surf Coast Shire  
[www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/fireready.htm](http://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/fireready.htm)

Business Victoria  
[www.business.vic.gov.au](http://www.business.vic.gov.au)

Tourism Victoria, 'Crisis Essentials' guide for tourism businesses  
[www.tourism.vic.gov.au](http://www.tourism.vic.gov.au)