



Natural Disaster

Review Date 20/10/2027

Introduction

Floods and other events can create challenges or hazards for staff and families traveling to the Preschool. During such times, the Preschool may need to close to prioritize the safety of staff, children, and families. Clear and timely communication will be crucial in these situations to ensure the safety of all stakeholders. Under Section 219A of the National Law (NSW), services can be ordered to close on a temporary basis in the event of an emergency, for example due to a natural disaster.

Goal

To ensure children, families, and educators are safe when natural disasters such as floods, severe storms and bushfires occur

To ensure educators are supported during periods of closure

Strategies - How will it be done?

In the case of flood and/or other extreme weather, the Director or Nominated Supervisor will seek information from the SES, the Bureau of Meteorology, Richmond Valley Council, and other sources to assess the risk to families and educators. Staff-child ratios should also be considered, and at least one designated Responsible Person of staff should be able to safely access the preschool.

Staff and families should not travel on roads that are flooded, where power lines are down, or where roads are otherwise unsafe. When recommended by SES, families should stay off the road.

The Director / NS will make decisions using the Australia Warning System

The NSW State Emergency Service (SES) has adopted the Australian Warning System which includes the following three tiers of warnings:

1. Advice;
2. Watch and Act; and
3. Emergency Warning

The Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Persons, and other staff should download and use the Hazards Near Me app to inform their assessment of potential risk.

Warnings during storms and flood events may also be distributed through text message alerts, the SES website, SES social media channels, ABC radio stations and media outlets. Additional advice can be found at: www.ses.nsw.gov.au/community-advice.

The Nominated Supervisor (or the Responsible Person, in their absence) will use the Warning System when making decisions about Preschool operations.

As a guide, the following steps should be taken at each level:

ADVICE (Yellow)

- Stay informed – The Nominated Supervisor and staff should monitor road conditions, warnings, and weather reports
- Use email and text messaging to advise staff, families, and the Management Committee that a weather incident is possible and that they should monitor for safety

WATCH and ACT (Orange)

Preschool will be closed upon this advice unless it is deemed safe for attendance. Advise all staff and families via text, email and/or social media. In the case that preschool is open at the time of this warning,

- Contact all families to collect children as soon as possible.
- Prepare the preschool in case of flooding (Evans Head), High Winds or loss of power or amenities.
- Staff should evacuate as soon as all children are collected. The Nominated Supervisor will send staff home once ratios allow, dependent on the location and distance of the staff members' homes, and the number and ages of dependents.
- Staff and family members should not drive through flood waters at any time

If conditions are expected to worsen, Preschool should be closed rather than try to manage the evacuation of Preschool children and staff throughout a disaster. Where evacuation or shelter-in-place is required, staff should follow the procedures for Emergencies and Evacuations.

EMERGENCY WARNING (Red)

- Staff and any remaining children should shelter in place unless they have been advised that it is safe to travel.
- The preschool will remain closed until the warning has lifted to yellow

Contacting staff/families

- Only the NS Directors will contact families to ensure continuity of information is given – In their absence, the NS Director will nominate the next person in charge.

Reopening

The preschool will notify families of reopening via email and text. Before opening, a thorough inspection will be completed. If any damage has occurred that poses a risk to children or educators, this will be rectified before they return.

Woodburn only – Any damage needs to be directed to the Woodburn Public School principal and assessed by AMU – the asset management unit of the Department of Education

Staff responsibilities during a natural disaster

- Any staff who are rostered on and unable to reach the preschool due to localised flooding or road conditions should notify the Director by 7a.m on the day of work.
- All staff should be aware of local road conditions between their own place of residence and the preschool using Live Traffic and other reputable sources.
- At no time should staff drive through flood waters or roads that are closed.

If appropriately qualified relief staff can be engaged, they will be employed. At least one designated Responsible Person/person in day-to-day charge should be on site while children are present.

In the case that preschool is open, but a staff member is not able to attend due to road closures or localised flooding, they should consult with the Director on their duties for the day. Options may include: working from home for all or part of the day, taking personal leave, long service leave, or unpaid leave, or working an alternative day.

In the case that the decision is made to close preschool due to SES warnings, road closures, safety concerns or staff shortages, permanent staff will work from home on their own documentation and record keeping and will be paid their usual wages for the day. This is offered to all casual staff with permanent contracted days.

Staff who are unable to work from home should discuss with the supervisor or Director about taking personal or unpaid leave on this day.

Staff members who have accrued personal leave or long service leave may elect to use this leave to cover absences during floods and this should be discussed with the Director. The HR manager may offer compassionate leave on a case by case basis.

Educators should respond to all communication when asked, this ensures the load is lessened to the Director /NS and all educators are clear of information being shared

Waiver of fees

Parents will not be charged fees for the days when the preschool does not open. Fees will be payable for any day that preschool opens, regardless of the opening hours or attendance, that is, if the preschool closes early, full fees are still payable.

Notifications

In the case that the Preschool is closed, the Nominated Supervisor should notify the Regulatory Authority within the required timeframe via the NQAITS portal

Statutory Legislation & Considerations

Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010: Section 174(2)(a), 174(3) & 174(4)

Education and Care Services National Regulations: Regulations 87, 97, 168(a)(e), 174(2)(b) & 175(2)(b)(c)

Sources

Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA)- www.acecqa.gov.au

ACECQA- Guide to the National Quality Framework www.acecqa.gov.au/nqf/about/guide

Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011

Links to Policies & Procedures

Emergency and Evacuation

First Aid

First Aid Plan

Medical Conditions

Business Continuity Plan

President’s Name: Ashleigh Mitchell

President’s Signature:

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