



Extreme Weather Policy

Authorisation	DSCC Management Committee
Review Date	July 2024
Approved Date	30 July 2024
Next Review Date (Frequency)	July 2027 (3 years) or sooner as required.
Relevant Documents	Attachment 1: Symptoms and Treatment of Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke Attachment 2: First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims

AUTHORISATION

This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Dawson Street Child Care Co-operative (DSCC), at a committee meeting on the Approved Date defined above.

POLICY STATEMENT

Values

DSCC is committed to:

- ensuring that the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the Centre is protected, while also promoting their learning and development.
- promoting protection strategies for children, families, staff and visitors to minimise the harmful effects from extreme weather events.
- to taking weather conditions into consideration when planning activities, events or excursions.

Purpose

Extreme weather can present risks and hazards for children, members of staff and families.

This policy will provide:

- guidelines and procedures to ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when weather conditions become extreme during normal operating hours.
- outline appropriate mechanism for communication of cancellations of child care and educational services in extreme weather conditions.

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Person with Management or Control, Nominated Supervisor, Person in day-to-day Charge, educators, staff, students, volunteers, parents/guardians, children and others attending the programs and activities of DSCC.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

Background

DSCC intends to continue to operate across a broad spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring, and learning in a natural environment. However, extreme weather conditions may arise periodically which can put the wellbeing and safety of the children and staff at risk. This policy provides weather guidelines that DSCC can use to make decisions to cancel child care and educational services in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform families.

Legislation and standards

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) (Part 2: Principles for Children)
- *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*: Section 167
- *Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011*: including Regulations 100, 101, 113, 114, 168(2)(a)(ii)
- *National Quality Standard*, Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety
 - Standard 2.3: Each child is protected.
 - Element 2.3.2: Every reasonable precaution is taken to protect children from harm and any hazard likely to cause injury.
- *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004*

DEFINITIONS

Bureau of Meteorology (BOM): Australia's national weather, climate and water agency.

Website: www.bom.gov.au

Extreme Weather: weather that threatens the immediate or long-term safety of individuals, as a result of rain, lightning, wind or heat. The risk to individuals' wellbeing is guided by the Bureau of Meteorology's forecast conditions.

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.
- High winds.
- Extreme storms including 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.
- Thunderstorm Asthma is triggered by a mixture of grass pollen in the air and thunderstorm conditions. The pollen grains absorb water, swell and burst open releasing high level of particles containing pollen allergens.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

Sources

- VicEmergency App
- BOM Website: www.bom.gov.au
- AS/NZS 4685.0:2017, Playground equipment and surfacing - Development, installation, inspection, maintenance and operation.6.2.1 *General considerations*, 6.3.9 *Shade and sun protection*, Appendix A *Shade and sun protection*.
- Safe Work Australia: [Guidance Note – Sun protection for outdoor workers](#) (2016)
- SunSmart: www.sunsmart.com.au

Service policies

- *Excursions and Service Events Policy*
- *Administration of First Aid Policy*
- *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy*
- *Occupational Health and Safety Policy*
- *Nutrition, Oral Health and Active Play Policy*
- *Supervision of Children Policy*

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Approved Provider and Person with Management or Control is responsible for:

- Establishing and updating an extreme weather policy which provides guidelines to staff and parents about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellations of the child care and sessional services and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather.
- All families being aware of this policy and are provided access to the policy upon request.
- Monitoring the weather forecast via the Bureau of Meteorology website www.bom.gov.au
- Monitoring events as dictated by the VicEmergency App.
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to families in the event of cancelling services in response to extreme weather conditions e.g.: families contacted by phone or the Xplor app.

The Nominated Supervisor, Person in day-to-day charge and educators are responsible for:

- All staff should be aware of forecasted weather conditions for the day, using traditional news sources or viewing the forecast for Brunswick postcode 3056 on the BOM website.
- The Nominated Supervisor or educator in charge of an excursion or other outside activity is authorised to make a decision on whether an activity should go ahead as planned, or if the arrangements need to be modified in the event of extreme weather or if forecasted.

- Undertaking the following actions in the event of extreme weather conditions listed:

Weather Conditions	Staff Actions
Heat Risks include sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke and dehydration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restrict outdoor play to short periods. • Ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats and application of sun cream. • Educators to check surfaces of play equipment to ensure it will not burn the children. • Offer water for hydration at regular intervals. • Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke (see Attachment 1 for symptoms and treatments). • Establish activities in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade. • <u>Children and staff are to remain indoors, with the air conditioning on and blinds lowered if the current temperature reaches 33 degrees Celsius for Brunswick 3056 on the BOM website.</u>
Heavy Rain – Hail – Cold Risks include child getting wet (and onset hypothermia), injury from hailstones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure children and staff are wearing appropriate clothing. • Staff and children to re-enter the building immediately if hail or heavy rain commences. • Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary.
High Winds Risks include falling trees/tree limbs, blowing particles (sand, dirt) into eyes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure structures and potentially dangerous loose items are secure. • Where possible move children away from trees. • <u>Children and staff are to remain indoors when wind gusts are occurring >60km/h (gale force) as reported on the BOM website for current weather observations at Essendon Airport.</u>
Bush fire smoke Risks include breathing difficulty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If bush fire smoke present consult the air quality reading via the airtmart.org.au app, if 'very poor' or 'extremely poor' <u>Children and staff are to remain indoors, with air purifiers running if available.</u> • Follow Emergency Management Policy and procedures if children and staff at risk.
Electrical storm activity/Lightning Risks include lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling and thunderstorm asthma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move indoors or seek undercover shelter. • In the event of illness or injury follow the Illness, Infectious Disease and Emergency Care Policy.

- In the event of illness or injury as a result of weather conditions, follow the Illness, Infectious Disease and Emergency Care Policy and Emergency Management Policy
- Contact the parent/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Illness, Infectious Disease and Emergency Care Policy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Ensuring they are comfortable at all times with the forecast weather conditions, while their children are attending DSCC. If for whatever reason families feel concerned for the wellbeing of their child due to weather conditions, they should consider withholding their child from the session and collect their child from a session in the event that extreme weather arises during a session.
- Exercising their judgement and consider the level of heat related risk posed to their child during transportation to and from DSCC.
- Ensuring appropriate clothing is worn by their child to suit the weather conditions and ensure a change of clothes is provided. Dressing children in items that are easily removed should they become hot.
- providing a named, SunSmart approved sunhat (refer to *Definitions*) for their child's use at the service.
- Ensure they carry a mobile phone with them or can be contactable always whilst their child attends DSCC.
- Reading and becoming familiar with this policy
- Ensuring they have downloaded the Xplor App
- Bringing relevant issues to the attention of staff, manager or committee of management.

Volunteers and students, while at the service, are responsible for following this policy and its procedures.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Approved Provider and Person with Management or Control will:

- regularly seek feedback from educators, staff, parents/guardians, children, management and all affected by the policy regarding its effectiveness.
- monitor the implementation, compliance, complaints and incidents in relation to this policy.
- keep the policy up to date with current legislation, research, policy and best practice.
- revise the policy and procedures as part of the service's policy review cycle, or as required.
- notify parents/guardians of any changes to this policy or its procedures.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Symptoms and Treatment of Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke
- Attachment 2: First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims

Date Reviewed	Details of Changes (if any)	Date of Next Review
July 2024	Inception of policy.	July 2027



Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke

Symptoms and Treatment

Heat exhaustion is a serious condition that can develop into heat stroke.

Common signs and symptoms of heat exhaustion include:

- Confusion
- Dark-coloured urine (a sign of dehydration)
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea
- Pale skin
- Profuse sweating
- Rapid heartbeat

What to do for Heat Exhaustion

If you, or anyone else, has symptoms of heat exhaustion, it's essential to immediately get out of the heat and rest, preferably in an air-conditioned room. If you can't get inside, try to find the nearest cool and shady place.

Other recommended strategies include:

- Drink plenty of fluid (e.g. water).
- Remove any tight or unnecessary clothing.
- Apply other cooling measures such as fans or ice towels.

If such measures fail to provide relief within 30 minutes, contact a doctor because untreated heat exhaustion can progress to heat stroke.

What to do for Heat Stroke

Heat stroke is a life-threatening emergency. It occurs when the body is unable to prevent the temperature rising rapidly. The symptoms may be the same for heat exhaustion, but the skin may be dry with no sweating, and the person's mental condition worsens. They may stagger, appear confused, have a fit or collapse and become unconscious.

Recommended strategies include:

- Call an ambulance.
- Get the person to a cool area and lie them down.
- Remove clothing and wet skin with water, fanning continuously.
- Position an unconscious person on their side and clear the airway.

ATTACHMENT 2

First Aid Recommendations for Lightning Victims

Giving first aid to lightning strike victims while waiting for professional medical attention can save their lives. It is safe to touch a lightning strike victim. People struck by lightning DO NOT carry a charge.

Follow these four steps immediately to help save the life of a lightning strike victim:

1. Call for Help

Call 000 immediately. Give directions to your location and information about the strike victim(s). It is safe to use a mobile phone during a storm.

2. Assess the Situation

Safety is a priority. Be aware of the continuing lightning danger to both the victim and rescuer. If the area where the victim is located is high risk (e.g., an isolated tree or open field), the victim and rescuer could both be in danger. If necessary, move the victim to a safer location. It is unusual for a victim who survives a strike to have any major broken bones that would cause paralysis or major bleeding complications unless the person suffered a fall or was thrown a long distance. Therefore, it may be safe to move the victim to minimize possible further exposure to lightning.

3. Respond

Check to see if the victim is breathing and has a heartbeat. The best place to check for a pulse is the carotid artery which is found on your neck directly below your jaw.

4. Resuscitate

If the victim is not breathing, immediately begin mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. If the victim does not have a pulse, start cardiac compressions as well (CPR). Continue resuscitation efforts until help arrives. If the area is cold and wet, putting a protective layer between the victim and the ground may help decrease hypothermia (abnormally low body temperature).

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Lightning may also cause other injuries such as burns, shock, and sometimes blunt trauma. Treat each of these injuries with basic first aid until help arrives. Do not move victims who are bleeding or appear to have broken bones.