

Management of Activities in Adverse Environmental Conditions

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Policy Statement:	<p>The purpose of this policy is to provide staff with direction for the modification of outdoor activities to reduce the risks to all participants associated with adverse environmental conditions.</p> <p>Note: All activities have their own procedural standards for safe operation, thus adherence to this policy alone does not guarantee safe outcomes in its own right.</p>

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1 SCOPE

1.1 ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CONSIDERATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

- General camp activity rotations under the direction of a Coolamatong Program Manager.
- Expeditions
- Training events for any Scripture Union (SU) volunteers
- Holiday camps run by either Camp Coolamatong or Scripture Union Australia
- On-site activities run during private group camps and events

1.2 DEFINITIONS

1.2.1 Adverse Environmental Conditions

These are Specific Environmental Events (see Section 2) that significantly impact an activity's session outline and increase the likelihood of certain risks occurring as outlined in the Risk Assessment Matrix for the activity.

1.2.2 Teacher in charge

Where the document refers to 'teacher in charge', this would imply the event coordinator, private group coordinator or holiday camp leader, depending on the program under consideration.

1.2.3 School staff

Where the document refers to 'school staff', this would imply other event adult supervisors or holiday camp team members, depending on the program under consideration.

1.2.4 Coolamatong Director

Where the document refers to 'Coolamatong Director', this would imply the Assistant Director assuming this role if the Director is on leave or offsite and not contactable.

1.2.5 Coolamatong Program Manager

Where the document refers to Coolamatong Program Manager, this refers to the staff member directly in charge of coordinating the school camp, user group, holiday camp or event.

1.3 PROCESS FOR DECISION MAKING

The Bureau of Meteorology often forecasts conditions that are on the borderline of whether an activity needs to be modified or cancelled. In this case, the following factors should be taken into consideration:

1.3.1 On-site activity (including non-journey canoeing or rafting within 400m of the entry point):

A forecast of adverse conditions should be noted and an alternative plan considered for modification. If the forecast eventuates then the activity needs to be cancelled.

1.3.2 Boat Trip (CC Neill beyond Duck Arm)

A borderline forecast should result in discussion of trip options between the Coolamatong Program Manager, Coolamatong Director, teacher in charge and CC Neill Master. Then an agreement should be made whether to modify or cancel a trip based on the forecast.

A forecast **beyond** adverse conditions will result in cancellation or postponement of the trip.

1.3.3 Offsite (Expedition)

A borderline forecast before departure requires discussion between the Coolamatong Director, Coolamatong Program Manager, teacher in charge and CC Neill Master to identify the ability to shelter from conditions and ease of evacuation during expedition. Where exposure cannot be managed,

cancellation should be considered. Where exposure can be managed, a contingency plan should be set and the expedition continued until such time that conditions require contingency.

A forecast **beyond** adverse conditions will result in cancellation or postponement of the expedition.

When forecast increases beyond adverse conditions after an expedition has commenced, discussion between the Coolamatong Expedition Leader, Coolamatong Program Manager, Coolamatong Director and the school's teacher in charge should identify the ability to shelter from conditions and ease of evacuation. If exposure cannot be managed cancellation and evacuation must be considered. If exposure can be managed, contingency and communication plans should be agreed upon and the expedition continued until such time that conditions require contingency.

2 SPECIFIC ENVIRONMENTAL EVENTS

2.1 SEVERE WIND

A decision to modify or cancel onsite activities needs to be made in consultation with the Coolamatong Director, Coolamatong Program Manager, and teacher in charge. When the activity is a boat trip, the CC Neill Master should also be consulted. The Coolamatong Program Manager and Coolamatong Director will consider the forecast in conjunction with:

- Area of intended program
- Wind direction
- Capacity to add more instructors to the group
- Age and ability level of the participants
- The wishes of teacher in charge

If campers are on an overnight expedition, every effort will be made to camp in an area that is free of large timber that is considered potentially hazardous to students and staff in tents. Walking through heavily wooded areas will be seriously considered, with alternatives discussed in consultation with the Coolamatong Director.

2.1.1 Wind Categories

Coastal water wind warnings issued by the Bureau of Meteorology are categorised as follows:

- *Strong Wind Warning*: Winds averaging from 26 - 33 knots.
- *Gale Warning*: Winds averaging from 34 - 47 knots.
- *Storm Force Wind Warning*: Winds averaging from 48 - 63 knots.
- *Hurricane Force Wind Warning*: Winds averaging 64 knots or more.

(Conversion: 1 knot = 1 nautical mile per hour = 1.85 kilometres per hour)

2.1.2 Strong wind or greater eventuating

- Land-based activities cease if average windspeed is consistently 30 knots or greater, depending on wind direction and location of activity.
- Water-based activities cease if average windspeed is consistently 25 knots or greater, depending on direction and location of activity.
- Bushcraft activity will be reviewed and modified at anything greater than 15 knots
- Staff may, at their discretion, finish an activity early at wind speeds less than 25 knots if they feel that participants are unable to continue meaningfully due to the wind and the group's capability.

- Campers on expedition are to be located in clear areas overnight.
- Water activities as part of expeditions are to be suspended and not recommenced until communication with the Program Manager has been made and a contingency is agreed upon. The Program Manager will consult with the Director in this scenario.

2.1.3 CC Neill Trips

CC Neill trips can continue as planned up to and including forecasts of 25 knots average wind speed depending on direction. In some adverse conditions, trip destinations can be altered to maximise sheltered conditions. Once the forecast reaches 30 knots average wind speed, CC Neill trips will be rescheduled or, if necessary, cancelled.

If wind eventuates above 25 knots the continuation of the trip will occur at the discretion of the CC Neill Master in consultation with the Coolamatong Program Manager and Coolamatong Director.

2.1.4 Locations affected by wind:

Duck Arm – west corner (Canoe sessions)

- Some protection from SSW, W and NNW wind directions
- Observation required to determine impact of strong wind.
- Westerly directional winds create a greater risk in this area of Duck Arm and the adverse conditions activity cancellation outline should be scaled down by 5 knots when winds are from this direction.

Duck Arm (Canoe Journey)

- Protected from S and N wind directions
- Journey up and down Duck Arm will be impacted by strong winds with either W or E components and the trip will need to be modified so that it does not leave Duck Arm.

Mason Bay (Adventure Race, Raft Building, SUPs)

- Protected from N/NE wind directions
- Observation required to determine the suitability of Mason Bay in any strong wind.
- South and South-Westerly winds affect this area most and the adverse conditions activity cancellation outline should be scaled down by 5 knots when winds are from this direction.

Lake Victoria

CC Neill trips may be adversely affected by SE and NE directional winds even at levels from 20-25 knots due to the long fetch in those directions. Trips may be modified in consultation with the Coolamatong Director, Coolamatong Program Manager, teacher in charge and CC Neill Skipper.

By comparison, N/NW and S/SE wind directions may pose reduced difficulties for CC Neill.

Easterly directional winds may adversely affect trips specifically to Sperm Whale Head at levels from 20-25 knots or less

2.2 ELECTRICAL STORMS

Electrical storms occur frequently over summer months.

When electrical activity has become close the following guidelines (2.2.1 & 2.2.2) must be considered to reduce risks of injury.

N.B. Electrical activity is considered close when there is 15 seconds or less between lightning and thunder; for onsite activities electrical storms are considered close when lightning is visible.

2.2.1 Storms Forecast

Ensure the Coolamatong activity instructor is aware of the response plan in the event of close electrical activity. Check the forecast and actual conditions prior to commencing any activity. Activity must be cancelled or postponed if there appears to be an immediate threat.

2.2.2 Storms eventuating

On-site activities:

- Move all participants off and away from the water if electrical activity is becoming or has become close.
- Move back to sheltered buildings if possible.
- If not possible to return to buildings, move to low lying ground and avoid single large trees.

Expeditions:

- Avoid peaks, ridges and exposed high ground.
- Avoid shelter under large individual trees.
- Look for shelter in low lying ground or in broad areas of small uniform trees.
- Brief students on the Safety Position.

2.3 HEAT & COLD

2.3.1 Heat Exposure - Predicted temperature over 28°C AND every day in Terms 1 & 4

In order to minimise heat exposure while outside, the following should occur:

- Ensure all participants (including Coolamatong staff members & interns and school staff) have a hat, sunscreen and ample water. Plan to spend most of the hot part of the day (11 am – 3 pm) in the shade.
- Recommend school staff to adopt a 'no hat, no outdoor activity' policy. Students without hats should be asked to complete alternative activities, whilst still being supervised, in the shade.
- Provide spare hats for participants based on general items accrued from prior camps.
- Wear clothing that protects the upper arms and shoulders.
- Wear wrap-around sunglasses (highly recommended – not compulsory) that meet Australian safety standards.
- Wear a hat that shades the face and neck. All participants are encouraged to wear broad-rimmed hats rather than peaked caps.
- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with a minimum SPF30+, which is reapplied every 2 hours or as per manufacturer's specifications. Sunscreen should be made readily available by Coolamatong.
- Coolamatong staff members are required to wear sun smart clothing at all times whilst outside. Sun smart clothing items include sleeved tops and hats. Cutaway tops, singlets or sleeveless tops (leaving shoulders, upper arms and back exposed to the sun) are not acceptable, even during non-teaching periods.

2.3.2 During activities

- Monitor group wellbeing and complete activities in the shade where possible.
- Activity leader may shorten or cease activity if he/she observes participants to be affected by heat.
- Increase water breaks and encourage participants to bring full water bottles.
- Lower intensity of activities, shorten activity length and modify levels of physical exertion.
- If out on expedition, walk during the cooler parts of the day if possible.

2.3.3 Extreme Heat

No strenuous physical activity is to take place over 34°C. All outdoor activities cease above 38°C.

Sports Medicine Australia is available to provide [more information](#) on the effects of strenuous activity according to temperature.

2.3.4 Extreme Cold

While it is unlikely for any conditions to qualify as extreme cold, it is possible for campers to develop hypothermia around water when air temperature is low and wind chill is high.

Coolamatong activity leaders should monitor group wellbeing and pay attention to any camper who is showing signs of hypothermia, providing first aid as appropriate. If participants are becoming wet in cold and windy conditions, it is recommended to either provide time to dry and change, shorten the activity or cease the activity altogether.

2.4 BUSHFIRE

2.4.1 CFA defined trigger points for Fire Danger Ratings (FDI = Fire Danger Index)

RATING	Recommended Action for Households	Recommended Action for Outdoor Activities
CODE RED (FDI 100+)	If you live in a bushfire prone area, the safest option is to leave the night before, or early in the morning.	Leave the area the night before or early in the morning. If this is not practical, take immediate action to protect the group. Practise (or remind the group about) behaviour in the event of a threat from fire.
EXTREME (FDI 75-99)	The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared, well-constructed and you can actively defend it.	Leave the area the night before or early in the morning. If this is not practical, take immediate action to protect the group. Practise (or remind the group about) behaviour in the event of a threat from fire.
SEVERE (FDI 50-74)	The safest option is to leave early in the day if you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave. Only stay if your home is well prepared and you can actively defend it.	If activity is in a bushfire prone area consider leaving early in the day. If onsite: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - remind group of the location and route to your severe weather site. (Emergency Assembly Area) - practise (or remind group about) behaviour in the event of threat from fire. - reassess the likelihood of meeting goals of the activity - re-evaluate route selection and evacuation options - re-evaluate campsite choices - ensure procedures are modified to account for the heightened fire risk
VERY HIGH (FDI 25-49)	If you live in a bushfire prone area and your Bushfire Survival Plan is to leave, the safest option is to leave at the beginning of a day.	If your activity is in a bushfire prone area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - reassess the likelihood of meeting goals of the activity - re-evaluate route selection and evacuation options - re-evaluate campsite choices - ensure procedures are modified to account for the heightened fire risk e.g. meals that do not require cooking, waste disposal, campsite procedures - practise (or remind the group about) behaviour in the event of a threat from fire
HIGH (FDI 12-24)	Check your Bushfire Survival Plan	Review your Activity Plan, including severe weather sites, particularly those for bushfires.
LOW-MODERATE (FDI 0-11)	Check your Bushfire Survival Plan	Review your Activity Plan, including severe weather sites.

2.4.2 Camp Coolamatong Bushfire Preparation:

On arrival

Within the first 15 minutes of arriving at Coolamatong, all participants are given a safety briefing, including a demonstration of the emergency signal and the designated Assembly Area for their particular campsite, as outlined below:

- Lake Camp Assembly Area = large deck adjacent to Dining Hall
- Farm Camp Assembly Area = volleyball court on front oval

Weather Conditions and Fire Danger Ratings

Each day, the Coolamatong Program Manager will check forecasted weather conditions and Fire Danger Ratings (including Total Fire Bans) for that day. A decision to modify or cancel activities needs to be made in consultation with the Coolamatong Director and the teacher in charge. They will consider the forecast in conjunction with:

- Area of the intended program
- Nature of the activity
- Wind direction and speed
- Capacity to add more instructors to the group

Below outlines considerations for the campsite and outdoor activities specific to Coolamatong, based on the Fire Danger Ratings:

RATING	Guidelines for Campsite	Guidelines for Outdoor Activities
CODE RED (FDI 100+)	Evacuate the campsite 24 hours before / the day prior when these conditions are forecast. If it is unsafe and not possible to evacuate, the Coolamatong Farm Camp Dining Hall is designated as the Refuge Area.	
EXTREME (FDI 75-99)	Consider evacuating campsite based on weather conditions forecasted, fires in the area and number of extreme rating days predicted.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All onsite activities cancelled. - Expeditions / offsite activities cancelled. - Any overnight expeditions evacuated back to Coolamatong
SEVERE (FDI 50-74)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expeditions cancelled. - Any overnight expeditions evacuated back to Coolamatong. - Land-based activities modified or cancelled. - Water-based activities reviewed and possibly modified.
VERY HIGH (FDI 25-49)		<p>Most activities are able to continue. Some may be modified based on weather forecast.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bushcraft/bushcooking modified or cancelled. - Offsite expeditions modified.
HIGH (FDI 12-24)	Monitor conditions	
LOW– MODERATE (FDI 0-11)	Monitor conditions	

Fire Season Preparation

Camp Coolamatong will undertake the necessary preparation of the sites prior to the fire danger period coming into effect. This includes the maintenance of all fire-fighting equipment, reduction of fuel around the site and accessibility of equipment.

Every October, in preparation for the fire season, the checklist in Appendix 2 of Camp Coolamatong’s Bushfire Management Plan (entitled ‘Camp Coolamatong Fire Season Readiness Plan’) is completed to ensure all fire fighting equipment is present and in working order.

Forecast Total Fire Ban Day

All fire-fighting equipment and fire preparation boxes are checked against the checklist (Appendix 2, mentioned above) to ensure all gear is present and in working order. If anything is missing it is replaced immediately.

2.4.3 Emergency Response Plan in the event of an immediate fire front

Evidence of a bush fire will be:

- warning that a fire is approaching;
- a dense cloud of smoke approaching;
- a strong smell of smoke

Phase 1: Raising the alarm

- Sound the alarm (continuous for at least one minute, take outside Dining Hall to sound)
- Phone Fire Brigade 5156 6548 or 0459 182 397
- Contact Coolamatong Director 0459 151 175

Phase 2: Assemble group for roll call

- All people on site proceed immediately to Assembly Area (*volleyball court at Farm Camp or deck outside Dining Hall at Lake Camp*) following designated emergency evacuation route. If unable to proceed to Assembly Area, go directly to Refuge Area (*Farm Camp Dining Hall, deemed the appropriate refuge area by local CFA*).
- Delegate teacher in charge (or holiday camp director or event leader) to collect camper/participant list, medical forms and camper/participant medications.
- Coolamatong Program Manager to collect Fire Management Folder.
- At Assembly Area, check roll and confirm list with leaders.
- Identify any campers not accounted for and inform Coolamatong Director.
- The priority at all times is the safety and welfare of human life.
- Do not return to bunkrooms, buildings or tents to retrieve valuables or to locate missing campers. This will be coordinated under the direction of the Camp Coolamatong Director.

Phase 3: Seek Refuge

- Proceed to Refuge Area when everyone is accounted for (*Farm Camp Dining Hall*)
- Do not wait for any 'missing' camper. Coolamatong Director will authorise specific leaders or camp staff to locate and move them to Refuge Area.
- Keep designated leaders with groups and remain in Refuge Area until notified by Coolamatong Director.

Phase 4: Waiting

- Do not send any person out of Refuge Area to perform a task unless authorised by Coolamatong Director.
- Reassure campers and wait calmly for further instructions.
- Fill emergency fire buckets with water.

Phase 5: Leaving Refuge

- Do not leave Refuge Area until told to do so by Coolamatong Director or Emergency Services.
- When the 'all clear' is given by Coolamatong Director, move group to Assembly Area or other area as directed and wait for further instructions.