

Yarram Early Learning Extreme Weather

Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

PURPOSE

This policy will provide clear guidelines to ensure that:

- Provide a framework around which well-informed decisions may be made by Yarram Early Learning to cancel a Nature Program session/s in response to forecast weather conditions and ensure that parents/guardians understand this framework.
- Ensure the health and safety of all children and staff when the weather conditions become extreme during a session.
- Provide guidelines for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Nature Program session.
- Provide an appropriate mechanism for communication of session cancellations in extreme weather conditions.
- Impress upon parents/guardians that they may collect their child from a Nature Program session at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

POLICY STATEMENT

VALUES

Yarram Early Learning is committed to:

- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children participating in the Nature Program.
- Facilitating a Nature Program experience in a variety of (safe) weather conditions, including rain, to allow children to experience nature across as broad a spectrum as possible and without compromising the safety of the participants.
- Accessing appropriate resources to enable well-informed determinations to be made regarding weather conditions.
- Facilitating effective and timely communication to parents regarding weather conditions, cancellations, or relocation of children in the event of extreme weather.
- Respecting the right of parents to remove their child from a Nature Program at any time in response to the weather conditions (or for any other reason).

SCOPE

This policy applies to the Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person, educators, staff, students on placement, volunteers, parents/guardians, children, and others attending the programs and activities of Yarram Early Learning Incorporated.

BACKGROUND AND LEGISLATION

BACKGROUND

Yarram Early Learning's Nature Program is intended to operate across a broad

spectrum of weather conditions, allowing the children to experience nature and its elements across the seasons. Whatever the weather, children are encouraged to take the lead in playing, exploring, and learning in a bush or 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 the parameters within which the kindergarten can make determinations to cancel Nature Program sessions in response to forecast extreme weather conditions and ensure appropriate communication channels are in place to inform participants. It also provides a framework for staff in the event that extreme weather conditions arise during a session and provides procedures for effective evacuation to a safe location.

LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS

Relevant legislation and standards include but are not limited to:

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011
- Education and Care Services National Law 2010
- National Quality Standards, including Quality Area 2 – Children's health and safety and Quality Area 3 – Physical environment
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004
- Occupational Health and Safety Regulations 2007

DEFINITIONS

The terms defined in this section relate specifically to this policy. For commonly used terms e.g., Approved Provider, Nominated Supervisor, Regulatory Authority etc. refer to the *General Definitions* section of this manual.

Bureau of Meteorology (BoM): Australia's national weather, climate, and water agency. BoM website, various smart phones, iPad apps use BoM data etc.

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. An extreme weather table is shown below.

Nature Program sessions will be cancelled if any of these determinants are met:

Weather condition	Extreme weather determinant causing cancellation
Forecast temperature	36 degrees Celsius or greater AND Kindergarten teachers/educators decide that it would be appropriate to cancel the Nature Program. Note: there is no pre-set minimum temperature. Thermals and clothing layers should be worn on very cold days. (Refer to Protective Clothing Policy)
Forecast wind speed	In excess of 45km per hour AND the Kindergarten teachers/educators decide that it would be appropriate to cancel the Nature Program, based on a final assessment at the site.
Forecast electrical storm activity	Thunderstorm/electrical storm forecast.
Nature Program sites flooded	On flooding warning/advice from the BoM.
BOM weather warnings of extreme storm conditions and excessive rainfall	On warnings issues by the BoM.

In addition to the above, Yarram Early Learning has the discretion to cancel a session/s if it views the weather to have an adverse impact on the Nature Program, even if the extreme weather determinants in the above table are not reached. Weather warnings from the Bureau of Meteorology for the area may also necessitate cancellation.

Protective Clothing: Refer to Protective Clothing Policy.

SOURCES AND RELATED POLICIES

SERVICE POLICIES

- *Nature Program Extreme Weather Policy (Nature Program specific).*
- *Nature Program Identification and Visibility Policy (Nature Program specific).*
- *Nature Program Emergency Evacuation Policy (Nature Program specific).*
- *Nature Program Snake Awareness Policy (Nature Program specific).*
- *Nature Program Protective Clothing Policy (Nature Program specific).*
- *Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy.*
- *Supervision of Children Policy.*
- *Excursion & Incursion Policy.*
- *Sun Protection Policy.*
- *Water Safety Policy.*
- *Occupational Health & Safety Policy.*

RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS

The Approved Provider and the Nominated Supervisor are responsible for:

- An Extreme Weather Policy which gives clear guidelines to staff and parents/guardians about extreme conditions that will necessitate cancellation of a Nature Program session/s and provides guidance and procedures for staff in the event of extreme weather during a Nature Program session.
- All parents being aware of this policy and provided access to the policy upon request.
- Ensuring communication channels are in place to facilitate notification to parents/guardians in the event of cancellation of a Nature Program session or if the group has been evacuated to a safe location in response to extreme weather conditions.

In the event of weather becoming extreme during a session Staff are responsible for:

- Undertaking the following actions in each of the weather conditions listed in the table below:

Weather condition	Staff Actions
<p>Heat Risks include but are not limited to - sunburn, heat stress, heat stroke and dehydration.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for heat exhaustion/heat stroke (see Attachment 1 for symptoms and treatments). • Offer water for hydration at regular intervals. • Establish activities that are in shaded areas and encourage children to play in the shade. • Ensure the application of sunscreen every two hours. • Ensure appropriate protective clothing including hats (refer to the Protective Clothing Policy for more information).
<p>Rain/Hail/Cold Risks include but are not limited to - child getting wet (and onset of hypothermia), injury from hailstones.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor children for wet clothing and change if necessary (with assistance of staff). • Ensure appropriate clothing is worn (e.g, waterproof clothing). • Encourage wearing of appropriate clothing, including coats, gloves, scarves etc. • Seek shelter in heavy rain or in hail.
<p>Electrical storm activity/Lightning Risks include but are not limited to - lightning strike, trees/tree limbs falling as a result of lightning strike.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move children away from trees. • Seek indoor shelter. • See Attachment 2 for Lightning Safety Fact Sheet.
<p>High winds Risks include but are not limited to - falling trees/tree limbs,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure structures and dangerous items are secure. • Move children away from trees.

blowing particles (sand, dirt) into eyes, Nature Program structures blowing down/away etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek shelter if necessary. • Any equipment/structures must be moved by at least two staff/volunteer to minimise risk of injury. • If the children are being moved, follow the 'Relocating to a safe position' instructions below.
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- In the event of illness or injury during a session as a result of weather conditions, the Illness Policy and Incident and Medical Emergency Management Policy must be followed.
- Contacting a parent/guardian in the event that a child is ill or injured in accordance with the Incident, Injury, Trauma & Illness Policy.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- Collecting their child at any time during the session if they are not comfortable with the weather conditions.
- Collecting their child as soon as possible where staff have determined and communicated to parents of an extreme weather event. **Don't we take them back to the centre? Parents can't always drop everything and pick up children.**
- Keeping their mobile phone with them on the day of the session to receive notice of cancellation in cases of extreme weather updates which necessitate cancellation.
- Checking the Xplor app for any notifications of session cancellation.

EVALUATION

In order to assess whether the values and purposes of the policy have been achieved, the Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person will:

- Regularly seek feedback from everyone 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 at least 14 days before making any changes to this policy or its procedures.

AUTHORISATION

This policy was adopted by the Yarram Early Learning Incorporated in August 2023

Reviewed by Committee – August 2023

To be reviewed - August 2025

ATTACHMENT 1

Heat Exhaustion and Heat Stroke –Symptoms and Treatments

Victoria Better Health Channel (www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/heat)

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

Warning signs may include but are not limited to:

- Pale and sweating.
- Rapid heart rate.
- Muscle cramps, weakness.
- Dizziness, headache.
- Nausea, vomiting.
- Fainting.

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 as 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.

What to do for heat exhaustion

- Get the person to a cool area and lie them down.
- Fan if possible.
- Drink cool water if not vomiting.
- Remove outer clothing.
- Wet skin with cool water or wet cloths.
- Seek medical advice.

What to do for heat stroke

- 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

LIGHTNING SAFETY FACT SHEET

Source: Victorian State Government – Education and Training
(www.education.vic.gov.au)

If thunder happens within 30 seconds of lightning, then the storm is within 10 kilometres of your location. Lightning safety experts consider this the strike danger zone and advise people to follow the 30/30 rule.

The 30/30 rule

Follow the precautions outlined below when thunder is heard within 30 seconds of a lightning flash and wait for 30 minutes after the last thunder is heard to resume your activity. If you are unable to take shelter inside, find the safest accessible location and stay there until the storm has passed.

General precautions:

- Stay away from metal poles, fences, clothes lines etc.
- Never ride horses, bicycles, or drive in open vehicles.
- If driving, slow down or park away from trees, power lines or other objects that may be damaged by storm activity.
- Stay inside metal-bodied (hard top) vehicles or caravans but do not touch any metal sections.
- If undertaking water activities, leave the water immediately.
- If boating, go ashore to shelter as soon as possible (a bridge or high jetty may offer immediate protection).
- Discard all metal objects.

If shelter is near-by:

- Seek shelter in a hard top vehicle or solid building. Avoid small structures or fabric tents.
- Keep clear of windows.

If shelter is not available:

- Crouch (alone, feet together), preferably in a hollow. Make yourself a small target.
- Remove metal objects from head/body.
- Do not lie down (the more of you that is in contact with the ground, the more 'attractive' you are to lightning) but avoid being highest object.
- If your hair stands on end or you hear buzzing on nearby rocks, fences etc, move immediately. At night, a blue glow may show if an object is about to be struck.
- Stay away from high and low points (hilltops, ridges & gullies), rock overhangs and shallow caves.
- Keep out of, and well away from, water bodies or watercourses.
- Make sure the group is aware of the Lightning Safe Position.

This involves:

- Squatting or crouching with knees drawn up and feet together, preferably on dry insulating material (e.g., foam mat).

- Keeping hands off the ground.
- Spread group members out – about ten metres apart, but within calling distance.
- Never shelter under tree/s.

First aid:

- Apply immediate CPR to lightning victims until medical help arrives (you will not receive a shock from the victim).

For further information contact the State Emergency Service office

www.ses.vic.gov.au