Bushfire Patrol

Teacher Guide Years 4 – 6

Building Disaster Resilience in Young People
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## Contacts

**Department of Fire and Emergency Services**  
Emergency Services Complex  
20 Stockton Bend  
Cockburn Central, Perth WA 6164

For school-aged education enquiries:  
Call: (08) 9395 9816  
Email: educationandheritage@dfes.wa.gov.au
About This Program

*Bushfire Patrol* is a WA Curriculum-linked bushfire education program for the Southwest Land Division (see Figure 1), suitable for primary school students from Geraldton through to Esperance. DFES School Aged Education provides a similar classroom resource, *North West Bushfire Patrol* for schools in the North West of Western Australia.

The intended outcome of *Bushfire Patrol* is to raise students' awareness of bushfire and its consequences, whilst further developing a range of skills to help them respond to a bushfire event.

Globally, human risk from disaster is on the rise and children are amongst groups of people most vulnerable to disasters¹. The impact of a bushfire disaster can be significantly reduced if affected communities are well prepared and equipped with the knowledge and skills of how to respond when a bushfire occurs.

This program reflects an inquiry approach to learning where students direct their own learning and apply it to their own location.

Key outcomes include:
- Identifying safe and unsafe behaviour with fire
- Understanding that fire is a tool for responsible adults (who hold the knowledge and skills to use it)
- Identifying there are unsafe times to light fires (thus increasing risk)
- Developing personal behaviours and strategies for staying safe when there is a bushfire
- Understanding how to respond to a bushfire
- Understanding the impact of deliberately lit bushfires

Previous Experience with Fire

In most school communities there will be families who have had a personal experience of bushfire. Teachers need to be aware of any student who may find the topic distressing and should take actions for the wellbeing of that child.

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Children who have a Fascination with Fire

There are children who are fascinated by fire and who are already either lighting fires or endangering themselves by getting close to fire. The DFES Juvenile & Family Fire Awareness (JAFFA) Program is available for these children and their families.

Specially trained firefighters deliver JAFFA in the family home. JAFFA includes an interview with the parent(s) and child, and, a specially adapted education session that assists the young person to understand the consequences of playing with fire. Please contact the DFES JAFFA Coordinator on 9395 9488, email jaffa@dfes.wa.gov.au or go to www.dfes.wa.gov.au/jaffa to refer a child to the program or to find more information.

Disaster Resilience Education (DRE) Outcomes

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Education is about building students’ understanding of the causes, nature and effects of hazards while also developing a range of skills to help prevent and lessen the impact of a disaster. DFES uses the term Disaster Resilience Education (DRE) in our materials and professional development sessions. DRE has a focus on skills and building disaster resilience in young people.

Disaster Risk Reduction programs have the following dimensions:

1. Understanding the science and mechanisms of natural disasters
   - Why they happen
   - How they develop
   - Where they occur
   - Their frequency
   - Their physical impacts
2. Learning and practising safety measures and procedures
3. Understanding risk and how hazards can become disasters
4. Building community risk reduction capacity by identifying local hazards and developing plans to respond to them
5. Building a culture of safety and resilience

The intended Disaster Risk Reduction outcomes for Year 4 - 6 are:

1. Students do not play with lighters and matches and tell adults immediately if they see lighters and matches in the reach of children
2. Students seek help from an adult when there is an unsafe fire, even when they took part in lighting the fire
3. Students do not light fires unsupervised and seek help from an adult when they see others being unsafe with fire
4. Students know to call Triple Zero when there is an unsafe fire
5. Students understand the causes and consequences of bushfire hazards

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6. Students are able to inform others of how weather can increase bushfire danger and create unsafe fire conditions
7. Students understand the scale of bushfire risk in Western Australia
8. Students learn how to read the Fire Danger Rating and inform others of the daily bushfire risk
9. Students know how to find warning information on the DFES website or local ABC radio during a bushfire, and to communicate these warnings to an adult
10. Students develop a bushfire survival plan with their families.

Using this Learning Program

This education resource has been developed for teachers for classroom use. It provides lesson plans, videos, photographs, illustrations and worksheets for Years 4 - 6. The lessons are ideally delivered as a whole unit of work, so that students are better able to work towards achieving all disaster risk outcomes.

Before beginning the program, it is highly recommended that you undertake the introduction activity (Critical Thinking and Reflection) provided in the Appendix of this Teacher Guide. The activity allows students to apply critical thinking skills to identify what they know and do not know about bushfires. These ideas can be revisited throughout the learning process to help both the teacher and student to reflect on what they have learnt so far and what they still need to find out.

_Bushfire Patrol (Years 4 – 6) contains five modules._

The first three modules focus on Bushfire Behaviour:

Module One: Understanding the elements of fire
Module Two: Causes of Bushfire
Bushfire Weather
Module Three: Fire Danger Ratings
Prescribed Burning

The next two modules focus on Planning for Bushfire:

Module Four: What is your Risk?
Module Five: Bushfire Plans
Fire Danger Warnings

An additional module is planned to include structural mitigation, back up plans and sheltering.
Whole of School and Community Approach

Research conducted around child-centred disaster risk reduction has repeatedly shown that multi-component whole-school initiatives involving the whole school community are more likely to increase disaster resilience outcomes than single-one off learning activities done in isolation.

A whole school approach includes all members of a school community, including teaching and non-teaching school staff members, parents and guardians, all students and the wider community. It involves providing students with interactive and engaging learning activities, ensuring all school staff and students are invited to be part of the learning process and building positive and respectful partnerships with families and the wider community.

You will find within the modules the following activity suggestions that will help build a whole of school and community approach:

- Ways to help guide children to talk with parents about what they have learnt
- Ideas on how students can engage the wider community during the learning process
- Child-parent interactive homework suggestions
- Activities which use the ‘kids teaching kids’ model so that those students learning about bushfires can teach other students
- Ideas on how to have direct engagement with local emergency management staff

To encourage household and family involvement in the learning program, a Parent Information Sheet is provided in the Appendix, which we encourage you to send home to parents and carers at the commencement of the learning process or after you have delivered Module Three in class.

Arranging a Firefighter Visit

To organise a visit from local firefighters, contact your local fire station. In Perth and in larger metropolitan centres, contact your local WA Fire and Rescue Service to see if an incursion focusing on bushfire is possible. All other fire services in Western Australia are provided by volunteers.

It may not always be possible for firefighters to visit your school. Volunteer fire services include WA Fire and Rescue Service (outside metropolitan Perth and larger regional centres), Bush Fire Brigades and Volunteer Emergency Services. Contact your local DFES Regional Office (dfes.wa.gov.au/contactus) to find out if your local firefighters visit schools and can deliver bushfire safety messages.

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3 Career fire stations serve most of the Perth metropolitan area including Mandurah and Rockingham and the regional centres of Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Bunbury and Albany. Firefighters visit all Year 3 classes to deliver our Home Fire Safety program. Bushfire education visits are additional to their workload and visits may be limited.
The purpose of the firefighter visit is to reinforce the key messages learnt from *Bushfire Patrol* and provide information about the role of firefighters in the community. The visit is also an opportunity for students to ask their own questions of firefighters. Incursions are best suited for one class at a time to allow for effective interaction with firefighters, rather than a larger audience, such as the whole school.

The main role of firefighters is to fight fires. While they may have some experience in working with young children, they will need your help to make sure their visit to your class goes well. To ensure that all students benefit from this presentation, teachers are asked to take responsibility for their students’ behaviour. Please note, firefighters may be called away to an emergency before or during their scheduled visit to your school. It is a good idea to forewarn students of this possibility beforehand.

Firefighters may bring a firetruck and allow your students to look through the truck. They may also demonstrate the personal protective equipment they use in a bushfire. This may not be possible nor suitable for all lessons.

**Knowing your Local Community**

Western Australia is a vast state and the range of emergency services varies between larger towns and more remote regions. Volunteer organisations play a vital role in providing services to regional towns and communities. There is value in knowing your local area and what emergency services and volunteer organisations are available, as this will influence how you teach certain parts of the program. Visit [www.dfes.wa.gov.au/contactus](http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/contactus) to find links to DFES Offices and Fire and Rescue Service Stations. Contact your local council or shire office for Bush Fire Brigade contact details.

DFES Regional Offices are in:

- Great Southern: Albany, Esperance
- Upper Great Southern: Narrogin
- Lower South West: Manjimup
- South West: Bunbury
- Goldfields/Midlands: Kalgoorlie, Northam
- Midwest/Gascoyne: Geraldton
- Pilbara: Karratha, Port Hedland
- Kimberley: Broome, Kununurra

Module Two of *Bushfire Patrol* includes a *Bushfire Location Report*. This report refers to the different DFES regions. A map of DFES regions is included in the Appendix to help you locate which region your school is in.

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4 If your students have questions, you may want to review them beforehand. Please be clear with the brigade about what information you are seeking.
School Bushfire Emergency Plans

If your school is in or near a designated bushfire prone area, bushfires are a real risk to you, your students, your school buildings and grounds and your local community. All schools in bushfire prone areas should have a stand-alone bushfire emergency plan. Use the DFES Map of Bush Fire Prone Areas to find out if your school is at risk to bushfires. Talk to your school management team about your schools bushfire emergency plan.

It would be highly valuable for you to organise and conduct school or classroom bushfire drills while undertaking this learning program. Make sure that students understand what a bushfire drill is and why it is important. Involve students in an activity where they reflect on how effective the drill was and if it can be improved.

Household Bushfire Emergency Plans

DFES encourage all households in Bushfire Prone Areas to have a Bushfire Survival Plan. A plan will help families make important decisions like, when to go, which way to travel, where to go and what to take. A plan will give families the best chance of surviving a bushfire. It is important to highlight that leaving early is always the safest option.

Module Five (Responding to Bushfire) asks students to have a five minute Fire Chat with their families as a homework task and to complete the My Family’s Bushfire Survival Plan worksheet. This is a particularly important component of the learning program. This activity may be difficult for some students where parents or guardians are unwilling or unable to participate. If this is the case, encourage students to have a ‘5 minute fire chat’ with other classroom students to decide the following:

- When will you know to leave your home?
- Where will we go?
- Which way will we go?

In Module Five, we ask you to invite guest speakers to your classroom to discuss their own bushfire plans with your students. This is a great opportunity to share your own bushfire plan with your students. Ideally, choose guests who are planning on leaving early. If a guest is choosing to stay and defend their property, they need to be able to demonstrate to students that their property is well prepared, they have appropriate equipment and a comprehensive bushfire survival plan.

Over 400 government schools in bushfire prone areas are on the Department of Education’s Bushfire Zone Register. A DFES Bushfire Risk Management Liaison Officer provides advice to government schools on bushfire plan development. It is not the role of career firefighters to provide assistance in bushfire planning. Non-government schools may need to employ a fire engineer (or other expert) to assist them with their bushfire plans.
At the completion of Module Five, we encourage you to host an event where students can communicate what they have learnt to their family and school community. This is a great opportunity for students to encourage others to complete or review their bushfire plans.

**Additional Resources and Useful Weblinks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Website</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.dfes.wa.gov.au">www.dfes.wa.gov.au</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bureau of Meteorology (BOM)</td>
<td><a href="http://www.bom.gov.au">www.bom.gov.au</a></td>
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Appendix

Map of DFES Regions

Module Two’s *Bushfire Location Report* refers to the Great Southern Region. The region was split in July 2018. Previously it included both the Great Southern Region and Upper Great Southern regions.
An Introduction Activity to the Modules

Before beginning this program we recommend that students undertake the following introduction activity. It allows students to apply critical thinking skills to identify what they know and what they don’t know about bushfires. Revisit these ideas throughout the learning process to help both you and your students reflect on what they have learnt and what they still need to find out.

Things you will need
- Introduction to Bushfires slideshow
- Critical Thinking and Learning chart to display in your classroom (a template is provided below)

Introduction Activity
1. Use the Introduction to Bushfires slideshow to prompt a discussion about bushfires.
2. Introduce the Critical Thinking and Learning chart. Work as a class to list all the things students know and don’t know about bushfires.
3. Display this information in the classroom so it can be referred to throughout the learning process.
4. Revisit your chart after the completion of each module to review students’ initial ideas. (Were students correct about what they know? Do they now know the answer to some of their questions? What more do they want to know?)

Critical thinking and learning template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we know about bushfires</th>
<th>What we don’t know about bushfires</th>
<th>What do we want to know about bushfires?</th>
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Parent Information Sheet

*Bushfire Patrol*

Dear Parent/Carer

This term our class is learning about bushfires in Western Australia. We are using a Department of Fire and Emergency Services program called *Bushfire Patrol*.

*Bushfire Patrol* aims to increase your child’s understanding of bushfire and provides them with life-long skills to prevent, prepare and respond to bushfires.

We encourage you to talk to your child about what they are learning in class and work as a family to complete any homework activities they may bring home. By completing the activities as a family, you will help reinforce your child’s learning and increase your family and home’s safety before and during the bushfire season.

Find out more about how to prepare for bushfires as a family on the DFES website and have a 5 minute Fire Chat: [https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/firechat](https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/firechat).

Keep up to date with Bushfire Warnings in your area using EmergencyWA: [https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/](https://www.emergency.wa.gov.au/)

If you want to know more about what your child is learning in class, you can download *Bushfire Patrol* from the DFES education page: [https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/schooleducation](https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/schooleducation).

We hope you and your child enjoy *Bushfire Patrol* and are well prepared for the bushfire season.
## Curriculum Links

### HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: Civics and Citizenship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strand (Knowledge and Understanding)</th>
<th>Content Descriptors</th>
<th>Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Government and Society</td>
<td>- The purpose of government and some familiar services provided by local government</td>
<td>Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings) &lt;br&gt; Module 4 (What is your Risk?) &lt;br&gt; Module 5 (Bushfire Warnings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Roles, responsibility and participation</td>
<td>- How regulations and laws affect the lives of citizens &lt;br&gt; - Why people work in groups to achieve their aims and functions, and exercise influence, such as volunteers who work in a community group</td>
<td>Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings) &lt;br&gt; Module 2 (Causes of Bushfire) &lt;br&gt; Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings; Prescribed Burns) &lt;br&gt; Module 5 (Bushfire Plans and Bushfire Warnings)</td>
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### HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES: Geography

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Strand (Knowledge and Understanding)</th>
<th>Content Descriptors</th>
<th>Module</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>The Earth’s environment sustains all life</td>
<td>- The importance of environments to animals and people, and different views on how they can be protected</td>
<td>Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings; Prescribed Burns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Factors that shape the environmental characteristics of places</td>
<td>- The way people alter the environmental characteristics of Australian places &lt;br&gt; - The impact of bushfires on environments and communities and how people can respond</td>
<td>Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings; Prescribed Burns) &lt;br&gt; Module 1 (Elements of Fire) &lt;br&gt; Module 2 (Causes of Bushfire) &lt;br&gt; Module 3 (Prescribed Burning) &lt;br&gt; Module 4 (What is your Risk?) &lt;br&gt; Module 5 (Bushfire Warnings)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Strand (Science Understanding)</td>
<td>Content Descriptors</td>
<td>Module</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Earth and space sciences</td>
<td>• Earth’s surface changes over time as a result of natural processes and human activity</td>
<td>Module 1 (Elements of Fire) Module 2 (Causes of Bushfire) Module 3 (Prescribed Burns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 5</td>
<td>Chemical Sciences</td>
<td>• Changes to materials can be reversible; or irreversible</td>
<td>Module 1 (Elements of Fire) Module 2 (Causes of Bushfire) Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings; Prescribed Burns)</td>
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<td>Year 6</td>
<td>Earth and Space Sciences</td>
<td>• Sudden geological changes and extreme weather events can affect Earth’s surface</td>
<td>Module 2 (Bushfire Weather) Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strand (Science as a Human Endeavour)</th>
<th>Content Descriptors</th>
<th>Module</th>
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<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Use and Influence of Science</td>
<td>• Science knowledge helps people to understand the effect of their actions</td>
<td>Module 1 (Elements of Fire) Module 2 (Causes of Bushfire) Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings) Module 4 (What is your Risk?) Module 5 (Bushfire Warnings)</td>
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<td>Year 5/6</td>
<td>Use and Influence of Science</td>
<td>• Scientific knowledge is used to solve problems and inform personal and community decisions</td>
<td>Module 1 (Elements of Fire) Module 2 (Causes of Bushfire) Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings) Module 4 (What is your Risk?) Module 5 (Bushfire Plans and Bushfire Warnings)</td>
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*Note: Humanities and Social Sciences skills are consistent across all lessons*
## HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Strand (Personal, Social and Community Health)</th>
<th>Content Descriptors</th>
<th>Module</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Year 4 | Being healthy, safe and active | - Personal behaviours and strategies to remain safe in uncomfortable or unsafe situations  
- Strategies to ensure safety and wellbeing at home and at school | Module 1 (Elements of Fire)  
Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings; Prescribed Burns)  
Module 4 (What is your risk?)  
Module 5 (Bushfire Plans and Warnings) |
| Year 5 | Being healthy, safe and active | - Reliable sources of information that inform health, safety and wellbeing | Module 3 (Fire Danger Ratings)  
Module 4 (What is your risk?)  
Module 5 (Bushfire Warnings) |

### Cross Curriculum Subjects
- Mathematics: Measurement and Geometry, Statistics and Probability
- English: Creating Literature, Expressing and Developing Ideas, Interacting with Others, Creating Text

### General Capabilities
- Literacy, Information and communication technology capability, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Ethical understanding, Intercultural understanding

### Cross Curriculum Priorities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures, Sustainability