

Lesson plan 1:

Summer fire awareness

Background

Students need to be aware of the actions required by adults to ensure the safe lighting and extinguishing of fires in the open air. This will enable them to act safely when camping.

Knowledge of the Fire Danger Period, and the reasons why there are fire restrictions, will provide students with an understanding of the possible dangers of lighting fires, particularly during the warmer months.

Knowing why a Total Fire Ban (TFB) is declared by CFA's Chief Officer in consultation with the Fire Services Commissioner, the Bureau of Meteorology and the other fire services will help students to understand that a TFB can be declared for the whole state or one or more of the fire weather districts when fire danger is particularly increased.

Ensure that **Support material 1: Letter to parent/guardian** is circulated prior to your visit and that any sensitivity is considered.

Suggested teaching time

45 minutes (approximately)

Objectives

To develop an understanding of bushfires so that students are able to:

- explain that fire is a common occurrence in the Australian environment
- describe ways in which we can be safe with fire in the outdoors.

Materials needed

- **Film: Basic bushfire science**
- **Poster: Bushfire warning signs**
- **Poster: Outdoor fire safety**
- **Worksheet 28: What is the bushfire risk?**

Lesson outline

1. Bushfire awareness

10 minutes

- Introduce the topic of bushfires by asking 'What is a bushfire? How do bushfires start? When are bushfires most likely to occur?' Play the **Film: Basic bushfire science**.
- Ask the students to identify areas that would be more likely to experience bushfires and to explain why they selected these areas. Discuss types of fires (bushfires, grassfires, scrubfires) that might occur in these areas and in the area where the students live.

- Explain that parts of Australia, in particular Victoria, often experience bushfires because of the hot dry summer weather and dry lightning storms, the types of plants and in particular the topography, for example, mountains of the local environment. Explain that although fire can destroy things, many plants are able to survive and regenerate after a fire.
- Present the problem: ‘Who or what is at risk in a bushfire?’ Talk briefly about the possible loss of life, houses and property, and livestock, and the environmental consequences of a bushfire. Explain that everyone has a responsibility to prevent bushfires by being careful with fire in the outdoors.

2. Summer fire danger period

15 minutes

- Using **Poster: Bushfire warning signs** show the Total Fire Ban and Fire Danger Ratings signs. Ask students if they have seen these signs before, and if they know what each sign means. Explain what they mean and discuss the need for the signs.
- Discuss what constitutes a day of increased fire danger. Ask students to describe the type of day when a Total Fire Ban would be declared.
- Explain how and why a day of Total Fire Ban is declared. On the map of fire weather districts, show the fire weather district in which the students live. Discuss the types of activities that are restricted on days of Total Fire Ban.

3. Fire safety outdoors

15 minutes

- Discuss and list the activities that involve fire in the outdoors, for example, burning off, barbecues and campfires – use **Poster: Outdoor fire safety** to prompt students.
- Brainstorm the different ways we can make sure we are safe with fire in the outdoors, and the extra precautions we should take during summer.
- Discuss some of the actions that can be taken to help prevent outdoor fires from starting bushfires, for example, clearing the area around the fire and not leaving fires unattended.
- Encourage students to discuss these safety measures with their parents/guardians when they are having a barbecue or campfire.
- Discuss the importance of adult supervision around outdoor fires.

4. Bushfires and my local area

5 minutes

- Provide students with a copy of **Worksheet 28: What is the bushfire risk?** Ask that over the coming week they spend some time finding out about bushfires in their local area. To conduct their research students could refer to newspapers, the local library and the internet, or they could interview family or members of the community. Ask the teacher to set aside time for students to discuss their completed worksheets in class.

Extension activities

- **Worksheet 29: Total Fire Ban: Can I or can't I?**
- **Worksheet 30: Outdoor fire safety**
- Using classroom equipment make a pretend campsite to show how to position a fire within safe distances from trees and tents; have water handy. Sit students in a circle and get them to pretend they are around a campfire. Encourage them to share some experiences of camping and campfires. Discuss other fire safe behaviours to practise during camping situations, such as putting out a fire correctly and never leaving it unattended.
- Discuss that you should never go camping on high-risk fire danger days, and especially Code Red days. National Parks close on Code Red days, as it is too dangerous to be there on these types of days.
- CFA campfire game for those regions with access to this resource.
- **Worksheet 7: James badge**