

POLICY AIM

Sweetpeas aims to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all staff, children, families, and visitors to the centre. Sweetpeas is committed to identifying risks and hazards of emergency and evacuation situations, and planning for their reduction or minimisation, and ongoing review of planned actions around handling these situations.

RATIONALE

The Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley is prone to rapid and deep flooding. There is a long history of dangerous and damaging floods within the valley. There is a medium chance that parts of Penrith may be impacted by floods from the Nepean River. The largest flood on record here reached 12.3 metres above normal river levels in 1867 at Victoria Bridge. There is a 15% chance of a flood this size happening in an 80-year lifetime.

If a similar flood happened in the valley now, more than 90,000 people would need to be evacuated and over 12,000 homes would be impacted by floodwater. A major flood in the valley happened in August 1990. At that time, the river rose 8.3 metres above its normal level at Victoria Bridge. A flood this size has a 98% chance of happening in an 80-year lifetime. (NSW SES)

The Sweetpeas Penrith Service is located in the Penrith CBD, within the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Zone, therefore Sweetpeas Management consider preparedness for a flood emergency to be an essential part of our emergency and evacuation planning and practice. Appropriate emergency preparedness and mitigation strategies need to be developed to ensure flooding can be a manageable hazard, especially in flood prone communities.

SCOPE - WHO IS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY?

- Children
- Families
- Staff
- Management
- Students
- Visitors

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD

QUALITY AREA 2 - CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Standard 2.2 (Safety) - *Each child is protected.*
- Element 2.2.1 (Supervision) - *At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.*
- Element 2.2.2 (Incident and emergency management) - *Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.*

QUALITY AREA 7 - GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

- Element 7.1.2 (Management Systems) - *Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.*
- Element 7.1.3 (Roles and responsibilities) - *Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and understood, and support effective decision-making and operation of the service.*

RELATED POLICIES & LEGISLATION

RELATED SWEETPEAS POLICIES:

- Acceptance and Refusal Authorisation Policy
- Administration of First Aid Policy
- Arrival and Departure Policy
- Bush Fire Policy
- Child Safe Environment Policy
- Emergency and Evacuation Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Evacuation Procedure
- Incident Procedure
- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness Policy
- Lockdown Policy
- Lockdown Procedure
- Lockdown Room Procedure
- Supervision Policy

RELATED EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL LAW AND REGULATIONS:

- Regulation 12(d) - Meaning of a serious incident- any emergency for which emergency services attended
- Regulation 97 - Emergency and evacuation procedures
- Regulation 98 - Telephone or other communication equipment
- Regulation 99 - Children leaving the education and care service premises
- Regulation 136 - First aid qualifications
- Regulation 168 - Education and Care Services must have policies and procedures
- Regulation 170 - Policies and procedures are to be followed
- Regulation 171 - Policies and procedures to be kept available

RELATED LEGISLATION:

- Work Health and Safety Act 2011

TERMINOLOGY

- **Emergency** - An incident, situation or event where there is an imminent or severe risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a person at the service. For example, a flood, fire or a situation that requires the service premises to be locked down or other type of emergency response.
- **Emergency drill/rehearsal** - A process to rehearse anticipated emergency scenarios or events, designed to help clarify roles and responsibilities, provide training and verify the adequacy of the emergency response.
- **Emergency services** - Includes ambulance, fire brigade, police and state emergency services.
- **Flood** - The covering of normally dry land by water that has escaped or been released from the normal confines of: any lake, or any river, creek or other natural watercourse, whether or not altered or modified; or any reservoir, canal, or dam.
- **Lockdown** - A security measure taken during an emergency to prevent people from leaving or entering a building or premises until the threat or risk has been resolved.

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS

- **BOM** - Bureau of Meteorology
- **PMF** - Probable maximum flood
- **SES** - State Emergency Service
- **WHS** - Work Health and Safety

IMPLEMENTATION AND STRATEGIES

According to the SES Flood Zone Map, the Sweetpeas Penrith Service (38 Union Rd, Penrith) is located within the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Zone. The SES currently lists five flood sizes/chances:

- **Small flood** - very high chance - *In Penrith, a flood this size has almost a 100% chance of happening in an 80-year lifetime. This is also referred to as a 1 in 5 chance per year flood.*
- **Large flood** - high chance - *In Penrith, a flood this size has a 98% chance of happening in an 80-year lifetime. This is also referred to as a 1 in 20 chance per year flood.*
- **Very large flood** - medium chance - *In Penrith, a flood this size has a 55% chance of happening in an 80-year lifetime. This is also referred to as a 1 in 100 chance per year flood.*
- **Huge flood** - low chance - *In Penrith, a flood this size has a 15% chance of happening in an 80-year lifetime. This is also referred to as a 1 in 500 chance per year flood.*
- **Biggest flood possible** - extremely low chance - *In Penrith, a flood this size has less than a 0.1% chance of happening in an 80-year lifetime. This is the largest possible flood in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley, also known as the probable maximum flood (PMF).*

Sweetpeas Penrith is in the Flood Zone for the flood sizes 'huge flood' and 'biggest flood possible', meaning **there is an extremely low to low chance of a major flood event at the service, but the severity of possible flood events is high.**

Management will take effective action to ensure that the Service is as flood safe as possible. We will identify possible flood risks, engage members of the community for advice and help and ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities and roles if required to respond to a flood emergency.

FLOOD SPEED

Floods are categorised according to the speed at which floodwaters rise:

1. **Slow-onset flood:** Occur by slow rise and fall of water level and usually lasts for a relatively longer period. Slow-onset floods may last one or more weeks, or even months. Due to the flood lasting for a longer period, it can lead to loss of livestock, agricultural products, roads, rail roads etc.
2. **Rapid onset floods:** Occur by a rapid rise in water level which lasts for a shorter period. The damage rapid onset floods can cause are often more destructive and pose a greater risk to life and property as people usually have less time to take preventive action prior to the flood.
3. **Flash-Floods:** Occur by a rapid rise in water level, within minutes or a few hours after heavy rainfall, tropical storm, failure of dams or levees. Flash-Flooding poses the greatest threat to life and may result in significant damage to property.

FLOOD CLASSIFICATION

The Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) uses a three-tiered classification scheme that defines flooding as minor, moderate or major at key river height stations. Each classification is defined by the water level that causes certain impacts upstream and downstream of the station. These levels have been determined based on standard descriptions of flood effects (see below), historical data and relevant local information. The classifications are revised from time to time by the Bureau's partner agencies and affected communities.

Minor flooding:

Causes inconvenience. Low-lying areas next to water courses are inundated. Minor roads may be closed and low-level bridges submerged. In urban areas inundation may affect some backyards and buildings below the floor level as well as bicycle and pedestrian paths. In rural areas removal of stock and equipment may be required.

Moderate flooding:

In addition to the above, the area of inundation is more substantial. Main traffic routes may be affected. Some buildings may be affected above the floor level. Evacuation of flood affected areas may be required. In rural areas removal of stock is required.

Major flooding:

In addition to the above, extensive rural areas and/or urban areas are inundated. Many buildings may be affected above the floor level. Properties and towns are likely to be isolated and major rail and traffic routes closed. Evacuation of flood affected areas may be required. Utility services may be impacted.

FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM

A flood warning system provides people with the ability to act in keeping safe and reducing the costs of flooding.

Flood warnings are issued by Emergency Services. The predicted extent of the flood and the amount of time available before it arrives will determine the course of action to be taken.

When there is a flood evacuation warning, educators need to prepare for possible emergency evacuation and implement the procedures effectively to ensure the safety of all children, staff, families and visitors in the Service.

RESPONSIBILITIES

THE APPROVED PROVIDER AND NOMINATED SUPERVISOR WILL:

- Work together with staff to identify potential emergency flood situations that may arise at this specific centre to identify all risks associated with such situations.
- Conduct an annual risk assessment to identify potential emergencies that are relevant to the Service, including local risks associated with the impact of flooding.

- Ensure hazards within the Service that may be harmful to children or staff during a flood are identified in the risk assessment.
- Ensure consideration is made to evacuate non-ambulant children.
- Ensure families are made aware of the *Flood Management Policy* and emergency evacuation procedures.
- Ensure emergency evacuation plans are displayed in prominent positions near each exit and in the indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- Ensure clear procedures are in place for when a flood warning occurs to ensure the safety of educators, children and families.
- Ensure emergency telephone numbers will be clearly displayed in prominent positions within the Service.
- Ensure emergency contact details of all children are updated regularly.
- Ensure consideration is made to how to save critical records- (current records, historical artefacts and archives).
- Make a notification of a serious incident to a regulatory authority (within 24 hours) through the *NQA IT System* when the education and care service has evacuated in response to a flood emergency.
- Follow responsibilities of *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*.

THE NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSONS WILL:

- Make the final call whether to evacuate the premises due to a flood situation.
- Work together with staff to develop procedures to manage all risks associated with emergency flood situations. These procedures will be attached to this policy.
- Follow responsibilities of *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*.

WHS OFFICERS WILL:

- Follow responsibilities of *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*.
- Ensure emergency evacuation rehearsals (drills) will be practiced every three months, including identifying a designated assembly point and place of refuge in case of flooding
- Ensure a range of possible flood scenarios are included in evacuation drills
- Ensure each emergency evacuation drill is documented (*Regulation 97*)

EDUCATORS AND STAFF WILL:

- Ensure the safety of children in the service to the best of their ability at all times.
- Familiarise themselves with all emergency procedures.
- Follow appropriate procedures for emergency situations (i.e., *Bush Fire Policy, Lockdown Procedure, Evacuation Procedure, Incident Procedure*).
- Provide the Nominated Supervisor with feedback following evacuation rehearsals (see *Evaluation of Emergency Drills*).
- Ensure there are no obstructions of emergency exits or evacuation routes.
- Unlock external gates each morning when the centre opens.
- Follow responsibilities of *Emergency and Evacuation Policy*.

FAMILIES WILL:

- Ensure contact details are kept up to date in *HubHello*.
- Provide emergency contact details on their child's enrolment form and advise the service of any change of name or phone number via email or *HubHello*.
- Ensure the attendance record for their child is completed each day on *HubHello* Electronic Sign In.
- Ensure they are aware of the service's *Emergency and Evacuation Policy* and procedures.
- Follow the directions of the 'Incident Manager' in the event of an emergency or evacuation.

FLOOD EMERGENCY PROCEDURE

BEFORE THE FLOOD

Management and educators will:

- continue to visit Bureau of Meteorology to check current flood and weather warnings: <http://www.bom.gov.au/> or <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/warnings/>
- visit the Bureau of Meteorology Flood Watch (Flood warning system): <http://www.bom.gov.au/australia/flood/>
- refer to the SES State Flood Plans and Hawkesbury-Nepean flood emergency sub plan, which outline arrangements for responding to floods: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/rescue-and-emergency-management/sub-plans/hawkesbury-nepean-flood>
- be familiar with the warning levels and what action needs to be taken during a flood
- ensure the removal of leaves, debris and other items that can enhance flooding (e.g.: check gutters and drains).
- become familiar with the emergency evacuation plan identifying routes and safe locations if evacuation is required (note: this may be different for a flood situation).
- prepare the Emergency Evacuation bag(s).
- ensure an up-to-date emergency contact list for all children is included in the Emergency Evacuation Kit.
- organise sandbags and sand.
- follow the advice by emergency services.
- place chemicals on high shelving to reduce contamination of flood water.
- ensure all outdoor toys are secured in sheds in case of extensive flooding of the area.
- talk to the children about the flood, using simple words that children can understand.
- ensure there is a procedure for out of hours decision making.
- ensure plans are made to include removal of animals (if safe to do so).

DURING A FLOOD

Management and educators will:

- act quickly.
- monitor current flood warnings in the local area.
- liaise with Emergency Services instructions and react to changing conditions.
- take the advice of local emergency services each day of the flood event to make the decision of whether or not to close the service.
- contact families to come and collect their child/ren once emergency services have issued a Flood Evacuation Order for your area.
- turn off electricity, water and gas.
- place sandbags in the toilet bowls and over shower and bath outlets to prevent backflow of sewage into the Service.
- lock all doors and take recommended evacuation routes for the local area.
- contact emergency services to ensure the relocation area is safe before proceeding and follow all advice.
- evacuate the Service immediately and relocate to clearly defined area as discussed with emergency services and clearly identified in the Service's Emergency Evacuation Plan. In the case of the need to evacuate the Service because of flood, all persons on site (including all staff and children) should evacuate to Penrith High School, High Street, Penrith. (opposite McDonalds).
- keep families updated regularly of the relocation site.

IF IT'S TOO LATE TO LEAVE DURING A FLOOD:

Important: calm and logical thinking will be required. The following points are options depending on the circumstances within your own context. Seeking safe options to move children and staff above rising waters levels will be the primary objective.

Management and educators will:

- continue to seek advice from emergency services.
- Remain calm.
- move to higher ground and avoid standing in flowing or rising water.

- if time permits, stack possessions, equipment and resources onto benches and tables.
- ensure that if flowing water is above the ankles, STOP! Turn around and go another way.
- avoid entering flood waters.

AFTER THE FLOOD

Management and educators will:

- stay tuned to local radio stations for official warnings and advice.
- contact families or emergency contacts to confirm the location and safety of the children.
- wait until emergency services have declared the area safe before entering the flood zone.
- not enter the Service until the water has dropped below floor level.
- not let children play in or near floodwater.
- stay away from drains.
- wear rubber boots or rubber soled footwear and rubber/leather gloves when entering the Service.
- check with electricity, gas and water establishments to determine if the supplies to the Service and local area has been affected and if it safe for them to be turned on.
- be aware of damaged power lines, bridges, buildings, trees surrounding the Service.
- if possible, take photographs for insurance claims.
- when safe and convenient, clean or discard contaminated toys and equipment.

Management will:

- complete a serious incident notification to the regulatory authority within 24 hours when there has been an emergency that has posed a risk to the safety and wellbeing of the children NQA ITS.
- notify the regulatory authority if the service is required to close for a period of time as a result of a local emergency (evacuation due to flooding or to repair damage caused by flooding).
- notify the Department if the service is temporarily closed via the Provider Entry Point (PEP).
- notify families about absences and Child Care Subsidy (CCS) due to a local emergency.

REFERENCES

- Beyond the assembly point: emergency training for childcare services
- Bureau of Meteorology: <http://www.bom.gov.au/water/floods/floodWarningServices.shtml>
- NSW Department of Education: Flood planning for Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC): <https://education.nsw.gov.au/content/dam/main-education/en/home/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service0/Flood-Planning-Early-Childhood-Education.pdf>
- NSW SES: Hawkesbury/Nepean Flood Zones (accessed March 2024) - <https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/hawkesbury-nepean-floods>
- NSW SES: School Emergency Flood Planning (accessed March 2024) - <https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/for-schools/leadership/school-emergency-planning-for-flood/>
- Preparing for emergencies: <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/preparing-for-natural-disasters?context=60042>
- SES: <https://www.ses.nsw.gov.au/disaster-tabs-header/flood/>

REVIEW AND AMENDMENTS

This policy will be updated regularly to ensure compliance with all relevant legal requirements. Appropriate consultation of all stakeholders (including staff and families) will be conducted on a timely basis. In accordance with *Regulation 172* of the National Regulations, families of children enrolled will be notified at least 14 days and their input considered prior to any amendment of policies and procedures that have any impact on their children or family.

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
1.	• Policy implemented. • Received advice from Australian Red Cross, NSW State Emergency Service, NSW Rural Fire	March 2024	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)

Flood Management Policy (Penrith)

Version	Amendment(s)	Review Date	Updated By
	Service, Fire and Rescue NSW and NSW Police via 'Beyond the assembly point' workshop. • Consulted with nearby centre, Explore and Develop Penrith, agreeing to combine staff and resources in the case of major evacuation for the safety of all children.		Janine Evans (Managing Director)
1.1.	• Checked all hotlinks • Checked flood zone and related advice remains the same • Minor grammatical changes	March 2025	Cassandra Way (Assistant Manager)