



Preparing for Evacuations

Keeping Children Calm, Informed and Involved

In early childhood education and care, we strive every day to create spaces where children feel safe, supported and confident to explore.

But safety isn't something that happens by accident, it's something we practice, refine and embed into everyday routines.

As bushfire and cyclone season arrive across many parts of Australia, knowing and practising emergency evacuation procedures is more important than ever.

Being ready can save time, reduce risk and ensure children feel safe and supported. This is true whether you're facing a planned fire drill or the reality of severe weather.

Tips to Prepare for Emergency Evacuations

1. Prepare before you Practice

- Ensure your emergency and evacuation procedures are up to date, clearly written and accessible to all staff.
- Display evacuation floor plans near exits at child and adult eye level.
- Check emergency kits regularly (attendance lists, contact details, first aid, medications, water).
- Assign and clearly communicate staff roles during evacuations so everyone knows their responsibilities.

2. Talk with Children about Safety

- Use simple, reassuring language to explain why you practice evacuations.
"We practice so everyone knows how to stay safe."
- Avoid frightening details. Focus on safety, togetherness and adult support.
- Read books or use stories that gently explore safety, emergencies and community helpers.



3. Practice Often and Gently

- Rehearse evacuation procedures regularly and more frequently if children show distress.
- Treat drills as familiar routines, not surprises.
- Keep your tone calm and steady, children take cues from educators.



If children appear anxious, upset or confused during drills, this is a sign to practice more often in smaller, calmer steps.

4. Keep Children Actively Involved

- Encourage children to help with ageappropriate roles, such as:
 - Walking with a buddy
 - Holding a rope or educator's hand
 - Listening for instructions
- Use visual cues, songs or consistent phrases to guide transitions.
- Celebrate children's cooperation and effort after each practice.

5. Support Emotional Safety

- Acknowledge children's feelings: "That was a bit loud, but you stayed close and safe."
- Allow time after drills for connection, comfort and questions.
- Reassure children that adults are there to keep them safe.

6. Reflect and Improve Together

- After each practice, reflect as a team:
 - "What worked well?"
 - "What could be clearer or calmer next time?"
 - "How did children respond?"
- Adjust procedures based on real observations, continuous improvement strengthens safety culture.

7. Build a Culture of Preparedness

- Embed evacuation practice into everyday conversations about safety.
- Communicate with families about when and why drills occur.
- Model calm, confident behaviour, preparedness reduces panic.

