
Fire learning opportunity procedure

Date Reviewed:

May 12, 2025

Regulation:

168 (2)

Standards:

2.3.2

Aim

To provide a clear and safe framework for the introduction and management of fire-based learning experiences for children at Woden Valley Early Learning Centre (WVELC). The policy ensures that children are exposed to safe, controlled fire activities that foster independence, respect for fire, and an understanding of traditional practices, while prioritizing their health, safety, and well-being.

Background

Fire-based learning experiences support children's understanding of the natural world, responsible practices, and the customs and traditions of First Peoples. However, these activities require careful planning, appropriate supervision, and adherence to fire safety regulations. It is critical that children learn both the value and the risks of fire in a safe environment.

Before introducing fire, or fire pits, it is mandatory that educators engage in meaningful discussions with children about fire safety, which will be documented as part of the program.

Procedure

Fire Pit Safety and Fire Management

- Adequate Supervision: Children will always be supervised when in or around the fire pit area.
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- Designated Fire Tender: A staff member will be appointed as the Fire Tender to manage the fire at all times. The Fire Tender is responsible for maintaining the fire, monitoring safety, and granting permission for children to enter the safety circle.
 - The Fire Tender must be present whenever the fire is burning and wear appropriate safety gear (such as fire gloves and a shovel) to handle the fire safely.
- Safety Circle: A safety circle will be marked with sitting benches, approximately 1 meter from the fire pit. Children are expected to stay seated within this circle unless given permission to enter by the Fire Tender.
- Fire Safety Equipment: Prior to starting a fire, a container of water and/or a garden hose will be available and ready for use at all times.
- Fire Safety Briefing: Educators will engage in pre-fire discussions with children, emphasizing fire safety and the importance of following instructions. This conversation will be documented as part of the program to ensure children understand both the potential hazards and the benefits of fire-based learning.
- Fire Danger Season: The fire danger season typically runs from November to April, although these dates may change depending on seasonal conditions. Educators will comply with ACT fire safety rules and restrictions during this period, including monitoring local weather reports for fire danger levels.

Post-Fire Procedures

- Cooling Down Coals: After the fire has been extinguished, the Fire Tender must ensure that any remaining coals are safely cooled. This involves covering the coals with wet dirt and placing the fire pit lid securely over the top.
 - Emergency Procedure (Burns): In the event of a burn:
 1. The Fire Tender will remain with the fire, ensuring it is safely tended, while other staff members assist with first aid.
 2. The child will receive immediate first aid by applying cool running water to the burn for a minimum of 30 minutes.
 3. A dedicated first aid officer will assist if available.
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4. Parents/guardians will be notified immediately, and an incident report will be completed.

Roles and Responsibilities

Educators

- Educators must ensure the fire safety procedures are followed at all times, including:
 - Maintaining appropriate supervision of children near or around the fire.
 - Ensuring that hot coals are safely extinguished and covered.
 - Ensuring that fire safety equipment (water or hose) is in place and ready for use.
 - Leading the discussions and ensuring children understand fire safety and fire management.

Fire Tender

- The Fire Tender is responsible for:
 - Supervising and managing the fire.
 - Ensuring the fire remains safe and under control.
 - Ensuring children remain within the safety circle and follow all fire safety instructions.
 - Monitoring the fire for any hazards and extinguishing the fire safely after use.
 - Providing first aid in the event of burns or injuries.

Candles and Fire-Based Activities

- Candles:
 - Educators will ensure candles are always placed in a safe, controlled environment, within arm's reach of the educator. Candles must be placed in a candle holder or lantern, and never left unattended.
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- Children will not be allowed to handle candles or flame directly.
- While precautions will be taken to avoid accidents, minor burns from wax or candle flame can occur. In such cases, educators will immediately provide first aid, applying cool running water for at least 10 minutes and contacting parents/guardians.

Risk Assessments

- Pre-Activity Risk Assessments: A comprehensive risk assessment will be conducted for every fire-based learning activity. This includes checking weather conditions, fire danger levels, and ensuring fire safety equipment is available and in good condition.
- Ongoing Monitoring: Throughout the activity, educators will continually assess risks and respond accordingly, adjusting the learning experience as needed to maintain safety.

Emergency Procedures

- In the event of a burn or injury, the following steps must be followed:
 1. Administer first aid immediately: Apply cool running water for at least 30 minutes.
 2. Alert other staff to provide assistance, including the first aid officer if available.
 3. Contact parents/guardians to inform them of the injury.
 4. Record the incident in the child's file and the WVELC incident log.
 5. Follow up: Ensure the child receives appropriate care after the incident and is monitored for any delayed reactions.

Conclusion

WVELC acknowledges the inherent risks involved with fire-based learning experiences but recognizes the significant educational and cultural value. By implementing stringent safety procedures and providing children with the tools to learn about fire safely, WVELC offers an enriching and culturally significant learning experience. Regular staff training, risk assessments, and safety procedures will ensure that fire activities remain a safe and meaningful part of the children's educational journey.

Parental Consent and Notification

Parents/guardians will be informed about WVELC's Fire Learning opportunity procedure at the beginning of care. By enrolling their child/ren, parents give consent for their child to engage in this part of the program.