

Section 3

Preparedness

Preparedness

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Importance of Preparedness

To manage a crisis well, you must be prepared to handle it. And despite the best efforts at prevention, it is a certainty that emergencies will occur in schools. Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when an emergency occurs. This takes an investment of time and resources, but the potential to reduce injury and save lives is well worth the effort.

Being prepared means having a comprehensive plan. Site administrators/Principals must consider many questions when they prepare. Among these are: Who will be in charge? Where are the utility shutoffs for the building located? How will entrances be secured during a lockdown? How will students be accounted for during an emergency? How will students be released to parents or guardians? How will parents and families receive information?

Organization of this Preparedness Section

This preparedness section is designed to help Site Administrators develop a comprehensive, site-specific emergency plan. Comprehensive planning and preparation requires that Site Administrators understand and implement five critical elements of preparedness. Each of these elements will be discussed in the designated subsections that follow.

5 key elements of preparedness:

1. Establishing a site specific Emergency Response Plan to follow in an emergency and instructing all school staff in how to implement this plan
2. Practicing required Fire, Earthquake, Evacuation Drills, and Lockdown/Shelter-In-Place Drills Procedures
3. Developing an evacuation plan for individuals with disabilities
4. Following procedures to account for students in the event of an emergency
5. Following procedures to release students to parents in the event of a serious emergency.

Developing a Site-Specific Emergency Management Plan

The purpose of an Emergency Response Plan is to help Site Administrators and staffs respond effectively in the event of an emergency. To be useful, each Site Administrator/Principal must create an emergency response plan that is specific to his/her school or facility. For example, the emergency plan for an elementary school will differ from that of a middle school since a middle school is likely to have different entrances, more students, more staff, and so on. Each school's plan will reflect the unique features and needs of the school.

The Emergency Response Plan is written in a fill-in-the-blank format that ensures school emergency plans include essential information. Each school's plan will include critical information such as the names of staff members that will fill incident command roles, evacuation locations, phone/pager numbers of key personnel, and location of utility shutoffs. This site specific plan should be e-mailed or sent in hard copy to the District.

In the event of an emergency, the Site Administrator/Principal or their designee will refer to the Emergency Response Plan for information to guide the school's emergency response. For example, if it becomes necessary to evacuate the school, the plan will specify the location to which students will be relocated.

The Director of Safety and Security Updates the Emergency Response Plan

The Director of Safety and Security is responsible for completing a new Emergency Response Plan at the beginning of each school year. Because information changes, it is imperative that the school emergency plan be updated every year.

The Director of Safety and Security must complete the Emergency Response Plan in partnership with school staff. If school staff members are not involved in completing the Emergency Response Plan, they will have a poor understanding of how to execute the plan. It is strongly recommended that Site Administrators complete the Emergency Response Plan at a staff meeting at the beginning of the school year. Make this part of your new school-year agenda!

Responsibilities

- The Director of Safety and Security must complete an updated Emergency Response Plan by October 15 of each school year
- The Site Administrator will review the Emergency Response Plan with school staff, most likely at a staff meeting
- The Site Administrator must ensure that staff are trained and able to execute the emergency plan

This is a MUST:

- Complete a new Emergency Response Plan by October 15, of each school year, and provide the plan to the District Office.

Overview of Site Administrator's Responsibility

As school leaders, Site Administrators play a critical role in preparing staff, parents, and students to respond to an emergency. When prepared, school staff members will readily assume emergency roles and execute the established Emergency Response Plan. In addition, when students and parents are informed about the schools emergency procedures, they will be more likely to follow directives and less likely to interfere with the school's response. For example, if there is police activity in the vicinity and the school must lockdown, parents will know not to come to the school, as no person will be admitted to the school under any circumstances.

The Site Administrator Leads the Emergency Plan

Unless otherwise designated, the Site Administrator is the leader of the school Emergency Response Plan. In an emergency, the Site Administrator will make key decisions as Incident Commander regarding the level of emergency and how to respond to the emergent situation. Because Site Administrators are sometimes out of the building performing administrative duties, it is critical that a staff member is trained and able to lead the school's emergency plan in the Site Administrator's absence.

Site Administrator Responsibilities

- The Site Administrator must assign a designee to execute the Emergency Response Plan in his/her absence
- The Site Administrator and the designee must be prepared to execute the school Emergency Response Plan

The Site Administrator Distributes the Emergency Management Plan

What good is an Emergency Response Plan if no one can access it? It is possible, even likely, that staff members will be called upon to implement the emergency plan during a Site Administrator's absence from the building. Therefore, it is essential that all staff know where the Emergency Response Plan is located. Each school should be provided with copies of the Emergency Response Plan. The Site Administrator should also copy the school Emergency Response Plan and distribute it to key staff as indicated.

Responsibilities

- Place a copy of the Emergency Response Plan in plain view
- Emergency Response Plan should be kept in the school emergency backpack each school year

Emergency Planning

The goal of the emergency planning process is to make sure all school staff are familiar with the school's emergency plan and able to implement it. Site Administrators should review their school's Emergency Response Plan in conjunction with a small group of key school staff. After it is reviewed, this plan should be explained to all school staff at the beginning of each school year. Site Administrators should also review the Emergency Response Plan periodically throughout the school year.

It's natural for people to forget information. School staff members will only be able to effectively implement an emergency plan if they routinely review it and practice it. Site Administrators are encouraged to routinely discuss an emergency response topic from this Emergency Response Plan at school staff meetings.

Fire and Evacuation

Introduction to Fire and Evacuation Procedures

The SSD has established School Emergency Evacuation and Drill Procedures in accordance with local requirements. These procedures are established by working with local first responders and school staff and are approved by the Superintendent and local fire department.

Preparation for Fire and Evacuation Procedures

Successful preparation for Fire and Evacuation requires several action steps. These steps must be completed in partnership with the district, on-site facilities, and the designated first responders.

Requirements

- The Site Administrator or designee must conduct a fire exit drill every month when school is in session. A second fire drill is required during the first month of the year.
- The Site Administrator must maintain a record of fire exit drills. Accidental or unexpected fire alarms may be counted as the monthly practice drill as long as the school follows established evacuation procedures.
- The Site Administrator must time and evaluate each fire exit drill. Any problems discovered with the evacuation should be resolved quickly and completely.
- The Site Administrator must ensure that students and staff discuss and train on correct fire exit and evacuation procedures and Outside Assembly Areas as least once annually.

Establish On-Site Outside Safe Assembly Locations

- The Site Administrator must establish On-Site Outside Safe Assembly Locations where students, staff, and visitors will gather after they have evacuated the buildings
- These locations must be a minimum of 100 feet from the building
Classroom attendance and "head counts" will be taken at this location

Establish Exit Routes for All School Areas and Rooms

The Site Administrator must establish a primary exit route and an alternate exit route from each classroom or room in the school to a specific Outside Safe Assembly Location outside of the school building. The exit route and the specific Outside Safe Assembly Location must be posted in each room.

Assign Classroom Monitors

The Site Administrator will direct teachers to appoint responsible students to act as Classroom Monitors to assist in the evacuation of the school.

Teachers should also appoint two substitutes for each monitor in case the Monitor is absent at the time of the drill or emergency.

Classroom Monitors' Responsibilities

- Hold open doors during the evacuation
- Close doors after the class evacuates
- Assist the teacher as requested

Training on the Exit and Evacuation Procedures

All students and staff must receive training in fire exit and evacuation procedures. The Site Administrator must instruct students and staff in correct procedures and identify *Outside Safe Assembly Locations* for each room in the school building. Training must include teachers, secretaries, school nurses, school psychologists, social workers, paraprofessionals, security personnel, School Based-Health staff, food service staff, custodial staff, volunteers, and any other District employees.

NOTE: Training must occur at least once a year.

Fire and Evacuation Drill

Fire Exit Drills must be conducted in collaboration with the district and Fire Department. The following procedures must be followed closely:

Before the Fire Drill

- Notify the local fire department the date and time of your drill
- The Site Administrator/Principal (or their designee), in coordination with the Facility Manager, will notify the District Office that the school will be conducting a Fire Drill
- Notification must take place at least 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the Fire Drill
- Give the following information to the District Office:
 - ~Your name and position
 - ~The school name
 - ~The day and date that the drill will take place
 - ~The time that the drill will take place
- Horns and strobes may *NOT* be deactivated for a Fire Drill

Conduct the Fire Drill

- The Site Administrator (or their designee) pulls the Fire Alarm
- The Site Administrator (or their designee) will time the evacuation
- Teachers and ALL staff evacuate the building(s) and take students to the predetermined Outside Safe Assembly Locations
- Students that are not in classrooms should be directed to evacuate the building at the nearest exit and report to the closest teacher so that they may be accounted for
- Teachers will take attendance with their student rosters
- Teachers and staff report to the Site Administrator and Operations Team that everyone in their area has been evacuated
- RED or GREEN card system

- The Site Administrator initiates a sweep of the facility to ensure that everyone has evacuated the building(s)
- The Site Administrator ensures that individuals waiting in the designated Evacuation Staging Areas are safe and supervised
- When the building sweep is complete and all issues are addressed, the Site Administrator will sound the “all clear” signal and direct students and staff to return to their classrooms and/or work areas.

After the Fire Drill:

- If the fire alarm transmitter cannot be reset, the district office will notify the Fire Department
- The Site Administrator (or their designee) will record and document the following information:
 - ~Date of the drill
 - ~Time when the drill began and ended
 - ~Last person out and the elapsed time for evacuation
 - ~Additional comments regarding the results of the drill, specific problems, areas of confusion, students/staff that did not evacuate and should have, etc.) so that these problem areas may be corrected for the next drill
- The Site Administrator (or their designee) must initial or sign the log for the drill

Evacuation

Evacuation Planning for Individuals Needing Assistance

Any school or district building with students or staff with mobility limitations that impact their ability to evacuate the building should develop an evacuation plan for these individuals. Evacuating a building during an emergency can be a major problem for students, staff or visitors who are disabled. Many people with mobility impairments cannot use stairs, and people with hearing and vision impairments cannot receive emergency notification and directions unless they are provided in both audible and visual forms. In addition, people with learning, emotional or cognitive disabilities may need instruction in safety and emergency procedures in language or terms they understand.

Because all schools may, at one time or another, have students, staff or visitors who need evacuation assistance, all schools must establish an evacuation plan for individuals with disabilities.

What are Evacuation Staging Areas?

Site Administrators must establish Evacuation Staging Areas for buildings with exits that are inaccessible for individuals with special needs. In general, stairways are provided as emergency exits for multi-story buildings and single-story buildings with exits not at ground level. This is potentially problematic as the elevators will automatically descend to the ground level floor and lock with the doors in the open position when the fire alarm has been activated. This makes stairways the only available exits by which individuals with special needs may leave a multi-story building. Evacuation Staging Areas are established to ensure that these individuals receive evacuation assistance at a designated area. In an emergency requiring evacuation, school staff and/or emergency responders will sweep Staging areas and assist individuals needing evacuation assistance.

Evacuation Staging Area: An Evacuation Staging Area is an area, close to an exit, where individuals that are disabled may receive further instructions and await evacuation assistance from rescue personnel

NOTE: Emergency Responders will evacuate students and staff from evacuation staging areas.

How to Establish Evacuation Staging Areas

Evacuation Staging Areas must be established in areas that best protect human life. An Evacuation Staging Area must be as close to an exit as possible. The area must be large enough to accommodate at least two wheelchairs and two staff members without blocking doors or stairs that other occupants will use to exit the building. A space about 30" X 48" is needed for one wheelchair. When possible, consider choosing stairway landings that are designed to isolate building occupants from smoke and fire. Keep in mind that there must be a source of communication nearby, such as a telephone or intercom. Consider these factors in order when establishing locations for Evacuation Staging Areas:

Examples of Possible Evacuation Areas:

- A portion of a landing within an enclosed stairway
- A vestibule located at an exit enclosure and constructed to fire-resistant standards
- A room or area (e.g., a classroom) that is adjacent to an exit stairway

To Establish Evacuation Staging Areas

The Site Administrator should:

- Assess the building for exits that have stairs or steps either inside or outside the building that would prevent an individual with a mobility impairment from exiting the building
- Determine the locations of an Evacuation Staging Area, install temporary signage to test your plan
- Designate at least two (2) Evacuation Staging Areas on each floor of the building that has stairs or steps that would prevent individuals with special needs from exiting the building
- Designate additional Evacuation Staging Areas as needed on ground and upper floors depending on the size and layout of the building
- Post signs to clearly mark Evacuation Staging Areas.
- Ensure there is a method of two-way communication at or near each Evacuation Staging Area, such as telephones, two-way radios, cell phones and other communication systems

Signs

Three types of signs are required:

- Signs to direct building occupants to the Evacuation Staging Areas
- Signs to identify the Evacuation Staging Area (from both inside and outside the building)
- Signs warning individuals needing evacuation assistance that there are no safe waiting areas beyond a certain point

Planning for Special Needs Populations

Identifying Students and Staff Needing Evacuation Assistance

Throughout the school year, the Site Administrator or designee must identify and maintain a list of all individuals who will need assistance in evacuating the building in the event of an emergency. This list must include any individual that is temporarily disabled in an injury such as a broken leg. This list will be used to develop a specific *Evacuation Plan for Individuals with Disabilities*.

Responsibility for Students and Staff Needing Evacuation Assistance

It is critical that students who need evacuation assistance are directly supervised, assisted, and taken to Evacuation Staging Areas. An adult staff member must remain with the student until s/he is evacuated. Procedure requires that the Site Administrator or designee assign a staff member to be responsible for every student who needs evacuation assistance. Obviously, assigning an adult staff member to be responsible for a

student with special needs throughout the school day, where the student may move class to class, is quite challenging. Planning and training are essential.

Follow these Guidelines when Assigning Supervision for Individuals Needing Evacuation Assistance

- For each student with special needs, a classroom teacher or staff member who is present with the child will assist the student in getting to the nearest Evacuation Staging Area. This means that responsibility transfers from staff member to staff member as the student moves from class to class.
- If a staff member (e.g., classroom teacher) with a special needs student deems it necessary to escort that student to the Evacuation Staging Area, s/he should transfer his/her class to a staff member in an adjacent classroom. This means that if the fire alarm sounds or an evacuation is ordered, the staff member with the special needs student will transfer his/her class to a teacher in an adjacent room if needed to continue a timely and safe evacuation.
- Substitute teachers should be informed that they might need to assist a student with special needs to Evacuation Staging Areas and transfer their class to another staff member if necessary. This means that, no matter what class a student with special needs is in, there will always be a staff member to assist a student to an Evacuation Staging Area.

How to Develop a Customized Evacuation Plan for Individuals Needing Assistance

After identifying students, staff or volunteers who will need evacuation assistance, the Site Administrator must develop a customized evacuation plan for each person. This is essential as people participate in a variety of activities during a school day/week in different areas of the building. The customized evacuation plan must anticipate and address the various scenarios. For example, while students might be assigned to a classroom that is on the ground level of the building, the plan should anticipate that even students with profound disabilities can and will participate in activities in other parts of the building (music, library, physical education, etc.).

This Emergency Response Plan provides a recommended Evacuation Plan for Individuals Needing Assistance form that may be used to develop customized evacuation plans for individuals needing assistance.

Customizing an Evacuation Plan for Individuals Needing Assistance:

- Identify and post signs for all Evacuation Staging Areas
- Post a floor plan indicating the location of Evacuation Staging Areas in the school in every room
- Identify all students and staff members in the building who will need evacuation assistance
- Develop and post the completed Evacuation Plan for Individuals Needing Assistance form; this form will assist the Fire Department when they respond to an emergency
- Inform all staff members about the Evacuation Plan for Individuals Needing Assistance emphasizing they may be called upon to assist a student to an Evacuation Staging Area, if necessary.

Training Each Student, Parent, and Key Staff Member

It is essential that all staff and students understand the purpose of Evacuation Staging Areas and be instructed in their use. Any staff member may be called upon to supervise a student with special needs and assist them to a Staging area.

After developing an evacuation plan for individuals with special needs, the Site Administrator (or designee) should:

- Instruct any staff member who has a special needs/mobility impaired student in their class (special education teachers, food service staff, etc.) in the use of Evacuation Staging Areas in the building.
- Show all Evacuation Staging Areas to each student with special needs and explain their use; train students and practice so that students can explain their plan to the staff if necessary.

- Instruct all staff that are responsible for sweeping the building during a Fire Drill or evacuation that they must ensure students with special needs at Evacuation Staging Areas are reported to the Site Administrator (Site Incident Commander) and emergency responders.
- Explain to parents how their child with special needs will be taken to an Evacuation Staging Area, making sure they understand their child's plan and answering their questions.

NOTE: The evacuation plan for individuals needing assistance form must be posted at the fire alarm panel.

Implementing the Plan during a Fire Exit Drill or Evacuation

How to evacuate an individual with special needs:

- At the sounding of the alarm, all students, including those with disabilities who are able to do so, shall evacuate the building to their designated safe area. Students with special needs who cannot evacuate the building shall report to the nearest accessible Evacuation Staging Area with a staff member who will assist them. The staff member shall remain with the student at all times.
- Staff members who are supervising students or staff with special needs at Evacuation Staging Areas shall report their status to the Site Administrator (or designee) by telephone or radio. The Site Administrator (Site Incident Commander) will report this information to the Fire Department.

As the school evacuates, the Site Administrator or designee shall take with them:

- A copy of the Evacuation Plan for Individuals Needing Assistance
- Floor plans showing the location of all Evacuation Staging Areas

Accounting for Students in the Event of an Emergency or Evacuation

This Emergency Response Plan establishes procedures to account for students and staff in the event of an emergency or evacuation.

If a school-wide emergency occurs or an evacuation takes place, the Site Administrator and teachers must account for all students, staff, and visitors.

This will only be possible if evacuations are done in an orderly manner and students are practiced in the procedure. All students, staff and visitors must be accounted for when:

Take an accounting when:

- The fire alarm signals an evacuation
- The Site Administrator gives a directive to evacuate the building (directed evacuation)
- The Site Administrator gives a directive to Lockdown or Shelter-in-Place

Site Administrators must account for all students and staff by ensuring that teachers take attendance and report missing students. During an evacuation, building security or designated school staff will sweep the building to make sure no person remains inside. Taking attendance as soon as students have evacuated the building ensures every person is accounted for and safe.

Keep Updated Student Rosters and Visitor Logs

To successfully account for all students, teachers and school secretaries must keep an updated student roster and daily attendance. It is critical that school secretaries routinely update student emergency contact information in the student information system. Secretaries must take the visitor log with them if the school evacuates.

School Secretaries MUST:

- Print Student emergency contact information and place it in a binder
- Label and place the binder in an obvious location in the main office
- Inform the Site Administrator and staff of the location of the binder
- Provide the Site Administrator with the school visitor log or sign in sheet in the event of an evacuation

Teachers MUST:

- Keep an updated list of students in their classroom
- Take daily attendance
- Use the student roster to take attendance during an emergency

Account for Individuals Needing Evacuation Assistance

This Preparedness section of the Emergency Response Plan includes procedures for evacuating and accounting for students and staff with special needs who need evacuation assistance. If individuals with disabilities are unable to exit the building, they will be supervised and directed to an Evacuation Staging Area to await evacuation assistance. Site Administrators and teachers must account for students or staff with special needs at Evacuation Staging Areas. Post a list of students and/or staff needing evacuation assistance at the fire alarm panel.

Teachers are Responsible for Accounting for Students

Accounting for students is the responsibility of teachers. Teachers directly supervise students and are responsible for directing them to safety during an evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place directive. Teachers take attendance and report any missing students to the Site Administrator.

The Site Administrator is Responsible for Accounting for Staff and Visitors

Accounting for staff and visitors is the responsibility of the Site Administrator. Site Administrators are also responsible for obtaining student attendance from teachers and conveying information about missing students to emergency responders. The Site Administrator and Student Supervision Coordinator actively seek teacher's attendance and forward this information to the Fire Department, and Police Department.

The Site Administrator also accounts for visitors listed on the school visitor sign-in sheet.

It is difficult to account for all students at high schools. This is because high school students tend to leave the site. As a result, the best practice is to make certain that NO person remains inside the school building. The Site Administrator must ensure that designated school staff conducts a thorough sweep of the building. In serious emergencies, contact with each parent/guardian will ensure that all students have been accounted for.

Accounting for Students, Staff and Visitors in the Event of an Emergency or Evacuation

Procedures vary slightly depending on whether the directive is to evacuate (leave the building) or to shelter-in-place/lockdown (stay in the building). However, the objective is the same: To account for all students and confirm they are safe (take attendance and report missing students).

Procedures for Accounting for Students, Staff, and Visitors during an Evacuation

- Teachers/staff supervise student's evacuation to Outside Assembly Areas and take the student roster with them.
- Designated school staff sweep and clear school building.
- Teachers/staff who are responsible for special needs students needing evacuation assistance must (1) supervise them, (2) direct them to Evacuation Staging Areas, and (3) notify the Site Administrator.

- Use **RED** and **GREEN** cards to let First Responders and Emergency Response Team know what is going on.
- Teachers/staff remain with students, take attendance, and report missing students to the Site Administrator.
- Site Administrator notifies emergency responders about any special needs students or staff awaiting evacuation assistance.
- Site Administrator reports any missing students to the Fire Department, Police Department and the District Office.
- Site Administrator accounts for all staff and any visitors listed on the school visitor log or sign-in sheet.
- For serious emergencies (fire, explosion, gun violence), Site Administrator checks the Teacher's reported attendance against the Secretary's updated student roster.

Reuniting Students and Parents/ Guardians in the Event of an Emergency or Evacuation

In the event of a serious emergency, it is possible that the school may have to reunite students with parents outside of the regular school schedule. For example, this might happen if a Police situation forces the lockdown of a school and the release of students is delayed beyond the school day. It may also be necessary if a fire at a school requires that students be evacuated to an alternative location. Student-Parent reunion may occur either at or away from the school site.

In general, students should only be released to a parent or guardian that is listed as an emergency contact in the student information system. Emergency situations call for the exercise of discretion and school officials will exercise due diligence in making sure students are returned safely to parents or guardians.

Procedures for Reuniting Students and Parents/Guardians

If there is a need to reunite students and parents following an emergency situation, the following procedures are recommended:

- The Reunification Coordinator will coordinate the return of students to parents/guardians in partnership with the Site Administrator
- School staff or their designees should use school binder with student's emergency contact information to call parents/guardians and request they pick up their child at a designated location
- It may be helpful to use tables organized by student's last names' to facilitate the reunification and sign-out process
- School staff should have parents or guardians sign-out their child directly next to their child's name in the binder that has students emergency contact information
- School staff should confirm parent/guardian identity by requiring them to show a photo ID
- Do not release any student without parent or guardian permission, and do not release a student to anyone other than those whose name(s) appear in the student's emergency contact information (unless a confirmed parent or guardian gives verbal permission over the phone)

Important Considerations for Reunification

- Contact a District Superintendent for consultation.
- Coordinate notification with District Office.
- Contact Transportation and other support services to determine whether students may be safely returned home on school buses.
- Consider whether you need to coordinate with day care centers, bus schedules or other activities.
- Consider whether parents need information about how trauma impacts children and/or referral for crisis recovery services.

- Consider whether after school activities including athletic events should be cancelled.
- Inform staff about Student-Parent Reunion procedures in advance so that they may efficiently implement them when needed.