

Chapter V - Preparedness

A. Introduction

1. Preparedness is the process of deciding what you will do in the event of an emergency, before the emergency actually occurs. It involves the coordination of efforts between the school district/schools, and the local community. To help agencies work together, they may want to develop a Memorandum of Understanding or Mutual Aid Agreement that outlines each agency's responsibility.

The Resource Section at the end of this chapter includes a Sample Memorandum of Understanding and/or Mutual Aid Agreement.

Include collaborative efforts with other school districts/schools, emergency responders, outside agencies, volunteers, and the private sector. Existing Memoranda of Understanding or Mutual Aid Agreements should be described and attached to this section of the plan.

2. Example:

_____ School District or School continues to enjoy a good working relationship with the community. We have a Memorandum of Understanding or Mutual Aid Agreement with _____ church for use as a Local Evacuation Assembly Area and with _____ School for use of the school as a Remote Evacuation Assembly Area. _____ Fire Company comes in annually along with the _____ Police Department, _____ Emergency Medical Services and _____ Emergency Management Agency to train and share information with the staff on firefighting, law enforcement, emergency medical services, and emergency management principles.

B. Community Resource List

1. Historically, school districts/schools have been relatively well prepared for emergency situations, such as fires. School Districts/Schools understand the need to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm sounds. The staff knows procedures for calling 911 to report a fire. School shootings, incidents of interpersonal violence, and severe weather have uncovered a need for preparedness for a much broader range of emergencies. Furthermore, although school districts/schools may have established procedures for dealing with emergency situations, most do not have these protocols collected in a coordinated, concise manner. More than ever before, school

districts/schools are faced with ongoing challenges to be prepared for a wide-range of emergency situations from medical emergencies to threats of violence, from severe weather to chemical release, and from sexual abuse to kidnapping.

2. It is extremely important that the school district/school have available contact information for all agencies, organizations, and businesses that may have to assist them with an incident from the response period through the recovery effort. This list should include contact information for counseling services, debris removal contractor, cleaning service, and any other type of resource that may be needed during the response and recovery period. The list should be reviewed every 90 days to ensure that it is kept current for the next incident.

A list of the chosen agencies, organizations and businesses, resource type, and their representatives contact information, such as name, office phone, 24 hour phone number, fax number, and e-mail address should be kept in the Preparedness Section of the School District's/School's "All Hazards" School Safety Plan. There should be a primary member and a back-up in case of extending beyond the 12-hour operational period or unavailability of the primary member.

A Sample Community Resource List is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter. This list can be revised to reflect your school district's/school's needs.

C. School District/School Resource List

The school district/school should also have a list of resources that are available on the school district/school campus for use during an incident. The list should be reviewed every 90 days or after a major incident to ensure that list is kept current and resources are available for the next incident.

A School District/School Resource List with resource type, number available, location, and restock information should be kept in the Preparedness Section of the School District's/School's All Hazards Plan.

A Sample School District/School Resource List is included in the Resource Section at the end of the chapter. This list can be revised to reflect your school district's/school's needs.

D. School District/School Personnel List

It's also important that the school district/school have a current list of positions with appropriate contact information for each one. The list should be reviewed every 90 days to ensure that it is kept current for the next incident.

A list of school district/school positions with names, office phone numbers, 24 hour phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses should be kept in the Preparedness Section of the School District's/School's All Hazards Plan.

A Sample School District/School Personnel List is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter. This list can be revised to reflect your school district's/school's needs.

E. National Incident Management System Implementation

1. All school districts/schools are key components of every community and its government. School Districts/Schools are not traditional response organizations and more typically are recipients of emergency management and first responder services provided by fire and rescue, emergency medical, and law enforcement agencies. These first responders and municipal emergency managers are required to adopt the National Incident Management System and use the Incident Command System to manage all incidents within their jurisdiction. The traditional relationship between school districts/schools and these agencies and organizations is such that school district/school participation in their municipal government's National Incident Management System preparedness program is essential to ensure that first responder services are delivered to school districts/schools in a timely and effective manner.
2. School Districts/Schools are to be involved in a community's emergency planning process. School District/School personnel involved in incident management, can be more efficient by fully understanding how first responders and emergency management personnel will manage an incident. School Districts/Schools receiving Federal preparedness monies via the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, and/or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are required to implement the National Incident Management System.

Training on the National Incident Management System and Incident Command are available online from the Emergency Management Institute. The website is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

It is highly recommended that all school districts/schools, regardless of whether or not they are recipients of Federal preparedness funding, implement the National Incident Management System.

A Sample National Incident Management System Implementation Checklist is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

Detailed guidance for National Incident Management System implementation can be found at the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center. The web address is located in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

F. Establish Incident Assignments

1. Before assigning incident assignments, school district/school staff should be surveyed to see if they have any special skills that could assist the School District/School Incident Command Team during an incident.

A Sample Staff Skills Survey is located in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

2. After surveying the school district/school staff on special skills, it is time to assign personnel to their Incident Command Team roles. Most assignments will be a logical, reasonable parallel to day-to-day work assignments. Other assignments might be based on the special skills that the staff indicated they had to contribute to the team.

A Sample School District/School Incident Command Team Assignment List is located in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

G. Setting up a Buddy System

1. If the School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan calls for assigning classroom teachers to Incident Command System positions, some classrooms will be uncovered. Having a buddy system in place:
 - a. Ensures all students are supervised properly if a teacher needs to perform his/her Incident Command System function.
 - b. Provides for coverage of all students in the event that some teachers become casualties or are injured in the incident.
2. An effective buddy system is based on classroom proximity. Copies of class rosters should be kept in a readily accessible location with other emergency supplies.
3. After developing a buddy pairing each individual teacher with another teacher to ensure proper coverage of students in an emergency situation, administrators need to ensure that:
 - a. Each teacher has copies of both class rosters.
 - b. Both classes evacuate to the same area or go to the same safe area of the school.
 - c. Ensure that substitutes are aware of the buddy system.
 - d. Ensure substitute teachers are instructed and included.

A copy of the Buddy System list should be kept in the Response Section of the School District's/School's “All Hazards” School Safety Plan.

H. Parental Notification

1. Schools should send home information about the school district's/school's emergency procedures at the beginning of the school year and again before typical natural disasters might occur (e.g., winter storms, tornadoes, flooding).
2. Informing parents of emergency procedures:
 - a. Inspires confidence in the school district's/school's preparedness measures.
 - b. Makes operations in an actual incident run more smoothly.
 - c. Helps the school district/school meet its obligation to account for and protect the children.

3. Information to convey to parents:
 - a. No student will be dismissed from the school district/school in the event of an incident unless a parent/guardian (or individual designated by the parent/guardian) comes for him/her.
 - b. Please do not call the school district/school. Telephone lines must be kept open for emergency calls.
 - c. Following an incident, do not immediately drive to the school district/school. Streets and access to the school district/school may be cluttered with debris or otherwise inaccessible. Parents that drive to school could interfere with emergency responders and their emergency vehicles.

I. Visitors' Policy

1. A key component to management of personnel during an incident is having knowledge of exactly what personnel are present at the time of the incident. In order to maintain control, each school district/school must have a staff, student, and visitor control system and policy which outline identification and responsibilities in maintaining access control to the school district/school buildings and grounds. This form of control can differ, but the preferred method is staff and student identification badges, as well as a single point of access for visitors with a badge system.
2. All school district/school staff should openly wear a picture identification badge at all times. If a staff member is working after normal hours, badges should continue to be worn. All visitors must be issued a visitor's identification badge that includes the visitor's name. All staff members should question the identity of any individual, without an identification badge, who is in the building during the normal school hours. Staff members will escort any individual without a badge to the main office. If this is not possible or the individual refuses, the staff member should notify the office immediately. Suspicious packages and individuals acting suspiciously must be reported to the office immediately.

School Districts/Schools should develop a Visitors' Policy and include a copy of it in the Preparedness Section of the School District's/School's "All Hazards" School Safety Plan. The policy should be distributed to all staff, parents/guardians of students, and school organizations.

A Sample List of Visitors' Policy Considerations is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

J. Student Care

1. Student care during an incident is one of the most important tasks faced by school districts/schools. It includes student accounting, protection from weather, providing for sanitation needs, and providing for food and water. Classroom teachers will handle much of the duties of student care. All tasks and the assignments of personnel to handle those tasks must be included in the School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan.
2. In planning for emergencies, it is wise for school district/school personnel to use 72 hours as a guide in determining resource needs. Depending on the situation, they may have to rely on the school district’s/school’s internal resources for that long. Resources to have on hand would include such things as:
 - a. Tools.
 - b. Medical Supplies.
 - c. Food and Blankets.
 - d. Search and Rescue Equipment.
 - e. Emergency “Go Kits”.

K. School District’s/School’s Incident Command Team “Toolbox”

Each School District’s/School’s Incident Command Team needs to develop a “Toolbox” to have available for use during an incident. Items in the “Toolbox” should not be used for anything other than a real incident or emergency preparedness training activities. A member of the School District’s/School’s Incident Command Team should be assigned to keep the “Toolbox” updated (change batteries, update phone numbers, etc.). The “Toolbox” should be portable and readily accessible for use in an emergency.

A Sample Emergency “Toolbox” Inventory Sheet is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

L. Emergency “Go Kits”

Classrooms should also have emergency kits that are easily transportable should the teacher and students have to evacuate. These kits are called “Go Kits” and will allow the teacher to have the equipment and paperwork he/she needs, as well as activities for the students to keep them occupied.

A Sample “Go Kit” List is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

M. Select Assembly Areas

The School District/School Safety Team needs to select Assembly Areas for staff and students for both Sheltering in Place and Evacuating, as well as Alternate Assembly Areas because of inclement weather or other reasons. In addition, Assembly Areas are needed for response equipment, medical operations, parent/student reunification, etc. A location also needs to be selected for the Incident Command Post.

A Sample Assembly Area Worksheet is located in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

N. Parent/Student Reunification

When an incident occurs that requires release of the students, school districts/schools must establish a safe area for parents/guardians to go to pick up their children. This area must be away from the incident, the student assembly area, and the media staging site.

Parent/Student Reunification will be discussed in more detail in the Response Chapter.

O. Media Staging Area

One area that is extremely important for the school district/school to select is the Media Staging Area. The media should be staged away from the response efforts, as well as away from the Student/Staff Assembly Area and the Parent/Guardian/Student Reunification Area.

Communication with the Media will be discussed in more detail in the Response Chapter.

P. Students and Staff with Special Needs

1. A comprehensive “All Hazards” School Safety Plan must address the needs of students and staff with special needs. School Districts/Schools, families, and communities have the responsibility to be well prepared for prompt, safe, and individualized care in the event of an incident on their campus.
2. Individuals who will be involved prior to or during an incident with a student with special needs should be invited to participate in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the “All Hazards” School Safety Plan as it applies to the students in their care. At a minimum, school district/school nurses and municipal emergency management and first response organizations should coordinate to ensure that a plan of action (Emergency Care Plan) is in place to maintain the student’s health and safety during an incident. Staff with special needs should also be invited to participate in the planning process to ensure that their particular needs are being met as well.

Sample All Hazards Planning for Students/Staff with Special Needs Questions are included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

Sample School District/School Action Steps for Special Needs Planning are included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

3. School Districts/Schools should conduct a survey each year at the beginning of the school year to ensure they have an up-to-date list of students and staff who have special needs and the assistance they will need in case of an incident on campus. A copy of this list should be kept in the Emergency “Toolbox”.
4. During an emergency, the ability to communicate with students and staff with hearing impairments will not only save time, but can also save lives. There are several successful ways to communicate with a student and staff member who is deaf:
 - a. Pantomime is used in everyday life. You may use your hands to describe the size, roundness or placement of an object. Facial expressions are often all that are needed to project a feeling or thought to a person who is deaf.

- b. Speech Reading is the ability to read lips. This ability will vary among students and staff. Eye contact and lighting are essential for students and staff to read lips successfully. It is important not to over-exaggerate your lip movements. Talk slowly (normally) and clearly without over-exaggerating your words.
- c. Written Communications can be used for short conversations. A drawback with this form of communication is the time necessary to craft the message. Another drawback can be the level of the student's or staff member's knowledge of the English language.
- d. Interpreting is an excellent choice for communication. Learning to work with an interpreter is easy and a very effective mode of communication. Establish a procedure for contacting an interpreter. Meet in advance of the incident with the interpreting services community agency to coordinate logistics and set up a procedure to access their assistance in the event of an incident.
- e. Sign Language is often taught through the school district/school or community service organizations. Learning sign language before the incident will show your support for the student and staff member who is deaf and enable you to be more prepared for incidents.
- f. Telecommunication Device for the Deaf (TDD/TTY) is an essential device needed to allow the student and staff member who is deaf to communicate via telephone.

Q. Testing the "All Hazards" School Safety Plan

1. After your School District/School "All Hazards" School Safety Plan is developed, the next critical steps are training key players and exercising the plan. Without testing a plan in a simulated incident, it is impossible to tell if the plan's assumptions, assignments, and other details would be effective in a real incident.
2. The process of implementing your School District/School "All Hazards" School Safety Plan is a cyclical process that includes:
 - a. Training a small group of staff.
 - b. Exercising the plan and making any needed revisions.
 - c. Training all school personnel and students to implement the "All Hazards" School Safety Plan.
 - d. Conducting regular drills and exercises.
 - e. Revising the plan based on lessons learned and changing situations (e.g. a new addition to the school), new hazards or threats.
 - f. Retraining school personnel and students.

3. The goal of testing an “All Hazards” School Safety Plan is to prepare for a real emergency –to save lives and limit property damage. Specific goals of exercising a School District’s/School’s “All Hazards” School Safety Plan are to:
 - a. Discover any planning weaknesses.
 - b. Reveal resource needs.
 - c. Improve coordination.
 - d. Practice using your communication network.
 - e. Clarify roles and responsibilities.
 - f. Improve individual performance.
 - g. Improve readiness for a real emergency.

4. When testing a School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan, it is the plan being tested-not the personnel. The plan must then be revised to incorporate lessons learned from the exercise. Before a plan can be exercised, however, some personnel must be trained so that they know what their responsibilities are and have the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out their responsibilities.

R. Training

1. There are many different ways to provide training on your “All Hazards” School Safety Plan. One method is to hold Orientation Seminars which are similar to many briefings that school districts/schools already conduct on various topics. Such seminars are:
 - a. Informal.
 - b. Not a simulation.
 - c. Introduce new programs, policies, or planning information.
 - d. Review roles and responsibilities.
 - e. Serve as a starting point for other types of exercises.
 - f. Provide parents at back-to-school nights or Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings with information on school district/school emergency preparedness.
 - g. Provide students with basic information about what to do for different types of incidents.

2. Training can also be provided by classroom, hands-on, or on-line training to provide specialized skills or information to school personnel. The level of training provided will vary with the role and responsibilities assigned during an incident. However, it needs to be impressed upon school district/school personnel that everyone has some role and responsibility during an incident and therefore it is very important that they all have some level of training in emergency preparedness.

3. There is also training that is required for the school district/school to be considered National Incident Management System compliant. The U.S. Departments of Education and Homeland Security recommend all “key personnel” take at least some of the National Incident Management System training courses. Key personnel are defined as individuals that would be involved in the response and incident command structure during an incident. Because every school district/school is unique and works from different operations and management structures, key personnel will vary from one education community to another.
4. The school district/school should determine the key personnel to receive National Incident Management System training, based on their roles in the overall school district/school emergency preparedness program. School Districts/Schools need to identify three groups of people:
 - a. Personnel with any role or responsibility in emergency preparedness, incident management, or response.
 - b. Emergency management personnel with a critical role in response.
 - c. Emergency management personnel with a leadership role in emergency response, who would be required to command and manage an incident in the absence of traditional response personnel.
5. It is recommended that the school district/school develop a training plan for school personnel. Training can be provided by municipal, county, or state organizations and agencies.

A Sample List of Mandatory and Recommended Training for School District/School Personnel is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

6. In addition, it is recommended that all students be provided training on various incidents that may affect the school district/school. The training should be appropriate for their age level. Many of the older students could also provide assistance during incidents with additional hands-on training in specialized skills. The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency is in the process of implementing a Teen Community Emergency Response Team training program in the Commonwealth. This training program provides a variety of hands-on skills in First Aid, Basic Fire Suppression, Light Search and Rescue, Disaster Psychology, Terrorism Awareness, and Team Concepts.

Sample Disaster Lesson Plans and Curriculum are provided in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

A Sample Teen Community Emergency Response Team Training Agenda is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

S. Exercises

1. There are several types of exercises that can be used to test the School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan:
 - a. Tabletop-Simulation activity in which a certain scenario is presented and participants explain what they would do to respond. The scenario for a tabletop exercise can be presented orally, in written text, or by audio/video means by an exercise facilitator. Additional information, or injects, can be presented in its entirety at the start of the exercise or as the situation unfolds. This type of exercise:
 - 1) Eliminates time pressure.
 - 2) Lend themselves to low-stress discussion of plans, policies, and procedures.
 - 3) Highlights the importance of communication, coordination, and cooperation between school district/school and community responders.
 - 4) Enable school district/school staff to walk through an incident scenario and make decisions similar to those made in an actual incident.
 - 5) Enable participants to get a first-hand view of the responsibilities and needs of other responders.
 - 6) Give participants an understanding of how their actions can affect others.
 - b. Drills-Focuses on a single function of the School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan. It allows the responders to gain field experience and practice a single incident response. The most common type of drill is an evacuation. However, school districts/schools should know and practice reverse evacuation, lock-down, and shelter-in-place drills.
 - c. Functional-Simulates a real emergency under high-stress conditions involving multiple responders. This type of exercise utilizes communications equipment and lasts between three and eight hours.
 - d. Full-Scale-Tests the community’s total response capability. This exercise is as close to reality as possible with role players and field equipment being deployed. A full-scale exercise can be several hours to one or more days in length.
2. Regardless of what type of exercise is used to test the School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan, it is extremely important that response organizations and agencies participate in the development and implementation of these exercises.

3. The facilitator is the key to the success of any type of exercise. This person should be able to perform the following responsibilities:
 - a. Leads the exercise and controls the pace and flow of new information or injects into the exercise play.
 - b. Presents the scenario developments and problem statements to the participants.
 - c. In a tabletop exercise, guides the discussion of actions the participants might take in response to those problem statements.
4. Be sure to build documentation and after-action reporting into your testing procedure. One or more evaluators/observers should be assigned to record what happens during the exercise or drill. The number of evaluators/observers is based on the complexity of the exercise or drill. Proper documentation will help school officials determine:
 - a. What parts of the ‘All Hazards’ School Safety Plan work well.
 - b. What parts need additional attention.
 - c. Whether additional training is necessary and what kind of training is needed.

T. Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

1. When developing exercises, it is important that all of the players who will respond to the incident be involved in the development process. It is also critical that all parts of the School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan be tested eventually so the same scenarios should not be utilized every time. The Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program is a capabilities and performance-based exercise program which provides a standardized policy, methodology, and terminology for exercise design, development, conduct, evaluation, and improvement planning. This program ensures that exercise programs conform to established best practices, and helps provide unity and consistency of effort for exercises at all levels.
2. Many of the emergency management and first responder personnel that participate in school district/school exercises have already taken the training associated with this program and use the program for all of their exercises.

It is highly recommended that members of the School District/School Incident Command Team take the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program course. This will allow them to effectively develop an Exercise Program for the school district/school in conjunction with the community emergency management, first responder organizations, and other players.

A link to the list of resident courses and application for admission to the Emergency Management Institute is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

U. Updating the “All Hazards” School Safety Plan

From the information gathered in the After-Action Report, the school district/school should update their “All Hazards” School Safety Plan. It is very important that this be done as soon as possible after an exercise or actual incident so the plan reflects the current Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery strategies. This will allow the school district/school to respond and recovery effectively to the next incident. Remember to provide copies of plan changes to everyone issued a copy of your “All Hazards” School Safety Plan previously (emergency management, first responders, incident command team members, etc.).