

## Chapter VI – Response

### A. Introduction

Response to a disaster includes emergency assistance to individuals affected by the disaster. Response activities also include reducing the probability of additional injuries or damage. Response actions should be performed in a way that speeds later recovery operations.

### B. Emergency Protective Actions

There are basically a handful of emergency protective actions that a school district/school can take to protect life and property. Specifically, these include modifying school operating times, such as early dismissal, school closure and school opening delay. Other actions include facility lockdowns, shelter-in-place and evacuation.

The Resource Section at the end of this chapter provides a Sample Emergency Decision Making Flowchart to facilitate this process.

### C. Activate School District's/School's Incident Command System

1. Every complex job needs to be organized, and emergency management in school district/schools is no exception. The Incident Command System is the nationwide standard for emergency management. The model is an expandable system of management which has proven to be workable for emergencies, from small emergencies to large disasters and is currently in use by many agencies across the country. Pennsylvania's governor has mandated its use for all incidents in the commonwealth.
2. The implementation of the Incident Command System helps to ensure life safety, property protection, and effective resource management. Adopting the Incident Command System will help school personnel work with emergency management and emergency responders to provide a coordinated response.

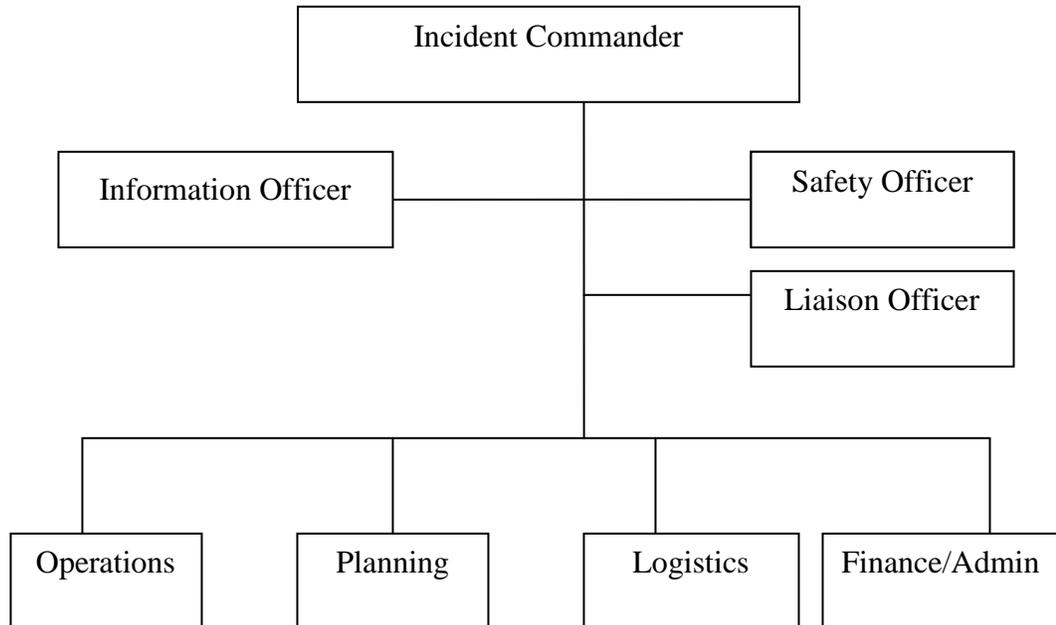
### D. Incident Command System Principles

1. A fundamental principle behind the Incident Command System is that every emergency, no matter how large or small, requires that certain tasks, or functions, be performed. For example, every incident will require such functions as student care, site or facility security, and communications.

2. Every incident needs one person in charge. That person, called the Incident Commander, may be the superintendent or his/her designee. The person in charge must be identified before and during an emergency. When first responders arrive, the incident command may transition to a unified command. Unified command means that the designated individuals from response agencies work jointly with the school district/school commander to carry out the response effort. In a unified command, school personnel retain responsibility for student, staff, and visitors' safety.
1. Another principle of the Incident Command System is to limit the Span of Control. The structure dictates a span of control of not less than three nor more than seven with an optimum of five subordinates.
2. Each individual participating in emergency operations reports to only one supervisor. This eliminates the potential for individuals to receive conflicting orders from a variety of supervisors, thus increasing accountability, preventing freelancing, improving the flow of information, helping with the coordination of operational efforts, and enhancing operational safety.
3. One of the most important principles for schools to use the Incident Command System is standardization of common terminology. Everyone should use the same words to refer to the same situation and these words should be communicated to school district/school personnel and responders in advance of an incident. Avoid using codes unless absolutely necessary or make sure they are communicated to emergency management and first responder organizations prior to an incident.

### E. The Incident Command System Organization

The diagram below shows the structure of the Incident Command System organization.



### F. Primary Incident Command System Functions

Position	Responsibilities
<b><u>Incident Commander:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Assesses the situation.</li> <li>◆ Establishes objectives.</li> <li>◆ Tracks resource needs: what resources are available, have been assigned, and are needed.</li> <li>◆ Develops a strategy or plan for handling the emergency, monitors it in process, and adjusts the plan as needed.</li> <li>◆ Ensures proper documentation.</li> <li>◆ Appoints additional staff as necessary.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Safety Officer:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Ensures that the safety of the students, staff, visitors, and others on school district/school property is the highest priority.</li> <li>◆ Has the authority to halt any response activities that create an unsafe situation or put students, staff, visitors or others at risk.</li> </ul>

<b><u>Public Information Officer:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Acts as a liaison with the public, including the media.</li> <li>◆ Must be well informed about the situation at all times.</li> <li>◆ Should be the only one who talks with the media. All other staff members should refer media questions to the Public Information Officer.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Liaison Officer:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Develop working knowledge of municipal/regional agencies.</li> <li>◆ Serve as the primary on-scene contact for outside agencies assigned to an incident.</li> <li>◆ Assist in accessing services when the need arises.</li> <li>◆ Document activities.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Planning Section:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Assist Incident Commander in the collection and evaluation of information about an incident as it develops (including site map and area map of related events).</li> <li>◆ Prepares Incident Action Plan.</li> <li>◆ Tracks resources.</li> <li>◆ Assist with ongoing planning efforts.</li> <li>◆ Maintain incident time log.</li> <li>◆ Document activities.</li> <li>◆ Prepares Demobilization Plan.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Operations Section:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Directs and coordinates all incident-related operational activities.</li> <li>◆ Will establish tactical objectives for each operational period.</li> <li>◆ Handles all emergency response jobs, including development and implementation of a Student Accounting and Release Plan.</li> </ul>
<b><u>Logistic Section:</u></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Responsible for Communications.</li> <li>◆ Provides medical support and food to incident personnel.</li> <li>◆ Procures facilities as needed.</li> <li>◆ Manages and distributes supplies, personnel, and equipment.</li> <li>◆ Deploys unassigned people.</li> </ul>

<p><b><u>Finance/Administration Section:</u></b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Administers any necessary procurement contracts.</li> <li>◆ Keeps financial records of expenditures and employee hours. (Note: A School’s All Hazards Plan Incident Command Structure may not include a Finance/Administration Section. This function may be performed at the school district level. In such circumstances, the Incident Commander must ensure that proper documentation is maintained.)</li> </ul>
--	--

G. How Incident Command System Functions in School Systems

1. The Incident Commander must be someone who is on the scene at the incident site. The Incident Commander operates from the Command Post, which is located on site, but away from the risk of damage from the incident.
2. The school superintendent or principal may be the Incident Commander, but not necessarily. Incident Command System positions should be assigned based on who is best qualified for each position, not according to seniority or positional authority in day-to-day work. During an incident, responsibilities and lines of authority will change from day-to-day authorities. This also means the normal Chain of Command may change for personnel. School personnel must be aware and accepting of these changes.

A Sample Diagram of a typical Incident Command System configuration at a school is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

3. Each key person shown should have an alternate assigned in case the primary person is unavailable or injured. If a school district/school has sufficient personnel, a contingency person should also be assigned. The primary, alternate, and contingency personnel should all be trained to perform the duties required of the position.

A School District’s/School’s “All Hazards” School Safety Plan should include procedures for each of the functional Incident Command System areas, as well as for others that may be pertinent to the school. In most emergencies, many of the Incident Command System positions will not need to be filled. These procedures should be included in the Response Section of your School District/School “All Hazards” School Safety Plan.

## H. Establish Incident Command Post

The location for the Incident Command Post should have already been identified in the Preparedness Section of the School District's/School's "All Hazards" School Safety Plan. If that location is not available, the alternate location should be utilized.

A Sample List of Incident Command Post Equipment and Structure Requirements is located in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

## I. Response Steps

1. Determine Type of Emergency – The first step is to determine the type of emergency. Listed below are different types of emergencies that could affect Pennsylvania school districts/schools. This does not represent an all-inclusive list. The School District's/School's Hazard Risk and Vulnerability Assessment determines which hazards affect your school district/school and helps to establish priorities.
  - a. Bomb Threats.
  - b. Building Loss of Structure or Structural Failure.
  - c. Child Abduction/Lost Child.
  - d. Death of a Student/Staff Member.
  - e. Earthquakes.
  - f. Field Trip Emergencies.
  - g. Fighting.
  - h. Fire/Explosion.
  - i. Floods.
  - j. Gang-Related Activities.
  - k. Hazardous Materials/Chemical Spills.
  - l. Hostage Situations.
  - m. Intruder/Trespasser.
  - n. Life-Threatening Crisis.
  - o. Mass Contamination of Food/Beverages.
  - p. Nuclear Power Plant/Radiological Incident.
  - q. Pandemic Influenza.
  - r. Severe Weather.
  - s. Sexual Assault/Rape.
  - t. Shootings.
  - u. Student Unrest/Demonstration.
  - v. Suicide.
  - w. Terrorism.
  - x. Utility Failures.
  - y. Vehicle Accident.
  - z. Weapons Incident.

Sample Checklists for each type of hazard that may affect school districts/schools in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania are included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter. They can be tailored to fit your school district/school and included in the Response Section of your ‘All Hazards’ School Safety Plan.

2. Determine Degree of Emergency – School emergencies can be categorized in terms of magnitude. Identifying the magnitude of an emergency will determine the allocation of resources. Some emergencies can be handled by school personnel without assistance from outside agencies. Examples include temporary power outages or minor first aid cases. Other emergencies require assistance from outside agencies (i.e., fire department, police, emergency medical services, and emergency management). Examples include a fire, act of violence, or a severe weather event with injuries and/or structural damage. The degree of emergency can also be categorized in terms of a building emergency, campus emergency (incident affecting multiples buildings), or a community-wide emergency.

School Districts/Schools need to look at their hazard vulnerability assessment, determine the degree of each emergency, and the immediate response actions for each hazard affecting their school district and individual school buildings.

3. Determine Immediate Response Actions – Immediate Response Actions are a set of standard, clear directives that may be implemented across a variety of emergency situations. When an emergency begins, the Incident Commander will decide which Immediate Response Action to implement, based on the situation. Most emergencies will require one or more Immediate Response Actions, such as Evacuation, Reverse Evacuation, Shelter-in-Place, or Lock-Down.

A Sample Chart of Immediate Response Actions is available in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter. Edit the sample chart to match your own Immediate Response Actions, and insert into the Response Section of the School District/School ‘All Hazards’ School Safety Plan.

## J. Parent/Guardian/Student Reunification

Student release is a crucial part of emergency planning. During an incident, the traditional student release procedure is often unsafe and therefore not implemented. Therefore, the School District/School ‘All Hazards’ School Safety Plan needs to incorporate certain procedures to insure the safety of the students, to every extent possible, back into the care of their parents/guardians.

A Sample Parent/Guardian/Student Reunification Procedures is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

A Sample Emergency Release Card is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

## K. Communicating with the Media

In a crisis, calls from the media should be referred to the school district superintendent/school principal or his/her designee. The school district/school may have a designated Public Information Officer who will be responsible for the calls. This person will also be responsible for writing all news releases and updates as approved by the superintendent/principal to be read and/or distributed to the media.

A Sample Media Communications Checklist is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

A Sample Template for Initial Media Release is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.

A Sample Tips for Speaking to the Media in an Incident is included in the Resource Section at the end of this chapter.