

*Safer Schools Complete Guide  
to creating & implementing a*  
**School Emergency  
Management Plan**



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*Committed to creating a safer environment for learners and educators in our schools*

## Introduction to the Safer Schools Guide

No one can predict when an emergency will occur. To ensure the safety of learners, educators, staff and administrators, all schools should be prepared to respond to, and recover from an emergency.

“Emergency” is defined in this Guide as “a sudden, generally unanticipated event with the potential to profoundly and negatively impact a significant segment of the school population.”.

As part of the Waltons Safer Schools Programme, we have developed the *Safer Schools Guide to a School Emergency Management Plan* to assist schools in preparing a comprehensive emergency planning, response and recovery mechanism. The generic Guidelines contained herein are intended to be universal to all schools, and therefore still need to be customized to individual requirements, and be coordinated with response plans already in place at local emergency management agencies.

For these reasons, this Guide is incomplete in its current format, and is presented as a practical model to assist individual schools evaluate emergency plans already in place, as well as develop new strategies and responses which are uniquely theirs.

Specific procedures in this Guide are arranged loosely in chronological order; but whereas some may be handled simultaneously by different groups of people working as a team, the order of other procedures will be dictated by building layouts, external agency response procedures, advance planning and assigned responsibilities.

### Purpose of the Safer Schools Guide

The *Safer Schools Guide to a School Emergency Management Plan* serves two important purposes:

1. As a template for creating a comprehensive response to emergency situations;
2. As a framework for addressing a range of other issues such as violence prevention, which require a coordinated school response.

Most South African Schools are relatively ill-prepared to deal with emergency situations. They may know what to do when a fire alarm is heard, who to call and where to go, but recently reported incidents of school shootings, cyber-bullying, rape and other forms of interpersonal violence have highlighted the need for preparedness across a much broader spectrum of emergency situations. More so now than ever before, schools are faced with the challenge of being prepared to deal with a plethora of crises, from medical emergencies to threats of violence, from severe weather to service delivery strikes, and from sexual abuse to kidnapping.

Schools must provide a safe, orderly learning environment for every learner, and well conceived plans provide protocols for a wide range of crisis response situations in a manner which enables staff and authorities to quickly restore the school climate to optimal learning conditions. Nevertheless, a school may have in place established procedures for dealing with a range of emergencies in a collected, concise and coordinated manner, only to find that in an emergency situation the involvement of external response and recovery agencies brings about confusion and misunderstandings. It is therefore important for schools not to work in isolation, but to establish relationships and coordinate plans with potential partners before a crisis occurs. Examples of important partners who can provide excellent guidance, training and support include Law enforcement agencies (local and national), the Fire Department, local hospitals, doctors, and emergency medical services, the Departments of Education and Health, and local municipalities.

## How the Safer Schools Guide was developed

The production of the *Safer Schools Guide to a School Emergency Management Plan* was motivated by requests from South African schools for more information on best practices in emergency planning, particularly in the context of effective responses to violent behaviour and hostage situations. Findings have also shown that many schools need assistance in developing holistic plans to deal with emergency situations.

Content for this Guide is based on best practice emergency procedures developed by the US Department of Education, various US emergency response agencies, and a number of US schools. In particular, we would like to recognise the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency, Illinois Department of Public Health and Ashville Elementary School for open content appearing on their websites.

## How to Use the Safer Schools Guide

This guide is designed to assist schools in developing individually tailored emergency response strategies, and is presented in four sections corresponding to the major phases of crisis management, namely

**Mitigation** - actions taken to reduce the adverse effect of an emergency. It involves activities that can be implemented before, during, or whilst in *recovery* from an emergency. As a result, information on mitigation activities appears throughout this Guide

**Preparedness** - the process of determining what to do **before** an emergency actually occurs. It involves the coordination of efforts between your school, the Departments of Education and the community at large. This section contains tips and tools for establishing a crisis response team, collaborating with partners, and preparing an emergency toolkit and evacuation routes.

**Response** - the process of implementing appropriate actions **while** an emergency situation is unfolding. The Response phase requires the school to do what it had planned and trained to do, and involves the mobilization of resources needed to handle the emergency at hand. This section contains steps for handling a wide range of emergencies, including certain universal emergency procedures that may be implemented across a number of situations.

**Recovery** - the process of assisting learners with the physical, psychological and emotional trauma that is associated with experiencing tragic events. This section contains a collection of follow-up measures and tools needed to effectively address the **aftermath** of an emergency situation, which are designed to assist educators in helping learners begin the recovery and healing process.

The Guide offers the information and tools necessary for schools to properly address the four phases of emergency mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. Once the essential components of these phases have been carefully addressed, a school will have a comprehensive, current and living emergency response plan best suited to its unique circumstances.

New “best practices” for handling emergency situations are being continuously developed and introduced. In addition, new emergency situations emerge over time requiring appropriate new responses. Therefore, this guide should always be a “working document,” and after initial completion, should be updated on a regular basis. Furthermore, to keep its plan fully functional, the school will need to conduct regular drills to ensure preparedness, regular training to inform staff of their roles in an emergency, and regular reviews to maintain its currency.

## The Purpose of Emergency Planning and Practice

National and provincial governments, local authorities, and community groups in South Africa are equally responsible for creating response plans to deal with every type of emergency. Our schools are an integral part of any coordinated response plan, and therefore every school should create a site-specific "School Emergency Management Plan" (SEMP) in cooperation with local and national emergency response and management agencies

To do this, the school will first need to establish a "School Emergency Response Team" (SERT) for the purpose of either developing a new SEMP, or reviewing existing emergency plans. In the first instance, the SERT may use the outlines, templates, sample forms and protocols provided in this Guide to create an emergency plan, which will include a designated chain of command, specific roles for team members, and school specific procedures to implement in the event of an emergency. For schools that have already developed and documented an emergency response plan, this Guide may be used by the SERT as a reference to best practices in school emergency situations, and to identify any areas in the school's plan that need further attention or development.

The SERT's next task is to communicate, introduce and practice the school's emergency response plan. Every school is responsible for conducting awareness training, and practicing all the elements contained in its emergency protocols. While many schools are adept at practicing certain techniques such as fire drills, most are not well rehearsed in planning for extraordinary events such as threats to self or others, intruders and chemical release emergencies.

To ensure the effective and timely execution of a school's emergency plan, every member of the school staff should be trained in emergency procedures. Lectures, practice drills, and simulated training exercises are essential components of emergency planning, providing a real measure of awareness and testing the plan's effectiveness. To increase preparedness, exercises should be varied throughout the year by changing the nature of the simulation and creating unusual crisis scenarios. Changes to fire drill scenarios, such as blocking evacuation routes and/or introducing hazardous chemical threats will serve to increase preparedness and improve training effectiveness. School plans, procedures and training should be updated annually based on the results of these drills.

A strong *School Emergency Management Plan* also offers schools a framework for addressing a range of health and safety issues that require coordinated attention from school officials. Examples of these issues include school violence prevention and learner mental health issues. In cases like these, the same planning, response and recovery mechanisms can be used to effectively address issues. Furthermore, the relationships developed with community groups as part of emergency preparedness can enhance ongoing school health and safety programmes. Thus, the considerable amount of time, effort and resources going into this planning process should be recognized as an important investment in building relationships and developing an infrastructure that will support school health and safety in general, not just in times of an emergency.

### Characteristics of a weak school plan

- No standardised format
- Lack of consistency between schools
- Lack of coordination between the school and external emergency response agencies
- Lack of interaction between national, provincial and local partners
- Lack of training for school personnel
- Lack of critique and/or testing of the school plan on a regular basis
- Lack of post-action reporting, review and documentation

## Starting Your School Plan

Your Emergency Management Plan will need a Cover page, Foreword, Statement, Description and Index.

### Page 1 : COVER

The cover page is the first page of the school plan, and should show the **School Name**, Emergency Plan **Title**, and a record of all **Revisions** to the Plan. The latter is important to ensure that every member of the emergency response team, and all external response agencies are working from the same document. A sample of a Revisions Record appears below

SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLAN REVISIONS RECORD			
VERSION	Revision Date	Amended By	Approved By
01/2009	03/01/2009	J. Smith	S. Green
02/2009	10/08/2009	A. Brown	S. Green
03/2010	23/11/2010	B. Jones	S. Green
04/2011	05/03/2011	P. White	S. Green

### Page 2 : FOREWARD

The Foreword page contains a short statement describing the background and purpose of the School Emergency Management Plan. For example:

*"In 2009, \_\_\_\_\_ (insert school name), together with Department of Education, school district personnel, Police, Fire Department and other response agencies, first developed this emergency management plan. Since then, there have been many changes to the school safety and community landscape, necessitating this School to continuously review and update this planning document. In the review process we enlist the expertise of various partnering agencies, our local school district personnel, and community organizations to provide input and direction. The result of our efforts is a comprehensive planning document for this school, which emphasises an "All Hazards Approach" that is built on the four distinct principles, or phases of Mitigation / Prevention, Preparedness, Response and Recovery, that are described in detail in this plan. Every phase of this process plays a unique role, and is designed to provide specific information and skills that are intended to support each of the other phases. Seen holistically, this document represents the School Emergency Management Plan, which provides a carefully considered, customised, and best practice response to an array of emergency situations that our school might have to face at some stage"*

### Page 3 : STATEMENT

The Plan should be endorsed by the School Board, as a reflection of its importance to every person associated with the school. A sample of a statement from the Board appears on page 6 of this guide

### Page 4 : DESCRIPTION

The Plan should contain a brief description of the Plan, summarizing the way it will be communicated to all, and implemented by the school. A sample of a description appears on page 7 of the guide

### Page 5 : INDEX

The Plan should contain an Index detailing the contents of the document, similar to that on page 8

### Statement by the School Board

\_\_\_\_\_ **(Insert School Name)** is committed to the safety and security of all learners, educators, administrators, staff, parents and visitors on its premises. In order to support that commitment, the School Board has called for a comprehensive review of the School's emergency mitigation/ prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery procedures relevant to natural and human caused disasters.

This School Emergency Management Plan is the result of the review and an update of school policies in the context of its location in \_\_\_\_\_ **(Insert School Location)**, and represents the official policy of \_\_\_\_\_ **(Insert School Name)**.

The Board endorses the practices and procedures reflected in this Plan, and commits the school's resources to providing the ongoing training, practice drills, and maintenance required to keep it current.

The Board believes that applying the information contained in this Plan will help maximize the health, safety, and welfare of learners, staff, and visitors at \_\_\_\_\_ **(Insert School Name)** when confronted with an emergency situation.

The Board recognises that this Plan is a blueprint which relies on the commitment and expertise of individuals within and outside of the school community, and that its success is dependent on effective communication with such persons, particularly Emergency Response Agencies, as well as ongoing monitoring of emergency management practices.

\_\_\_\_\_  
For the SCHOOL BOARD

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

## SAMPLE DOCUMENT #2 : DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT

## OUR SCHOOL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN (SEMP)

This Emergency Management Plan describes \_\_\_\_\_ (insert name of school) and its environment, the potential hazards to which it is likely to be exposed and the manner in which the school will manage emergencies. It assumes that staff and learners will be familiar with its contents and will be regularly drilled in the procedures to be adopted during an emergency. It also assumes that preventive measures will have been implemented to reduce the impact of any emergency that may occur.

An emergency includes the following:  fatality  serious injury/serious assault  siege/hostage/kidnap/ firearms  removal of learner  bomb threat  collapse/major damage to building or equipment  fire in school building/bushfire  fumes/spill/leak/contamination by hazardous material  outbreak of disease  flood/wind storm or other natural event.

Our School Emergency Management Plan, otherwise known as "SEMP", is intended to be flexible. Procedures have been developed that will assist our school to manage emergencies ranging in nature and intensity from small-scale localised incidents lasting minutes or hours, and which are managed by this school, to large-scale incidents which require external assistance and which may last for several days. It identifies roles and responsibilities of our staff, learners and visitors during an emergency. It describes actions to be followed in the case of specific types of emergencies.

All incidents likely to affect the safety and wellbeing of our learners, staff or school visitors are to be reported immediately and responded to as soon as possible. The safety and wellbeing of every person exposed to an emergency are to be considered at all stages of the emergency. An emergency may have effects on those involved lasting long after the initial crisis has been resolved. This school recognises that in addition to implementing procedures to resolve the emergency quickly, we may require support to assist the overall school community to return to normal functioning.

The SEMP is to be reviewed annually by our School Emergency Response Team, otherwise known as "SERT" In the event of an emergency, the Plan is to be reviewed as soon as possible after the event to determine whether procedures in the plan were followed and whether they were adequate.

A copy of our SEMP has been sent to the Board of Trustees, Department of Education, Police Department, and all other local emergency agencies, to ensure that safe and correct procedures have been identified for use during emergencies.

A copy of our SEMP is provided to members of SERT and all Staff via Intranet, with an abridged version in the Staff Handbook. Parents are informed via the first newsletter of each school year, at Parent Evenings, and by way of information bulletins during the year outlining Emergency Management strategies. The School Website has a link to our SEMP, and provides SMS, Email and Cellphone details in the event of emergencies. Learners are informed of the Emergency Management Procedures at school assembly, and at Emergency Drill Practices in first week of new school year and throughout the year. All contractors, and after-hours users of the school facilities are required to acquaint themselves with the SEMP and follow established emergency procedures when on site.

Emergency Drills are the responsibility of the Principal, who will ensure that these are called once per term where appropriate, and that a variety of situations are included. Feedback on drills will be requested from all participants, improvements identified, and any changes will be recommended at subsequent School Emergency Response Team meetings.

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# PHASE 1

## Mitigation/Prevention



***“MITIGATION” is the action a school takes to eliminate or reduce the loss of life and/or damage to property resulting from an event that cannot be prevented.***

***“PREVENTION” is the action the school takes to decrease the likelihood of an event or emergency occurring.***

**Mitigation** and **Prevention** activities are the cornerstone of creating an effective emergency response plan. While schools and communities will have little control over some hazards that could impact them (e.g. plane crash, industrial accident, weather related events, etc.) there are actions which can be taken to reduce the impact of such events. Other events such as bomb threats, fights, intruders, and vandalism are more likely to occur and actions can be taken to minimize the likelihood of their occurrence.

The first rule of thumb in this process is to not to work alone. In order to effectively develop a viable plan of action you will need the input from a variety of individuals (local emergency response agencies, hospital/medical staff, social welfare, mental health and local government representatives).

Mitigation refers to actions taken to reduce the adverse effect of an emergency. Mitigation measures can be implemented before, during or while recovering from an emergency. Following a school safety and risk assessment conducted in the "mitigation and prevention" phase, measures can be taken to eliminate or minimize the hazards that have been identified. The main thing to remember is that mitigation activities refer to any sustained action implemented to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property related to events that cannot be prevented. Mitigating emergencies is also important from a legal standpoint. If a school does not take all necessary actions in good faith to create a safe school, it could be vulnerable to a negligence law suit.

Prevention can best be described as a set of proactive strategies that will enhance the safe and orderly learning environment at the school.

Some examples of proactive prevention steps would be

- Conducting an annual Safe School audit which assesses the degree of school safety
- Reviewing data on school violence for trends that will inform the school plan
- Conducting regular safety checks of school buildings and grounds
- Communicating protocols to school staff, learners, parents and the community at large
- Vaccinating against flu pandemics
- Developing a pro-social skills curriculum
- Introducing wellness activities for learners
- Bolting bookshelves to the wall

When an agreed upon list of issues has been established, strategies and corresponding activities can be implemented. Anti-bullying programmes, drug and alcohol prevention programming, school wide discipline programming, and required staff supervision schedules are examples of strategies that can be implemented to assist in the Prevention phase of the plan. Only those strategies that have been validated or proven to be effective should be utilized.

#### MITIGATION / PREVENTION CHECKLIST

- ⇒ Connect with local and national emergency responders to specifically identify local hazards (within the past year)
- ⇒ Review the last safety assessment to examine behaviour and financial concerns
- ⇒ Encourage staff to provide input and feedback for emergency planning
- ⇒ Review the school incident data
- ⇒ Determine the major problems in the school with regard to crime and violence
- ⇒ Share concerns with the school emergency response team
- ⇒ Review insurance claims against the school to determine types, locations and severity

# PHASE 2

## Preparedness



***“PREPAREDNESS” is the process of deciding what you will do in the event of an emergency, before it actually occurs***

**Preparedness** involves the coordination of efforts between school, external agencies and the community at large, and activities under this heading are intended to prepare schools to rapidly respond to emergency situations in a planned and coordinated manner.

School Emergency Management Plans (SEMPs) should always be preventative in nature. This should include addressing proactive solutions to eliminate or mitigate identified safety concerns found as a result of safety and/or risk assessment processes. The SEMP should include a detailed emergency response structure, with roles and responsibilities of the emergency team members, and emergency protocols to follow in various crisis situations. The plan must reflect the school's unique characteristics and needs, and should take into consideration any areas of concern pertinent to the community in which the school is situated

Some examples of "Preparedness" activities are

- Identifying and incorporating procedures for individuals with special needs
- Acquiring emergency supplies ("Emergency Toolkits") for administration and classrooms
- Identifying weaknesses in the current School Emergency Management Plan
- Interpreting data collected from assessments conducted in the Mitigation/Prevention phase
- Creating and strengthening relationships with community partners,
- Establishing a School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Implementing training exercises between the school and external emergency responders
- Implementing evacuation, lockdown and shelter-in-place drills
- Coordinating the SEMP with national and local agencies to avoid unnecessary duplication

#### PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST

To review the comprehensiveness of the school emergency response plan, consider the items on the checklist below

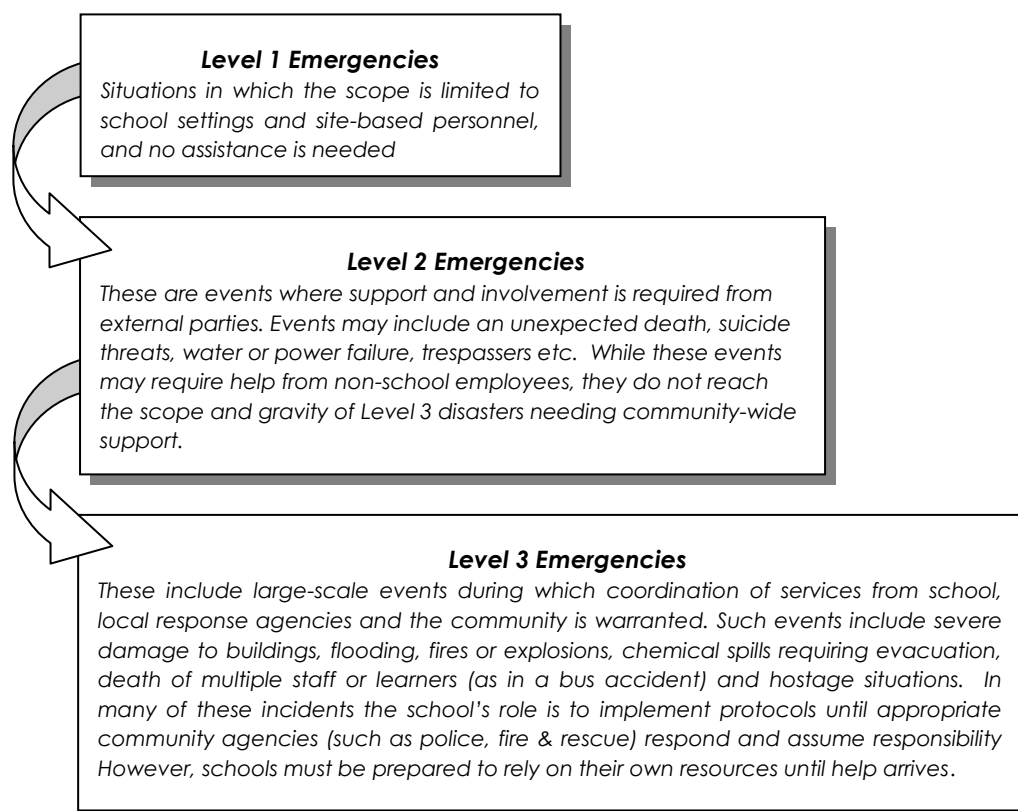
- ⇒ Determine what crisis plans exist in the school and community
- ⇒ Identify all stakeholders involved in emergency planning
- ⇒ Develop procedures for communicating with staff, learners families, and media
- ⇒ Establish procedures to account for learners during a crisis
- ⇒ Gather information that exists about the school facilities, such as building plans, servitudes, and the location of DB Boards and water stopcocks.
- ⇒ Identify and assemble the necessary equipment that will assist staff in a crisis

To be prepared for an crisis, your school's emergency management plan should address each of the issues listed below. Use this section to develop your SEMP, or if one is already in place, check to see whether you have covered the essential components of emergency preparedness.

- Establishing an Incident Command System (ICS) & School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Introducing and maintaining Emergency Response Activities
- Identifying Hazards in the School area
- Identifying Evacuation Routes
- Identifying Emergency Codes
- Developing an Emergency Toolkit
- Identifying local Partners and Resources
- Creating plans for people (learners, educators, staff and visitors) with special needs
- Communicating before, during and after n emergency
- Developing an Accountability system
- Developing a Parent/Learner Reunification plan

## Introduction to Emergency Management Planning

It is essential to understand and be prepared for a range of emergency situations from school-based events. The chart below illustrates different levels of emergencies, and the following page describes in more detail the possible impact of large scale (Level 3) disasters on individual schools.



### Understanding the Impact of large scale (level 3) disasters

In certain circumstances, schools must be prepared to rely on their own resources because assistance from others may be delayed, depending on the scope of the emergency. Remember that for a large-scale event such as a flood, the same disaster that affects your school will also affect the surrounding community. Experts advise that schools may be on their own for three or more days following a catastrophic disaster. All staff should be alerted in the planning phase that, in the event of such an emergency, they will be required to staff the school for the duration of the emergency.

Level 3 disasters may result in

- Widespread telephone outage
- Road blockages and damage to roads and bridges
- Gridlock or congestion of roadways
- Loss or damage to utility systems
- Damage to local dams, especially earth-fill dams
- Chemical or electrical fires
- Release of fuels and hazardous materials
- Flash flooding
- Injuries and death caused by falling objects, fire/smoke inhalation, hazardous materials, flying debris, roof collapse, flooding and landslides.
- The overwhelming of emergency response forces (police, fire department, hospitals etc.)

## Professional Responsibilities For Emergency Preparedness

1. Schools are a vital community resource.
  - The school has an obligation to keep learners safe, and is responsible for them during day-to-day operations.
  - School personnel have a moral and legal responsibility to all learners in their care.
  - After a disaster, your school may serve as the gathering place for hundreds of people who live or work nearby.
2. In most cases, educators and staff members will be required to remain at school until released by the principal.
  - This responsibility to learners in a disaster situation should be covered in each staff member's employment contract.
  - The school cafeteria should maintain a three day food supply to feed those sheltered at the school.
  - Just as school staff members will rely on other members of the community to open blocked roads, repair utilities, perform rescue work, etc., those members of the community will rely on schools to provide for the learnerren in their care.
3. Staff members should each have a family emergency plan which anticipates that they must stay at school during emergencies.
  - Knowing that one's family is prepared and can handle the situation will enable you to do your job professionally.
  - Remind your family that if the telephones are not working, you will be unable to call them.
4. Ideally, the school emergency response plan should prioritise which educators and staff members will be released first (such as those with small learnerren at home).
5. Staff members who live alone, or a long distance from the school, should be encouraged to make special preparations for remaining at school longer, such as arranging with a neighbour to check on their homes.
6. If you are a school official with decision-making authority, and you neglect or avoid taking disaster safety precautions, you may be found personally and financially liable for damages, injuries and deaths at your school.
7. The Principal must ensure that the school is fully compliant with the requirements of the South African Health & Safety Act (85 of 1993). Not only does non-compliance carry the threat of onerous fines and possible imprisonment, but the school could be temporarily closed down until it attains the required level of safety standards. In addition, the school board runs the risk of legal action and damages due to negligence.
  - Safer Schools provides a simple, convenient and user-friendly online solution to achieving health and safety compliance in schools, and is available without cost or obligation to every school in South Africa, through its sponsors Waltons, HP and Mondi Rotatrim. Sustained and effective Implementation of this programme will enable every school to achieve, and exceed legally prescribed safety standards.

## Introduction to an Incident Command System (ICS)

Every complex job needs to be organized, and managing crises in schools is no exception. An emergency management system (widely known as the "Incident Command System" or ICS) which can prepare school staff to respond appropriately and effectively to an emergency situation is a necessity for all schools. The model presented in this Guide is an expandable system of management which has been adopted by many countries and has proven to be workable for most emergencies, from small events to large scale disasters.

To be prepared for an emergency, your Incident Command System and School Emergency Management Plan should address each of the issues listed below. Keep in mind that these should both be **preventative** in nature, which means identifying actions you can take now to mitigate safety concerns found as a result of a school assessment. In addition, your system and plans should reflect the school's unique characteristics and needs.

If you have already begun developing your School Emergency Management Plan, use this section to make sure you've covered the essential components of emergency preparedness. Utilise the information and templates provided here to supplement any areas that need additional attention.

### Division of Labour

A basic premise to any School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is that in a crisis staff will transition from their day-to-day jobs into similar roles which can address that emergency. For example, the school principal may become the "Incident Commander" and take charge of the School Emergency Response Team.

The major concept behind an Incident Command System is that every emergency, no matter how large or small, requires that certain tasks or functions, be performed. The organization handling these can expand or contract according to the size of the emergency and the staff available.

The primary functions within the ICS are - Management, Operations, Logistics, Planning/Intelligence and Administration/Finance. In simple terms:

- Management** - is in charge
- Operations** - makes it happen (by "doing")
- Logistics** - makes it possible (by "getting")
- Planning/Intelligence** - makes it rational (by "thinking")
- Administration/Finance** - makes it financially accountable (by "recording")

### Span of Control

Another concept of an Incident Command System is the span of control. The structure dictates that no one person should be in charge of more than 7 other people. The optimum number is 5, unless a large number of people are all performing the same function, as in the case of 1 person being in charge of 10 educators who are all caring for learners.

### Common Terminology

One of the most valuable benefits of establishing a standardised Incident Command System across all schools is the use of common terminology. School personnel, external emergency response agencies, and other professional responders will all communicate and function more effectively if roles and responsibilities are described using similar wording and common definitions.

## Establishing an Incident Command System (ICS)

Some emergencies require involvement from the police, fire department, and other emergency responders. With several agencies handling a crisis, roles and responsibilities can quickly become confusing. To prevent confusion about “*who is doing what*”, an Incident Command System (ICS) should be developed as part of the School Emergency Management Plan to inform school personnel on how to work cooperatively with other agencies during an emergency.

The ICS assigns roles and decision-making authority during the planning and handling of critical incidents of all types. Implementing the ICS will enable school personnel to know their area of responsibility during an emergency, to plan and practice the management of their specific role, and to effectively coordinate their responses with all major emergency response agencies involved in the incident.

### Steps to forming an ICS

To construct an ICS for your school, first identify special traits and abilities inherent in your team members, and then match these to the role assignments contained in this Guide. But please note that as no two schools are the same, the ICS roles and responsibilities outlined here will need to be tailored to fit your school. Some positions may not be needed by some; while additional roles may be required by other schools. Remember to include backups for each assignment. This may necessitate some members being assigned more than one task; but in these cases make sure the tasks are similar.

### ICS Functional Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the core ICS functions are summarized below, and at the end of this section is a template to use for assigning roles for your school's own ICS.

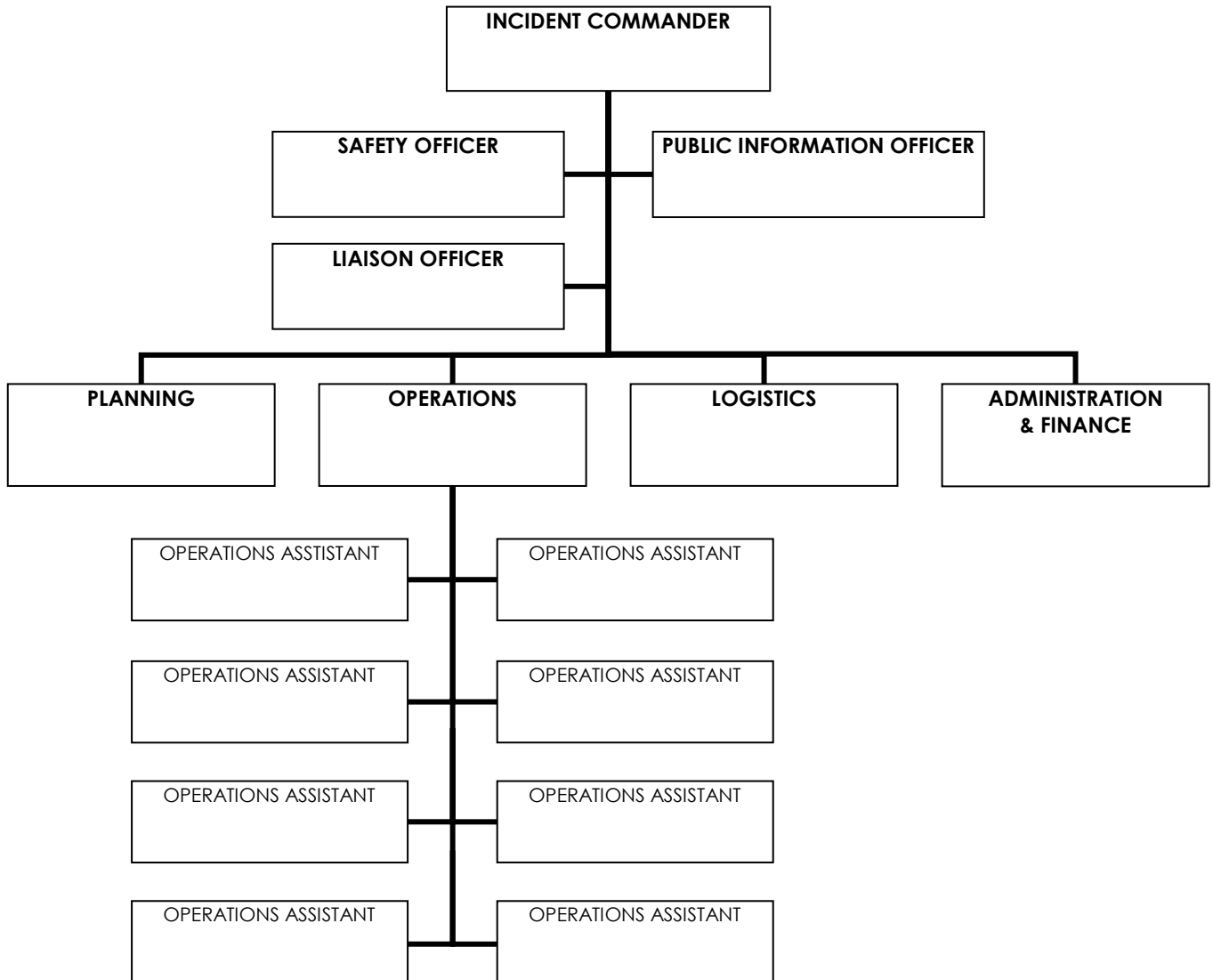
- **Incident Command**  
Establishes command, works to protect life and property, directs overall management of emergency response activities.
- **Operations**  
Responsible for the care of learners and carrying out response activities according to established Emergency Response Procedures and Emergency Management Protocols (see Response Section). Most school staff will be assigned roles under Operations.
- **Logistics**  
Responsible for communications, as well as securing and providing needed materials, resources, services and personnel. This section may take on a major role in extended emergency situations.
- **Planning**  
In small emergencies, the Incident Commander (IC) is responsible for planning, but in a larger emergency, the IC establishes a Planning Section. Planning collects and evaluates information as related to the development of an incident, and status of resources.
- **Administration/Finance**  
Sometimes overlooked, Administration/Finance is critical for tracking incident costs and for reimbursement accounting. This is especially important in tracking costs where a national or provincial “disaster area” may be declared.

## ICS Emergency Personnel defined

ICS Function	ICS Personnel	Nature of Personnel Roles & Responsibilities
Incident Command	Incident Commander	Responsible for overall management of emergencies; establish/manage Command Post; activate the ICS; determine strategies to implement protocols and adapt as needed
Operations	Safety Officer	Monitor safety conditions in an emergency situation and develop measures for ensuring the safety of building occupants (learners, staff, volunteers, responders); document activities
Logistics	Public Information Officer	Develop relationship with local media reps.; prepare media releases; establish Media Centre near the Command Post; establish/monitor communication to parents and staff; coordinate information with Incident Commander and SERT; document activities
Operations	Liaison Officer	Develop working knowledge of local/provincial/national agencies; serve as the primary on-scene contact for outside agencies assigned to an incident; assist in accessing services when the need arises; document activities
Planning	Planning Officer	Assist Incident Commander in the collection, analysis and evaluation of information about an incident as it develops (including mapping the site and area); assist with ongoing planning efforts; maintain incident time log; document activities
Operations	Learner Accounting and Release Officer	Analyse school staffing to develop a Learner Accounting & Release Plan; implement plan in an emergency; document activities
Operations	Facility & Environmental Officer	Monitor site utilities (electric, gas, water) shut off only if danger exists or directed by Incident Commander; assist in securing facility (locking gates and perimeter doors, posting yellow caution tape as needed, etc.); document activities
Operations	Medical Officer	Conduct triage before local EMS arrives; coordinate with local EMS personnel to provide first aid, CPR and medical care to the injured; request additional supplies from Logistics; document activities
Operations	Crisis Intervention Officer	Provide and access psychological first aid services for those in need (working with "Operations: Medical"); access local/regional providers for ongoing crisis counselling for learners, staff, parents; document activities
Operations	Supplies Control Officer	Coordinate the rationed distribution of food and water (prolonged emergencies); establish secondary toilet facilities in the event of water or plumbing failure; request needed supplies from Logistics; document activities
Logistics	Communications Officer	Establish/oversee communications centre and activities during an emergency (two-way radio, cell-phones, written updates, etc.); develop a "Telephone Tree" for after-hours communication; document activities
Logistics	Logistics Officer	Responsible for establishing and maintaining an "Emergency Team Toolkit"; coordinate access to, and distribution of, supplies during an emergency; monitor inventory of supplies and equipment; document activities
Administration/ Finance	Administration Officer	Responsible for overall documentation and record keeping activities; when possible, photograph or videotape damage to property; develop a system to monitor and track expenses and financial losses; secure all school records

## ICS Organisational Structure at our School

In general, ICS roles should be a logical, reasonable parallel to day-to-day work assignments. Complete the chart below to reflect your school's ICS assignments according to the roles and responsibilities provided in the table above. Assignments should be reviewed regularly (at least once a year) to ensure they account for staff turnover and other changes in responsibilities.



In the event of an emergency, the Incident Commander is in charge. As needed, the IC activates those in the Incident Command System who in turn, activate others needed to fulfill emergency response tasks.

Before local emergency management agency personnel arrive, your school may activate the ICS with the principal serving as the IC. However, when other agencies arrive to help handle the emergency, the ICS will change to incorporate the official roles and leadership from these agencies. It is essential that external emergency responders take over the management of the situation if appropriate to avoid conflicting information and instructions.

## Establishing a School Emergency Response Team (SERT)

The first step in creating your School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is to form a School Emergency Response Team (SERT). The SERT should reflect the diversity of the school community and should capitalize on the unique training and expertise offered by staff in various positions in the school.

The school **Principal** is usually responsible for overseeing the formation of the SERT, and should therefore be its designated leader. Certain positions in the school lend themselves to SERT membership, including:

INTERNAL PARTICIPANTS	EXTERNAL PARTICIPANTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School Principal</li><li>• School Psychologist / Counsellor</li><li>• School Nurse</li><li>• School Estate / Building Manager</li><li>• Office secretary</li><li>• Vocational Training Educators</li><li>• Chemistry Educators</li><li>• School Security Officer</li><li>• Cafeteria / Canteen Manager</li><li>• Staff with special knowledge or training (i.e. CPR, First Aid etc.)</li><li>• Staff in strategic locations in the building (i.e. near exits/fire extinguishers, on different floors etc.)</li><li>• Learners (high schools only)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Representatives from Emergency Response Agencies, such as Police, Fire, Hospitals</li><li>• City/Town Emergency Managers</li><li>• Community representatives</li><li>• Businesspeople</li><li>• Health Professionals</li><li>• Parents</li></ul>

Each of these persons has unique knowledge in areas ranging from mental and physical health to learners with special needs, access to building plans to knowledge of community resources.

### Purpose of the SERT

The primary purpose of the SERT is to

- Develop the School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP), including school-specific risks and assets, and learner-specific needs.
- Conduct or coordinate orientation training for staff, and recommend additional training.
- Conduct or coordinate awareness programmes for learners.
- Evaluate the school's preparedness for implementing the SEMP.
- Perform an operational critique after every emergency to determine strengths and areas for improvement in respect of the SEMP.
- Initiate communication with learners, parents and community during and after an emergency.
- Report progress to important stakeholders, such as the School Board, Parent/Educators Body, and Department of Education authorities.
- Assign individual roles in the event that outside agencies become involved in an incident and the Incident Command System goes into effect.

## Steps to forming a SERT

Depending on the size and needs of the school, the SERT should include 6 to 12 members. Although these team members make up the formal SERT, it should be made clear to other staff that each will have a role in the implementation of effective emergency management protocols, and everyone is responsible for addressing the immediate safety needs of learners in their care.

To form a School Emergency Response Team in your school, follow the nine steps shown below

STEP	ACTION	Complete
1	Principal communicates with all staff identifying specific needs, and requesting volunteers to serve on the SERT.	
2	Principal communicates with parents, learners, and potential community representatives requesting interested parties to serve on the SERT.	
3	Principal creates list of interested persons, making sure all major areas of need are addressed, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical/medical needs</li> <li>• Emotional/mental health needs</li> <li>• Learners with special needs</li> <li>• Faculty and staff with special needs</li> <li>• Staff from all areas of the building (different floors, out-buildings, etc.)</li> <li>• Staff with knowledge of transportation needs</li> <li>• Staff with knowledge of building plans, locks, distribution board, water mains, etc.</li> <li>• Staff with ability to convey information to the media</li> <li>• Staff with knowledge of community resources</li> </ul>	
4	Principal selects 6 - 12 persons from these lists to serve on the SERT, and communicates these appointments in writing	
5	Principal or designee holds a meeting with potential team members to discuss what will be expected from team membership.	
6	Principal or designee follows up with all school staff to update them on SERT formation, and to fill in areas where deficits exist <i>(Note: Although an individual may seem "perfect" for a particular role, no one should be required to have a primary position on the SERT if he/she does not feel capable of fulfilling his/her duties in a time of need).</i>	
7	Principal or designee calls an initial meeting to formally establish the SERT and, where necessary, to begin the process of developing the School's Emergency Response Plan using forms in this Guide.	
8	SERT sets dates to conduct orientation, review and updates of plan. Regular team meetings should be held throughout the school year (every 1-2 months) to review protocols and ongoing issues as they arise (which may include local, provincial or national issues that may affect the school).	
9	SERT sets dates to hold meetings with other staff and external stakeholders, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a formal presentation to staff at the beginning of each school year.</li> <li>a formal presentation to external stakeholders at the beginning of each school year.</li> </ul>	

Utilise the template on page 27 to document your SERT's members and contact details

## Individual Responsibilities

The following is an outline of roles and responsibilities for staff during an emergency. This does not include your specific SERT responsibility which is outlined in the individual school emergency management plan.

### Principal

The principal shall serve as Incident Commander (in the vast majority of cases) and will be responsible for the overall direction of the emergency procedures at the school. Responsibilities include:

- Taking steps deemed necessary to ensure the safety of learners, school staff and other individuals in the implementation of Emergency Management Response Protocols.
- Determining whether to implement Universal Emergency Procedures, such as evacuation, reverse evacuation; shelter in place; severe weather/safe area; drop, cover and hold; lockdown.
- Activating the School Emergency Management Response Team..
- Arranging for transfer of learners, staff and other individuals when their safety is being threatened by a disaster.
- Working with emergency service personnel (depending on the incident, community agencies such as police or fire department may have jurisdiction for investigations, rescue procedures, etc.).
- Maintaining a line of communication with the relevant authorities (Education Department, School Board, etc.).

### Department of Education District Support Team

The Department of Education District Support Team's role shall be to support the school whenever the need exceeds the resources of the school to handle a situation:

- Providing guidance regarding questions which may arise.
- Directing additional support personnel, including District Support Team members as needed.
- Monitoring the emergency situation and facilitate major decisions which need to be made.
- Providing a district contact (Public Information Officer) for release of information to the media. This should include planning of a prepared statement that will be released.

### Educators

Educators shall be responsible for the supervision of learners and shall remain with them until directed otherwise. They shall:

- Take steps deemed necessary to ensure the safety of learners, staff, and other individuals during the implementation of Emergency Management Response Protocols.
- Direct learners in their charge according to established Universal Emergency Procedures.
- Render first aid if necessary. Selected school staff should be trained and certified in First Aid, CPR, and the use of Automated Electronic Device (AED).
- Ensure that they have their roll book with them.
- Take roll when the class relocates in the designated assembly area.
- Report missing learners and staff to the Learner Accounting and Release Officer (you may consider utilising a colored card system to expedite this process).
- Assist as directed by the principal/incident commander.

### **Counsellors, Social Workers, Psychologists**

Counsellors, Social Workers and Psychologists shall be responsible for assisting the overall direction of the emergency procedures at the site. Responsibilities include:

- Taking steps deemed necessary to ensure the safety of learners, school staff, and other individuals in the implementation of Emergency Management Protocols.
- Directing learners in their charge according to established Universal Emergency Procedures.
- Rendering first aid if necessary.
- Assisting in the transfer of learners, staff and other individuals when their safety is threatened.
- Maintaining a line of communication with the SERT Team leader and assisting as directed.

### **School Nurses**

Responsibilities include:

- Providing first aid or emergency treatment as needed.
- Communicating first aid and emergency treatment needs to emergency service personnel.
- Assisting as directed by the principal/incident commander.

### **Custodians / Ground Staff**

Responsibilities include:

- Surveying and reporting damage to principal/incident commander.
- Assisting with implementing the Universal Emergency Procedures and Protocols as directed.
- Controlling main shut-off valves for gas, water, and electricity, and assuring that no hazard results from broken or downed lines.
- Assisting in the conservation, use, and disbursement of supplies and equipment.
- Assisting as directed by the principal/incident commander.

### **School Secretary**

Responsibilities include:

- Answering phones and assisting in receiving and providing consistent information to callers.
- Providing for the safety of essential school records and documents.

### **Food Service / Cafeteria Workers**

Responsibilities include:

- Using, preparing, and serving food and water on a rationed basis whenever the feeding of learners and staff becomes necessary during an emergency
- Assisting as directed by the principal/incident commander..

### **Bus Drivers**

Responsibilities include:

- Supervising the care of learners, if an emergency occurs while learnerren are on the bus.
- Transferring learners to new location when directed by a school authority or law enforcement agency
- Following safety procedures as directed by the school transportation policy for emergency situations.
- Assisting as directed by the principal/incident commander.

## Emergency Response Planning

Under the direction of the principal, each school is to complete the following according to its unique needs and circumstances.

- Complete the following Emergency Planning Documents
  1. Staff Skills Inventory
  2. Emergency Response Team Members' Details
  3. Educator Survey: Learners/Staff Needing Special Assistance
  4. Master List : Learners/Staff Needing Special Assistance
  5. Classroom & Building Hazard Identification Lists
  6. Classroom & Building Hazard Mitigation Plan
  7. Designated Assembly Area — Outdoors
  8. Designated Assembly Area — Alternate Building Location A : Within walking distance
  9. Designated Assembly Area — Alternate Building Location B : Requiring transport
  10. Learner Accounting and Release
  11. Orientation and Training Schedule
  12. Drill Schedule and Log
- Create an Emergency Team "Toolbox"
- Adopt Visitor Screening and Access Control Policies
- Adopt Daily Dismissal Procedures
- Review the Emergency Response Protocols (see "Response" section); make necessary modifications for school-specific needs (using feedback from Staff Surveys and School Emergency Response Team, local or district authorities, etc.)
- Review and update Severe Weather Safe Area for each room of the school building
- Review and update Shelter in Place plan for each room of the school building
- Prepare your School's Emergency Quick Reference Guide
- Provide Emergency Quick Reference forms to all staff members
- Establish a schedule and procedures for orientation, training, and practicing the School plan
- Submit the School plan to the Incident Commander and SERT for final review.
- Practice the plan as scheduled, update the plan at least yearly.

**SAMPLE DOCUMENT #3 : Emergency Response Planning**

## Staff Skills Inventory

TO ALL STAFF:

As part of the development of our School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP), and in accordance with school policy, please complete the following survey and return to the administration office. The information provided will be used to help design and update our SEMP in order to be fully prepared for an emergency situation should one arise.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ ROOM \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency Response Training

Please check any of the following areas in which you have training or expertise:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> First Aid         | <input type="checkbox"/> Search & rescue     | <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling/mental health |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CPR               | <input type="checkbox"/> Hazardous materials | <input type="checkbox"/> Firefighting             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emergency medical | <input type="checkbox"/> Media relations     | <input type="checkbox"/> Incident debriefing      |

Explain or clarify items checked \_\_\_\_\_

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### Special Considerations

Please check and list special skills or resources you feel would be an asset in an emergency situation.  
Explain items checked:

- Multilingual, list language/s \_\_\_\_\_
- Experience with disabilities \_\_\_\_\_
- Ham radio or CB radio experience \_\_\_\_\_
- Knowledge of community resources \_\_\_\_\_
- Other knowledge or skills \_\_\_\_\_

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**(SERT) School Emergency Response Team Members**

Commencing \_\_\_\_\_

Name	SERT Role	Room No,	Work Phone	Cell Phone	Home Phone

PREPAREDNESS









## Designated Assembly Area Outdoors (for Standard Evacuation)

Use the following worksheet to plan for evacuation from the school building to an nearby outdoor Assembly Area (e.g., football field). The Assembly Area should minimize exposure of Learners to dangers or hazards around the school.

1. Examine floor plans, site plans and maps for your school grounds and surrounding neighbourhood. Determine primary and secondary exits for each room in the building. Consider factors such as: gas, sewers, power lines, chain link or electrical fences, storerooms containing toxic, water towers, multiple storey buildings (vulnerable to collapse), transformers, balconies (which may fall from buildings), etc.
2. Designate each of the following in the Assembly Area:
  - Command Post \_\_\_\_\_
  - Access for Emergency Vehicles \_\_\_\_\_
  - Learner Assembly areas (by Grade, Classroom, Team, etc) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\_\_\_\_\_
  - First Aid area \_\_\_\_\_
  - Heliport landing area for air medical (if traffic gridlock prevents vehicular access) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Heliport GPS coordinates \_\_\_\_\_
  - Psychological Counselling area \_\_\_\_\_
  - Learner Release area \_\_\_\_\_
  - Media area \_\_\_\_\_
  - Potential morgue \_\_\_\_\_
3. Communicate Learner Accounting and Release procedures to parents.

## Designated Assembly Area Alternate Building Location: Walking Distance

In inclement weather, it may be necessary to move Learners to an Alternate Building Location rather than using the typical Outdoor Assembly Area. Use the following worksheet to plan for evacuation from the building to an off-site building location within walking distance from the school. Coordinate your planning with Emergency Response and Education Authorities, other schools, etc.

1. Examine maps and site plans for possible Alternate Building Location in the immediate vicinity of the school property.
2. Consider factors such as roadways, waterways, power lines, metal fences, utilities, etc., and select routes that minimize exposure to area hazards.
3. Coordinate planning with nearby schools, community centers, businesses, churches, etc. to establish relationships for Alternate Building Location.
4. Designate each of the following:

**Alternate Building Location**  
(Address)

**Primary Contact / Phone**

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**Secondary Building Location**  
(Address)

**Primary Contact / Phone**

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**USE SPACE BELOW** for any special planning needs, such as specifying routes/alternate routes, or for coordinating your school's plan with other schools on the same campus.

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## Designated Assembly Area Alternate Building Location: Requiring Transport

Use the following worksheet to plan for evacuation from the building to an off-site building location **requiring transport** from the school. Coordinate your planning with Emergency Response and Education Authorities, other schools, etc.

1. Contact the School transportation manager / Service provider to coordinate and plan for transporting learners and staff to an Alternate Building Location. Examine local area maps for primary and secondary roadways to these locations.
2. Consider factors such as roadways (for potential traffic "gridlock"), waterways, power lines, metal fences, utilities, etc, and select routes that minimize exposure to area hazards.
3. Coordinate planning with other schools, community centres, businesses, churches, etc. to establish reciprocal relationships for Alternate Building Location (schools across town may serve as alternate site for each other).
4. Designate each of the following

**Alternate Building Location**  
(Address)

**Primary Contact / Phone**

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**Secondary Building Location**  
(Address)

**Primary Contact / Phone**

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**USE SPACE BELOW** for any special planning needs, such as specifying routes/alternate routes, or for coordinating your school's plan with other schools on the same campus.

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## Orientation and Training Schedule

Each school should prepare a schedule of orientation and training events annually. You may use the worksheet below to outline a schedule for training events, drills, etc.

Month	Training Event and Who is to be Trained	Person Responsible	Comments
January			
February			
March			
April			
May			
June			
July			
August			
September			
October			
November			
December			

## Emergency Drill Schedule and Log

Use the following worksheet to plan emergency drills for your school. Attach a copy of the schedule to your school's plan, and use the original to document drills when they actually occur. (See *alternative on page 40*)

**1. FIRE DRILLS :** Policy — 2 X Drills in the first month of school, and 1 X Drill each month thereafter

Monthly Schedule	Date Conducted	Weather Conditions	Number of Participants	Evacuation Time	Comments /Notes
1st					
2nd					
3rd					
4th					
5th					
6th					
7th					
8th					
9th					
10th					
11th					
12th					

**2. EARTHQUAKE / SEVERE WEATHER DRILLS:** Policy — 2 X Drills per year

Date Scheduled	Date Conducted	No. of Participants	Response Time	Comments/ Notes

**3. OTHER DRILLS (Lockdown/Shelter-in-Place/Bomb Threat/Intruder etc)** Policy — 2 X Drills per year

Date Scheduled	Date Conducted	No. of Participants	Response Time	Comments/ Notes

## **Emergency Team “Toolbox”**

The School's Emergency Response Team should consider developing a “toolbox” to have available for use during an emergency situation. Items in the toolbox should not be used for anything other than emergency preparedness training activities. A member of the Emergency Response 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.

### Contents of an Emergency Team Toolbox

- Copies of the all forms completed in the development of the School Emergency Management Plan (Chain of Command, Learners Needing Assistance, etc.)
- Map of school building/s with location of Exits, Phones, First Aid Kits, Assembly Areas
- Blueprints of school building/s, including utilities.
- DVD of inside and outside of the school building and grounds.
- Map of local streets with evacuation route (Alternate Building Location requiring Transport)
- Flash lights (recommend the type that does not require batteries).
- First Aid kit and latex gloves (and other types for latex-sensitive persons)
- Staff Roster (including emergency contacts names and numbers)
- Learner Roster (including emergency contacts for parents).
- Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).
- Two-way radios and/or cellular phones available.
- Battery powered AM/FM radio and spare batteries (wind-up radios).
- Several writing pads and ink pens.
- Small notice/white boards and dry erase markers
- White peel-off stickers and markers (for name tags use
- Flipchart pad and permanent markers
- Local telephone directory.
- Lists of the Department of Education personnel's phone, fax, and cellphone numbers.
- Lists of other emergency responders phone numbers.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Practicing the Plan

Once an School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) is completed, all school personnel need to be trained. It is recommended that such training

- Be informal
- Not be a simulation
- Includes a discussion of Roles and Responsibilities
- Introduces related Policies, Procedures, Plans and Responsibilities

## Conducting Training Exercises

It is essential to practice the SEMP periodically to make sure that it works, and that all personnel understand their roles. There are typically four ways to accomplish this

### 1. Drills

Features:

- An informal simulated emergency
- May test a single component or function of the SEMP (for example, a "lock-down" drill)
- May involve one or more supporting agencies

### 2. Tabletop Exercise

Features:

- An informal discussion of simulated emergencies
- No time pressures
- Low stress
- Useful for evaluating plans and procedures
- Helpful to resolve questions of coordination and responsibility

### 3. Functional Exercise

Features:

- An informal discussion of simulated emergencies
- Policy and coordination personnel will practice all or part of the SEMP
- More stressful and realistic simulation of real life situations
- Usually takes place in "real time"
- Emphasizes the emergency functions of the SEMP. Examples might include perimeter security (securing all doors of the school), utility shut-downs, and accounting for all the people who should be in the school at the time (to include learners and staff)
- School's Emergency Response Team (SERT) is activated

### 4. Full Scale "Mock" Exercise

Features:

- Takes place in "real time"
- Employs real people and equipment, including some from the community that is expected to respond in the event of a school emergency
- Coordinates many agencies and functions, both internal and external to the school
- Is intended to test several emergency functions, either concurrently or in sequence
- Usually produces stress among participants

**SAMPLE DOCUMENT #16 : SCHOOL EXERCISES/DRILLS TRAINING RECORD**

(See also page 37 for alternative form)

EMERGENCY EXERCISE/DRILLS TRAINING RECORD							
NAME OF SCHOOL :				YEAR :		2011	
Date & Time	Fire Drill	Drop, Cover & Hold Drill	Lockdown Drill	Evacuation Drill	Full Scale Drill	Simulation Exercise	Principal's Signature
10/03/2011 09h30	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
15/04/2011 13h05	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
30/05/2011 08h00	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
31/05/2011 13h05	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	
19/06/2011 09h00	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
23/07/2011 15H45	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
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	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
<b>TOTAL</b>	[ 1 ]	[ 1 ]	[ 1 ]	[ 1 ]	[ 0 ]	[ 2 ]	[ 6 ]

PREPAREDNESS

## Tips for Conducting Successful Drills

Conducting successful drills is critical in preparing for an actual emergency. All school personnel need to be prepared for emergency situations, allowing for circumstances such as inclement weather, substitute educators and accounting for all learners.

### Inclement Weather

An emergency that requires evacuation from the school may occur during inclement weather. Each school should be prepared for such an event and identify a protected site, such as a nearby school or community centre, where learners and staff can go until the school has been cleared for re-entry. Refer to the section on identifying evacuation routes for more information.

### Substitute Educators and Staff

Substitute educators and staff may be on site when an emergency occurs. Therefore, when developing and practicing emergency plans, schools should account for the needs of substitute personnel who may not be as familiar with the school grounds. As part of their orientation programme, all substitute staff should receive an introduction to the school's emergency plans, and be made familiar with the school evacuation sites, .

### Accounting for Learners

Accounting for learners is critical during an actual emergency, and drills provide an opportunity to practice the school's accountability system. Using classroom rosters and attendance logs, all learners should be accounted for during each drill. Missing or extra learners should be reported to the Principal upon the completion of each drill. Refer to the section on developing an accountability system for more information.

### Emergency bus evacuation drills

All staff and learners should participate in at least one emergency bus evacuation drill each year. This is necessary as learners who ordinarily do not ride the bus may need to ride a bus during a field trip or emergency evacuation. Conduct additional drills for learners who regularly ride the bus, as well as those with special needs since evacuation procedures from buses are more complex.

## Examples of Drill Exercises

### Tabletop exercise scenario - *Rape of an Educator in her classroom after hours*

It is 19h40 and your SERT has been activated due to a reported sexual assault of a educator at your school. Upon arrival at the school, you meet with other team members in the cafeteria and are briefed on the incident by the principal and a police detective. You are told that a educator regained consciousness in her classroom after being beaten unconscious with a fire extinguisher. Her clothing had been ripped off and a medical examination confirms that she has been raped. The educator is unable to recall what happened, but is in stable condition at the hospital and the incident is under investigation.

**Exercise** - Describe the steps and action to be taken by the SERT?

### Functional exercise scenario - *Aircraft Crash*

At 07h35 a passenger aircraft takes off from your local airport during a thunderstorm. As it is climbing, it encounters a severe cross-wind at an altitude of 250 feet. Within seconds, the plane slams into a residential area five kilometers south of the airport and two kilometers from your school. Upon impact, the plane is torn apart and the leaking jet-fuel ignites. Dozens of homes are destroyed over a three-block area. There are numerous injuries and fatalities among passengers and people on the ground. A fire has been reported at your school. Fire/rescue units from the city and the airport respond to the scene., but encounter a situation that will require their full resources and capabilities. Additional fire/rescue and police units are requested to report to the school. Onlookers and media have arrived and are standing too close to the danger area, as well as interfering with incident response operations. Parents are calling the school offices for information.

#### Exercise 1 - The group/s must answer the following questions

- Who is in charge at the school level?
- How will you coordinate the services of many agencies and jurisdictions that will respond?
- How will you deal with the parents and Media?
- How will you handle school buses that are en-route to school?
- How will the victims be treated and transported to hospital?
- Where will the family reunification site be set up?
- Who and what agencies will disseminate official information to the public?

#### Exercise 2 - The group/s must formulate a coordinated response plan.

*Facilitator note: During this discussion, pass the following written instructions to the designated people*

- PRINCIPAL: You have just had a heart attack, please get up and leave the room for 10 minutes
- HEALTH OFFICER: People claiming to be doctors have shown up, and want to know where to report.
- EDUCATOR: A learner is having an asthma attack.
- ⇒ **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENT:** 3 learners are ill with watery eyes and shortness of breath.
- INCIDENT COMMANDER Several educators have panicked, abandoned those in their care and left the school
- NURSE: You receive a report that the SERT leader has passed out.
- PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER: 5 international media outlets are requesting press kits about the situation.
- PRINCIPAL: Residents in the area are demanding information about the situation.
- SECRETARY: Due to the high call volume, the phone system has shut down.
- ⇒ **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENT:** Several parents are demanding to get into the school to pick up their learners.
- PRINCIPAL: The school secretary has lost control and is yelling, "Everyone is going to die!"
- PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER: Please go to the front of the room and deliver a press briefing.
- PRINCIPAL: The Education MEC would like a briefing from the IC. Please leave the room for 10 minutes.
- ⇒ **GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENT :** Send help to the command post. Elect someone to leave the room for 10 minutes.
- ⇒ **FACILITATOR ANNOUNCEMENT :** Who is in charge at this point? Write down your answer and give it me, to assess your answers and share my findings with the group.

## Communication during an Emergency

Communication is a critical part of emergency management.

- School staff and learners must be told what is happening and what to do.
- Parents of learners, and families of staff members, must be informed about the situation, including the status of the learner or family member.
- Timely contact with law enforcement agencies and other emergency response services is necessary for an effective response to the crisis
- School Board members must be informed and kept updated.
- Information must be transmitted to the District Education Office
- Information must be passed onto other schools which may also be affected by the crisis.
- The media must be informed and kept updated.

After an Emergency has been reported, the principal will need to notify staff of the emergency, and keep them informed as additional information becomes available, or as response plans for the management of the situation evolve.

The means of communicating to staff includes the following:

### The Telephone Tree

A "telephone tree" is a simple, widely used system for notifying staff of an emergency event when they are not at school.

To set up a telephone tree, start by listing the first in the school's chain of command (i.e. Principal or Incident Commander). Then link him/her to several other staff members on the School Emergency Response Team; then link these to different staff groupings (educators, support staff, etc.), and continue this until everyone on the SERT is linked in.

In practice, the first person on the list calls several people who in turn call others, etc. until everyone on the list has been notified of the situation.

A carefully crafted statement, specifying what is and is not yet known, and what action steps may need to be taken, should be drafted before the telephone tree is activated.

### The Morning Staff Meeting

An early, brief staff meeting provides the opportunity to give accurate, updated information about an the emergency situation and to review procedures for the day.

### The End-of-Day-One Staff Meeting

A brief end-of-day-one staff meeting provides the opportunity to review the first day of an emergency, to update information, and plan for day two. As importantly, this allows for misinformation or rumours to be addressed before staff members go home or into the community where they are likely to be asked about the situation.

## Communications Technology

Technology can be a very effective tool for communication during an emergency, including:

### Telephones

It is recommended that schools should have at least one unpublished number. Check with Telkom to see if there are unused lines in the school's control panel which could be activated if needed. Use standard jacks and mark them clearly so emergency personnel can find them. There are automated phone systems for contacting "sub-populations" within your school instantly. These can be very effective in getting a quick standardized message to staff and/or parents.

### Intercom systems

Ideally, systems should include educator-initiated communications with the office and use a handset rather than a wall-mounted speaker. Instructions for use of the intercom should be posted near the controls in the office area.

### Bullhorns / Megaphones

Battery-powered megaphones can be effective for communicating during an emergency, and should be part of the school's emergency toolbox. Procedures governing storage and use will help ensure availability.

### Two-way Radios

Two-way radios provide a reliable method of communication between rooms and buildings at a single site. All staff should be trained to operate the two-way radio. It is suggested that one radio be allocated to the principal, assistant principal, school resource officer, custodians, guidance counselors, secretary and one representative from each grade level. A designated educator from each grade level should be given one during a crisis. It is recommended that the school have an extra one available in the office to be used as needed during a crisis situation. Remember that some electronic devices can trigger bombs, therefore a designated frequency on two-way radios should be kept shared confidentially with Emergency Responders.

### Computers

Existing computers may be used for communication within the school and to other sites. E-mail may be a useful tool for updating information for staff, central office, other schools in an affected area, and possibly other agencies. School websites can inform the public of the current situation and pertinent information.

### Fax machines

Possible uses for fax machines include an off-campus accident where lists of learners and staff members are involved. These locations and needed telephone numbers can be quickly and accurately communicated. Medical information, release forms, and authorisations can be faxed and returned in emergencies.

### Cellular telephones

These phones may be the only tool working when the electricity is out. They are useful to staff who may be en-route to or from a site. Be aware however, that cell phones are often the first form of communication to fail in a large scale emergency (this is due to overloading networks). They can also trigger bombs.

### "Panic buttons"

Emergency panic buttons may be connected directly to the police or other emergency services.

### Alarm systems

Bells or buzzers may be sounded in different ways to signal different types of emergencies - e.g. fire, severe weather, or special alerts.

## Communication Strategies with Parents and Community

An important aspect of managing emergencies is dealing effectively with parent reactions and community agencies. Communication with parents and the community is best begun **before** an emergency occurs. Some useful strategies include the following:

- Inform parents about the school's emergency management plan (SEMP), its objectives, and the need for it. Such information can be included in a school newsletter, local public access media, websites or other informational materials prepared for parents.
  - Lists of personnel on emergency teams and their specific roles in a crisis should not be detailed and released to parent or listed on community information. Many of these lists include private information such as cell phone numbers.
  - The details of the emergency plan should remain confidential, and care should be taken not to publish evacuation routes, floor plans or other information that could be used by individuals seeking targets for predatory actions.
- Develop a school climate that nurtures relationships with parents so that they trust and feel comfortable calling school personnel in the event of emergency.
- Develop materials that may be needed, including:
  - Drafts of letters to parents informing them of what happened.
  - Information regarding possible reactions to a variety of safety situations for use by parents as they talk with their learnerren.
  - Steps the school and school district authorities are taking to handle the situation.
- Develop a list of community resources which may be helpful to parents or the school in the event of an emergency.
- Identify parents who are willing to volunteer in the case of an emergency, and include them in all preparation efforts and training.

## Sharing Information with Parents

In the event of an emergency, parents have very specific information needs. First, parents want to know their learnerren are safe; then they will want to know the details of the emergency situation and how it is being handled, and finally they will want to know that the learnerren will be safe in the future.

The first reactions are likely to involve **Fear**. Upon learning of an incident at the school, parents are likely to either descend upon the school in search of their learner, or to frantically telephone the school seeking some information. Establishing a system for responding quickly to parent needs for information is an important part of pre-planning.

**Anger** is another common reaction of parents, particularly in the case of senseless acts of violence.

In the event of an emergency or disaster:

- Tell parents exactly what is known to have happened. Do not embellish or speculate.
- Implement the plan to manage phone calls, traffic control and meet with parents who arrive at school.
- If deemed necessary, schedule and attend an open question-and-answer meeting for parents as soon after the incident as possible. The meeting will provide an opportunity for school authorities to listen and respond to parent concerns (which are helpful in combating rumours and misinformation) and to work on restoring parental trust in the school.
- In the event of an incident which involved damage or destruction, an open house for parents and other members of the community to see the school restored to its "normal" state helps everyone get beyond the emergency.
- During a school-level emergency, the school may utilise (if available) an automated telecommunication device that can be programmed to deliver critical messages in a short period of time. Such messages can be directed to the residences of the learners and their parents or guardians attending this particular school.
- During a school-level emergency, it may be necessary to move learners to an alternative site. This area should be designated as part of the overall plan. Parents will need to be notified as to where they need to meet their learnerren (this forms part of the reunification plan).

## Dealing with Rumours

Establishing reliable communication networks is critical for dealing effectively with a potentially detrimental phenomenon often present in emergencies: - Rumours. People are going to talk about an emergency, and when accurate information or facts are not available, rumours and speculation will start. Rumours create a negative perception of the school's ability to manage an emergency, and the most strategy for combating this is to provide facts as soon as possible.

Identify and notify internal groups including administrators, educators, learners, custodians, secretaries, teaching assistants, cafeteria workers, bus drivers, etc. These are primary sources of information and are likely to be contacted in their neighborhoods, at grocery stores, etc. It is critical that they have accurate information because what they know (or are speculating about) will be passed on. A staff meeting should be held before staff members go home on day one so that what is (and is not) known then can be clearly communicated.

Staff who answer the telephone at the school must know which information can be shared and cannot be shared. They must be kept informed of inaccurate information that is circulating so they can help correct misinformation. Designating a few persons to answer telephone calls will help control the circulating of misinformation. You should prepare a scripted preapproved statement for faxing, e-mailing and telephone communication.

### Using key communicators to deal with rumours

Adults and learners who are trusted in the community, will help to combat rumours about an incident. These individuals may or may not be in positions of authority or officially recognized leaders. They are frequently dentists, police officers, firefighters, news agency owners, post office clerks, contacts from radio & television, etc. Within the school it might include a school secretary, custodian and others that have an interest in the schools and the community. Of course it should also include various staff from the Department of Education.

The distinguishing characteristics of these key communicators are that they are respected by their peers and their opinions are trusted by others. They must agree to disseminate accurate information about the school system and correct misinformation, and immediately report misperceptions to school officials.

### Other means of dealing with rumours

A telephone tree or a briefing held especially for identified community representatives directly associated with the school will help convey accurate information.

The media can also help control rumours by providing frequent updates to the public containing the latest and most accurate information on the incident.

Immediately after the emergency has passed, one should hold a public meeting to provide people with an opportunity to ask questions and to receive accurate information. A follow-up public meeting may also help in restoring the community's confidence in the school's ability to manage emergencies and provide a safe environment for their learnerren.

## Communicating with the Media

Most news people are sensitive in reporting emergencies that occur in school settings and are interested in doing a reputable job. The following suggestions will promote clear communications with the media:

- Identify a single information source (typically this will be your designated Public Information Officer).
- Direct media representatives to one area (on or off campus) where briefings can take place. This should be done in advance so there is a known media staging area, and should not necessarily take place at the site of the event, unless the school is showing how normalcy has been restored.
- Instruct all employees to refer all information and questions to the School Media Liaison or Information Officer.
- If the emergency is a death, consult with the deceased learner/staff member's family before making a statement.
- Insist that reporters respect the privacy rights of learners and staff.
- Advise learners of the school's learner media policy.
- Decide what to say, issue a statement, and answer questions within the limits of confidentiality.
- Remind employees that only designated personnel are authorized to talk with news media.
- Take initiative with news media and let them know what is, or is not known about the situation.
- Emphasize school's good safety record.
- Speak to reporters in plain English - not in "educationese."
- If there is involvement with a criminal case, work in conjunction with law enforcement spokesperson and the local board attorney.
- Don't try to "kill" a story; don't say "no comment"; don't speculate; don't try to blame anyone for anything.
- When communicating, maintain a unified position and message; keep messages concise, clear, and consistent.
- Contact external school authorities (Dept. of Education, School board) to regularly update.
- Delay releasing information until facts are verified and the school's position is clear; prepare your statements about the situation in advance, and read these word-for-word to avoid ad-libbing.
- Assign sufficient staff to handle telephones, and keep a log of all calls and personal contacts.
- Express appreciation to all persons who helped handle the emergency.

## **SAMPLE DOCUMENT #17 : LETTER TO PARENTS IN THE EVENT OF A DISASTER**

*Dear Parents,*

*As you may or may not be aware, our school has recently experienced (specify the event, whether death, fire, etc.) which has deeply affected us. Let me briefly review the facts (give a brief description of incident and known facts).*

*We have implemented our school's Emergency Management Response Plan in an effort to provide an appropriate response to the situation. This plan is also designed to provide assistance to our learners and their families when deemed necessary. Learners, educators and staff will react in different ways to emergencies of this nature, so it will be important to have support available to assist those in need. Qualified counsellors are available in the school setting to assist learners as they express their feelings related to (the specific event). We have included a reference sheet to help you recognize possible reactions you may observe in your learner. If you feel your learner is in need of special assistance or is having a great deal of difficulty coping with (the loss, disaster, etc.), please do not hesitate to call me.*

*While it is important to deal with grief, loss, anger and fear reactions, we believe it is essential to resume as normal a routine as possible regarding school activities. The following modifications in our school's regular schedule will be in effect during (specify dates, times and places), and after that time all regular schedules and routines will resume. (Specify needed information such as memorial services, possible changes in classroom locations, alterations school operating hours, etc.).*

*Thank you for your support of our school system as we work together to cope with (specify event). Please observe your learner closely over the next several days and weeks to watch for signs of distress which may indicate a need for additional support and guidance. Please feel free to call if you have any concerns or questions regarding your learner, or the steps being taken by the school to address this (loss, tragedy, etc.).*

*Sincerely,*

*(Principal Name)*

*(Phone)*

## SAMPLE DOCUMENT #18 : ANNUAL LETTER TO PARENTS ON EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Dear Parents:

Providing for your child's safety when at school is the responsibility of the principal and staff, and we are prepared to make prompt and responsible decisions in any situation that could threaten the safety of our learners. These responses are detailed in the School's Emergency Management Plan which is being continually reviewed, updated and practised, and is presented to all parents at the start of each school year.

We would like to make you aware of some of the procedures we take in the event of an incident which may affect you

- The need to lockdown, initiate shelter-in-place, evacuate learners or close school before the regularly scheduled closing time could arise from a relatively minor emergency such as a prolonged interruption of power, or due to a major event such as a violent incident at school. During these times, communication and/or transportation may be disrupted.
- In the event of a major emergency or disaster, information will be given primarily through our dedicated emergency line, and additional information may be released to local radio stations if necessary.
- In terms of our Learner Release Policy, no learner will be dismissed from school unless a parent (or individual designated by a parent) comes for him/her. No learner will be released to another person, even a relative or baby sitter, unless there is written permission to that effect on file, and that particular person is able to identify him/herself.
- All parents or designated persons who come for learners must sign out their children out at the office, unless directed elsewhere by posted signs.
- In the event of an evacuation, emergency personnel will inform parents where the designated emergency assembly and release station has been set up.

Please be assured, we are prepared and ready to care for your learner in an emergency situation. Members of our staff are trained in the areas of first aid, search and locate, and learner safety to ensure that all your learner needs will be met. We will communicate with local emergency services, and will keep them informed at all times on our current status and the need for additional resources. During the school year, your child will be trained in the necessary emergency procedures, and each will learn how to react, where to assemble, and what to expect in an emergency situation.

To support our efforts, we request your assistance in the following ways:

- Do not call the school. We will contact you, if necessary, and if possible. It is essential that telephone lines be kept open for emergency calls.
- If you come to pick up your child, please be patient and orderly. We will release learners as quickly as possible. Panic can spread very quickly if parents do not remain calm.
- We suggest that you meet with your immediate family and develop an emergency plan of your own to deal with various situations.

If you have any questions or comments regarding our emergency preparations, please call the school office at \_\_\_\_\_, or contact us by email at \_\_\_\_\_.

Yours Sincerely,

PRINCIPAL

## Backpack Letters

### What are Backpack Letters and when should they be sent?

A Backpack Letter is a letter or notice to parents and guardians which is sent home in learners' backpacks.

Regular, clear communication between schools and families is essential, and backpack letters are a key communications tool between principals and parents.

- When a critical incident has occurred at school, or has involved one or more learners or staff in a school, backpack letters written by the principal, or in conjunction with public safety officials, can be an effective way of relaying important and helpful information to parents.
- Unlike verbal messages, backpack letters can be reread and used as a reference tool.
- Backpack letters can be used to demonstrate to the community that a school is taking care of its learners and staff members.
- The information in backpack letters can form the outline for media interviews. Reporters often use backpack letters to verify facts.

### What Should a Backpack Letter Say?

All well-constructed backpack letters share of number of characteristics:

- They are clear and simply written.
- They avoid words or phrases that are inflammatory.
- They contain only accurate information without speculation.
- They involve parents in the solutions.

Often a backpack letter can be limited to three paragraphs:

- The first paragraph outlines the situation.
- The second paragraph details the steps the school has taken with other agencies and public safety or health officials, to remedy the problem.
- The third paragraph lists ways that families can help, and how families can get more information.

### How is a Backpack Letter Prepared?

A draft of a backpack letter is prepared by the principal, and first reviewed by the Board, District officials, or other key school personnel.

In all situations that involve police, or fire and rescue investigations, the backpack letter should be reviewed by public safety officials before being sent home with the learner.

Every effort should be made not to rush the review process, but to allow as much time as is necessary for this to be done correctly.

## Examples of Media Statements

### Example 1: Bus Accident

*"Our third grade learners were on a field trip when their school bus was involved in an accident on (NAME OF ROAD). Emergency medical teams have arrived and are transporting learners to (NAME OF HOSPITAL). Our assistant principal is at the scene, and two members of staff are at the hospital.*

*We have established a hotline for parents (or...staff members are calling parents of learners involved in the accident). The hotline number is (TELEPHONE NUMBER). Our School Emergency Response Team is implementing our emergency protocol for bus accidents, including providing support to learners and staff."*

Take note of the important points made by the school within this media statement:

- ⇒ The preparedness of the school
- ⇒ The coordination of efforts with community agencies
- ⇒ Access to information for parents
- ⇒ The responsible and immediate action taken by the school representatives (including those in positions of authority)
- ⇒ The support being provided to learners at the school.

### Example 2: Fight/Death of Learner (off campus, after hours)

*"A fight involving two eleventh-grade learners occurred a block from the school at 19h00 last night. The incident resulted in the fatal shooting of one of our learners. No more is known at this time, but Police are conducting an ongoing investigation.*

*Our School Emergency Response Team went into action immediately following the incident, and the following actions have been taken in accordance with emergency protocols:*

- 1) *The team met last night and have planned a staff meeting before the start of the school day.*
- 2) *All staff have been notified about the meeting by means of our Telephone Tree.*
- 3) *Crisis intervention for learners is being provided by our staff and appropriate community resources;*
- 4) *A review of our school weapons policy is underway and school security is on alert for potential related violence."*

Take note of the important points made by the school within this media statement:

- ⇒ Even though the incident occurred off campus and after hours, the school recognises that it still has a responsibility to act
- ⇒ The incident is coupled with a statement concerning the school's weapons policy
- ⇒ The school demonstrates its ability to handle emergencies by convening a SERT meeting, by drawing on community resources, and by providing (or accessing) crisis counseling to the learners.

## Developing a Parent/Learner Reunification Plan

When an incident occurs at a school, learners' parents will contact the school and may begin arriving at the school to retrieve their learnerren. The arrival of parents may disrupt the efforts of those dealing with the emergency. Planning for parent response will allow for a quickly organized process where parents and learners can be reunited in an orderly and accountable fashion. A well-organized parent reunion location will alleviate parents' fears and deliver learners to their parents or guardians efficiently.

### Tips for Developing a Parent/Learner Reunification Plan

The parent reunion area should be away from any other of the staging areas and can be some distance from the school building. When choosing a parent reunion area, plan for the worst case scenario so that the location can support many parents and vehicles, provide shelter, and possibly offer some isolated quiet areas for private moments. One good location for this type of operation is a nearby church or similar building with plenty of parking available.

All personnel involved in the incident, including your local police department, must be aware of the parent reunion location and be able to direct parents to the area. Depending on the type of incident, the parent reunion area may require security and traffic direction, which should be identified in advance and coordinated with the police department during the incident.

Parent contact should be expected and planned for by giving specific directions to the parents as they arrive in the area. A central location must be established where the parents can wait to be reunited with their learnerren and obtain information about the event. A well-informed member of the crisis team should be at this location and coordinate the activities at this site. This person should: 1) coordinate with the media liaison for information that can be released to the parents, and 2) communicate with the evacuation, learner accounting and bus staging personnel to facilitate learnerren coming to the reunion location to join their parents. The reunion location has the potential to become very chaotic during a school incident, but with proper planning the activities can be established quickly and remain organized.

### Steps for developing a parent/learner reunification plan

- 1) Using the school's evacuation routes, identify a parent/learner reunification area for each type of evacuation, including
  - Outside the school building
  - Alternate building location within walking distance
  - Alternate building location requiring transport
- 2) Identify a SERT member to coordinate activities on the site as parent reunion organizer, including coordinating contact with the media.
- 3) Come to agreement with local emergency management personnel about any special procedures that may be necessary (e.g., traffic direction) to direct parents to the reunification area. Keep local partners updated with any changes to your parent/learner reunification plans.
- 4) Develop learner release procedures for after reunification occurs.
- 5) Communicate reunification location and release procedures to parents once every school year or as they are updated.

# PHASE 3

## Response



***“RESPONSE” is the process of implementing appropriate actions while an emergency situation is unfolding.***

**Responding** means “*doing what you planned to do.*” In this phase, the school mobilizes resources needed to handle a particular emergency situation.

A broad range of emergency situations have been identified in the Emergency Management Response Protocols section of this guide. For each event, there are specific actions to be taken to handle the given situation appropriately. Depending on the type of emergency, protocols may remain under the domain of the school, may require assistance from external emergency responders, or may necessitate a coordinated community-wide response. Schools should strive to maintain an agreed upon simple language protocol that all school personnel, learners, visitors and responders would easily understand. This process should avoid the use of elaborate codes or code words that may not be known or understood by the majority of people involved in the crisis, or by visitors in the school at the time of the incident.

“Universal Emergency Procedures” refers to a set of clear directives that may be implemented across a number of situations. For example, “**Evacuation**” is a procedure that would apply to a situation when it is safer outside the building than inside; such emergencies could be fire, bomb threat or interior gas leak. Staff throughout the school would not necessarily need to know what type of emergency is occurring; they would simply need to know to *evacuate* the building once a decision has been made and announced. The intent is always to move learners, staff and visitors away from harm and the immediate vicinity of danger.

Other Universal Emergency Procedures include “**Shelter-in-Place**”, “**Drop, Cover & Hold**”, “**Severe Weather**” “**Safe Area**”, “**Lockdown**” and “**Reverse Evacuation**”. The main advantage of having a small set of universal procedures is its simplicity. With Universal Emergency Procedures in place, staff can learn to follow specific directions without having to learn extensive protocols for dozens of different emergency responses.

As a means of reviewing and improving on the School Emergency response Plan, an “After Action Review Report” (page 51) should be completed after a drill or crisis, and thereafter implemented or acted upon.

#### RESPONSE CHECKLIST

- ⇒ **Don't panic** — take a deep breath and remember your training
- ⇒ Determine if a crisis is occurring — verify all information
- ⇒ Identify the type of crisis taking place and determine the appropriate response protocol to initiate
- ⇒ Decide whether to call the Police, or other Emergency Responders
- ⇒ Decide whether to activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- ⇒ Ascertain whether an evacuation; reverse evacuation; lockdown; or shelter-in-place needs to be implemented.
- ⇒ Maintain communications with relevant staff at officially designated locations
- ⇒ Establish what information needs to be communicated to staff, learners, families, media and the community.
- ⇒ Prepare formal statements or announcements to staff, learners, parents, families, media and the community
- ⇒ Monitor how emergency first aid is being administered to the injured
- ⇒ Decide if more equipment and supplies are needed
- ⇒ Establish contact with parents/family members of affected learners or staff
- ⇒ Notify School Board and Dept. of Education officials, as appropriate
- ⇒ Expand the Incident Command System as necessary, and deactivate the same when the crisis has been dealt with
- ⇒ Review and implement “Recovery” activities
- ⇒ Document actions taken, and secure all records

# Universal Emergency Procedures

Universal Emergency Procedures are a set of standard, clear directives that may be implemented across a variety of emergency situations. When an emergency begins, the principal, as Incident Commander, will decide which Universal Emergency Procedures to implement, based on the situation.

There are six basic procedures which can be utilized in responding to various emergencies:

## EVACUATION

*(For use when conditions outside are safer than inside)*

When announcement is made, or alarm sounded:

- Take the closest and safest way out as posted (use secondary route if the primary route is blocked or hazardous)
- Take roll book for Learner accounting.
- Assist those needing special assistance.
- Do not stop for Learner/staff belongings.
- Go to designated Assembly Area.
- Check for injuries.
- Take attendance roll-call
- Complete requirements according to Learner Accounting and Release procedures
- Wait for further instructions.

## SHELTER-IN-PLACE

*(For use in external gas/chemical release scenarios)*

When announcement is made, or alarm sounded:

- Immediately shepherd learners into the nearest available classroom or other designated area
- Assist those needing special assistance.
- Close and tape all windows and doors, and seal gaps between bottom of the door and the floor
- Take attendance roll-call
- Complete requirements according to Learner Accounting and Release procedures
- Do not allow anyone to leave the classroom.
- Stay away from all doors and windows.
- Wait for further instructions.

## REVERSE EVACUATION

*(For use when conditions inside are safer than outside)*

When announcement is made, or alarm sounded:

- Move Learners and staff inside as quickly as possible
- Assist those needing special assistance.
- Report to classroom.
- Check for injuries.
- Take attendance roll-call
- Complete requirements according to Learner Accounting and Release procedures
- Wait for further instructions..

## DROP, COVER & HOLD

*(For use in earthquake or other imminent danger to school building or immediate surroundings)*

When the command "Drop" is made:

- DROP – to the floor, take cover under a nearby desk or table, and face away from windows
- COVER - your eyes by leaning your face against your arms
- HOLD - on to the table or desk legs, and stay in that place and position
- Assist those needing special assistance.
- Wait for further instructions.

## SEVERE WEATHER SAFE AREA

*(For use in severe weather emergencies)*

When announcement is made, or alarm sounded:

- Take the closest, safest route to find shelter in designated safe areas (use secondary route if primary route is blocked or dangerous)
- Occupants of portable classrooms must move to the main building to designated safe areas
- Assist those needing special assistance.
- Do not stop for Learner/staff belongings.
- Close all doors.
- Take roll book for Learner accounting .
- Take attendance roll-call
- Complete requirements according to Learner Accounting and Release procedures
- Remain in the safe area until the "All Clear" is given.
- Wait for further instructions .

## LOCKDOWN

*(For use to protect occupants from potential dangers in the school building)*

When announcement is made, or alarm sounded:

- Learners are to report to their classroom or nearest designated safe area
- Assist those needing special assistance.
- Close and lock all windows and doors, and do not leave for any reason
- Cover all room and door windows (providing this has been previously approved by local law enforcement authorities)
- Stay away from all doors and windows and move learners towards the interior walls
- Drop to the floor
- Shut off lights
- BE QUIET!
- Wait for further instructions.

## After Action Review Report

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**EVENT** (mark one)       Drill  
    Fire  
    Severe Weather  
    Earthquake  
 Lockdown  
 Tabletop Exercise  
 Full Scale Mock Exercise

**INCIDENT** (mark one)       Fire  
    Severe Weather  
    Earthquake  
    Lockdown  
    Intruder  
    Other: specify \_\_\_\_\_

**START TIME** \_\_\_\_\_

**END TIME** \_\_\_\_\_ (Time at which there was 100% accountability for learners, staff and visitors)

### AFTER ACTION REVIEW

**Participants** (continue on back)      \_\_\_\_\_

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**Commendations**

\_\_\_\_\_

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**Recommendations**

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**RESPONSE**

# Emergency Response Protocols

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# ALLERGIC REACTION

## Possible Symptoms

- Skin irritation or itching, rash, hives, nasal itching, sneezing, localized swelling, swollen tongue
- Restlessness, sweating, fright, shock
- Shortness of breath, vomiting, cough, hoarseness

## Staff Actions

- If the learner is in imminent danger, notify the principal and send for immediate help (First Aid, CPR, Medical) and the First Aid kit (for known allergies)
- Assist in getting any medication (such as Epinephrine) which has been prescribed for the learner (usually to be found in the learner's backpack or Main Office)
- Keep the learner comfortable
- Move the learner only for safety reasons

## Principal / SERT Actions

- Call an Ambulance/Emergency Medical Services if deemed necessary
- Administer appropriate medical assistance, such as
- Provide medication as directed by a physician
- Apply an ice pack to affected area
- Keep the victim warm
- Watch closely for respiratory difficulty and be prepared to respond with Oxygen
- Notify the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Notify the learner's parents/guardian of the incident
- Record all details relating to the incident – e.g. time & site of insect sting or food ingested, name of medicine, dosage & time administered etc.

## Suggested Preventive/Supportive Actions

- Ensure that the First Aid Kit is stocked with medication for known and common allergies.
- Have parents complete a Health Card for every child, and ensure that these are easily accessible by school personnel
- Provide School Bus drivers with information on all learners known to be acute reactors, and train them on appropriate medical responses in the event of an incident
- Encourage employees with special health considerations to alert the principal and staff

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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# ASSAULT

## Staff Actions

- Report to the Principal the type and number of injuries and if assailant is still in area
- Provide a good description of the assailant (clothing, height, etc.)
- Give the location of the assault
- If the assailant has left the building on foot, give the direction of travel
- If the assailant leaves in a vehicle, give a description of vehicle, license number and direction of travel
- Administer First Aid to the victim, and call for medical attention if needed

## Principal / SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Notify the school's law enforcement staff, and call the police if warranted
- Summon Ambulance/Emergency Medical Services if necessary
- Give the type and number of injuries
- Advise if the assailant is still in the building or on the property
- Provide a description of the assailant
- Give the direction of travel and type of vehicle
- If the threat still persists, determine whether to initiate a school Lockdown
- Notify other school authorities as directed
- Document actions and complete incident reports

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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RESPONSE

## BOMB THREAT

A bomb threat may be received at anytime. Experience shows that over 95% of all written or telephoned bomb threats are hoaxes. However, there is always a chance that a threat may be authentic. Appropriate action should be taken in each case to provide for the safety of Learners, staff, and facilities. While the responsibility for action rest with law enforcement authorities, the people who work in the building are most aware of what does and does not belong in or near it.

### Staff Actions

- The person receiving the call should make every attempt to
  - Obtain as much information as possible
  - Listen – do not interrupt
  - Prolong the conversation as much as possible
  - Identify background noises & voice characteristics
  - Engage the caller to give a description of the bomb, its location, and the time it is due to explode
  - Determine the caller's knowledge of the facility
  - Take down the entire message
  - Have a tracer placed on the call

**NOTE :** Be aware that the more **specific** the call, the more likely there is an actual bomb

- Alert the principal or SERT without hanging up (Use another phone to call the authorities)
- Complete the School Bomb Threat Report (below) as soon as possible
- Evacuate the building until it is deemed safe to re-enter by the Police or other emergency responders.

### Principal / SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Call the Police
- SERT Commander makes a decision using standard procedures on whether to evacuate the school building, or to stay inside.

**NOTE:** If an evacuation response is initiated, modify evacuation routes if necessary based on possible location of bomb

- If what appears to be a bomb is found, DO NOT TOUCH IT. Wait until the police arrive to take charge
- Turn off all cell phones and do not transmit with "Walkie Talkie" radios
- Leave the immediate environment as it is, and avoid altering any electrical items or systems (i.e. Do not turn on or off lights; do not change thermostat temperatures; avoid opening and closing doors)
- Evacuate personnel at least 100 meters from the building; during inclement weather and a possible prolonged search, move learners to an alternate building location
- Follow standard Learner accounting and reporting procedures
- Check absentee list for possible clues to who might have phoned in the bomb scare
- After an "all clear" signal is given, instruct learners to return to class
- Document actions and provide police with a copy of the School Bomb Threat Report



## CHEMICAL/HAZARDOUS MATERIAL SPILL

Chemical accidents may originate inside or outside the school building. Examples include toxic chemical leaks; spills caused by tank, truck, or railroad accident; spills from water/waste treatment plants; spills from neighbouring industries or laboratories, etc.

### ⇒ Accidents originating from outside the building

#### Staff Actions

- Notify Principal
- Determine the wind direction by observing flags or leaves, and move learners to an appropriate location away from the danger area (if already outside, initiate "Reverse Evacuation" procedures)

#### Principal / SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) and brief them on the situation
- Initiate "Shelter in Place" procedures
- Call the Police and Fire department
- Notify all other designated authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Do not leave the building unless instructed to do so; if you must evacuate building or grounds, take care to avoid fumes

### ⇒ Accidents originating from inside the building

#### Staff Actions

- Notify Principal
- Move learners away from immediate vicinity of danger

#### Principal / SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) and brief them on the situation
- Determine the urgency of situation and call the Police and Fire Department if warranted
- Initiate evacuation plan; avoid the area where the chemical accident occurred and any fumes which are present
- Follow standard learner assembly, accounting and reporting procedures; if necessary, move the assembly area up-wind, up-hill, or up-stream from the location of the spill
- Wait for instructions from Emergency Response Agencies and SERT.
- Do not take unsafe actions such as returning to the building before it has been declared safe, or lighting matches, candles, or other fires which could cause an explosion or ignite volatile fumes

#### Additional steps for our school (if any)

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## CYBER-BULLYING

*Cyber-bullying is described as the use of information and communication technologies, such as emails, mobile phones or internet-based social networking sites, to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group, for the purpose of harassing, threatening, humiliating or harming others.*

Cyber-bullying can involve:

- Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images
- Posting sensitive, private information and/or lies about another person
- Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad
- Intentionally excluding someone from an online group

Learners can cyber-bully each other through:

- Emails
- Instant messaging
- Text or digital imaging messages sent on cell phones
- Social networking sites
- Web pages
- Blogs
- Chat rooms or discussion groups
- Other cyber technologies

Of these, bullying via instant messaging appears to be particularly prevalent

Schools can be very effective brokers in working with the parents to stop and remedy cyber-bullying situations. They can also educate the learners on cyber-ethics and the law. However, when schools try and get involved by disciplining the learner for cyber-bullying actions that took place off school grounds and outside of school hours, they are exposed to accusations of exceeding their authority and violating the learner's free speech right. By being creative, schools can avoid claims that their actions against cyber-bullying exceeds their legal authority for off-campus incidents. One way is to add a provision to school policy reserving the right to discipline the learner for actions taken off-campus if they are intended to have an effect on a learner in that school, or they adversely affect the safety and well-being of learner while in school. This makes it a contractual, not a constitutional issue.

### Staff Actions

- Educate learners on cyber-bullying, the ways they can become inadvertent cyber-bullies, how to be accountable for their actions, and how not to stand by and allow bullying (in any form) to be acceptable.

### What to teach learners

- If you wouldn't say it in person, don't say it online
- Respect other people and treat them the way you want to be treated
- Don't contribute to cyber-bullying by forwarding or adding to cruel messages

## CYBER-BULLYING continued

- Don't be afraid to stand up to the cyber-bully and report his/ her behaviour to a educator or trusted adult
- The cyber-bully is the one in the wrong
- Never tell anyone your online passwords or your cell-phone PIN number
- Never share personal information online, such as your home address or phone number
- Never take naked or compromising pictures or videos of yourself, or your friends, on your cell-phone. Even if you just share them among your friends, they can soon spread like wildfire. And it's illegal
- Think before you react to something online
- If you are being victimised online, block the person doing it from your Facebook page, or instant messaging account, and communicate only with people you know;
- Raise awareness of the serious consequences of cyber-bullying with your friends and your community;
- Talk to your parents about what you do online; don't shut them out of this part of your life

### Principal / SERT Actions

- Educate learners, educators, and other staff members about cyber-bullying, its dangers, and what to do if someone is cyber-bullied.
- Provide an anonymous method of reporting cyber-bullying, offensive web sites, profiles and campaigns.
- Ensure that the school's anti-bullying rules and policies address cyber-bullying.
- Closely monitor learners' use of computers at school.
- Use filtering and tracking software on all computers; but don't rely solely on this software to screen out cyber-bullying and other problematic online behaviour.
- Investigate reports of cyber-bullying immediately. If cyber-bullying occurs through the school internet/intranet system, you are obligated to take action. If the cyber-bullying occurs off-campus, consider what actions you might take to help address the bullying, such as
  - Notify parents of victims and parents of cyber-bullies of known or suspected cyber-bullying.
  - Notify the police if the known or suspected cyber-bullying involves a threat.
  - Closely monitor the behaviour of affected learners at school for possible bullying.
  - Talk with all learners about the harms caused by cyber-bullying.. Remember — cyber-bullying that occurs off-campus can travel like wildfire among learners and can affect how they behave and relate to each other at school
  - Determine whether counselling is required by victim(s) of cyber-bullying.
- Contact the police immediately if known or suspected cyber-bullying involves acts such as:
  - Threats of violence
  - Extortion



# DEATH/SERIOUS ILLNESS

## Staff Actions

- Notify the School Principal, providing as much detail as possible
- Remove all learners from the immediate vicinity of the victim

## Principal / SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) and brief them on the situation
- Call the Police and Emergency Medical Services when death/illness is verified
- Protect the privacy of the family; the school neither gives nor confirms information to the media or others without consent
- Notify all other designated authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Notify educators prior to the start of school by using a "phone tree"; or during school in a staff meeting held prior to learners being notified
- Schedule a staff meeting as soon as possible to:
  - share the known details
  - review procedures for the day
  - discuss procedures for notifying learners
  - establish availability of support services and the referral process for learners needing assistance
- Contact the family or visit the learner's home to offer help, condolence and support
- Allow learners to meet in guidance office or other appropriate place; learners should be encouraged to report others who might need assistance
- Designate multiple areas for crisis team/grief counsellors to meet with affected learners
- Notify the bus driver of the learner who will not ride home on the bus
- Contact the parents/guardian of highly traumatised learners to determine appropriate support needed after leaving school
- Offer assistance to parents of impacted learners
- If deemed necessary by the Principal, call a staff meeting at the end of the day to disseminate additional information
- Complete appropriate incident reports and documentation

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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# “DROP, COVER & HOLD”

*(For use in earthquakes, or imminent danger to buildings and immediate surroundings)*

## Procedure

- When the command “**DROP**” is given
  - ⇒ DROP to the floor facedown, and take cover under a nearby desk or table, facing away from windows
- When the command “**COVER**” is given
  - ⇒ COVER your eyes by leaning your face against your arms
- When the command “**HOLD**” is given
  - ⇒ HOLD on to the table or desk legs, and maintain present location/position

## Staff actions

- At the alarm or signal, give the commands “Drop, Cover & Hold”
- Assist those learners needing special assistance
- Check to see that all learners have adopted the correct positions
- Take up a safe position whereby all learners remain visible
- Wait for further instructions

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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# EARTHQUAKES

Because earthquakes can strike without warning, the immediate need is to protect lives by taking the best available cover. All other actions must wait until the tremor subsides. If protected from falling objects, the rolling motion of the earth may be frightening, but not dangerous to learners.

## ⇒ **If inside a building**

### **Staff Actions**

- Initiate the "Drop, Cover & Hold" procedure
- If in a room with no desks or furniture and no other cover is available, crouch against an interior doorway or an inside wall and cover head; stay away from outside walls, windows or other expanses of glass, or potential falling objects
- Leave doors open to minimize jamming if the building shifts
- Do not attempt to run through building or outside due to risk of falling objects
- After initial shock, initiate "Evacuation and Standard Learner Accounting" procedures
- Assemble in an area away from buildings, overhead power lines and underground sewers
- In the event of after-shocks, encourage learners to stay calm and seated on the ground
- Administer emergency first aid as needed
- Do not re-enter building until given "all clear" from the Principal or SERT

## ⇒ **If outside a building**

### **Staff Actions**

- Move quickly away from buildings and overhead power lines
- Lie flat, face down, and wait for shocks to subside
- In the event of after-shocks, encourage learners to stay calm and seated on the ground
- Administer emergency first aid as needed
- Use the "green card procedure" to indicate when class is all accounted for
- Use the "red card procedure" to indicate if a child is missing or assistance is needed
- Do not attempt to enter building until authorized to do so by the Principal or SERT
- Do not light fires or touch fallen wires

### **Principal / SERT Actions**

- When tremors stop,
  - Establish whether any learners or staff have been injured or are missing
  - Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
  - Call the Police, Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services as necessary
- Investigate condition of buildings, and determine whether it is safe to return.

### **Additional steps for our school (if any)**

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# EVACUATION

⇒ **For use when conditions outside are safer than inside**

**Staff Actions**

When the Evacuation announcement is made or alarm is sounded,

- Take the closest and safest way out as posted (use a secondary exit route if the primary route is blocked or hazardous)
- Take a Roll Book for learner accounting
- Help those needing special assistance
- Do not stop for learner/staff belongings
- Go to the designated Assembly Area
- Check for injuries
- Take attendance roll-call; report back to SERT according to standard learner accounting and reporting procedures
- Wait for further instructions

⇒ **For use when conditions inside are safer than outside**

**Staff Actions**

- When the Evacuation announcement is made or alarm is sounded,
- Move learners and staff inside the building as quickly as possible
- Help those needing special assistance
- Assemble in the classroom
- Check for injuries
- Take attendance roll-call; report back to SERT according to standard learner accounting and reporting procedures
- Wait for further instructions.

**Additional steps for our school (if any)**

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# EXTREME WEATHER

## Weather Bureau Notifications of Weather Conditions

- ⇒ **“Watches”** Indicate that conditions are right for development of a weather hazard. And usually have lead times of approximately 1-2 hours (severe thunderstorm), 3-12 hours (flash flood), and 12-36 hours (river floods).
- ⇒ **“Advisories”** Issued when weather is expected to disrupt normal routines, but is not expected to be life threatening (e.g. dense fog, heavy rainfall, snow, etc.). Advisory lead times are the same as Warnings
- ⇒ **“Warnings”** Indicate that a hazard is imminent and the probability of occurrence is extremely high. Warnings are issued based on eyewitness reports or clear signatures from remote sensing devices (radar, satellite). Warnings usually have lead times of approximately 30 minutes or less (for thunderstorms & hailstorms), and 6-18 hours (for flooding).

## Upon Issuance of a Weather Bureau “Watch” or “Advisory”

### Principal/SERT Actions

- Activate appropriate members of the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) to be alert for possible change in weather status
- Monitor weather reports for any changes in conditions

## Upon Issuance of a Weather Bureau “Warning”

### Staff Actions

- Take the closest, safest route to shelter in designated Safe Areas (use secondary route if primary route is blocked or dangerous)
- Help those needing special assistance
- Do not stop for learner/staff belongings
- Take the Roll Book for learner accounting
- Take attendance roll-call; report back to SERT according to standard learner accounting and reporting procedures
- Close all doors
- Remain quiet to hear further instructions
- Remain in the Safe Area until the “all clear” signal is given

### Principal/SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Implement “Safe Area” procedures - all learners and staff to proceed to designated safe areas



# FIRE

## Staff Actions

- Sound the Fire Alarm
- Call the Principal and provide details of the location and extent of the fire
- Implement "Evacuation" procedures to an outside Assembly Area
- Implement the emergency plan for any learners needing special assistance
- Follow standard "Learner Accounting" procedures
  - ⇒ **Note:** Some schools use a **Card notification system**. The universal colours of green and red are used; a Green card denotes that all learners are present and all is well, a Red card signifies a problem and calls for assistance.
- Do not re-enter the building until given the "all clear" to do so by the Principal or SERT.
- Determine if arrangements need to be made for transportation to an alternate building location, or if the school is to be dismissed

## Principal / SERT Actions

- Call the Fire Department
- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Establish whether any learners or staff have been injured or are missing
- Call the Police and Emergency Medical Services if necessary
- Do not sound the "all clear" until directed to do so by the Fire Department or SERT
- Notify other designated school authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Document responses and complete incident reports

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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# KIDNAPPING

## Staff Actions

- Notify the school Principal with a description of suspect and the missing Learner/s
- Move other children (if present) away from area of abduction

## Principal / SERT Actions

- Call the Police
- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Notify other designated school authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Contact the parents/guardian of the learner involved; establish a communication plan with them
- If the incident occurs during a school day, maintain normal classroom routines
- Conduct an immediate search of the school buildings and grounds
- Obtain a school photograph and full description of the learner (including clothing) to provide to the Police
- Obtain a full description of the suspect from witnesses
- Call an emergency staff meeting to brief them on the situation; give factual information, as appropriate, to allow them to respond to learners' questions
- Prepare appropriate notices (preferably in writing) for the parents and media
- If required, arrange for counselling assistance for learners
- Document actions and complete incident reports
- When the learner is found, advise all the parties involved

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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## RAPE / SEXUAL ABUSE

When a school is notified that a rape or other sexual abuse may have occurred, the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) and school personnel must protect the identity and right to privacy of the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator. News of the incident should be contained as much as possible. The services provided to the victim and her/his family must be kept confidential and should be coordinated with outside providers, such as social welfare, a rape crisis centre, children's advocacy centre, or hospital emergency room.

**Rape / Sexual Abuse becomes a crisis to be managed by school staff only when one or more of the following conditions exist**

- A rape or other sexual abuse occurs on school grounds
- A member of the alleged victim's family requests intervention
- The alleged victim's friends request intervention
- Rumours and myths of the alleged incident are widespread and damaging
- Learners witness the intervention by police, emergency medical services, or other agencies

### Staff Actions

- Ensure confidentiality is maintained during the investigation
- Ensure the short-term physical safety of the victim
- Notify the school Principal
- Secure immediate medical treatment/First Aid from the school nurse, counsellor or other appropriate staff

### Principal/SERT Actions

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Call the Police and Ambulance/Emergency Medical Services
- Notify a Rape Crisis Centre (if present)
- Notify the parents/guardian of the alleged victim and perpetrator
- Notify other designated school authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Designate the school counsellor or staff member closest to the alleged victim to review the types of support she or he may need
- Determine which peers close to the victim may need support
- Take action to control rumours
- Document actions and complete incident reports
- Store all records related to rape or other sexual abuse incidents, and emergency services provided, in a confidential file not available to other staff

### Additional steps for our school (if any)

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# SCHOOL BUS ACCIDENT

## Staff Actions

- Call an Ambulance/Emergency Medical Services if warranted
- Call Law Enforcement agencies
- Call the School Principal
- Implement basic first aid until the emergency medical services and/or law enforcement agencies arrive and takes charge of the situation
- Move all uninjured learners to a location that is a safe distance from the accident
- Record the names of all injured learners and the location to which they may be taken for medical treatment, and communicate this information to the school.
- Record details of other vehicles and drivers involved in the accident
- Assist law enforcement authorities with details of how the accident occurred.

## Principal or SERT Actions

- Summon the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) and brief them on the situation
- Notify the designated authorities (e.g. School Board, Dept. of Education etc.) of the incident
- Ascertain the names of any injured learners and the nearest location of any medical treatment facility
- Notify the parents/guardians of all learners on the bus as soon as accurate information is available
- Send a designated school representative to the medical treatment facility(s) to which the injured learners have been taken to assist parents and to provide support to learners
- Complete appropriate incident reports and documentation

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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RESPONSE

# SUICIDE

Hinting, writing, or talking about suicide is a call for help and must be taken seriously. When confronted with a situation in which life-threatening behaviour is present, immediate mobilisation of all appropriate resources is paramount. Under such conditions, commitment to learner confidentiality is superseded by the need to initiate life saving intervention/s.

## CLASSIFICATIONS

The following classifications offer three levels of suicide risk among learners:

- ⇒ Suicidal Threat
- ⇒ Suicide Attempt
- ⇒ Suicide Completed

## DO'S AND DON'TS REGARDING A SUICIDE THREAT

### DO'S

- LISTEN to what the learner is saying and take the suicidal threat seriously.
- GET HELP by contacting a school counsellor, psychologist, principal or other resource. Never attempt to handle a potential suicide by yourself.
- OBSERVE the learner's nonverbal behaviour. Facial expressions, body language, and other overt signs often are often more telling than what the learner says.
- ASK whether the learner is thinking about suicide. If the indication is "yes," ask how she/he plans to do it and what steps have already been taken.
- ASSURE the person that you care and you will find help that will keep her/him safe.
- STAY with the learner, and if possible, assist with the transfer to an appropriate mental health professional. The learner has placed trust in you, so you must help transfer that trust to another person.

### DON'TS

- Don't ignore the threat.
- Don't leave the learner alone for even a minute.
- Don't act shocked
- Don't allow yourself to be sworn to secrecy
- Don't let the learner convince you that the crisis is over. Often the most dangerous time is precisely when the person seems to be feeling better. Sometimes the learner may appear happy and relaxed simply because they have come to a decision (even if that decision is suicide).
- Don't take too much upon yourself. Your responsibility to the learner in this situation is limited to listening, being supportive and getting her/him to a trained mental health professional as soon as possible





### 3. SUICIDE COMPLETED

#### *(In the event of a successful suicide)*

School staff should exercise caution when discussing an "apparent suicide" with learners. Often there will be ongoing investigations by the police department, and parents or other relatives may be reluctant to accept the terrible nature of the death. Once the cause of death has been officially established, it is best to first request permission from the parents to talk about the suicide with other learners.

If news of death by suicide is received, the principal or SERT designee shall initiate efforts to address emotional reactions within the school community.

#### **Staff Actions**

- Notify the Principal
- Control the spread of rumours
- Watch for warning signs in other learners (such as "copycat" actions)

#### **Principal/SERT Actions**

- Activate the School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Call the Police and Emergency Medical Services
- Inform the learner's parents/guardian
- Once the death has been officially confirmed, notify the designated authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Identify any family member(s) that may be at school and provide crisis counselling
- Do not release the names of other family members who attend the school
- If the media requests information, refrain from discussing any details relating to the deceased learner; school staff may wish to describe assistance being offered on behalf of learners
- Call an emergency staff meeting to disclose all relevant facts
- Have the school counsellor or other appropriate professional describe how learners may react to the news and suggest how educators can address questions and reactions
- Allow time for school staff to ask questions and express their feelings; some staff may be particularly upset and may request and/or require support
- Outline procedures for the remainder of the school day
- Provide support meetings for school personnel if the need exists
- Compile a list of other learners deemed to be at risk; consider immediate counselling opportunities as part of the school's commitment to responsible follow-up and recovery
- Allow learners to leave class during the day to receive counselling support offered by school personnel, designated volunteer resources or community faith-based persons who have received this specific training
- If the School Emergency Response Team (SERT) deem it appropriate, consider cancelling/avoiding large group meetings or assembly of learners in an effort to maintain order
- Call an after school staff meeting to
  - Debrief the events of the day.







# WEAPONS

## Staff Actions

- Notify school principal, and provide a description and the location of the individual and weapons
- Be certain that at least one other staff member is aware of the situation, but limit this information to staff and learners on a need-to-know basis

## Principal / SERT Actions

- Activate School Emergency Response Team (SERT)
- Call the Police
- Inform the Police of the location, identity and description of the individual and weapons
- If the weapon is in a locker or a backpack, prevent access to that area
- If the weapon is on the individual (but not displayed), isolate the individual
- If the weapon is displayed on the individual
  - Move other learners (if present) away from area
  - Remain calm; avoid sudden moves or gestures.
  - Do not attempt to take the weapon from the individual.
  - Using a calm and clear voice, instruct the individual that they need to place the weapon down
  - Use the individuals name while talking to them.
  - Try not to raise your voice—but, if this becomes necessary, do so decisively, clearly and with authority
  - Determine whether to implement Lockdown, Evacuation or other procedures.
- While maintaining a safe distance, attempt to keep the individual in full view until the Police arrive
- Notify other designated school authorities (School Board, Dept. of Education etc.)
- Document responses and complete incident reports

## Additional steps for our school (if any)

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RESPONSE

# **PHASE 4**

## **Recovery**



***“RECOVERY” is the process of assisting people to deal with the physical, psychological & emotional trauma associated with experiencing tragic events.***

**Recovery** involves the implementation of a plan to return the school to a normal learning environment as soon as possible.

### Immediate vs. Ongoing Recovery

It is essential to understand recovery at two distinct levels, "Immediate" and "Ongoing".

- **Immediate** support is needed from the first moments of a traumatic event through the first few days following it. Recent victims of major trauma are frequently in a state of shock, and at this time basic human needs of food, shelter and clothing are often a primary focus. Long-term recovery needs may not be readily apparent, and for many, ongoing support will be needed.
- **Ongoing** recovery refers to support provided to some individuals for weeks, months or years following a tragic event.

### Crisis Intervention and Support

Learners and their parents, school staff and administrators, public safety personnel and the larger community are all impacted by tragic events and will benefit from immediate and ongoing support.

For some traumatic events, the school emergency response team may be adequate to provide immediate and ongoing recovery services. Other traumas that affect a small number of people may be well served by crisis counselling and intervention programmes from external mental health providers or similar services. In addition, this may be an appropriate time to include members of faith-based organisations who have been trained in this area.

For large-scale emergencies however, services such as triage, trauma assessment, victim outreach and crisis intervention are best delivered by an external response network of trained professionals. The reason for this is that in large-scale disasters, site-based personnel normally assigned to such functions are now themselves the victims/survivors, and therefore outside professionals will be required to provide first response support. Site-based personnel can be called on to provide the ongoing support services once the immediate crisis has passed, but their effectiveness will be greatly strengthened if the support they need in the early stages of recovery is provided at that time. Recognizing the impact of incident-related stress on staff members will help ensure that "quality care" is provided by the school in times of crisis.

#### RECOVERY CHECKLIST

- ⇒ Strive to return to learning as quickly as possible.
- ⇒ Repair damages to the school building as quickly as possible
- ⇒ Monitor how staff is assessing learners for the emotional impact of the crisis.
- ⇒ Identify what follow up interventions are available to learners and staff
- ⇒ Conduct debriefings with staff
- ⇒ Assess curricular activities that address the crisis.
- ⇒ Allocate appropriate time for recovery.
- ⇒ Plan how anniversaries of events will be commemorated.
- ⇒ Capture "lessons learned" and incorporate them into revisions of the emergency plan, and training sessions.

## Disasters and their Effects

The impact of tragedies on individual learners and adults is not simple to predict. The range of human responses can include physical, cognitive, behavioral, spiritual and emotional symptoms including nausea, sleep disturbance, slowed thinking, bad memories, regressed behavior, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger and a host of other responses.

Potential experiences or feelings after a disaster include

- Sense of fear, worry
- Disruption of home, routine
- Feeling that one's life was or is threatened
- Feeling trapped and isolated
- Feeling out of control of life's basics: food, shelter, clothing, people, comfort...even life itself
- Having flashbacks to other catastrophes
- Feeling cut-off from services
- Being separated from loved ones
- Having a sense of mortality
- Feeling "survivor guilt"
- Learners having to become "parents" to adults who are scared or worried
- Problems sleeping (too much or too little)
- Loss of weight
- Poor hygiene

## Symptoms of Distress in Learners

As a result of traumatic experiences, some learners will show a variety of symptoms of distress. Adults must first know a learner's baseline ("usual") behavior and cultural/ethnic responses before they can identify "unusual" or problem behavior in a learner. In addition to educators and school administrators, it is important to train bus drivers, food-service workers and any other staff and/or community members to be alert for learners who show signs of emotional distress.

Symptoms of distress in learners include

- Unusual complaints of illness
- Keeping isolated from the rest of the group
- Signs of pressure to dominate or distract others, or is otherwise "needy"
- Changes in behavior or appearance
- Resistance to opening up (Note: the learner might just be shy or may have language/cultural barrier)
- No eye contact (Note: In some cultures, making eye contact with adults is "defiant behavior")
- Difficulty in concentrating or focussing
- "Feisty" or hyperactive behaviour - silly, giddy
- Any emotional display - crying or "regressed" behavior (less than age-appropriate)
- Lack of emotional expression
- Poor performance
- Inability to tolerate change or move to the next task
- Lethargic, apathetic
- Easily startled, jumpy

**SAMPLE DOCUMENT #19 : Mental Health Checklist**

This checklist can assist parents and educators in determining if a learner is in need of professional counseling following a disaster or traumatic event. Add up the pluses and minuses to obtain a final score. If the learner scores more than 35, it is suggested you seek a mental health consultation.

<b>MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST</b>		If the answer is "YES"
Name of Learner _____		
Date of Assessment _____	Assessed by _____	
Has the learner experienced more than one other major stress within the year PRIOR TO this disaster?		+5
Does the learner have a network of supportive, caring individuals who relate to him/her daily? .		-10
Has the learner had to move out of his/her house because of this disaster?		+5
Was the Learner properly housed within one week of the disaster together with his/her usual household?		-10
Is the learner showing severe disobedience or delinquency?		+5
<b>Has the learner shown any of the following NEW behavior traits for more than three weeks after the event?</b>		
<input type="radio"/> Nightly states of terror?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Waking from dreams confused or in a sweat?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Difficulty concentrating?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Extreme irritability?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Loss of previous abilities in toilet or speech?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Onset of stuttering or lispng?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Persistent severe anxiety or phobias?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Obstinacy/stubbornness?		+5
<input type="radio"/> New or exaggerated fears?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Rituals or compulsions?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Severe clinging to adults?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Inability to fall asleep or stay asleep?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Startling at any reminder of the disaster?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Loss of ambition in the future?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Loss of pleasure in usual activities?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Loss of curiosity?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Persistent sadness or crying?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Persistent headaches or stomachaches?		+5
<input type="radio"/> Hypochondria?		+5
<b>Was anyone in the learner's immediate family killed or severely injured in the disaster?</b>		+15.
<b>TOTAL SCORE</b>		
NOTE: Any learner presenting a preoccupation with death, unusual accident proneness, or suicidal threats should be referred for immediate consultations. It is also recommended that a learner who has been seriously injured or who has lost a parent, sibling or caregiver to death, be referred to a mental health professional.		
Learner Referred to _____ Referred by _____ Date _____		

**RECOVERY**

## Follow-Up Strategies after an Emergency

For some trauma victims, adverse effects fade with emotional support and the passage of time. Others are more deeply affected and experience long-term consequences. These reactions are normal responses to an abnormal event. Although no-one can predict who will experience the most severe reaction to trauma, the more direct the exposure to the event, the higher the risk for emotional harm.

In general, schools can help learners by restoring a learning environment, modeling event recovery, and maintaining basic educational goals.

Administrative Staff, Counsellors and Educators can help their school community by:

- Reducing conflict among groups
- Creating working partnerships among groups inside and outside of the school
- Following familiar school routines
- Acknowledging the trauma through shared activities and observances
- Representing safety and security
- Supporting learners and their families
- Creating opportunities to support caregivers
- Having trained crisis intervention personnel be highly visible in the schools following a crisis
- Remembering that learners and their communities are resilient when supported adequately

### Short-Term Follow-Up and Evaluation Strategies

- Convene a meeting with the School Emergency Management Team and staff members to update them on any additional information/procedures.
- In case of death, provide funeral/visitation information.
- Identify learners and staff in need of follow-up support, and assign staff members to monitor vulnerable learners:
  - Coordinate stress management/crisis intervention strategies for learners, using internal resources.
  - Announce what the school is doing for learners, including place, time, and staff facilitator providing ongoing support.
  - Provide parents with a list of community resources available to learners and their families.
- Designate a comfort room for counselling.
- Convene an External Support team to assist with crisis management.
  - Assess district-wide support needs, and develop planned intervention strategies
  - Schedule and coordinate stress management/crisis intervention strategies for learners, family and staff using external resources.
  - Discuss successes and problems.
  - Discuss things to do differently next time.
- Allow staff opportunities to discuss feelings and reactions, and provide a list of suggested readings to educators, parents and learner

### Long-Term Follow-Up and Evaluation Strategies

- Amend the School Emergency Management Plan and Protocols if needed.
- Write thank-you notes to people who provided support during the emergency.
- Be alert to anniversaries and holidays. Often learners and staff will experience an “anniversary” trigger reaction the following month or year on the date of the emergency, or when a similar crises occurred

## Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM Everly and Mitchell, 1999) is a comprehensive, integrated multi-component crisis intervention system. CISM services provide a framework for education and crisis intervention immediately following a critical incident. These services complement the delivery of traditional mental health services and include

- **Pre-crisis preparation** - Set expectations for what to do when a critical incident occurs.
- **Individual consultation** - A structured one-to-one technique used by a trained peer counsellor or professional, after a critical incident.
- **Crisis Management Briefing** - A presentation to groups following a crisis or critical incident to share information, reduce and dispel rumours, and provide details of action plans.
- **Defusing** - A group crisis intervention technique conducted by a trained facilitator.
- **Debriefing** - A structured small-group process targeted toward mitigating or resolving the psychological distress associated with a critical incident or traumatic event.
- **Parent/family/organization consultation** - A group process conducted to provide ongoing education and support to families, parent groups or organizations following a critical incident.
- **Referral/follow-up** - A process to assure that individuals experiencing intense symptoms and who need ongoing support will be referred for appropriate mental health services.

One common way to organize these interventions is to set up a "Drop in Room." A Drop in Room is a safe, welcoming place for learners or staff to gather during the school day for group or individual support from trained team members.

### Educators Helping Learners After a Critical Incident

This resource was designed to help educators assist learners, and is useful for general disasters as well as emergencies that occur in the lives of individual learners.

Emergencies hit learners hard. It's difficult for them to understand and accept that there are events in their lives that can't be controlled or predicted. Worst of all, adults can't "fix" a disaster, and can't keep it from happening again.

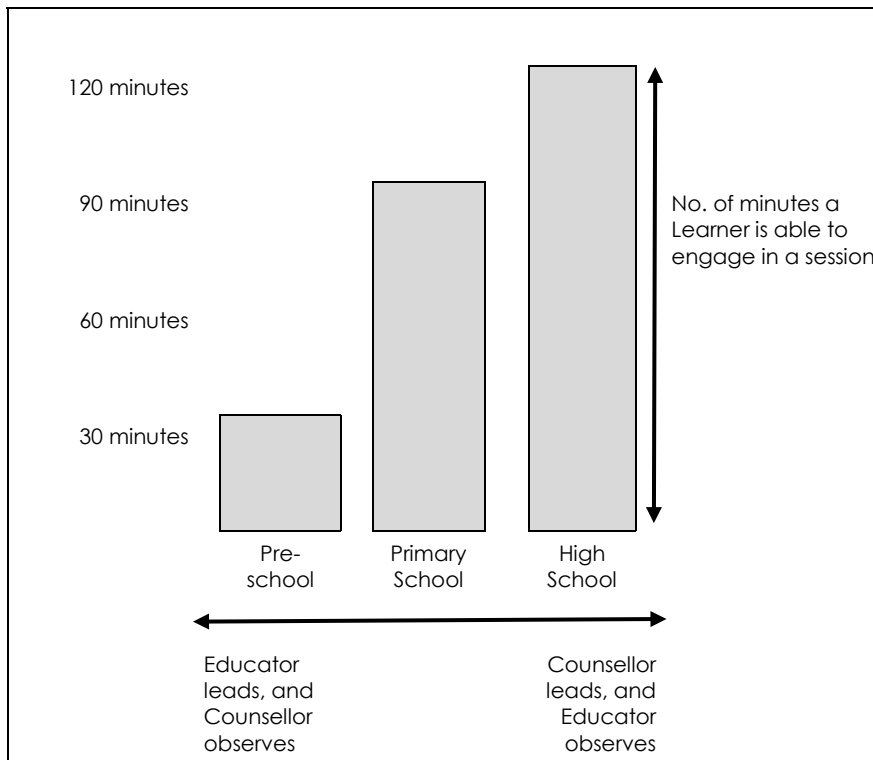
#### Ways in which Educators can assist Learners

- Cope with your own natural feelings of helplessness, fear, and anger. Until you do this, you won't be able to effectively help the learners.
- Learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of distress and post-traumatic stress reactions.
- Put the emergency or critical incident in context; provide a perspective.
- Communicate a positive "I'm not helpless" attitude.
- Start the healing process; help learners to feel relieved and soothed.
- Identify learners who may need crisis intervention and referral to mental health professionals or other helpers

## Understanding Age-appropriate CISM Interventions

When providing Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM, Everly & Mitchell, 1999) interventions, it is essential to tailor your approach to the developmental level of the learners involved.

The following chart illustrates a range of minutes suitable for discussion for different age levels, and from “educator led” to “counsellor led” interventions. In general, younger learners need more educator-led interventions using activities (as opposed to discussion), while older learners benefit from counsellor-led discussions



(Adapted from Johnson, 1998)

## The Talking Method

The Talking Method is a CISM method/technique employing questions or themes, to use in the classroom after a critical incident to help learners understand and process it.

### Suggested questions to ask/themes to represent

- Where were you when it (the disaster/event) happened?
- What were you doing?
- Where were your friends? Where was your family?
- What was your first thought when it happened?
- What did you see? What did you hear?
- What sound did it make? What did you smell?
- Was anyone you know killed or injured?
- What can you do now to help others to feel better?
- How did you feel?
- What did other people around you do (during, after)?
- What was the silliest thing you did?
- Were you or anyone else you know injured?
- What happened to pets or other animals around you?
- What dreams did you have after it?
- What reminds you of it? When do you think about it?
- What do you do differently since the event?
- How do you feel now? What makes you feel better?
- How have you gotten through rough times before?
- What would you do differently if it happened again?
- How did you help others? How would you help next time?
- What can you do now to help others?

### Special Considerations:

- Allow for silence for those with poor language skills, shyness, discomfort, etc. Encourage peer support for these learners.
- Observe the learner's body language.
- Accommodate the communication needs of the learner:
  - If a learner has limited English skills, consider asking for a translator or a peer to help the learner express in words
  - Create a chance for verbal expression in any language

NOTE: As the educator, you might think of more questions to ask the learners. Be sure your questions are "open-ended," which means they cannot be answered with a "Yes" or "No." Open-ended questions facilitate discussion .

## Talking Method Activities

- Learner tells a story (allow metaphors)
- Puppets “tell” or “live” a story
- Have an open discussion using previous questions to guide the talk, and calling for volunteers to begin
- Use photos, drawings, etc. to facilitate discussions
- Use a video (if appropriate) prior to discussion to get it going
- Create a skit, play or do role-playing, related to the critical incident (provide “dress-up” clothes if available, including uniforms if possible to represent emergency workers seen during the disaster, etc.)
- Do “show and tell” related to the event
- Inform/educate the learners about the event to make it less threatening to talk about

## Notes

1. When people understand that their feelings and experiences are normal and can be predicted (even if they are scary feelings), they begin to regain control
2. Remember to keep yourself in a facilitative/guiding role, and try not to control the discussions/stories etc. as this will be more helpful to the learners. Reassure the learners by verbally acknowledging and “normalizing” their experiences.
3. For some learners, the talking method is not helpful
  - In some cultures, talking openly is not comfortable, appropriate (or even “polite”).
  - Some learners have been raised in families where “talking-out one’s feelings” was not possible or supported.
  - Some learners have been raised in situations where talking openly was not practiced or encouraged.
  - Many learners do not have verbal skills to use when traumatized.
  - Some learners simply prefer not to discuss their feelings openly due to personality type, privacy concerns or lack of trust in the process.
  - All these reasons should be respected as valid.

## The Drawing Method

The Talking Method is a CISM method/technique employing drawing as a playful experience to express feelings after a critical incident to help learners understand and process it.

### Introducing the Drawing Method

- Introduce drawing as another way of “talking,” but with pictures instead of words, and a means of expression used by many. Point out that some people express themselves by talking, some by singing, some by dancing, some by drawing.
- When introducing drawing of any sort, remember to say clearly that the goal is not to draw a “pretty picture” but rather, a picture of expression.
- Drawings should not be judged or analyzed. If a learner’s artwork is concerning, refer the learner for mental health services (see “If you have concerns” section following).
- Drawings should be presented to the learner as an option for expression, not as a required activity.
- Use previous questions from the Talking Method to help lead these activities: A question can become a theme for a drawing.

### Drawing Method Activities

- Draw/write a book together, or make journals with pictures.
- Do a collective drawing, such as a mural (murals tell a “collective story,” develop/support teamwork, and feel “safer” for some learners as opposed to individual art).
- Give the mural a “place of honor” in the classroom.
- Make the mural accessible for everyday viewing.
- Celebrate the mural - use it to demonstrate overcoming something tough or to facilitate discussions.
- Take photos/slides of the mural when completed.
- Draw aspects of the event (people, places, activities, etc.).
- Suggest lots of options, not specifics (e.g., rather than saying “draw a fireman, helping someone,” say “draw a person you saw doing something helpful...”
- Create a collage (a variety of materials) using a leading question such as “Where were you when the disaster happened?”
  - With a collage, the educator may draw/paste on the central image, before learners add photos, magazine pictures, articles, fabric pieces, etc. around theme, or draw directly onto it.
  - Collages are the “safest” form of “drawing” because the learner is symbolizing other people and may feel he/she is “losing less of himself/herself.”
  - Collages provide “boundaries” for the learner; this can act as an emotional safety net for some.
- Look at other pictures (drawings, paintings) and talk about what they communicate.
- Avoid the use of paint in this method as it is too “loose” a medium for a traumatised learner; who may use it to bring up things not easily handled in a classroom.
- Allow a full range of expression and respect all varieties: some learners will draw recognisable “things,” while others will draw “abstracts;”
- Allow learners to discard their artwork or decide what to do with it.
- Emphasize to learners that their work will not be judged, graded or necessarily shown to others.
- Only exhibit the artwork if a learner desires to share with others.
- Reassure learners that there is no “right way” to draw.
- Allow the use of various mediums (pastels, crayons, pencils, markers, etc.).
- Exercise as little control as possible over the artwork.
- It’s preferable to do the drawing method with more than one adult present

## Concluding Drawing Activities

A key element of the Drawing Method is the follow-up discussion. This discussion can help to bring closure to the experience which is an important step in the process of expressing feelings.

- Allow those learners who want to, to talk about their drawings.
- Know that some learners will “close” the session by listening to their peers.
- Use open-ended questions in this process.
- Examine a drawing for clues to some deeper problems or feelings within the learner. Sometimes the artwork may be especially expressive of the learner’s feelings;
- Try to read the picture in the same way you might read words; what might it be telling you?
- Look at the artwork as a piece of communication, not just fantasy.
- Keep in mind that colours, forms, etc. have different meanings to learners from different cultural backgrounds, and to different learners within the same culture.
- Regard the artwork as a part of what’s going on within the learner; consider the learner with a holistic view.
- Ask the learner what’s going on behind the drawing—this is usually the best way to find out!

### If you have concerns...

When using either the Talking or Drawing Method, you might notice a learner exhibiting more serious problems. One sign of successful defusing of your learners is that they feel better. Another sign of success might be that the defusing process caused other problems to surface and come to your attention.

These problems might take on a variety of forms, such as

- Symptoms similar to those for anxiety or depression (physical symptoms, persistent avoidance of being alone, unrealistic worries about harm)
- The inability of the learner to “let go” of a memory
- Varying degrees of emotion and silence. Be sure to talk with the learner and ask, quietly and confidentiality, how they are feeling and coping.
- Other physical manifestations of stress resulting of the impact of the event

### Be aware that...

- Learners experience different forms of adjustment, and therefore educators should know the baseline behavior and cultural/ethnic responses before identifying “serious problems” in the learner.
- Educators are not meant to be diagnosticians, and should refer those learners they are concerned about to professionals.
- Some learners may be predisposed to adverse reactions following a critical incident (generally, these are learners who have experienced other loss, relocation, death, abuse, crime, etc.)
- An anniversary date of a disaster or death is a predictable time when memories and associated problems may resurface.

### If you are unsure...

- Alert parents/guardians of your concerns
- Contact your school counsellor/social worker/school psychologist
- Refer the learner to mental health professionals in the community

## Assisting learners when someone at School dies

Learners may experience a number of powerful feelings when confronted with the death of a classmate or another individual. The School's Emergency Response Team can assist learners individually or in groups to process and defuse their feelings and reactions following a death that affects the school community.

The following outline describes Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD, Everly & Mitchell, 1999), an interactive process to facilitate learners' expression of these feelings. If your SERT determines that debriefing may be necessary, contact local mental health partners to coordinate its implementation.

Debriefing should only be implemented with the assistance of mental health professionals, and usually follows this sequence:

1. Introductory Phase
2. Fact Phase
3. Feeling Phase
4. Reaction/Teaching
5. Closure Phase

### 1. Introductory Phase

- Introduce team members or helpers to discuss why we are here and what we hope to accomplish
- Stress the need for confidentiality and ask for a verbal agreement to keep what is said confidential

### 2. Fact Phase

- Give all known relevant facts about the death/incident.
- Ask the following questions:
  - Is this your understanding of what happened?
  - Does anyone have any other information?
  - Is there any other information you want to have about his/her death?
  - How did you find out?
  - Where were you when you first heard?
  - What were your first thoughts?
  - Is there anyone not here that perhaps needs to be? Who are you worried/concerned about?

### 3. Feeling Phase

- Make an effort to include everyone in the discussion
  - How did you feel when you first heard? Explore feelings (shock, denial, anger, fear etc.)
  - How are you feeling now? (All feelings are okay)
  - We did not know \_\_\_\_\_(name), could anyone tell us about him/her? What was he/she like?
  - When do you think it will hit you that \_\_\_\_\_(name) is really gone, or when do you think you'll miss him/her?
  - Does anyone have a photo of \_\_\_\_\_(name)? (Pass around)
  - What are some of your memories of \_\_\_\_\_(name)?
  - How do you think \_\_\_\_\_(name) would like to be remembered?

#### 4. Reaction/Teaching Phase

- Explore the physical, emotional and cognitive stress reactions of the group members
  - What are some things you usually do when you are really upset or down?
  - Has anyone lost anyone close recently? What were some of your reactions to his/her death?
- Take this opportunity to teach a little about the grief process, if appropriate
  - Talk about effective coping techniques
  - Determine if learners have someone they can talk to

#### 5. Closure Phase

- Give information about the funeral, if available
- Learners will often make comments about wanting to take a collection, plant a tree, or dedicate a page in the yearbook. Let them talk, then refer them to the Principal without either encouraging or discouraging their plans
- Encourage learners to support one another. Remind them that it may take a long time before they will feel settled, and that's normal
- Encourage them to talk with someone in their family about their sadness
- Conclude this process with a time of quiet, reflection.

Schools should carefully assess their involvement in the activities surrounding a death in the school community. For example, schools may want to consider the following

- Will the school close after a death has occurred? If so, for how long?
- If the school is closed, will learners be able to access counseling at the school during its closure?
- What role, if any, should the school play regarding transporting learners to the funeral or memorial service?

## Suggestions for Handling a Classmate Tragedy

This section is designed to assist the educator or counsellor in preparing the class to help a learner who has experienced a tragedy prior to their return to the class.

### EXAMPLE: Death of a friend or family member

Explain what is known of the loss, and ask

- If other learners have experienced the death of a friend or family member?
- Are there things people said or did that made you feel better?
- How do you think our classmate might be feeling?
- What could you say that might help him/her know you care? This is your chance to guide learners responses towards helpful comments, and away from less helpful comments
- What would you want someone to say to you if you experienced the death of someone close?
- Are there things you could do that may help them feel better?
- If we can take our cues from the person that will guide our actions, what might some of those cues be?

### When a grieving Classmate returns:

- Encourage the class to at least say, "hello," "Welcome back," "I'm glad to see you," or something similar. Brave classmates might even say: "I missed you," "I'm so sorry to hear about your \_\_\_\_\_'s death." Even braver friends might make statements like, "It must be incredibly tough to have your \_\_\_\_\_ die."
- Suggest other responses for the class, including writing a brief note or card, making a call, etc.
- Remind the class that if their classmate cries it is okay to offer comfort and a tissue

### Helping the Classmate adjust to the Class

- Encourage the class to offer past notes from missed classes or compare class notes for a while, as their classmate's attention span will probably vary for several weeks.
- Encourage the class to give their classmate phone numbers to call if having problems with homework
- Recommend the class to call their classmate to check on how homework was going
- Recommend the class to study together in person or over the phone to motivate their classmate, particularly as grieving learners frequently do not feel like doing school work

### Some DONT'S to teach the Class

- Don't shun the learner. Speak to them.
- Don't make cliché statements (e.g., "I know how you feel" when nobody knows the unique relationship the classmate had with the deceased).
- Don't expect the person to snap back into the "old self."
- Don't be surprised if the classmate seems unaffected by the loss, since everybody has his/her own way of grieving.
- Don't be afraid to ask appropriate questions about the deceased, such as "What did you and your \_\_\_\_\_ enjoy together?" Grieving people often like to talk about the deceased.
- Just because the classmate may seem to be adjusting to school again, don't assume the grieving has stopped, nor the need for comfort and friendship.

### **Suggestions for Learners attending a Classmate'' funeral**

This information should be helpful to learners attending the funeral of a classmate

- Expect to feel nervous when going to a funeral home or a funeral.
- Go with a friend or ask a parent to accompany you.
- Offer simple condolences, such as "I am so sorry about \_\_\_\_\_'s death" (this may open a conversation).
- Only view the body (if the funeral is open casket) if you are comfortable doing so; you are not obliged to.
- Continue visiting the parents/friends of the deceased child after the funeral
- Continue talking about their deceased child from time to time.

### **Suggestions for Learners when visiting grieving Parents**

This information should be helpful to learners when interacting with the parents of a deceased friend; however these suggestions must fit the parents' needs and requests, as well as the learner's own comfort level.

- Always respect the wishes of grieving parents.
- In the vast majority of cases the parents find it comforting to see friends of their deceased child.
- If you were a close friend of the deceased and you know the parents, then go visit them at their home.
- If you were a friend but had not met the parents (yet they know who you are), you might still visit the home. Other friends might wait until the funeral.
- Send the parents a note or card.
- When you visit, do not worry about what to say; your presence is all that is needed; if you wish to take a flower or anything meaningful, that's all right too.
- Don't be afraid you will upset the parents by asking or talking about the deceased; they are already upset.
- Just sitting with the parents will most likely fill the silence.
- Listen, no matter what the topic.
- If you were a really close friend, the parents might be pleased for you to visit the deceased friend's room (if you are comfortable doing so).
- Ask what you can do for them; ask other relatives what you might do to help.
- Do not try to take away the grieving parent's pain.
- Talk about the deceased person (grieving people often like telling stories about the deceased, "do you remember the time...").
- Offer suggestions only when advice is asked.
- Do not tell the parents to feel better since there are other learners and loved ones still alive.

### **Suggestions for handling Memorials**

When a member of the school dies, often people will want to find ways to memorialize the learner or staff member. A word of caution: carefully think through the type of tribute you pay to a person who has died

- In general, memorials should focus on the life lived, rather than on the cause of death.
- Yearbook memorials should be a regular-sized picture with a simple statement such as "We'll miss you."
- Creating permanent or lasting memorials for one person creates a precedent which makes it difficult to refuse a similar memorial for another person.
- Planting trees for people who die can ultimately result in a forest known as "the graveyard" by learners.
- Schools have a responsibility to take care of "Memorial" trees or gardens
- Consider other ways to remember the deceased, such as cards, food, kind words, work parties for relatives, scholarship funds, contributions to a favorite charity, or flowers. Of particular importance to the family is that others miss the deceased, and that there was great sadness at the loss.
- Permanent or lasting memorials are not encouraged in the event of a suicide

## Suggestions for dealing with a Suicide

A school's general response to a suicide does not differ markedly from a response to any other death emergency. However, some issues exclusive to suicide require specific attention.

School administrators must allow learners to grieve the loss of a peer without glorifying the method of death. Over-emphasis on a suicide may be interpreted by vulnerable learners as a glamourisation of the act of suicide, which can assign legendary or idolised status to taking one's own life.

The following "DO's" and "DON'Ts" will help school staff limit the glamourisation of suicide:

### DO

- Do acknowledge the suicide as a tragic loss of life.
- Do allow learners to attend funeral services.
- Do provide support for learners profoundly affected by the death.

### DON'T

- Don't organise school assemblies to honor the deceased learner.
- Don't dedicate yearbook pages, newspaper articles, proms, athletic events, or advertisements to the deceased individual.
- Don't pay tribute to a suicidal act by planting trees, hanging engraved plaques or holding other memorial activities.

A suicide in the school community can heighten the likelihood, in subsequent weeks, of "copycat" suicide attempts and threats among those especially vulnerable to the effects of a suicide. To prevent further tragedies, learners considered to be especially susceptible to depression/suicide must be carefully monitored, and appropriate action taken if they are identified as high risk. These efforts require a limited, rather than school-wide, response.

## Recovery strategies for Educators

### General reactions to a crisis by Educators

First reactions may include

- Numbness, shock, difficulty believing what has occurred or is in the process of occurring
- Very slow or confused physical and mental reactions
- Difficulty in decision making; uncertainty about things; hesitancy in choosing a course of action or making even small judgment calls

Ongoing reactions may include

- Loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, loss of interest or pleasure in everyday activities
- Desire to get away from everyone - even family/friends
- Becoming irritable or upset more quickly than usual
- Feelings of fatigue, hopelessness, helplessness
- Digestive problems; headaches or backaches
- Difficulty in recognizing the impact of the emergency on oneself
- Difficulty in accepting support from friends and the community

### Recovery advice for Educators

- Take time to relax and do things one finds pleasant; getting away for a few hours with close friends can be helpful
- Stick with one's regular routine for a while; avoid making changes, even if it appears to be a positive change
- Get regular exercise or participate in a regular sport; activity soothes anxiety and helps one relax
- Keep one's days as simple as possible; avoid taking on any additional responsibilities or new projects
- Get assistance with one's your workload - have learners, assistants or volunteers help grade papers, take care of copying, or help with other time-consuming tasks
- If symptoms of stress persist beyond a few weeks or are severe, seek professional help

## Recovery Information to Share with Parents

### Helping your child/teenager after a Disaster

Learners may be especially upset and express feelings about the disaster. These reactions are normal and usually will not last long. Listed below are some problems you may see in your child:

- Excessive fear of darkness, separation, or being alone
- Clinging to parents, fear of strangers
- Worry
- Increase in immature behaviors
- Not wanting to go to school
- Changes in eating/sleeping behaviors
- Increase in either aggressive behavior or shyness
- Bedwetting or thumb sucking
- Persistent nightmares
- Headaches or other physical complaints

### Helping your child/teenager deal with the disaster

- Talk with your child about his/her feelings about the disaster; share your feelings, too.
- Talk about what happened; give your child information he/she can understand.
- Reassure your child that you are safe and together; you may need to repeat this reassurance often.
- Hold and comfort your child often.
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime.
- Allow your child to mourn or grieve over lost belongings (a toy, a lost blanket).
- If you feel your child is having problems at school, talk to his/her educator or the school counsellor so you can work together in helping him/her overcome.

### Helping your child/teenager with ongoing recovery

Usually a child's emotional response to a disaster will not last long, but some problems may be present or recur for many months afterward. Details about professionals skilled in talking with people experiencing disaster-related problems can be obtained from the school principal.

# **APPENDIX 1**

## ***Glossary of Terms and Concepts***



**Assembly Area** A pre-designated area where personnel and learners are trained to gather following directives to evacuate buildings. Sites chosen should minimize exposure to hazards, provide quick and accessible shelter for all, and consider the needs of persons with disabilities. Monitoring the safety and well-being of learners and staff begins here. The school's most experienced trained emergency responders should be assigned here and begin providing on-scene support.

**Briefing** An educational and informational presentation to groups following a crisis or critical incident. Objectives would include: sharing the official nature and scope of the event to reduce and dispel rumours; providing details concerning the plan of action the school is taking to manage the crisis and mitigate its effects; and providing group education in stress management within naturally occurring support systems.

**Coping skills** A range of thoughts, feelings and behaviors utilised to decrease the negative effects of an experience, or to master a threatening situation. Individuals who have successfully worked through past traumatic events often develop strengths and coping skills that help them and others facing traumatic events.

**Crisis** A state in which coping skills are overwhelmed, leaving the individual feeling out of control, helpless and anxious.

**Crisis Intervention** The application of short term repeated interventions designed to support problem solving, reduce feelings of isolation, helplessness and anxiety and promote the return of normal functioning.

**Critical Incidents** Events that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope. They are psychologically traumatic, cause emotional turmoil and cognitive problems, and often result in behavioral changes. These effects can be lasting, depending upon the quality of the experiences during and shortly after the incident.

**Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)** A comprehensive, integrated multi-component crisis intervention system. CISM services provide a framework for the application of education and crisis intervention during the acute stage following a crisis or disaster. These services enhance and complement the delivery of traditional mental health services.

**Debriefing (CISD)** A group process utilising both crisis intervention and educational processes targeted at mitigating or resolving the psychological distress associated with a critical incident or traumatic event. A debriefing is a peer (educator/staff) driven process in partnership with mental health professionals who provide oversight and guidance.

**Defusing** A group crisis intervention technique conducted by a trained facilitator. It provides a supportive, safe interactive process among individuals in small groups, providing clarity and complete expression of the event and experiences. It is often referred to as classroom discussion or classroom defusing.

**Drop-in-room** A safe, welcoming place for learners to gather during the school day with their peers, for group and one-on-one support from trained crisis intervention team members, following a traumatic event, such as the death of a classmate or educator. It is also referred to as the Safe Room.

**Emergency Management Protocols** The step-by-step procedures for schools to implement in an emergency.

**Incident Command System (ICS)** An organizational structure designed to handle Management, Operations, Logistics, Planning, Administration and Finance during an emergency. The ICS allows for appropriate utilisation of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications, and for the management of assigned resources to effectively accomplish stated objectives pertaining to an incident.

**Incident Commander (IC)** The highest ranking official in the Incident Command System responsible for the emergency/disaster operations. The IC directs from a command post set up in close proximity to the incident.

**Individual Consultation** A crisis intervention technique employed by a trained peer (educator/staff member), counsellor or mental health professional in a one-on-one confidential meeting using a structured model.

**Joint Information Center (JIC)** A facility established to coordinate all incident-related public information activities. It is the central point of contact for all news media at the scene of the incident. Public information officials from all participating agencies should coordinate at the JIC.

**Mitigation** Any action taken to reduce the adverse effects of an emergency and the likelihood of loss of life or property. These actions can be to eliminate existing hazards, to respond effectively when an emergency arises, or to help recovery in the aftermath of an emergency. It applies to pre-crisis planning and crisis intervention techniques designed to reduce the psychological and emotional effects of a traumatic event.

**Peers** Emergency service providers and trained school personnel who provide crisis intervention services following crises and disasters. Refers specifically to educators, school staff and non mental health professionals,

**Practice** A series of training drills and exercises intended to familiarize educators, learners and school staff on emergency procedures. It is generally recommended that schools begin with basic orientation and tabletop exercises prior to engaging in full-scale simulations or drills.

**Preparedness** The process of school-based planning to prevent emergencies when possible, and to develop effective responses for when they occur.

**Protocol** A procedure, rule or practice representing the correct or most appropriate behaviour of an individual or group in a given situation

**Public Information Officer (PIO)** The official spokesperson designated by an organization to coordinate internal and external communications. Responsible for handling all requests for information and proactively providing consistent, accurate and timely information. The PIO establishes a central site for the media, maintains a log of all actions and communication, prepares press releases, keeps the Incident Commander apprised, and maintains all documentation to support the history of the event.

**Recovery** The process of assisting with physical, psychological and emotional trauma associated with experiencing tragic events. Recovery during an emergency can address immediate short-term needs, while ongoing recovery may last for months or years.

**Referral** Transferring survivors to appropriate levels/providers of healthcare, based on indications of the need for medical supervision or the threat of harm to self or to others. Such indications are identified during individual and group crisis intervention sessions, where trained peers and mental health professionals actively assess and monitor the overall status of survivors.

**Release** A pre-planned process to facilitate the reunification of learners with their families. It may involve setting up a number of separate release stations to ensure accountability and crowd control.

**Response** The implementation of Universal Emergency Procedures and/or Emergency Management Protocols to maximise the health, safety and well being of individuals.

**School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)** A written consolidated plan to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. It is a modified version of this Guide, which has been tailored and fine-tuned to meet the unique needs and resources of a particular school. The plan contains School Emergency Response Team (SERT) roles, emergency numbers, response protocols, etc.

**School Emergency Response Team (SERT)** A school-based team of individuals with specific duties to perform in preparing for, and responding to emergencies. This team is responsible for developing the School Emergency Management Plan (SEMP) and implementing it should the need arise.

**Shock** A psychological and emotional defense shield characterised by numbness, confusion and disorientation, during which time the full impact of an emergency/disaster is not totally absorbed by the survivor.

**Shelter in Place** A procedure designed to protect individuals from an outside influence, such as the release of chemicals. Usual procedures include: preventing individuals from leaving the room until further instructions are given; closing doors and windows; placing tape or wet towels around doors, windows and vents; and turning off pilot lights, air conditioning and exhaust fans.

**Social Support** A term utilised by social scientists to describe positive interactions among people. These exchanges may involve passing along information, offering material help or providing emotional support. The health implications of these exchanges are especially important during times of stress, life transitions and crises. One's relationship with a spouse, friends, family, co-workers and neighbours can buffer stress and have a positive effect on physical and mental health. Research with disaster survivors demonstrates the importance of social support to their recovery.

**Unified Command (UC)** The structure that allows for coordinated command of an incident when there are multiple agencies handling the event. When there is Unified Command, as opposed to a single Incident Commander, all agencies with responsibility for the incident, either geographical or functional, manage an incident by establishing a common set of objectives and strategies. This is accomplished without losing or abdicating agency authority, responsibility or accountability.

**Universal Emergency Procedures** A set of clear directives that may be implemented across a number of emergency situations. These procedures include Evacuation; Shelter in Place; Drop, Cover & Hold Reverse Evacuation; and Lockdown.

# **APPENDIX 2**

## **Supporting Documents**



## Bomb Threat/Suspicious Packages

### Definition

A bomb threat/suspicious package situation is one that involves the threat of an explosive device that has been placed in, around or near the school, or the detection of a suspicious package that could contain an explosive device.

### Alert Signal

Public address announcements

- **Known Danger** *“Code Red: an emergency evacuation is in effect at this time. Evacuate to site \_\_\_\_\_ located at \_\_\_\_\_. Please sweep all routes and the site.”*
- **Unknown Danger** *“All staff initiate a sweep in place, please report your status upon completion of the sweep”*

### Principal's Response

- Upon receipt of a bomb threat, the Principal should call \_\_\_\_\_(insert emergency number) and request that fire, law enforcement and emergency management personnel respond.
- If a threat has been received by telephone, provide the completed bomb threat checklist (see Appendix 2) to the first law enforcement officer to arrive on the scene.
- Make sure that call tracing procedures have been implemented
- Consult with responding public safety officials and quickly determine whether it is best under the circumstances to initiate (a) sweep & evacuate, or (b) sweep in place. Available information should be evaluated to weigh the potential risks of explosive devices inside or outside the building (including the possibility of a vehicle bomb), explosives devices placed in or near evacuation routes or sites, or other hazards such as persons with firearms who plan to shoot at evacuees.
- If multiple bomb threats are received over time, be sure to rotate evacuation routes and sites to make it more difficult for someone to pattern evacuation responses and target evacuees with explosives, firearms or chemical agents.
- If the “sweep and evacuate” option is selected
  - Notify staff to sweep and evacuate through a public address announcement
  - Have the evacuation route and site swept for suspicious persons, objects (which could contain an explosive device) or other safety hazards prior to the evacuation if appropriate.
  - Have designated staff or public safety officials direct learners safely across any streets that must be crossed by evacuees.
  - Remind staff members and learners not to utilise cellular phones or portable radios unless a life-threatening emergency exists.
  - Request that uniformed personnel escort staff and learners to the evacuation site and remain with them until and unless they are instructed to return to the building.
  - Leave the school and take the emergency evacuation kit and make responding public safety officials aware of the contents of the kit.
  - Check with staff to see that all evacuees are accounted for. Immediately notify responding public safety officials if any persons are not accounted for.
  - Assist responding public safety officials with the second sweep of the facility.
  - Consult with public safety officials before authorising evacuees to return to the facility.

## Bomb Threat/Suspicious Packages (continued)

- You may determine that it is appropriate to close the facility for the remainder of the day. If so, begin notification of parents and guardians and implement your emergency release procedures.
- If the “sweep and remain in place” option is selected
  - Notify staff to initiate a sweep in place.
  - Make sure that all areas inside and around the facility have been swept by staff.
  - Assist public safety officials in conducting the second sweep of the school.
  - If any suspicious packages are discovered, make sure that all staff and learners are moved away from the danger, and that the item is not disturbed in any way.
  - Consult with public safety officials to see if the facility should be evacuated, if the decision is made to do so, implement the evacuation plan .

### Staff Response

#### “Sweep and evacuate” procedures

- If the sweep and evacuate option is announced, staff should quickly scan their area of responsibility for any packages or items that could contain an explosive device (objects that they do not recognize as normally being present).
- If no such items are noted, staff should use masking or duct tape to make a slash across the entrance door to the area (/) to indicate to public safety officials they have swept the area and no suspicious items were noticed.
- If any suspicious items are noted, they should not be disturbed and the staff member should notify the principal or designee upon evacuation from the area.
- The staff member should then follow the evacuation protocol. Have learners bring their book bags and other hand-carried articles with them.
- Refrain from using cellular telephones or portable radios during these situations unless a life-threatening emergency exists. In some extremely rare instances, radio frequency energy can trigger an explosive device to detonate. Explain to learners that the use of electronic communication devices can pose a safety hazard and any that are observed in use will be seized.

#### “Sweep and remain in place” procedures

- Staff members should scan their area of responsibility for any packages or items that could contain an explosive device (objects that they do not recognize as normally being present).
- If no such items are noted, staff should make a slash with masking or duct tape across the entrance door to the area (/) to indicate to public safety officials that they have swept the area and no suspicious items were noted.
- Take roll-call to account for all persons in your area of responsibility in case evacuation is ordered at a later time.
- If any suspicious items are noted, they should not be disturbed. The observing staff members should then direct all people in the area to accompany them to the office to report their observations to the principal or designee of .
- Follow the principal's instructions.

## Remote Evacuation & Family Reunification

### Definition

This type of evacuation is used for any situation in which learners and staff need to be moved to a remote site for reunification with family members and loved ones.

### Alert Signal

Public address announcement

***“We are activating our Family Reunification protocol. Learners, staff and visitors will be transported to \_\_\_\_\_ to be reunited with family members and loved ones. We ask for your assistance and cooperation. Buses will pick us up at \_\_\_\_\_. All staff initiate a Code Blue – emergency evacuation in effect at this time, evacuate to site \_\_\_\_\_ located at \_\_\_\_\_. Please sweep all routes and the site. We will be implementing the Remote Evacuation and Family Reunification Protocol from that location”***

### Principal's Response

- Notify the central office of your decision to implement the family reunification protocol. Provide a brief description of the incident and specify the staging area so that buses can be dispatched to the appropriate location.
- Request that law enforcement officials dispatch uniformed personnel to the staging area.
- Activate the School Emergency Response Team.
- Make the announcement above by public address system, runners, e-mail or whichever means is most practical
- In certain situations, it may not be practical or safe to order a general evacuation (such as during a hostage situation or if an armed intruder may still be in the area). In such instances, coordinate with public safety officials or law enforcement personnel to conduct the evacuation room by room.
- Designate a staff member to serve as the school representative at the family reunification centre. Instruct this designee to take along learner details from one of the Emergency Evacuation Kits.
- Notify the appropriate School Emergency Response Team to serve as the school representative at the staging area.

### Educators' Response

- Follow evacuation procedures and guide learners to the designated school evacuation site. Prepare learners for boarding of buses.
- Ensure that any special needs persons in your area of responsibility are assisted during the evacuation.
- Once learners and other persons from your area of responsibility have boarded a bus, assist the bus driver by taking roll-call and completing the driver's evacuation roster.
- Follow the instructions of SERT members when you arrive at the Family Reunification Site. You may be asked to assist in staffing the site.

## Remote Evacuation & Family Reunification (continued)

### School Bus Driver Response

- When you are notified that your assistance is needed for implementation of the family reunification plan, make sure that you have copies of learner family reunification rosters.
- Follow directions provided by route supervisors and public safety officials as to the best approach to the affected school or its evacuation area.
- Try to calm learners as they board the bus.
- Once loaded, proceed safely to the family reunification site. Understand that evacuees may be traumatised by events and may be in an excited and emotionally distraught state.
- Have a staff member fill out the learner transport roster. If no staff member is present, ask a learner to perform this task and note the name of the learner who completed this task on the form.
- Do not stop the bus or open the door to allow evacuees to meet family members.
- When you arrive at the family reunification site, follow the instructions of public safety and crisis team personnel. Provide the learner roster (s) to the Crisis team member that meets your bus.
- Return for the next relay if you are needed and repeat the process until the evacuation is complete.
- Your bus may or may not be escorted by law enforcement depending on the available resources and the nature of the crisis.
- Keep all radio traffic to a minimum.

### Custodial / Ground Staff Response

- Follow evacuation procedures and guide learners to the designated school evacuation site. Prepare learners for boarding of buses.
- Ensure that any special needs persons in your area of responsibility are assisted during the evacuation.
- Report to the Principal/SERT member and provide assistance as needed. Assistance may include a SERT in sweeping all/part of the school to ensure that all occupants are evacuated, or securing the building.
- Once you are advised to evacuate to the family reunification site, and learners and other persons from your area of responsibility have boarded a bus, assist the bus driver by taking roll-call and completing the driver's evacuation roster.
- Follow the instructions of SERT when you arrive at the Family Reunification Site. You may be asked to assist in staffing the site.

## Notification of a Death

### Principal's Response

- Verify the name of the deceased with the police.
- Contact the school administrative office and request that all correspondence concerning the learner and/or staff member be stopped. Delete the learner's name from all school mailing lists.
- Do not go alone. Contact another SERT member to accompany you.
- Have grief resources (brochures, hotline numbers, web sites, etc.) available to provide the family
- Talk about reactions to the death with your team member before the notification to enable you to better focus on the family when you arrive.
- Provide the notification in person. **Do not call.** If the family is present at the Family Reunification Center speak to them in a quiet, private counselling area/room away from others.
- Introduce yourself and the other team member, present credentials and ask to speak to them. Remember, only one member should talk.
- Sit down, ask the other party to sit down, and be sure you are speaking to the nearest next of kin. (Do not notify siblings before notifying parents or spouse). Never notify a child, or use one to translate.
- Ensure the right family is in the room. Use the victim's name - "Are you the parents of \_\_\_\_\_?"
- Look the family member/s in the eye and speak face to face. Inform them of the death in a simple fashion and direct manner, with warmth and compassion. Do not use expressions like "expired," "passed away," or "we've lost \_\_\_\_\_." Remember to add your condolence. Adding your condolence is very important because it expresses feelings rather than facts, and invites them to express their own.
- Use the words "dead" or "died" in the conversation, but avoid using the terms "body" or "the deceased."
- Continue to use the victim's name.
- Do not use clichés.
- When a child is killed and one parent is at home, notify that parent and then offer to take them to notify the other parent.
- Never speak to the media without the family's permission.
- Do not leave survivors alone.
- Call and follow up the next day with a visit.
- Ask the family how and when they would like personal possessions delivered. Do not assume that clothing should be washed. Make an inventory of the victim's items and pack in a box. Do not deliver personal items in a plastic bag or trash bag.
- Do not discount feelings, theirs or yours. Intense reactions are normal. Expect fight, flight, freezing, or other forms of regression. If someone goes into shock have them lie down, elevate their feet, keep them warm, monitor breathing and pulse, and call for medical assistance.
- Know exactly how to access immediate medical or mental healthcare should family members experience a crisis reaction that is beyond your ability to deal with.
- Do not blame the victim in any way for what happened, even though he/she may have been fully or partially at fault.
- Join the family in their grief without being overwhelmed by it.
- Answer all questions honestly (This requires knowing the facts before you go). Do not give more detail than is asked for, but be honest in your answers.
- Offer to make calls, arrange for child care, and call clergy, relatives and employers. Provide them with a list of the calls you make as they will probably have difficulty in remembering this later.
- Debrief your own personal reactions with a caring and qualified disaster mental health personnel.

**SAMPLE OF AN EMERGENCY PROTOCOL #4**

## School Emergency Exercises/Drills Training

- A minimum of two (2) simulated/table-top emergency exercises, involving SERT Members and designated school staff, will be conducted during the course of each School year
- A minimum of six (6) real-time emergency drills, involving all learners, educators, school staff, and volunteering parents, and community support personnel, will be conducted during the course of each School year, of which
  - Two (2) of these drills must be "Obstructed", meaning that at least one exit and one stairway in the school building are blocked off or not used.
  - Two (2) of these drills must be "Lockdowns", meaning that proper emergency procedures for confining learners to the classroom in response to certain kinds of threats are followed.
  - Two (2) of these drills must be "Evacuations", meaning that proper emergency procedures for the immediate and rapid movement of learners and school staff away from danger, or threat of danger are followed.
  - One (1) of these drills must be a "Full Scale Exercise" involving external emergency response agencies such as the police, fire department, and/or emergency medical services.
- Real-time drills will be held during the following months / school terms

	(specify month/term)
	(specify month/term)
	(specify month/term)

- The school principal is responsible for ensuring full adherence to the School Emergency Drill Protocol
- The school principal is responsible for completing the School Emergency Exercises/Drills Training Report, and recording the results of each drill on the date it is held, for example

Date & Time	Fire Drill	Drop, Cover & Hold Drill	Lockdown Drill	Evacuation Drill	Full Scale Exercise	Principal's Signature
15/10/2011 09h30	[ ]	[X]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	
	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	

- Upon completion of the eight (8) emergency training exercises/drills each year, the Principal will forward a copy of the School Emergency Exercises/Drills Training Report to \_\_\_\_\_ (specify relevant authority i.e. District Office, Dept. of Education, Board of Trustees etc.)
- Every fire, lockdown and evacuation drill is to be regarded and treated as real.

## School Emergency Training Exercises/Drills (continued)

- The only person to have any advance notice of fire drill is the one who sounds the alarm. For lockdown and evacuation drills the local authorities should have advance notice.
- Drills shall take place at any time, whether learners are in classes, at assembly or in the cafeteria.
- The signaling device must be heard in all parts of the building and shall be used only for emergencies
- Learners must not run during a drill but must move quickly and orderly.
- All occupants must be evacuated from the building in a fire and evacuation drill.
- An educator or other responsible adult shall be assigned to assist persons with special needs who require assistance in evacuation.
- During a fire or evacuation drill, educators or other responsible adults must check restrooms, cloakrooms, and other rooms/areas where learners congregate, to ensure all have vacated the building. During a lockdown drill, the checking of these areas will not take place
- Learners must not be permitted to go to lockers for personal items during a fire or evacuation drill. In the case of an evacuation for bomb threat, learners should take any type of schoolbag they have with them in the classroom at the time of the drill.
- With the exception of a lockdown drill, educators must leave the building with their classes.
- For all drills, educator should have with them class register to ensure accurate accounting of learners.
- In fire or evacuation drills, educators are responsible to ensure that all learners have left the classroom, and the door of the room is closed. In a lockdown drill, educators must ensure that the classroom door is closed and locked, and that learners are moved to a safe area within the classroom.
- There shall be no talking during any drill.
- Custodial /ground staff must report to pre-designated locations and assist in drill procedures.
- In fire or evacuation drills, learners must be led to a predetermined and safe area far enough away from the building, and out of the path of emergency vehicles and equipment.
- The School will have a written emergency management plan (SEMP) that shall include evacuation and lockdown procedures and specific provisions for protecting learners and the handicapped. The plan shall be reviewed and approved annually by local authorities.
- Each occupied area shall have a predetermined evacuation route. This route should lead to the nearest available exit. At least one alternative route shall be established for each occupied area. These routes and other related instructions shall be clearly posted near the exit door of each room so that an occupant of the room may know the correct plan of evacuation.
- All staff and learners shall be informed of the school's evacuation plan and lockdown procedures



