

APPENDIX D: GUIDELINES FOR EVACUATIONS IN THE EVENT OF A FIRE, BOMB THREAT, OR EXPLOSIVES INCIDENT

Every school plan must detail procedures to facilitate a safe and effective partial or full evacuation of the facility. Plans should also detail the process to end any partial or full evacuation. Although an evacuation for a fire incident or a bomb threat are very similar, there are some particular elements to consider for each.

In the event of a fire, any staff member can trigger the fire alarm. On hearing the fire alarm, staff and students are to evacuate the building following the evacuation procedures.

In all other cases, the decision to evacuate will be made by the principal, vice-principal, or designate. The decision to direct an evacuation should be made only after careful consideration of the risks. In the event of a bomb threat, the principal, vice-principal, or designate must keep in mind that, because the most likely location for a bomb is in a common area, evacuation through common areas can increase risk.

Effective Practices

The notification process for both a partial and a full evacuation of each facility is to be included in each school plan. Staff should be aware of who is authorized to order evacuation of and re-entry to the facility. The notice to evacuate must be unambiguous, and the evacuation location(s) must be clearly understood. Evacuations should be conducted in a quiet and systematic way, considering the threat location and students and staff most at risk.

Staff and students should be directed to quietly leave the location, proceed in a calm and orderly manner, and assemble in the designated evacuation location(s). Evacuees should not attempt to bring personal belongings with them.

In the event of a bomb threat, evacuees should be directed not to return to their lockers but to bring with them any personal belongings (e.g., bags, lunches, laptops) that are in the immediate area, if it is safe to do so. Removing these articles will assist police with any subsequent search of the area, by decreasing the number of suspicious packages or devices.

Plans should address practices for ensuring that evacuation routes and alternate routes are clear from obstructions. Designated stairwells that are identified in the school plan should be used. Provisions should be in place to assist with the evacuation of physically challenged staff and students. Because of the risk of power failure, elevators should never be used for evacuation. If, however, stand-by power is provided to an elevator, consideration should be given to using that elevator for the evacuation of physically challenged staff and students.

Evacuation routes and locations should be inspected prior to, or immediately upon, the arrival of evacuees to ensure that a secondary explosive device has not been placed in these areas. At the evacuation location, attendance should be taken, and all students and staff accounted for. The command post is to be notified when the evacuation is complete. Students and staff should be directed to remain in the evacuation location.

All staff and students evacuating the premises must promptly gather at the designated evacuation site. Ensuring proper control and supervision of the students is essential. Attendance should be taken, and records cross-checked with daily attendance and class schedules to account for as many

individuals as possible. Designate one staff member and an alternate to collect any witnesses or individuals who can provide information to emergency personnel. While shielding students from distressing scenes is important, it's crucial not to disturb any crime scene evidence.

Plans should include provisions for the care, control, and well-being of evacuated persons. The use of school buses should be considered to shelter staff and students during inclement weather.

Other duties at the evacuation or family reunification site should be assigned to staff members not involved in the direct supervision of students. These duties could be pre-assigned with two alternates for each task. They are:

- logistics officer: working with police logistics personnel in obtaining necessities for students;
- parent liaison: assigned to handling parent inquiries at the family reunification site;
- records manager: receiving and processing attendance records; and
- reception area manager at the family reunification site: directing the activities in the reception area, overall control of the students, ensuring that students are divided into homeroom groups and attendance is taken, other duties as necessary.

Have a sign-out sheet to monitor which students have been picked up by their parents and guardians. Do not dismiss students to unknown care. As soon as possible, take a head count to determine which students, staff and teachers are accounted for and which ones are not.

RE-ENTRY PROCEDURES

Each school plan must include procedures for ending evacuations and ensuring safe re-entry into the school. Plans should clearly indicate that the decision to end a partial or full evacuation shall be made by the school principal, vice-principal, or designate in consultation with the on-scene incident commander.

Effective Practices

Plans should encompass procedures for communicating the conclusion of a partial or full evacuation. These procedures may differ depending on the facility and whether evacuees are located off-site.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWING AN EXPLOSIVES INCIDENT

Every plan must include procedures for dealing with an explosives incident that occurs within a school building or in the school yard. Explosives incidents may occur without warning or after a bomb threat has been received. Explosives incidents do not always require a full evacuation of the school. Under certain circumstances, and if it is determined that there is no fire, a partial evacuation of the building may be appropriate.

Plans for responding to an explosives incident should address the following:

- criteria for full or partial evacuation;
- considerations related to the provision of emergency care;
- considerations related to the notification of emergency services; and
- containment of the explosion scene.

Effective Practices

When an explosives incident occurs, the school principal, vice-principal, or designate should be notified immediately and informed of any action taken. Personnel designated in the plan should report to the command post location to carry out their duties, many of which will be taking place simultaneously.

The following items are considerations to be addressed as part of the response to an explosives incident and in plan development.

EVACUATION CONSIDERATIONS

The area around the explosion scene should be immediately evacuated, and evacuees should be directed to a designated evacuation location. Emergency first aid should be provided to any persons injured in the incident. Information regarding injuries should be communicated to the command post. Attendance should be taken and a list of any missing staff or students should be communicated to the command post.

It should be determined whether an evacuation of the entire site is necessary, or whether a partial evacuation of the area around the explosives incident will suffice. A fire resulting from the incident can make staying in the building unsafe, so partial evacuation should be considered only if it is certain that no fire has started. The school principal, vice-principal, or designate shall work with emergency services personnel to evaluate the need to relocate evacuees and/or command posts.

As staff and students are evacuating, they should continue to follow proper evacuation procedures. They should be asked to keep their eyes open for unusual packages, and, where possible, staff who are designated to conduct visual scans should visually inspect the areas that are being evacuated and areas along the evacuation route. If a suspicious package/device is noticed, it should be reported to emergency responders immediately on arrival at the evacuation location.

EMERGENCY SERVICES NOTIFICATION

The fire department, emergency medical services (EMS), and police should be called immediately. An explosives incident can often result in the spread of fire and smoke.

CONTAINMENT OF THE EXPLOSION SCENE

Once the area has been evacuated, staff and students should not re-enter an explosion scene. Not only may additional packages or devices be present, but the area will be subject to a substantial crime scene investigation and therefore should not be disturbed.

COMMUNICATIONS

Having primary and secondary communication systems allows for accurate transmission of information between officials, staff, students, and emergency services personnel.

Effective Practices

Plans should specify designated primary and secondary communication systems, with provisions for internal communication with staff and students and external communication with emergency

services personnel. The external communication plan should have provisions for communication with parents, or other stakeholders during extended incidents and after incidents.

In most cases, intercoms and telephones will be used as primary communication systems. Radios and walkie-talkies are *not* recommended as secondary systems, given that radio signals may detonate sensitive explosive devices. Runners, loud hailer, or other methods should be used for secondary communication systems. Local police services should be consulted regarding the use of cell phones, and staff and students should be educated about how such devices can be used in the event of an incident.

The protocol should emphasize the importance of reminding all responders of the danger of using radio communication in a bomb threat situation.

Media

Plans shall include provisions for dealing with media in the event of an incident.

Please consult the [Media](#) section in [Appendix B](#).

Communication with Parents, Guardians, and The Community

Please consult [Communication with Parents, Guardians, and The Community](#) in [Appendix B](#).

CHILDCARE AND OTHER FACILITY OCCUPANTS

Many schools have licensed childcare centres and/or other tenants and community groups using school premises, sometimes outside regular school hours. These organizations or individuals must be taken into consideration when planning and when conducting training and drills, and they must be informed of the need to follow school board procedures.

Effective Practices

It is important that principals make best efforts to ensure that the appropriate staff from organizations who share school facilities are included in the development and implementation of procedures, and that these organizations participate, whenever possible, in relevant aspects of planning, training, and drills.

TRAINING

Plans should address initial and ongoing training of all staff as well as students and, where possible, visitors to the school.

Mandatory Requirement (Ministry of Education)

Each board must ensure that its staff, students, and other stakeholders are aware of their obligations and responsibilities within the individual school plans.

Effective Practices

Orientation for new staff should include mandatory training in evacuation procedures. Such training should be conducted as early in the school year as possible.

In many situations, it may be impractical to try to provide training to school visitors. In other cases, however, when the visitor is in the school over an extended period, as in the case of a service provider, it is necessary to inform the visitor of the school's evacuation procedures.

Where possible, it is advantageous to have police partners present to assist with the training of staff and students. Fire department and EMS personnel could also be invited to training sessions.

DRILLS

Fire drills have long been accepted as an important and effective tool in preparing staff and students for procedures to be followed in the event a fire breaks out in a school. As with fire drills, drills and education related to evacuation following a bomb threat can help maintain order in the event of an incident. Such drills can be held as part of a school's emergency evacuation drills. Provincial regulations require schools to practice evacuation procedures six times a year.

Effective Practices

School personnel should work cooperatively with police and fire department partners on drills. The principal is responsible for setting the date of drills and overseeing the drill, with police and or fire department support/assistance. Staff, students, childcare workers, and community partners or other visitors who may be in the school should be given some warning of an impending drill. When developing plans, consideration should be given as to whether or not to notify parents in advance. Plans should include procedures for alerting neighbouring schools of drills, especially if fire and EMS personnel have been invited to participate.

A short debriefing should be held after all drills to identify areas for improvement. Many boards have established a tracking system to record drill dates.

SCHOOL RECOVERY FOLLOWING AN INCIDENT

Plans should include provisions related to recovery after an incident involving a fire or an explosion.

Effective Practices

Recovery procedures will differ significantly, depending on the nature of the incident. A debriefing should always take place following a fire or an explosives incident. The nature and severity of the incident will dictate who should be included in the debriefing.

PLAN REVIEW

Each school plan, as well as the board plan, shall be thoroughly reviewed annually.

Effective Practices

The plan should incorporate a dedicated page for documenting the date of review, the reviewing personnel, and a space for their signatures. If the board utilizes a web-based platform to log drill completions, a separate section can be allocated within the system to record the annual review date of the plan.