

SAFE Schools

A Parents' Guide to Emergency Preparedness



The start of a new school year is an appropriate time to review school emergency procedures and to stress the importance of having emergency contact information on file for each student. An emergency can be anything from a snowstorm to terrorist activity, and can affect only one school or the entire district. Our schools have plans in place and have conducted training and drills so that school staff is prepared to respond quickly and appropriately.

Please help us by providing your school with emergency contact information about your child and keeping it up to date throughout the school year.



HOWARD COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

PLEASE KEEP FOR YOUR REFERENCE! 2009-2010

HCPSS*Emergency Response Plan*

Advance preparation and planning can minimize the risks inherent in any emergency situation. The Howard County Public School System has worked closely with the Howard County Police Department, Howard County Fire and Rescue, and the Community Emergency Response Network (CERN) to develop coordinated emergency response procedures.

In times of emergency when a system-level crisis response is required, an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is activated at the Department of Education, located on Route 108 in Ellicott City. The Chief Operating Officer assumes the role of incident commander and coordinates the system response through various central administrators who have been trained to assume specific roles in times of emergency. The school system has conducted multiple tabletop and on-site emergency response drills with personnel from Fire and Rescue and the Police Department in order to review and improve the system's emergency response procedures.

Local School Emergency Response Plans

Each public school in Howard County has developed a School Emergency Response Plan. The plan is updated annually and reviewed with all building staff. It includes school site information, staff responsibilities in time of emergency, the type of training staff will receive and when training will occur, and annual plans for ten drills.

The plan also defines emergency response operations such as potential command posts locations, communications plans, the teacher "buddy" system, student release procedures, general emergency actions, and hazard-specific procedures.

Attached to the emergency plan are site maps, which identify assembly areas, traffic flow information, request and release gates, outside and inside command posts, loading areas, utilities controls and potential medical station areas. Also included are any prearranged agreements with adjacent businesses or facilities for the provision of emergency shelter.

Emergency Incident Kits

Emergency Incident Kits have been provided to each school. The kit, which is portable and can be replenished easily, includes such items as first aid supplies, emergency blankets, barrier caution tape, duct tape, megaphones, orange, high-visibility vests, and an AM/FM radio and batteries. Schools are responsible for adding items to the kit such as school floor plans, a staff roster, student emergency procedures cards, and area maps. Additionally, each school has been issued a weather alert radio.



PROTECTIVE *Actions*

Closing Schools

- Students do not attend schools.
- All school-sponsored activities are canceled.
- All after-school and evening activities, both school and non-school, scheduled in school facilities are canceled.

Late Start/Early Dismissal

- Students report later than usual or are dismissed before the established dismissal time.
- When schools dismiss early for emergency situations, all school-sponsored activities are canceled.
- When schools dismiss early for emergency situations, after-school and evening activities, both school and non-school, scheduled in school facilities are canceled.

Lockdown

- An announcement is made by runner or over the public address system: "Your attention please. Lockdown (pause). Lockdown (pause). Lockdown."
- If it is safe to do so, all students and staff are moved into the building or relocatable classroom immediately.
- Students and staff in relocatable classrooms remain in place and follow the same procedures as those inside the main building unless the school incident commander determines another response is warranted.
- All interior and exterior doors are locked. No one is to enter or leave the building.
- If it is safe to do so, blinds and shades are drawn. If the room is without window coverings, lights are turned off.
- If the situation warrants, students and staff sit or lie on the floor.
- All students and staff are accounted for.
- Staff and students are to remain in lockdown until emergency responders (police/ fire and rescue personnel) or the school incident commander gives the "all clear" notice.

This action is considered appropriate for, but not limited to, situations that involve extreme violence and/or gunfire and that immediately and directly affect the school site.

Modified Lockdown

- An announcement made by runner or over the public address system: “Your attention please. Modified lockdown (pause). Modified lockdown (pause). Modified lockdown.” If the situation allows, an announcement regarding the nature of the emergency is made over the public address system.
- All students and staff are accounted for.
- Outdoor activities (recess, physical education, etc.) cease immediately and do not resume until further notice.
- All exterior doors are locked and main doors are monitored with access restricted. Identification is required for anyone entering.
- If the situation warrants, blinds and shades are drawn or if the room is without window coverings, lights are turned off.
- A “Modified Lockdown” sign is placed on the outside of the main door.
- Normal activity continues within the building.
- Students and staff in relocatable classrooms remain in place and follow the same procedures as those inside the main building unless the school incident commander determines another response is warranted. Students must be escorted to activities inside the main building by at least one adult.
- School remains in modified lockdown until notice to resume normal routine is given by central or school command.

This action is considered an appropriate response to violence, criminal activity, or any other situation that has the potential to affect the school site.

Shelter in Place

- An announcement is made by runner or over the public address system: “Your attention please. Shelter in place (pause). Shelter in place (pause). Shelter in place.” If the situation allows, an announcement regarding the nature of the emergency is made over the public address system.
- All staff and students report to assigned classrooms as quickly as possible.
- Students and staff in relocatable classrooms move immediately into the main building.
- Doors and windows are shut immediately.
- All students and staff are accounted for.
- If incident warrants, tape is placed around doors, windows, and vents; and wet towels are placed at the bottom of doors.
- The HVAC system is shut off.
- A “Sheltering-in-Place” sign is placed on the outside of the main door.
- Students and staff stand by until given directions by school command or emergency responders (police/ fire and rescue personnel).

This action is considered appropriate for situations such as hazardous materials releases, nearby fires, and bioterrorism. Officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and local public safety officials indicate that incidents requiring communities to “shelter in place” are viewed as short-term, measured in terms of hours, not days.

Evacuation (on site and off site)

- A fire alarm or horn signal is sounded. If the situation allows, an announcement regarding the nature of the emergency is made over the public address system.
- During an on-site evacuation, students and staff exit the building via the closest safe exit and assemble in pre-determined locations. The same procedure is used for off-site evacuation except that staff and students are transported or walk to a pre-determined off-site location.
- All students and staff are accounted for.
- Students and staff remain in the evacuation area and await instructions from school command.

This action is considered appropriate for, but is not limited to, situations such as floods, fires, hazardous materials incidents, or other situations that may render the school site unsafe.



EMERGENCY *Communications*

If an emergency occurs during school hours:

- Do not drive to the school unless directed to do so.
- Do not call the school.
- Tune to news media for emergency instructions.

In times of emergency, information about the status of schools is communicated through a variety of media. The school system requests that parents do not call their child's school or the central office in times of emergency as it is important to keep phone lines free for emergency communications. Circumstances may prevent parents from picking up their children or may require that children be picked up at a location other than the school.

The safety of children and staff is our first priority. Our second priority is the reunification of parents with their children. Parents should check the following sources for information and status reports:

- The school system's website, www.hcps.org
- HCPSS News email alerts - Register at www.hcpsnews.com.
- The school system's cable TV Comcast 95 / Verizon 42
- Local media

In times of emergency, information will be shared with the community through the following major radio and television stations:

WMAR-TV – Channel 2
WBAL-TV – Channel 11
WJZ-TV – Channel 13
WRC-TV – Channel 4
WJLA-TV – Channel 7
WUSA-TV – Channel 9

WIYY-FM – 97.9*
WMAL-AM - 630*
WBAL-AM – 1090*
WTOP-AM – 103.5*

* Regional Emergency Broadcast Alert System