# **OKLAHOMA SAFETY & DRILL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

We have and are experiencing what will go down as perhaps the most challenging school years in history. Where we will be, and how and when we will move forward all remain to be seen. The OSDE [Return to Learn](https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/Return%20to%20Learn%20Oklahoma.pdf) Plan walks district and school staff through several reopening alternatives. It provides science-based guidance around addressing COVID-19 related safety issues. Reopening is a local decision on which options work best for individual locations and how those options will be implemented. There will be a wide range of implementation plans before we are all done.

The OSDE incorporated the Oklahoma State Department of Health and Safety Requirements listed within the [Oklahoma School Safety Protocol](https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Oklahoma%20School%20Safety%20Protocols.pdf). Let’s take a look at some ***safety-planning actions*** we can take now to carry districts and schools into that future. These suggestions are made with district, school, classroom and home activities in mind.

**Drill Requirements**

The most frequently asked question recently has been around the requirement to practice [**emergency drills**](https://www.ok.gov/schoolsecurity/documents/Drill%20Documentation%20Updated%2019-20.docx)**.** We are all still bound by the [security drill](https://www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/deliverdocument.asp?lookup=Previous&listorder=21615&dbCode=STOKST70&year=) and [safety drill](https://www.oscn.net/applications/oscn/deliverdocument.asp?lookup=Next&listorder=21610&dbCode=STOKST70&year=) requirements, but these, too, will have to be adapted to the new conditions. Some drills may be fairly easy to practice with different reopening models. But all will require some additional planning and adaptations. The ***Oklahoma Office of Homeland Security’s Oklahoma School Security Institute*** has developed guidance for Emergency Drills and Exercises found [here.](https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/OSDE%20OSSI%20W-Drill%20Considerations%207.1.2020%20%281%29.pdf)

For example, evacuation drills will have to take social distancing into account. There may also be a need for more drills so that every student has a chance to practice during a time when he/she is in school.  If a school plans for alternating day schedules, there would be the need to build a drill schedule which accommodates that schedule. *Be sure to communicate with staff and students "This is just a drill and the following classes will be practicing the drill today at 9am. Others will conduct the drill at xx:xx (time)."* For a word documentation of your drills, you may click here ([**emergency drills**](https://www.ok.gov/schoolsecurity/documents/Drill%20Documentation%20Updated%2019-20.docx)**.)**

**Conducting Drills During a Pandemic**

One possibility might involve a *rotation schedule*. The rotation schedule would limit the number of students in hallways and exiting the buildings at the same time. The rotation schedule might involve two or more groups. By way of example: Group A could include all odd numbered classrooms and Group B could include all even numbered classrooms. Drills might take place on different days or at different times of day. A variation to rotation might be a *blocked schedule*. This format would allow each classroom to perform the evacuation separately. Each classroom would follow the normal exit as determined by the school’s safe zone exit plan, explaining to the students where they would go in the case of a real emergency.

In addition, there will likely be a need to reconsider evacuation locations, space, distancing, etc., all dependent on the specific school/campus size, layout, etc.

The following are some suggestions to help drill planning and implementation:

* Review mandated [drill requirements.](https://www.ok.gov/schoolsecurity/documents/Drill%20Documentation%20Updated%2019-20.docx)
* Discuss drills and drill requirements during staff meetings.
* Review the **purpose** of particular drills, and the **processes** in implementing them.

(We often just take these things for granted.)

* Use **scenarios** or **table tops** with staff. Make them building specific.
* Build the results of staff discussions into **classroom lessons**.
* Talk with students about the whys and how’s of safety drills.
* Include and involve **first responders** in conversations and planning around all this.
* ***AT HOME*** ***DURING REMOTE LEARNING***:
  + Include and involve **families**. *Especially during periods of remote learning.* Some of the safety drills and activities usually done in schools can also be shared and practiced AT HOME. This is a very important way of bringing home and school safety together.
  + Safety planning involving students in a virtual classroom might have teachers asking students where they feel most comfortable and safe AT HOME. They might ask who they would call in case of an emergency. They could discuss where they planned to drop, cover and hold on, or who they could talk to if they feel threatened, bullied, or sick. As an assignment, teachers might suggest that students and their families develop an emergency contact list and posting the list on the refrigerator. They might also discuss everyday safety precautions such as wearing a bike helmet, not sharing passwords or talking to strangers – along with wearing a mask andsocial distancing when going out.
  + Teachers can share discussion ideas and age appropriate scenarios with families and with their students. Simple starters like, “What would you do if….?” Or “Who would you call if….?” will help. Students might enjoy **mapping** their house, their yard and even their neighborhood.
  + OSDE’s Office of School Safety and Security has developed a training program for staff to help teach early childhood students and lower elementary students about safety. [Contact](https://sde.ok.gov/school-safety-pd) us to schedule this Professional Development program.
* **Reunification**

Planning for Socially distancing will require some special considerations:

* *Location*:
  + Inside/Outside: Will reunification take place from within the school, itself, or will it take place from a campus site away from the school?
  + on-site/remote: If an evacuation moves staff and students to an off-site location, will that site be prepared to take them in? Is it safe and secure? Is it currently accessible? Have you accessed the location for social distancing? Do you have extra masks in your go-kit? (If needed)
* *Vehicle traffic flow*: How will traffic be accommodated to ensure safety, and distancing?
* How will drivers be identified if they are wearing masks?
* *Sign-in/sign-out:* How will this be accomplished while adapting to current safety guidelines?

Ultimately, in district/school planning for these things in the current environment, many decisions will come down to reasonableness, common sense, risk assessment *within* an emergency *within* COVID-19. And, it almost goes without saying, but involving families and community partners is more important than ever!

*Please note that,* ***during an actual emergency*** *such as a fire, lockdown, shelter for dangerous weather, evacuation, etc., social distancing would not be required, but recommended if possible.*

## **Comprehensive District and School Safety Planning**

[**Comprehensive Safety Plans**](https://sde.ok.gov/ok-cares-partner)

Districts and schools are required to have comprehensive school safety plans aka: emergency operations plans or **EOP**s. Comprehensive plans consider prevention, mitigation, protection, response and recovery from *all threats and hazards:* natural, biological, technological or manmade. Remember, each district or school EOP plan is designed for their particular location. Remember, too, that many of the topics which are often viewed *separately* (things like [behavioral threat assessment,](https://sde.ok.gov/ok-cares-bta) and student health and well-being) *should be addressed and included* as part of the overarching comprehensive plan.

**Digital Safety:**

Zoom, Skype and other platforms are filling in for in-person gatherings and meetings; they are becoming our new best ways of connecting with staff and friends. Within that context, there are many reports of hacking and other cybercrimes, make ensuring the safety and security of your district and school networks all the more critical. The [Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity](https://www.dhs.gov/topic/cybersecurity) page provides information and guidance.

Specifically with educators, parents and students in mind, the [Cyberbullying Research Center](https://cyberbullying.org/) and [StaySafeOnline](https://staysafeonline.org/covid-19-security-resource-library/) provide a wide array of resources to help keep kids safe.

***AT HOME***: For home, links and pages from these sites can be shared with student and families. It is important to keep in mind that *most* young people are safe and productive online *most* of the time. However, given the amount of time and number of activities students are online, it is also important for adults to be well aware of students’ time and activities, and to be prepared to step in to keep them safe. Contact our Office for [Professional Development](https://sde.ok.gov/school-safety-pd) on Social Media Trends.

In addition, based on our current COVID experience, we know, first-hand, why [Continuity Of Operations Planning (COOP)](https://sde.ok.gov/documents/2020-08-10/any-ps-eop-coop-annex-document) is also an important component of an EOP/safety plan. Planning is a process. Now is a good time to review, revise, and in some cases, develop your EOP with the future in mind.

**Communications**

Communications processes are critically important moving forward. In recent months, everyone has likely experienced more and more varied forms of communications than ever before. With respect to safety planning, consider revisiting what is currently in place, updating and adding specific communications lines with your different stakeholders in mind.

***RAVE Panic Button***

Districts should consider utilizing communication technology like the RAVE mobile safety panic button. This tool is available to every public school district in Oklahoma at no cost. RAVE provides one-touch communication within schools, between campuses, among key employees and 911 and first responders as needed. To find out more about the free [RAVE Panic Button,](https://www.ravemobilesafety.com/oklahoma-school-panic-button) contact the [Office of School Safety and Security](https://sde.ok.gov/school-safety-and-security).

**Communication considerations may include:**

* Staff – update phone trees and text options; train on effective use of Zoom, Skype or other platforms used for meetings and trainings;
* First Responders – ensure that everyone knows and has access to appropriate contacts and protocols;
* Families – as with staff, update family contact information; maintain an easily accessible web site; create a blind/dark page with emergency-specific information which can be made public quickly, as needed;

**AT HOME**: Encourage students and families to have and post current emergency contact lists; identify safe places within homes during emergencies, as well as safe family reunification points in and around neighborhoods.

* Accommodate the language needs of your families and students.
* Anonymous reporting – Provide call, text, web, resources for students, staff and families. Remember the old-fashioned “secret drop box” can also be an effective way for students to reach out for help. *The Oklahoma School Tip-Line information* can be found [here.](https://www.ok.gov/ossi/tipline/app/index.php)
* Media – Identify your district Public Information Officer (PIO); make sure that everyone knows who this is and how to contact that person. Discuss with staff that they should direct all media calls to the PIO.

**Communicating Drills:** Schools are required to do drills when students are in the building. Although all students may not be in the school building at the same time, this is a good time to plan drills for the coming year. It is also a good opportunity to *discuss* those drills with staff. Take some time during staff meetings, both virtual and in-person, to discuss why drills are required, how they are carried out, and what changes may be needed. Use scenarios and tabletop exercises (**TTX**) to simulate actual situations. *Be sure to communicate the specific conditions surrounding drills during the pandemic to staff and students*.

**Communication for Visitors:** It is important that schools communicate any changes to visitation procedures. As the new school year begins, and as schools adjust to various schedules and safety accommodations, it should be noted that visitors will likely be arriving wearing masks of one kind or other. In addition, with varying new work schedules for families, not everyone coming to school may be a familiar face. Adapt your plans to accommodate potential changes to visitor screening and sign-in procedures. It is highly recommended that visitors remain in the school office area and not be allowed to go throughout the building. Proper signage to encourage social distancing is recommended.

**ASSESSMENTS**

Within a comprehensive safety plan, assessments are a key component for planning. Assessing physical surroundings (sites), the climate and culture, and the capacity to respond will help determine current and future needs. A walk around now might identify overgrown landscaping or broken playground equipment. It might uncover previously unknown broken windows or other danger warning signs. Survey staff to assess and compile their specific skill sets which would be useful in case of emergency. Identify assets and resources within campus buildings and assess potential needs for the future. Contact the [Oklahoma State Department of Education’s Office of School Safety and Security](https://sde.ok.gov/school-safety-and-security) to schedule a [School Safety Walk-Through and Six-Step Planning Process](https://sde.ok.gov/ok-cares-partner).

***AT HOME***: For “assessing” AT HOME, scavenger hunts can be both fun and educational for students. They can also help families identify those things they may want to do to keep their homes safer; they might even uncover hidden treasures families want to keep and use! Students and families can also build their own home “[Go Kits](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/HH_Vol1Issue1.pdf)”.

**Finally**, in planning for the safety and security of students and staff, be sure to include deliberate, focused self-care in the process. *We can’t take care of others if we don’t take care of ourselves.* Now is a great time to provide your staff Self-Resiliency Training. Contact the [Office of School Counseling](https://sde.ok.gov/counseling) to schedule training.