



EMERGENCY DRILL & EXERCISE GUIDANCE 2020 – 2021 SCHOOL YEAR

Preparing to return in the COVID 19 environment may be challenging for school personnel as reentry procedures are continuously reviewed and revised. Along with a tremendous effort to ensure all students enjoy a safe and smooth transition, the process of preparation must continue to include planning for all potential threats and hazards. Drills and exercises, vital component in preparing for potential emergencies, can be safely conducted regardless of pandemic-related restrictions.

The following considerations, developed in consultation with the Oklahoma State Department of Education offer recommendations for conducting safe and practical drills and exercises by slightly modifying procedures or incorporating other methods.

Various regions around the state have different circumstances related to the COVID 19 pandemic. Rural schools may not have the same concerns regarding contact or community spread as those in more populated areas, thus all schools are encouraged to evaluate these considerations in a collaborative review with local stakeholders (i.e. emergency services, health departments and other key organizations) and determine how or if the guidelines should be applied. Inviting emergency responders to observe and/or participate in all drills is encouraged.

Fire Drills:

Conducted on a regular and continuous basis to ensure students and staff are familiar with evacuation procedures in the event of a fire within the facility. Modifications might include:

- Scheduling additional time to conduct each drill.
- Activating the fire alarm to familiarize occupants with the sound and explain procedures.
- Practicing evacuation in a slower, methodical process while emphasizing appropriate personal physical distance. Wearing masks may be appropriate if concern of infection is elevated.
- Conducting drills more frequently and alternating small groups to reduce the number of individuals evacuating at any given time.
- Closely monitoring more points along evacuation routes to limit congestion.
- Identifying “one-way” avenues or hallways to avoid congestion and “crossing paths.”
- Pointing out common staging areas for emergency response vehicles and explaining possible avenues of approach.
- Expanding rally points to accommodate distancing and staging handwash/sanitizing stations. Directing students to wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to rooms.

Tornado Drills:

Conducted two or more times just prior to severe weather season and designed to practice moving students and staff to a safe location within a building or structure in the event of a tornado or severe weather warning. Modifications might include:

- Scheduling additional time to conduct each drill.
- Explaining procedures during local siren tests.

- Clearly announcing the drill and practicing it in a slower, methodical process while emphasizing appropriate personal physical distance. Wearing masks may be appropriate if concern of infection is elevated.
- Moving students to the shelter location one classroom or group at a time.
- Identifying “one-way” avenues or hallways to reduce congestion and “crossing paths.”
- Applying clear signage to identify shelter locations and pointing out signage on a regular basis. Stage wash/sanitizing stations in or near shelter locations. Ensure social distancing measures so students do not gather around stations.
- Directing students to thoroughly wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to rooms.

Security Drill:

Lockdown/Lockout drills are conducted as a response to “active shooters,” dangerous intruders or incidents presenting a potential danger to the school community. Modifications might include:

- Increasing number of table-top exercises with staff to ensure procedures are understood.
- Explaining procedures to students and staff with visual aids.
- Conducting more frequent small drills with smaller groups of students/staff.
- Practicing procedures to move small groups to safe locations (if applicable) while emphasizing appropriate personal physical distance. Wearing masks may be appropriate if concern of infection is elevated.
- Staging wash/sanitizing stations at safe locations and directing students to wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to rooms. Ensure social distancing measures so students do not gather around stations.
- Recording (with video) drills conducted by staff and emergency services using limited number of actors and utilizing video to educate students in procedures.

Other Drill:

Practicing a safe and timely response in events such as earthquake, chemical spill or any other event unique to the campus. Modifications may include:

- Explaining procedures to students and staff with visual aids.
- Walking through evacuation procedure with small groups. Wearing masks may be appropriate if concern of infection is elevated.
- Expanding rally points, staging wash/sanitizing stations and directing students to wash/sanitize hands prior to returning to classrooms. Ensure social distancing measures so students do not gather around stations.

Bus Evacuation Drill:

Drill conducted in emergency response for passengers and drivers. Modifications may include:

- Conducting the drills in a slower and methodical pace while encouraging personal physical distancing. Wearing masks may be appropriate if concern of infection is elevated.
- Practicing evacuations with a handful of passengers and rotating participants.
- Conducting procedures in a secure parking lot to ensure room for physical distancing.
- Providing sanitizing products for passengers and direct youth to sanitize hands during pre-determined points of the procedures.

Reverse evacuation and a number of other drills may be performed and can be practiced in the “COVID” environment with the same considerations. Simply allowing students to exercise social distancing during a drill is acceptable as long as they understand the need to react with urgency in an actual emergency, thus requiring extensive vocal reinforcement during any exercise. Working with local emergency services is encouraged to provide insight from practitioners.