

Security Drills

Effective November 1, 2010, New Jersey schools are required to conduct **one school security drill** and **one fire drill** each month that school is open. This represents a significant increase in the number of school security drills compared to previous years.

The statute (NJSA 18A: 41-1) defines a school security drill as “an exercise, other than a fire drill, to practice procedures that respond to an emergency” including a non-fire evacuation, lockdown, bomb threat, or active shooter situation. The duration of a school security drill is similar to that of a fire drill.

The goal of any drill is to familiarize students with procedures so they will feel comfortable, safe, and secure in a real emergency. We embrace this mandate as an ongoing opportunity for practicing our security procedures, but recognize that the increased frequency of drills may heighten anxiety for some students. To lessen that, our staff will discuss the school security drills with students in an age-appropriate context.

The procedures that apply to various crisis situations are defined by each school’s Crisis Management Plan. The plan was developed in close collaboration with local and regional law enforcement and emergency management agencies and is reviewed and revised frequently to ensure our readiness to respond to any emergency or crisis situation.

Each school’s emergency response plan is consistent with its unique school environment. So, while evacuation routes and assembly areas may vary among schools depending upon the facility and its grounds, the methods in which our schools respond to a crisis situation are procedurally consistent.

In a real emergency, the district will work closely with, and be directed by, local police and other emergency management officials. Parents can play an essential role in keeping students safe during an emergency. Please consider the following guidelines so that you can help our staff respond effectively:

- Keep your emergency contact information up to date. In the event of a real emergency, we will activate our District Notification System and call all parent contact numbers (home, cell, office). If your contact information changes during the school year, please notify your child’s school of the change. If you have children in multiple schools, please notify all of the schools.
- Calls notifying parents of an emergency situation will be made as soon as practical – that is, once the situation has been assessed. When warranted, we will also provide updates via follow-up calls using the District Notification System.
- In certain emergency situations (e.g., a school lockdown), all of the building’s outside doors will be locked. Please do not rush to school to pick up your child. This could put you at risk and compromise the secured environment. Police may bar parents from school grounds in some emergencies. The safety of our students is paramount and we will reunite students and parents as soon as possible.
- Remind your students that the unauthorized use of cell phones is prohibited during school hours, including during school security drills and fire drills. Security professionals also advise that the use of cell phones during an actual emergency

can lead to confusion and misinformation. Remind your students that you will receive calls from the district in an emergency situation.

A proactive approach to crisis management involves planning and practice. We look forward to working with our staff, students, parents, law enforcement, and emergency management officials as we strengthen our school security procedures through these state-mandated drills.

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