

# SCHOOL EMERGENCY PROGRAM

## GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



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SCHOOLS ARE CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE SAFEST PLACES IN OUR COMMUNITIES. HOWEVER, IN REALITY, **AN EMERGENCY CAN STRIKE ANYWHERE AT ANY TIME.**

## A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

During an emergency, the Division's first priority is the safety of its students and staff. To provide an effective response to any school crisis, the Division has developed an Emergency Response Plan. The plan works in conjunction with other local emergency plans, as a school emergency could require the involvement of numerous agencies. Both individual school plans and the Division's plan are reviewed annually and after each emergency.

There is an a site emergency response team (SERT) at each school, along with a Division-based emergency response team that provides support and aid to schools at the time of an emergency. All staff are trained on emergency protocols and drills are regularly practiced at each school.

Although standardized protocols and procedures provide the basis for the response, the way Elk Island Public Schools (EIPS) responds to an emergency is influenced by the specifics of an incident. As a Division, the foremost concern is to ensure the safety of students and staff.

As such, the Division collaborates closely with local emergency personnel to ensure plans are co-ordinated with appropriate agencies. The Division's plans don't replace the authority of the municipality, law enforcement, fire or EMS—staff members work in full co-operation with these agencies.

For security reasons, certain components of the emergency response plans aren't publicly available. However, the following "School Emergency Program" guide outlines key elements of the plan and answers questions parents frequently ask regarding emergency preparedness. I hope you find the guide helpful and informative.

We appreciate your support and assistance in our continued safety efforts.

Sincerely,

Mark Liguori, Superintendent

## KEEPING SAFE

Throughout the year, schools conduct training and drills to help better prepare students and staff for possible emergency situations. These drills are an opportunity to rehearse emergency procedures. They prepare students and staff to act quickly and help to minimize a child's fear during a real emergency. When a school is confronted with an emergency, staff will assess the situation and then decide on a course of action.

In addition to the procedures described here, schools also practice protocols such as "Drop-Cover-Hold," a method of protecting vital body parts during certain natural disasters, and conduct fire drills. All staff and students are required to participate in these drills.

## LOCKDOWN

A lockdown is used in response to acts or threats of violence to students and staff when the perpetrator is **inside the building** and directly impacting the school. During a lockdown, all students and staff immediately proceed to the nearest lockable area and all interior doors are locked. Lights are turned off, and students and staff remain quiet and hidden from sight until the lockdown is lifted. No one is permitted in or out of any area once it has been locked. Students and staff must respond quickly to a lockdown command to get to a safe location before doors are locked. **No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the lockdown is over.**

## HOLD AND SECURE

Hold and secure is used in response to security threats or criminal activity located **outside the school**. During a hold and secure, all exterior doors to the school are locked, with no one permitted in or out of the building. **No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the hold and secure has been cleared.**

## SHELTER-IN-PLACE

Shelter-in-place is used when it is **safer to be inside** the building than outside. It is typically used during a severe weather or air quality event. It can also be used to control movement inside the building due to situations such as an injury incident or chemical spill. Depending on the situation that triggers the shelter-in-place, any people outside are directed back into the building, and all students and staff move to the nearest designated shelter-in-place area of the building. **Students will not be released or dismissed until the situation is resolved.**

## EVACUATION

An evacuation is used when it is **unsafe to remain inside the building**. An evacuation requires all students and staff to leave the building and go to an alternate location. In some cases, this may mean only going outside and away from the building until it's safe to re-enter. In other cases, students and staff may need to go to an evacuation centre. Parents are informed of the alternate location at the time of the evacuation through the school's usual phone and email distribution systems.

## CONTROLLED STUDENT RELEASE

A controlled student release is a structured method of releasing students to their parents or an authorized adult when an incident has occurred and students need to be sent home. Additional information is on page 5.

## WHEN AN EMERGENCY OCCURS

Although your natural instincts in an emergency may be to go to the school to safeguard your child, doing so could impede the response to the situation. Extra vehicles and people at the site make the task more difficult. Follow the instructions provided to you through the communications channels outlined below. **Do not come to the school to pick up your child unless requested to do so.**

**If you arrive at the school in the midst of an emergency,** respect the protocol in progress. While the Division understands personal circumstances or initial reactions might move you to do something contrary to the school's established procedures, it cannot compromise the safety of students or staff to accommodate individual requests that could put others at risk.

► **DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL AND DO NOT CALL YOUR CHILD'S CELL PHONE DURING AN EMERGENCY.**

- Phone systems need to remain available for handling the actual emergency.
- Overloading the system may mean the school cannot communicate with first responders.
- Calling your child's cell phone during an emergency may put them at higher risk by disclosing their location or drawing attention to them during a lockdown.
- Experts advise, under some circumstances, cell phones and other electric devices may act as an ignition source for fires or explosions.

## KEEPING INFORMED DURING AN EMERGENCY

During an emergency, it's unlikely you will be able to reach the school by phone. The school will, however, make every effort to contact parents directly or by one of the methods noted below.

► **WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND RECORDED MESSAGES**

The school or Division will keep parents informed through SchoolMessenger notifications—by phone or email—and by posting information regarding the emergency on the [EIPS website](#), [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and recorded messages on the EIPS Central Services phone system (780-464-3477).

► **MEDIA**

The Division may also use local media to share information in the event of an emergency. Stay tuned to local TV and radio stations for news alerts.

We recognize when an emergency occurs parents are worried and want to be reunited with their child as quickly as possible. It's our intention to make this happen. However, to ensure every child's safety and the safety of staff, specific procedures have been established for releasing students.

**DURING AN EMERGENCY, DO NOT COME TO THE SCHOOL TO PICK UP YOUR CHILD UNLESS REQUESTED TO DO SO.**

Additional information regarding emergency procedures is included in your child's School Handbook and on the [EIPS website](#).

If you have any questions or concerns, contact your child's school.

## REUNITING WITH YOUR CHILD

Parents are asked to adhere to the parent-child reunification procedures listed below. Staff will work to ensure these procedures take place without delay. Understand the process will take some time and we ask for your patience when you arrive at the parent-child reunion area.

### Parent-Child Reunification Procedures:

- 1. A Parent-Child Reunion Area will be established.** Parents are notified at the time of the emergency of the reunion area's location. The location may not be at the school—the location will depend on the specifics of the emergency.
- 2. Students will only be released to an individual designated as legal guardian or emergency contact** in the student's official registration information. Make sure to keep this information current with your school, as the school will only release a child to an authorized individual—no exceptions are made.
- 3. Valid identification is required to pick up your child.** Requiring identification protects students from any unauthorized individuals attempting to pick them up. Even if school personnel know you, you must still present ID as the school may be receiving assistance from other schools or agencies.
- 4. You will be required to fill out a Student Release Request Form.** The form ensures all students are accounted for at all times and students are only released to authorized individuals. Do not just take your child from the school or evacuation centre without signing for his or her release.
- 5. Once you have been reunited with your child, please leave the area immediately.** Leaving immediately ensures your safety and that of your child's.

**If you are unable to pick up your child,** he or she will be kept at the parent-child reunion area until alternate arrangements can be made. Your child will be supervised at all times.