

Emergency Operation Plans (EOPs) for Independent Schools

March 19, 2024

Courtney O'Brien, AOE Operations Manager

Taylor Goodwin, AOE Safe and Healthy Schools Coordinator

Considerations/Quick Definitions

- Hierarchies
 - State law (e.g. Act 29/16 V.S.A. § 1480)
 - Policies: Passed by school boards (can be based on model policies developed by AOE/VSSC, other state entities)
 - Procedures: Adopted by school boards or schools (can be based on model policies developed by AOE/VSSC, other state entities)
 - Guidelines and Best Practices: Usually created by AOE/VSSC/other entities to support schools in implementing policies and procedures

To Whom Does Act 29 Apply?

Act 29 is applicable to all public SU/SDs and **all Approved and Recognized Independent Schools.**

Not applicable to:

- Approved Education Programs
- Approved Tutorials
- Approved Distance Learning Schools
- Approved Independent Kindergartens

Act 29: Overview

- Amends [16 V.S.A. § 1481](#)
- Addresses:
 - **Options-based Response to Violent Intruder** and **Fire** drills
 - All-hazards emergency operations plans
 - Access controls and visitor management policies
 - Behavior Threat Assessment Teams
 - Creates the Working Group on Student Protections from Harassment and Discrimination in Schools
- Earliest timelines for implementation began July 1, 2023

Emergency Operations Plans - Overview

- Each independent school shall adopt and maintain an all-hazards emergency operations plan (EOP)
- EOP must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis
- Must be at least as comprehensive as All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan template provided by Vermont School Safety Center
- Must be developed and updated in collaboration with local emergency first responders and local emergency management officials
- All-Hazards EOPs should be kept confidential within the necessary responsible parties

Recommended Training

Emergency Preparedness Training through NIMS (Emergency Management Institute - National Incident Management System (NIMS) (fema.gov)).

- **IS-700:** [National Incident Management System, An Introduction](#)
- **ICS-100:** [Introduction to the Incident Command System](#)

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center

- [\(Virtual\) Developing Emergency Operations Plans \(EOPS\) K-12 101](#)

When available:

- **(In-Person) Developing Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) K-12 101 Training**

All-Hazards EOP Guide

[All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guide](#)

- Aids in the development of a school or district's written All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan.
- Provides the basic structure of an All-Hazards EOP.
- Provides additional detail and considerations needed to develop a comprehensive plan.
- Follows the same content, best practices, and recommendations as provided by REMS.
- Provides recommendations and sample language that schools and districts can (and should) consider when developing their EOP.
- Optional for use during REMS training or other plan development exercises.

Threat and Hazard Annexes

The importance of the inclusion of threat-specific annexes* cannot be understated.

Threat and Hazard-Specific Annexes should be:

- Clear
- Comprehensive
- Accessible
- Achievable based on the specific needs and abilities of their school
- Easily executed by any member of the school or district during an emergency event

*The Guide offers considerations and many examples of threat and hazard-specific considerations

EOP Alternate Template

[State of Vermont All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guide 2024*](#)

***Alternate Template - See Appendix D of All-Hazards EOP Guide**

- VSSC recognizes that school size plays a role in the effectiveness of an EOP.
- VSSC created an "alternate" EOP template for schools with **less than 30 students enrolled**.
- Does **not** apply to:
 - Schools with 30+ students enrolled.
 - therapeutic schools.
 - residential schools.

All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Template

[All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan Template](#)

Reminder: All approved and recognized Independent Schools must adopt and maintain an All-Hazards EOP that is *at least as comprehensive* as the template maintained by the Vermont School Safety Center

- Template developed as a baseline for the minimum required components of an All-Hazards EOP.
- Designed to mirror the language and distinct sections of the Guide.
- Optional: Schools may choose to use a format other than the Template, however they must ensure that the final EOP includes, at minimum, all sections and components included in the Template
- Final Product: Clear and complete, written All-Hazards EOP that is updated at least annually and reflects the current and specific needs of a school

Hazard Identification

Hazard Type	Description
Example: Severe Storm	<p>Springfield and its surrounding areas are vulnerable to severe local storms. The effects are generally transportation problems and loss of utilities, but can vary with the intensity of the storm, the level of preparation by Springfield School, and the equipment and staff available to perform tasks to lessen the effects of severe local storms.</p> <p>During the 2012-13 school year winter storms, high snowfall, and cold temperatures resulted in significant snow accumulations. The accumulations aggravated by rain, drifting snow, and ice in roof drains caused excessive weight and the collapse of a shed located near the soccer field. The collapse resulted in over \$3,000 in damage to sports equipment.</p>

Considerations

- How often has this occurred?
- What precautions are already in place?
- Potential impacts?
- Have local first responders been included in planning? Has the EOP and floor plans of the school been shared with them?
- Has the plan been exercised?
- Do any students or staff have special needs that should be included in planning and preparation?
- What equipment may be needed to assist with addressing threat or for relocation? (Go-bags, class rosters, medicines, etc.)

Final Outcomes

- Hazard-specific annex within the EOP.
- Clear procedures to address the specific threat.
- Clear identification of roles and responsibilities for specific threat.
- Collaboration with local first responders to assure familiarity with the plan and to understand the expectations for response.
- As soon as possible after incident, the Superintendent, Principal, Head of School or other Key School Safety staff reports the event through the VSSC Critical Incident Reporting Form* to determine if any additional support is needed or available.
- Plan future trainings and exercises to test the plan and procedures.

Implementation and Maintenance of completed EOP

- Once established, the All-Hazards EOP must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, in collaboration with local emergency first responders and local emergency management officials
- All Independent Schools are strongly encouraged to establish procedures to ensure complete and thorough annual review, and strong partnerships with their local partners.
- In addition, schools and districts may request additional trainings or supports, such as tabletop practice exercises, through the VSSC.

Timeline for Planning and Implementation

(Anticipated: Actual times may vary)

- Trainings: 4-8 hours
- Updating existing EOPs: 8 hours
- Creating new EOPs: 8-24 hours*
 - Planning time varies – some may take more than 24 to effectively complete the EOP
- Current deadline for the All-Hazards EOP in Act 29 is **July 1, 2024**
 - AOE has requested an extension to July 1, 2025
 - Until and unless this extension is approved, all Independent Schools should move forward with this work under the assumption that completed EOPs must be completed by July 1, 2024

Required Actions

- ✓ Create EOP development team
- ✓ Complete recommended EOP trainings
- ✓ Review VT School Safety Center template all-hazards EOP: [School Safety Planning | Vermont School Safety Center](#)
- ✓ Coordinate with local emergency responders and local emergency management officials to develop all-hazards Emergency Operations Plan
 - [Emergency Management Director \(EMD\) Public Contact Information](#)
 - [Emergency Management Partners](#)
- ✓ Implement EOP Plan
- ✓ Effective July 1, 2024

Reminder: 2024 Act 29 Assurances

- Intended to allow respondents to certify their compliance with several key elements of Act 29.
- In acknowledgement that several of the effective dates included in Act 29 were challenging, if not impossible, for school systems to meet, the 2023-2024 assurances allow for respondents to certify their anticipated compliance with Act 29 requirements for the 2023-2024 School Year.
- Assurances due October 15, 2023
- If already completed and prior information needs updating, please create a new submission on the webform and include the necessary changes.

[Act 29 Assurances WebForm](#)

Points of Contact

Agency of Education

- Act 29 Requirements
- Taylor Goodwin (Taylor.Goodwin@vermont.gov)

Vermont School Safety Center

- All-Hazards EOP recommendations by VSCC
 - Sunni Erikson (Sunni.Eriksen@Vermont.gov)
 - Rob Evans (revans@cosecure.com)

Vermont School Safety Center Website: <http://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/>

Questions?
