


MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Independent School Headmasters, School Crisis Planning Team Members

FROM: Dan French, Secretary of Education 
Michael Desrochers, Executive Director, Division of Fire Safety

SUBJECT: School Safety Drill Guidance for COVID-19

DATE: July 28, 2020

Scope

With the increasing issues facing school reopening amid the COVID-19 pandemic, schools need flexibility and innovation to keep occupants safe and healthy. With a focus on limiting student movement and social distancing, the routine practice of conducting Egress Fire drills along with Active Shooter/Violent Intruder drills will need to be modified to protect the health of faculty, staff and students. Prior to the pandemic, 6 Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drills and 5 Lockdown drills were required throughout the school year. Under the new guidance, only 1 Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill will be required within the first 30 days of opening and the other 5 Egress Fire Drills may be instructional. Under the new guidance, Active Shooter/Violent Intruder Drills will be conducted within 30 days of the start of the fall and spring semesters. These drills will be either instructionally based or in delivered in a discussion format.

Fire/Evacuation Drills

- Faculty and students' normal path of travel within the building will be altered to comply with social distancing. Emergency evacuation plans are designed to evacuate the school in the most efficient and safe manner without panic. Without practicing drills, occupants including faculty will not know how to implement their emergency action plans.
- Young children (grades K, 1 and 2) and new teachers who have never participated in an Egress Fire Drill may not know how to properly execute an emergency evacuation plan.
- School fires and other emergency conditions may arise warranting the complete evacuation of the school in a timely manner thus, schools must be prepared to initiate emergency evacuations.

Guidelines

1. Within the first 30 days of students returning to class, all students, faculty and staff must participate in an Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill consisting of full evacuation of the school. *The school will have full flexibility* in how this is achieved as long as within the first 30 days the school can document in the registry that all students have participated in an Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill. This drill may be spread out over multiple days.

2. Subsequent Egress Fire Drills will be conducted every other month through instruction. The instruction guidance must include the following information:
 - Time and Date of the Instruction
 - Duration of the instruction
 - Specific guidance and instruction on how the students will exit the classroom (walk) and where they will meet outside away from the school.
3. The Division of Fire Safety will provide internet-based Fire Prevention Education messaging to assist teachers in providing the instruction. The messaging will be very short (under 3-5 minutes) and will include very important fire safety tips suited for specific audiences.

Active Shooter/Violent Intruder Drills

For those schools utilizing a traditional “Lockdown” approach to an Active Shooter/Violent Intruder, we recommend the following instructional guidance:

The term LOCKDOWN means “LOCKS, LIGHTS, OUT OF SIGHT.”

Students are trained to:

- Move out of the line of sight of the doorway(s) and windows
- Maintain silence
- Turn off cell phones

Teachers are trained to:

- Lock classroom door(s)
- Turn lights off
- Move out of the line of sight of the doorway(s) and windows
- Maintain silence
- Do not open the door
- Take roll, account for students (if safe to do so)

Suggested Classroom Activity: Start with a classroom discussion or question and answer session in which the teacher explains what a Lockdown is and under what circumstances a Lockdown might be used. A Lockdown would be used in situations when there is a violent threat inside the school building. *Remember to utilize age-appropriate language when having these discussions.*

Discussion points could include that a Lockdown means locking classroom doors and other access points to keep students safe, moving everyone to a location in the classroom that is out of the line of sight of windows and doorways, and having everyone remain silent.

Consider having the students practice the classroom Lockdown procedure. The teacher would begin by locking the door(s), shutting off lights, pulling down window coverings/shades, while students move to the predesignated area in the classroom where they will all be out of sight of all windows and doorways.

Run, Hide, Fight

Run, Hide, Fight is the US Department of Homeland Security's recommended actions to be taken when responding to an Active Shooter.

- Does **NOT** replace current safety protocols for evacuation, sheltering in place or other emergency response procedures.
- **DOES** give additional tools that may be used to respond to an Active Shooter.

The **Run, Hide, Fight** concept is to:

- **Run** – if you can safely escape the area of the threat, you must decide based on the best information available
- **Hide** – find a safe location to hide and avoid detection and potentially reinforce or “harden” your location
- **Fight** – when faced with no other option, you may need to confront an active threat with the resolve that you will survive the encounter

Run

- Can be faculty or student initiated
- Have an escape route and plan that includes identified assembly areas located a safe distance away from the incident (Accountability)
- Leave personal belongings behind
- Must be prepared to change evacuation/run routes based on situational awareness
- Be prepared to transition to a lockdown/hide or fight option based on situational awareness
- Keep your hands visible

Hide and Reinforce

Take steps to barricade, reinforce or fortify your location

- Hide in an area out of the perpetrator's view
- Lock doors and use items such as desks, chairs, bookshelves to barricade the door
- Silence cell phones

Fight

- Last option for survival
- Must assess individual capabilities
- Enhance survivability by utilizing available resources (fire extinguisher, books, heavy objects) to defend or protect yourself and incapacitate the perpetrator
- Consider developing a plan with others in your location to determine the best options for your survival (swarming, distraction)

The following videos may provide faculty and staff additional background and possible talking points to be discussed in a classroom setting. **The videos are not intended to be shown to students as a part of this instruction.**

- [Run Hide Fight Elementary School](#)
- [Run Hide Fight Intermediate School](#)
- [Run Hide Fight High School](#)

Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate (ALICE)

For those schools who utilize the ALICE methodology for response to an active shooter, please consult [ALICE Training Resources](#).