



CRISIS PREPAREDNESS:

Parents And School Emergencies

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Introduction

The safety and security of our students and staff are top priorities for St Marys City Schools (SMCS). This article explains some of the procedures that have been planned and practiced in the event of an emergency at your child's school.

School administrators work closely with police, fire, emergency services and public health to ensure our Emergency Operations Plan reflects appropriate practices and all schools are prepared for emergencies. Key personnel are trained in National Incident Management System procedures, and SMCS takes an all-hazards approach to emergency readiness. We are prepared to work in partnership with emergency responders should a critical incident occur in one of our schools.

Our comprehensive emergency plan addresses a multitude of potential incidents, not because we expect them to occur, but because we want to be prepared in case they do. For security reasons, specific details are not made available to the public; however, parents and students have a vital role and it is important that you know what to do in an emergency. Please review information in advance of the school year, to make sure you and your child understand the emergency procedures.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is any unexpected incident that could possibly put your child's safety at risk. It could be anything from a disruption in utilities to inclement weather and could affect one child, one school, or the entire school district. School officials, and sometimes emergency responders, will evaluate the seriousness of each situation and determine the best action to respond quickly, safely and appropriately.

Advanced planning and preparation can minimize the risks in any emergency situation. This article offers guidelines for preparedness, what parents should do, and what the school will do in the event of an emergency. Communication procedures and student release procedures are also outlined.

Preparedness – What Should Parents do to Prepare for an Emergency?

Parents have an invaluable role in preparing their children for emergencies. Listed below are some of the ways you can help them understand that if an emergency occurs at school, teachers and school officials are trained to handle the situation. Reassure them you will be contacted by the school and you will be reunited with them as soon as it is safe to do so.

- Be sure emergency contact information is current and correct. Contact the school secretary immediately whenever your work, home or cell number changes.
- Keep the school nurse informed of any medical conditions or physical limitations your child may have or medications your child may be taking. Provide the necessary medical supplies and medications for daily use.
- Identify who is authorized to pick up your child if you are not able to respond. Make sure their contact information is current and correct. Please understand your child will only be released to parents and persons identified on the emergency contact list. Discuss this information with your child.
- Make sure your child knows their parent or guardian's name, address, and phone numbers. If there is only one parent or guardian, your child should have contact information for a second responsible adult.
- Talk with your child about the importance of remaining calm and following instructions in the event of an emergency. If an emergency occurs while they are at school, their teacher will provide them with appropriate instructions and information.
- Let your child know they could be moved to another location until you can pick them up. Explain the term "relocation" so they are not afraid of being evacuated from their school.

- Explain that cell phones should not be used during an emergency unless directed to do so by a teacher. Texting may be the preferred method of communication. Emergency responders will depend on cell phones for communication. If students and parents are trying to contact each other, cell phone circuits may become overloaded, interfering with the ability of emergency personnel to communicate vital information.
- Whenever you are on school grounds, remain alert to activity in and around the school. Report any suspicious activity to school administration and/or law enforcement so they can investigate.
- Establish a family preparedness plan including a communications plan. This will enable you to communicate with all family members during an emergency.

What Will Schools do in the Event of an Emergency? _____

What we do in an emergency depends on the situation and the specifics of the incident. We will make every attempt to ensure that instruction continues, even when it becomes necessary to secure the school. Depending on the severity of the threat or emergency, additional measures may be taken, including sheltering-in-place, evacuating students from the building or closing the school early.

If emergency responders are called to the scene, we will work with them in a unified command to determine which plan should be implemented. School emergency plans vary from school to school, based on school size, building layout and other relevant factors, and are initiated depending on the events unfolding at the time of the incident. While every school has pre-established plans of action, evacuation sites, and family reunification plans, these plans must remain flexible as conditions change. Parents will be informed as soon as we have done everything we can to ensure the safety of students and when it becomes possible to provide accurate and helpful information.

Protective Actions the School May Use _____

Each school has an emergency operations plan involving a number of possible actions. The response varies, depending on the conditions and the situations, and is determined by a team trained to make such decisions. It is important for parents to understand that if a critical incident occurs, students will be dismissed to parents only when danger has passed.

Schools may use the following protective actions:

EMERGENCY ACTION

LOCKDOWN

LOCKDOWN is initiated to isolate students and school staff from danger when there is a crisis inside the building and movement within the school might put students and staff in jeopardy. **LOCKDOWN** is used to prevent intruders from entering occupied areas of the building. The concept of **LOCKDOWN** is a “no one in, no one out” scenario. During **LOCKDOWN**, all exterior doors are locked, and students and staff are to remain in the classrooms or designated locations at all times. Teachers and other school staff are responsible for accounting for students and ensuring that no one leaves the safe area. **LOCKDOWN** is not normally proceeded with any warning. This ACTION is considered appropriate for, but is not limited to, the following types of emergencies:

- Gunfire
- Violence inside the building

EMERGENCY ACTION

CONTROLLED ACCESS/RELEASE

CONTROLLED ACCESS/RELEASE is initiated to isolate students and school staff from potential dangers outside the school and movement within the school is not dangerous. **CONTROLLED ACCESS/RELEASE** is used to prevent intruders from entering the building and prevent students and staff from exiting the building. During **CONTROLLED ACCESS/RELEASE**, all exterior doors are locked and monitored, and students and staff are to go about their normal routine. Teachers and other school staff are responsible for accounting for students and ensuring that no one leaves the building. **CONTROLLED ACCESS/RELEASE** is not normally proceeded with any warning. This ACTION is considered appropriate for, but is not limited to, the following types of emergencies:

- Incident near school that does not pose danger to students

CONTROLLED ACCESS/RELEASE differs from **LOCKDOWN** because it does not require the locking of all classroom doors and it does allow for the free movement of staff and students within the building.

EMERGENCY ACTION

STAND-BY/STAY PUT

STAND BY/STAY PUT is appropriate for all incidents that require hallways, entrances and exits to remain clear. Students and staff are to stay in their classroom and go about normal routine. This ACTION is considered appropriate for, but is not limited to the following types of incidents:

- Medical situation inside the building.

EMERGENCY ACTION

SHELTER IN PLACE

SHELTER IN PLACE is a short-term measure implemented when there is a need to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment to prevent exposure to airborne contaminants. The procedures include closing and sealing doors, windows and vents; shutting down the classroom/building heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems to prevent exposure to the outside air; and turning off pilot lights.

SHELTER IN PLACE allows for the free movement of staff and students within the building, although one should not leave the room until further instructions are received. It is appropriate for, but not limited to:

- gas leaks
- external chemical release
- hazardous material spills.

EMERGENCY ACTION

EVACUATION

EVACUATION is implemented when conditions make it unsafe to remain in the building. This ACTION provides for the orderly movement of students and staff along prescribed routes from inside school buildings to a designated outside area of safety. **EVACUATION** is considered appropriate for, but is not limited to, the following types of emergencies:

- Fire
- Bomb threat
- Explosion or threat of explosion

What Should Parents do in the Event of an Emergency?_____

The most helpful parental responses to a school emergency are to remain calm and wait for accurate information to be sent to the number listed on your child's emergency contact. We understand it is natural instinct for parents to want to rush to their child. It is important for you to understand that, during such an event, individual schools and emergency responders have made preparations to deal with these incidents. Your cooperation in an emergency is essential to the safe and swift resolution of the incident.

Please do not call the school. It is essential to keep phone lines open so school officials can make outgoing emergency calls. If students are ill or injured, the parents of those students will be notified first.

Please do not go to the school. As we have learned from past school emergencies, one of our greatest challenges is how to manage an onslaught of parents and concerned citizens rushing to the scene to "help". By doing so, parents can inadvertently create traffic jams that may block emergency responders from getting to the scene or leaving if necessary to transport injured staff or students to emergency medical facilities.

- Remain calm, follow procedures, and cooperate with school and public safety officials.
- Remain close to the phone listed as your emergency contact number.

- Tune in to radio or television stations designated to carry SMCS emergency information. See “Emergency Communications” section below.
- Obtain current information about the incident from the district website at www.smriders.net or Edulink All Call.
- Understand that emergency pickup procedures are different than routine pickup procedures. In the event you are notified to pick up your child at school or at the designated family reunification site, bring a photo identification card. If you must send someone else to pick up your child, be sure it is someone who is listed on school records as an authorized individual and they are in possession of a photo ID. Your child will not be released to anyone who is unauthorized or who cannot provide appropriate identification.
- Follow emergency procedures. If you are asked to pick up your child, you will be asked to follow the checkout procedure established for emergencies. The reunification system was developed to ensure the safety of students and it is vital that the procedure be followed.
- Remain in designated areas at the family reunification site.
- Be patient. It is essential that the family reunification procedure be carried out in an orderly manner so we can protect and account for all of our students.

Emergency Communications – How Will Parents be Notified if an Incident Occurs at School?

Our first priority is to ensure all students are safe, accounted for, and under adult supervision. As soon as it is possible to do so, the superintendent will communicate information to parents and the community. The school district has a variety of media available to parents which will be updated, as needed, with the most complete and accurate information available.

1. Mass notification system
2. Individual School Facebook Pages
3. School Website www.smriders.net)

In the event of a significant emergency, parents are encouraged to tune in to one of the following local television stations to follow the event as it unfolds.

- Hometown Stations Lima, NBC, Fox, ABC, CBS, Dayton WHIO CBS
- Radio Stations WKKI 94.3, WCSM 96.7

Parents may also add additional phone numbers and sign up for text and email alerts please go the link below:

<https://target.brightarrow.com/PortalLogin15.aspx?PortalKey=346BA733-8771&SiteHeader=&PUID=>

You can also access via school webpage www.smrider.net and click on Community tab and select Delay/Cancellations Notifications

Recovery After a Crisis

The school officials understand that a traumatic event in a school or in the community can have an emotional impact on staff and students. SMCS has guidance counselors who can respond to the school during and after a critical incident to provide assistance. If there is a chance a critical incident makes an emotional impact on staff and students, SMCS has access to counselors who can respond to the school during and after a critical incident to provide assistance. If there is a chance a critical incident makes an emotional impact upon staff or students, the SMCS will help those affected cope with the aftermath of the incident.

For Additional Information

- For additional information about the SMCS Emergency Operations Plan, please contact Bill Ruane, Superintendent, 419-394-4312 or bill.ruane@smriders.net or Dan Grothause, Transportation Supervisor, 419-394-7278 or dan.grothause@smriders.net