



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

FOR NOVA SCOTIA SCHOOLS



PROVINCIAL GUIDELINES





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Emergency Management for Nova Scotia Schools—Provincial Guidelines

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Introduction

The guidelines found within this document are the result of extensive consultation with representatives from each of the eight Nova Scotia school boards and numerous other stakeholder agencies. *Emergency Management Plan for Nova Scotia Schools: Provincial Guidelines*, originally distributed in 2007, was updated and presented to the Deputy Minister of Education and the superintendents of school boards through the Educational Consultative Forum in 2012.

These guidelines are intended to inform school boards of the minimum requirements that must be present in a school emergency management plan.

These guidelines are intended to be used in conjunction with the Nova Scotia Department of Education School Emergency Management Plan resources, which are available at www.EDnet.ns.ca by searching “School Emergency Management.”

The essential components described on the following pages comprise the minimum guidelines that must be present in a school emergency management plan.

Essential Components:

1. Scope
2. Established Chain of Command
3. Emergency Communications
4. Evacuation
5. Relocation
6. Lockdown
7. Hold-and-Secure
8. Hazard Specific Planning
9. Training
10. Evaluation Procedures

SCOPE

Emergency management plans shall include the following:

- Definition of an Emergency (Nova Scotia Emergency Management Organization 2011)

“An abnormal situation which, in order to limit danger to people or damage to property or environment, requires prompt action beyond normal procedures.”
- Authority—The authority to implement the provisions includes, but is not limited, to the following:
 - *Nova Scotia Education Act*

39 (2) It is the duty of a superintendent to

(g) maintain a safe, orderly and supportive learning environment in all schools in the school district or school region
 - *Nova Scotia Fire Safety Act*

17 Unless this Act or the regulations otherwise prescribe, every owner of land or premises, or a part thereof, and every person shall take every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to achieve fire safety and to carry out the provisions of this Act, the regulations and the Fire Code.
 - *Nova Scotia Occupational Health and Safety Act*

13 (1) Every employer shall take every precaution that is reasonable in the circumstances to

(a) ensure the health and safety of persons at or near the workplace

Note: The procedures described in Nova Scotia Department of Education School Emergency Plan resources are a result of extensive research and consultation. It is recognized however, that circumstances may dictate an alternative to standard practice by the person-in-charge to ensure the safest course of action.

ESTABLISHED CHAIN OF COMMAND

- The objective of establishing the chain of command at the board and school level is to clearly indicate who will be contacted by the school in an emergency and in what order.
- The emergency management plan shall include a list of roles and responsibilities in emergencies including, but not limited to:
 - principal and vice-principal
 - administration staff
 - teachers
 - teaching support staff
 - custodians/operations staff
 - bus drivers
 - students
 - parents/guardians/visitors
- The emergency management plan will provide guidance regarding inter-agency collaboration in the following areas:
 - when the person-in-charge will transfer authority to, or take direction from, the responding emergency service that has jurisdiction over the incident
 - responsibilities of the person-in-charge regarding the safety of students and staff after the transfer of authority
 - how and when authority will be transferred back to the person-in-charge

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

- The emergency communications plan provides guidance to the person-in-charge regarding communications to the following groups:
 - 911/police/fire/EHS/EMO
 - school staff/school board
 - students/parents/guardians/community
 - media

The emergency communications plan also provides guidance on how and when to communicate to the above groups before, during, and after an emergency.

EVACUATION

The objective of an evacuation is to ensure that all students, staff, and visitors leave the building in a safe and timely manner.

- The established fire evacuation plan will form the basis for all evacuations and will only be varied as the circumstances dictate.
- The evacuation plan provides guidance
 - to school staff, students, and visitors about safely evacuating the school and includes the circumstances under which an evacuation should be initiated as well as the means for announcing an evacuation
 - for determining circumstances for re-entering the building following an evacuation
 - on actions to take if the building cannot be re-entered after an evacuation

RELOCATION

The objective of a relocation is to move students and staff to a pre-determined location away from the school in a safe and timely manner.

- The relocation plan provides guidance to school staff, students, and visitors about safely relocating to an alternate site as follows:
 - the circumstances under which a relocation should be initiated
 - the means for announcing a relocation
 - identification of the primary relocation site or sites
 - identification of the alternate relocation site or sites
 - specific procedures to be taken to ensure student safety during relocation
 - a system to account for students prior to departure from the school site and on arrival at the relocation site
 - the circumstances for students to be released to parents/guardians or on their own
 - a system for accounting for students released to parents/guardians or on their own

LOCKDOWN

The objective of a lockdown is to isolate students and staff in a secure location in response to a threat of violence present within the building.

- The lockdown plan provides guidance to school staff, students, and visitors as follows:
 - preparing to conduct a lockdown, including building readiness and student/staff training
 - the circumstances for initiating a lockdown
 - the primary and any alternate means for announcing a lockdown to all occupants within the school and on school grounds
 - the means for communicating to police and other relevant persons that a lockdown has been initiated
 - specific procedures to be taken to ensure student safety:
 - during regular class time
 - during transition times
 - before school begins
 - during change of classes
 - lunch/recess
 - end of the day
 - how and when a lockdown will be lifted with the assistance of the police

HOLD-AND-SECURE

The objective of a hold-and-secure is to maintain the safety of occupants by controlling who enters and leaves the building. A hold-and-secure is initiated in response to a threat of violence or other dangerous situation outside the building.

- The hold-and-secure plan provides guidance to the school staff, students, and visitors as follows:
 - preparing to conduct a hold-and-secure, including building readiness and student/staff training
 - the circumstances under which a hold-and-secure will be initiated
 - the primary and any alternate means for announcing a hold-and-secure to all occupants within the school and on school grounds
 - the means for communicating that a hold-and-secure has been initiated to police and other relevant persons
 - procedures on how to secure the building and control who enters or leaves
 - specific procedures to be taken to ensure student/staff/visitor safety
 - during regular class time
 - during transition times
 - before school begins
 - during change of classes
 - lunch/recess
 - end of the day
 - how and when a hold-and-secure will be lifted

HAZARD-SPECIFIC PLANNING

The objective of hazard-specific planning is to prepare for events that require additional actions beyond those covered by the four all-hazard responses (evacuation, relocation, lockdown, and hold-and-secure).

- Hazard-specific planning provides guidance on conducting an assessment process that identifies and prioritizes risks to the school.
- Hazard-specific planning provides guidance on developing plans that may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - animal threat (inside or outside of the building)
 - bomb threat
 - bus accident
 - civil disobedience
 - custodial disputes
 - expansion plans to accommodate external groups seeking shelter
 - off-site emergencies (field trips)
 - person with unknown intent
 - sudden and severe weather
 - sudden death or severe injury/illness
 - toxic/hazardous material release—internal
 - toxic/hazardous material release—external

TRAINING

The objective of training is to prepare staff and students to respond appropriately to an emergency.

- **Communication:** A training plan ensures the reasons for training are communicated clearly to staff and students. Communications must be developmentally appropriate.
- **Reporting:** The board shall be responsible for ensuring that all schools conduct the drills as described and be able to provide a status report to the Department of Education on request.
 - **Fire evacuations:** Regulations require that fire evacuations are successfully exercised a minimum of six times each school year: three drills in the fall term (the first of which is to occur in the first week of school) and three drills in the spring term.

- **Relocation:** Relocation to a predetermined site should be exercised a minimum of once each school year, with results recorded. If it is deemed that the risk to students is too great to practice a relocation, it may be conducted with staff only. If practice with staff without the support of emergency services is not safe/practical, the relocation plan must be clearly communicated.
- **Lockdown:** Lockdown drills shall be exercised a minimum of two times each school year, with results recorded. The first drill shall be held prior to the end of September.
- **Hold-and-secure:** Hold-and-secure drills shall be exercised a minimum of once each school year, with results recorded.
- **Drills:** The training program shall be progressive in that successive drills incorporate the varying circumstances under which an emergency may occur; for example, lockdown drills during lunch or class change, fire evacuations with a primary route obstructed.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

The objective of evaluation procedures is to review drills and actual events and to incorporate lessons learned in revisions to the plan.

- Evaluations shall be conducted
 - with school staff after each drill
 - with school staff and board representatives after every significant event that requires an evacuation, relocation, lockdown, or hold-and-secure

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