

Preparing to Shelter at School

Additional Issues for School Management to Consider

I. Responsibility for Providing Shelter

1. Who is the school responsible for protecting in a shelter-in-place emergency?
 - a. Students and staff?
 - b. Other people who use or visit the school?
 - c. Community residents for whom the school is a designated shelter?
2. Under what circumstances will students, staff, and others inside be instructed or given the option to protect themselves by sheltering in the school?
3. How will the conditions for sheltering in place differ in these emergencies?
 - a. If a shooter is in the building, will people need to be in locked or barricaded rooms that the shooter cannot enter?
 - b. In a dirty bomb explosion, will people need to stay in rooms or corridors that can protect them from the dust and radiation outside?
 - c. In an electrical blackout, will people have unrestricted access to the building? What functions will building generators and office batteries support? For how long?
 - d. In a snowstorm, will all systems in the building be functional? Will the people inside be in any danger?
4. Will parents or authorized adults be allowed to pick up their children?
5. What is the school's responsibility to children when the school is not in danger but an emergency elsewhere prevents parents from picking their children up, meeting them at the bus stop, or caring for them at home?

II. Communication

1. How will emergency information be transmitted to school staff and students?
 - a. Do current strategies clearly distinguish emergencies in which people need to shelter in the school from emergencies in which they need to evacuate the building?
 - b. How will the school communicate with staff and students who are outside the school building (e.g., on a bus or athletic field) at the time of the emergency? What will they be told to do?
2. How will the people sheltering in the school communicate with the outside world during the emergency?
 - a. If some forms of communication are not operational during the emergency, does the school have back-up ways to receive and send information?

III. Basic and Medical Needs

1. Should school staff and students (or their parents) be encouraged to store personal emergency supplies at school?
2. Have parents been encouraged to provide a several-day supply of their children's medications and written permission to provide these medications?
3. Are other basic and medical supplies needed that staff and students cannot store on their own (or that other people in the school would need)?
 - a. What do these supplies need to include (e.g., water, food, blankets, flashlights, a generator, first-aid supplies)?
 - b. How will they be distributed?

IV. Protection from Toxic Substances Outside

1. In an emergency like a dirty bomb or chemical spill, what actions will be taken to prevent toxic substances from coming into the building?
 - a. How many employees know how to close or seal windows, doors, and vents; to disable automatic doors; and to turn off air conditioners?
 - b. Are instructions for carrying out these tasks readily available so other employees could do them, too?
2. Which room(s) in the building will provide the best protection from toxic substances outside?
 - a. Are these "safe" rooms large enough to accommodate everyone who is likely to be inside at the time?
 - b. Will the people in these rooms have safe access to communications, toilet and washing facilities, and critical basic and medical supplies?
3. Will people be allowed to enter or leave the building?
 - a. What is the basis for this decision?
 - b. Is there a way for people to enter and leave without exposing the people already inside to dangerous amounts of the toxic substances outside?

V. Staff Responsibilities

1. What is expected of different kinds of staff during this kind of emergency, and what training have they received to meet their responsibilities?
2. What if critical staff members leave or don't show up?
 - a. Does the school have back-ups for the people in charge as well as everyone else who will be playing important roles during the emergency?
 - b. Is important information about the school readily available so other people who may need to take over will know where things are and what to do?

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