

AP 106 – Critical Incident Management and Emergency Response

Background

Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment for all members of the school community. The district recognizes the importance of developing and implementing administrative procedures that address the possibility of a major emergency or critical incident that may disrupt or threaten the safety of individuals, property or the learning process. The level of preparedness to deal with such an incident by school/worksite staff, students, parents, First Responders (e.g., Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Fire and Rescue, Emergency Medical Services or the Ministry of Children and Family Development) and community partners will have a major impact on the outcome of the incident.

The purpose of this administrative procedure is to ensure that schools and worksites are prepared, through proactive planning and training, to respond to a threatening or critical incident on school property, Board property and/or the neighbouring community. The 'Critical Incident Management and Emergency Response' administrative procedure shares best practices and provides information to develop and implement a workable site-specific plan in response to serious events such as an armed intruder, a dangerous wild animal near the school, a suicide threat, a threatening incident requiring a 'Lockdown', a hazardous chemical spill or other community crisis. The Administrative Procedures Manual – *Critical Incident Management and Emergency Response Guide* will provide the processes, procedures, guidelines and templates for individual facilities to develop an effective **Site Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)** to respond appropriately and function effectively throughout a disruptive event.

Goals

The goals of emergency response planning and management are to:

- Provide for the safety of students, staff, visitors and building occupants in the event of an emergency.
- Clearly document procedures to facilitate decision-making and outline roles and responsibilities of personnel during an emergency.
- Educate building occupants so that emergency responses can be accomplished in a safe, rapid and orderly manner.
- Ensure that there are communications and protocols aligned with the community.
- Minimize disruption and ensure the continuity of the learning process.

Definitions

A **Site Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)** includes processes, procedures, decisions and activities to ensure that district schools can continue to function throughout a disruptive event such as an emergency, disaster or critical incident.

Critical Incident - Any incident, whether natural or human-caused, that has a negative emotional impact on those affected, resulting in a state of stress or discomfort and feelings of loss of control. *(Adapted from the Justice Institute of BC Critical Incident Stress Management Program, CSMI 100)*

Disaster - An event, generally considered to have an even greater impact than an emergency, caused by an accident, fire, explosion or technical failure, or by the forces of nature, and has resulted in serious harm to the health, safety and/or welfare of people, or in widespread damage to property. *(Adapted from section 1 of the Introduction to Emergency Management in British Columbia, 2007/BC Emergency Program Act)*

Emergency - A present or imminent event or circumstance that is caused by accident, fire, explosion, technical failure, human action or force of nature, that requires prompt coordination of action or special regulation of persons or property to protect the health, safety or welfare and/of a person or to limit damage to property. *(Adapted from the BC Emergency Program Act)*

Framework

The Ministry of Education's document *Emergency Management Planning Guide, 2015* provides an 'all-hazards' approach for planning appropriate responses and managing potential emergencies. In an all hazards framework, there are four key responses that can be appropriately implemented in the event of most emergencies.

It is important to know that the responses are context specific and flexible. A decision to evacuate a school following an earthquake is not necessarily automatic. The decision must be made in reference to the circumstances – damage to the building, the weather and other possible considerations.

The four all-hazards responses are:

Drop-Cover-Hold On – Most people are familiar with the drop-cover-hold on response as it is the recommended response for earthquakes. However, it is also appropriate in the event of an explosion that causes buildings to shake or materials to fall from structures. The result is that structures become unstable and materials can fall, explode or disintegrate.

EXAMPLES: Earthquake, explosion

Evacuate – When a building or area becomes unsafe, evacuation may be called for. The most common event requiring evacuation is fire, but other circumstances may also require evacuation. These include floods or a bomb threat within the school.

EXAMPLES: Fire, bomb threat, chemical accident, post-earthquake, explosion or threat of explosion, tsunami

Lockdown – ‘Lockdown’ is used to prevent intruders from entering occupied areas of a building or when it is necessary to isolate students and staff from a danger outside or within the building. Situations include active shooters or dangerous intruders. Staff and students are restricted in their movements to a specific area, which is then protected through locking of exterior and classroom doors and covering windows. There may be other areas of the school that are capable of being locked down and these may also be designated as lockdown locations.

EXAMPLES: Dangerous intruder, active shooter, barricaded suspect

Hold and Secure – ‘Hold and Secure’ is used when it is necessary to secure a school because there is an emergency situation occurring outside the school. The exterior doors are locked and monitored to allow students and staff to enter but otherwise remain locked.

Once inside, no one leaves the building. An active police incident in a neighbourhood would trigger a ‘Hold and Secure’. Confirm with local police when it is safe to lift the ‘Hold and Secure’.

EXAMPLE: Police incident in area e.g. robbery or any serious criminal offence in close proximity to a school or where a suspect has been pursued by RCMP and/or on foot near a school.

Roles

School/worksite staff, and in particular administrators/managers, have the overall responsibility for the safety and well being of students, staff and on-site visitors. Students have the responsibility of following the direction of staff.

It is vital that all schools/worksites and Emergency Responders follow the **Site Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)** as printed, and do not modify or change the plan as it has been customized to a specific site.

The **SEMP** is fully the responsibility of the school or worksite. If a major incident occurs, it is highly unlikely the RCMP will be in the school or worksite at the outset of the incident. The entire school or worksite community must be prepared to implement this plan quickly and effectively.

The principal, or designate, is the person-in-charge during an emergency at their school. The principal is also responsible for conducting drills on an annual basis. The Ministry of Education and the District endorse the following best practices:

- Six fire drills (BC Fire Code requirement)
- Three earthquake drills (BC Earthquake Alliance recommendation)
- Two lockdown drills (RCMP recommendation)

All School/Worksite Staff

- Staff are responsible for being familiar with the **SEMP**, participating in drills, and responding quickly, according to guidelines in this plan, during a threatening incident;
- Staff are responsible for educating and training of students in their classes/areas;
- Any staff member with information or knowledge about a potential threatening incident is expected to ensure that school administration/management receives that information immediately;
- Staff responsibilities in assisting First Responders/community partners:

- Staff must follow direction given by First Responders;
- Staff will endeavour to ensure that crime scene evidence is not disturbed (leave all objects exactly as found; discourage others from disturbing potential evidence; isolate area if possible).

District Staff

- Initiate support as required from District Administration Centre (DAC) staff (e.g., communications, learning services, facilities, transportation);
- Support ongoing management and communication of the situation;
- Communicate with the Assistant Superintendent for the school who will monitor the situation and be involved in debriefing and follow-up;
- Communicate with Trustees;
- Ensure school principals have communicated with any classes that may be off-site for the day.

School Administration/Worksite Manager

- Ensure that school/worksite **SEMP** (which includes 'Hold and Secure') is completed and updated annually;
- Ensure that the **SEMP** is regularly communicated to staff, students and school community;
- Ensure that a mechanism is in place to inform the school community about the **SEMP**;
- Ensure that specific **SEMPs** are in place for all students and/or staff with special needs where specific actions, which may be different from the regular plan, need to be taken in the event of an emergency;
- Ensure that specific plans are in place to address potential medical issues of staff/students;
- Ensure that training of staff and drills take place at least twice per school year (fall and spring);
- Ensure that the necessary facility issues are addressed and reviewed on an annual basis (e.g., outside speakers, command centres, door locks and window coverings for classrooms/offices, etc.);
- Ensure that protocol for communication is followed in the event of a threatening incident;
- Administrator/manager's role with RCMP:
 - The administrator/manager remains primarily responsible for the safety of staff and students but will work closely with RCMP in planning for and responding to threatening incidents (**Note: First Responders/Community Partners should be invited to participate in at least one drill exercise annually**);
 - The administrator/manager or designate will provide RCMP with a copy of the **SEMP** and include floor plans of the school/worksite;
 - In the event of a violent incident, the administrator/manager or designate will be the primary contact with RCMP and will ensure administration and staff cooperation with direction given by RCMP;
 - In an actual incident, the RCMP is responsible for management of the threat and subsequent criminal investigation; however the principal shall provide full cooperation with police.

Teaching Staff

- Teaching staff will normally oversee the classroom lockdown procedure and will follow the procedure outlined in the **SEMP** (Initially, if it is safe to do so, get everyone into the classroom from the hallway and begin the lockdown procedure);
- In the elementary school setting, staff teaching in the classroom(s) closest to the washrooms, can be assigned the task of getting those children into their classroom(s).
- Document times and events if possible;
- Maintain quiet in the room. Direct students not to use their cell phones. (The staff member should call 911 immediately if they are unsure whether First Responders have been notified or if there is information the First Responders should know);
- Take attendance and note in writing the names of all students/staff present and;
- No one leaves the room until directed by officials such as First Responders, school administration or other authority. It may be a number of hours from the onset of lockdown.

Students

- Students are responsible for being familiar with the **SEMP**, participating in drills, and responding quickly to the direction of staff during a threatening incident;
- Any student with information or knowledge about a potential threatening incident must come forward to a staff member or school administrator with that information immediately;
- Student responsibilities in assisting First Responders:
 - Students must follow direction given by First Responders;
 - Students will endeavour to ensure that crime scene evidence is not disturbed (leave all objects exactly as found; discourage others from disturbing potential evidence; isolate area if possible).

Non-teaching Staff

- Must be familiar with the **SEMP**, how to initiate a lockdown and how to operate the Public Address system;
- Must know the procedure when en route to school with students or immediately upon arrival, upon learning a lockdown is occurring and;
- Must take students to the student evacuation staging area for safety as described in the **SEMP**. Take attendance and await further direction from the principal, staff designate or First Responders.

RCMP

- RCMP will work closely with school administration in planning for and responding to a threatening incident as per the Board of Education/RCMP protocol;
- RCMP services will ensure that officers who may be called for service at a school are fully trained in the **SEMP**;
- During a threatening incident ('Lockdown' or 'Hold and Secure'), RCMP will assume command and control of the response:
 - All members of the school community must provide full cooperation and follow RCMP direction;
 - RCMP will control access to the school and designated off-site locations;

- RCMP will assign an officer to the off-site evacuation location to communicate information to the school community and neighbouring community;
- RCMP will direct families arriving on-site to pre-designated, off-site evacuation locations where they can receive information;
- RCMP will set up a media relations centre outside the incident area (**Note: RCMP representatives handle media relations regarding the incident and RCMP response; Board representatives handle media relations regarding Board related concerns**).

Communication with Parents/Guardians

- Communication with parents, guardians, and the community in general is important to ensure a good understanding of the **SEMP**, without instilling fear.
- Information is to be provided to each home at the beginning of the school year, to inform parents of lockdown procedures and to encourage parents to reinforce with their children the importance of understanding the procedures and following staff and police direction. This information will explain and define the terms 'Lockdown' and 'Hold and Secure'.
- Parents/guardians need to be informed of how they should proceed in the event of an actual incident involving a lockdown. Communication with parents around the importance of lockdowns is vital. Parents should be informed of what is expected should they arrive at the school during a drill, or if they are present within the school when a lockdown is activated.
- In all incidents of a lockdown that are not drills, administrators/managers will work with the Director of Communication's Office to provide information to parents/guardians by the conclusion of the school day or as soon as possible.
- Parents/guardians are to be encouraged to ensure contact information is kept up to date so staff, in the event of an emergency, can easily reach them.

Non-teaching Staff, Non-school/Excluded Staff, On Site Daycare, Strong Start Centres, Before and After School Childcare Programs, Community School Programs, Contractors, Renters

- Childcare staff shall follow procedures outlined in the school's **SEMP** and are to ensure that specific plans are in place to address the needs of children in their care in the event of a drill or a threatening incident.

Emergency Response Planning and Management Guide

The principal/designate will work with the Occupational Health and Safety Committee and the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) to ensure that a written **Site Emergency Management Plan (SEMP)** is developed, practiced and monitored on an annual basis according to the school calendar.

The Critical Incident Management and Emergency Response Guide is available to principals/site-managers in the **Administrative Procedures Manual**. It provides the guidelines and templates that are to be followed in developing all hazard responses, procedures, timelines, practice regimens, protocols and flow charts associated with the **SEMP**.

The principal/designate will ensure all staff are informed about the **SEMP** and their specific roles and responsibilities within this plan in the first staff days at the beginning of the school year. All staff

designated to specific positions on the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) will attend required training and ensure regular practice drills are implemented at their site.

All staff are expected to participate fully in the **Site Emergency Management Plan**. It is important that all Nanaimo Ladysmith Public Schools staff recognize that any one individual's actions or inactions may have a critical impact on the overall outcome of an emergency situation.

Emergency Incidents Requiring Planning and Management

Emergency and/or critical incidents that require planning and management included in the administrative procedure are:

- Critical Incident Management Guide
- Abduction/Missing Student
- Accident on a Field Trip
- After Hours School Usage
- Air Contamination
- Anaphylaxis
- Bomb Threats/Suspicious Packages
- Child Abuse and/or Neglect
- Death of a Student/Staff Member
- Earthquake
- Evacuation of School Building/Site
- Fire
- First Aid
- Flooding/Tsunami
- Gang Activity
- Hazardous Material Spill/Explosion
- 'Hold and Secure' Procedures
- Hostile Individual/Intruder
- Inclement Weather/Power Outage
- 'Lockdown' Procedures
- Medical Emergencies/Mental Health/Communicable Diseases
- Off-site School Related Emergency
- Suicide Intervention (HELP)
- Violence, Threat/Risk Assessment (VTRA)

Effective: April 19, 2016

Reference: Administrative Procedures Manual – *Emergency Response Planning and Management Guide*
BC Emergency Program Act, 2007
Introduction to Emergency Management in British Columbia, 2007/BC Emergency Program Act
Justice Institute of BC Critical Incident Stress Management Program, CSMI 100
Emergency Management Planning Guide 2015