School Emergency Program

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

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A Message from the

Schools are considered to be one of the safest places in our communities.

However, in reality, an emergency can strike anywhere at any time.



DURING ANY EMERGENCY, OUR FIRST PRIORITY is the safety of our students and staff. In order to provide an effective response to any school crisis, the Division has developed an Emergency Response Plan. The Plan works in conjunction with other local emergency plans, since a school emergency could require the involvement of numerous agencies. The plans created for individual schools, along with the Division Plan, are reviewed annually and after an emergency occurs.

There is an on-site emergency response team at each school, along with a Division-based Emergency Response Team that provides support and aid to schools at time of an emergency. All staff is regularly trained on emergency protocols and drills are practiced at each school.

Although standardized protocols and procedures provide the basis for our response, the way in which we respond to an emergency is greatly influenced by the specifics of an incident. We are driven foremost by our concern of ensuring student and staff safety.

Our Division collaborates closely with local emergency personnel to ensure plans are coordinated with appropriate agencies. The Division's plans do not replace the authority of law enforcement, fire or EMS – staff members work in full co-operation with these agencies.

For security reasons, certain components of our emergency response plans are not publicly available. However, this guide outlines the key elements of the Plan and answers questions parents frequently ask regarding emergency preparedness. I hope you find this guide helpful and informative.

We appreciate your support and assistance in our continued safety efforts.

Sincerely,

Greg Luterbach, Superintendent of Schools

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Keeping Safe

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, SCHOOLS CONDUCT TRAINING AND DRILLS to help better prepare students and staff for possible emergency situations. When a school is confronted with an emergency, staff will assess the situation and then decide on a course of action.

Schools conduct drills throughout the year to rehearse emergency procedures. These exercises prepare students and staff to act quickly and help to minimize a child's fear during a real emergency.

In addition to the procedures described below, schools also practice protocols such as "Drop-Cover-Hold," a method of protecting vital body parts during some natural disasters, and conduct fire drills. All staff and students are required to participate in these drills.

Lock-Down	Lock-Downs are usually used in response to acts or threats of violence to students and/or staff directly impacting the school. During a Lock-Down all doors to and within the school are locked. No one is permitted in or out of any area once it has been locked. Students and staff must respond very quickly to a Lock-Down command to get to a safe location before doors are locked. **No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the Lock-Down is over.**
Hold and Secure	Hold and Secure is used in response to security threats or criminal activity outside the school. During a Hold and Secure, all entrance doors to the school are locked, with no one permitted in or out of the building. **No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the Hold and Secure has been cleared.**
Shelter-in-Place	Generally, Shelter-in-Place is used during an environmental emergency, such as severe storms or chemical spills. During a Shelter-in-Place, students and staff retreat to safe zones to seek shelter. This includes having students or staff who are outdoors come back into the school. Each school's emergency response plan identifies the safest location for its occupants and how to seal a room from hazardous conditions. **Students will not be released or dismissed until the situation has been resolved.**
Evacuation	An Evacuation requires all students and staff to leave the school and go to an alternate location. This may mean only going outside and away from the building until it is safe to re-enter the school. In other cases, students and staff may need to go to an evacuation center. Parents will be informed of the alternate location through the school's Crisis Notification Network.
Dismissal	Under some circumstances it may be determined that it is best to dismiss students to their homes and families as expeditiously as possible. Should this be the case, every attempt will be made to alert the emergency contact for each student of the situation and to ensure young students are not left unsupervised.

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Reuniting with your Child



WE RECOGNIZE THAT WHEN AN EMERGENCY OCCURS parents will be worried and want to be reunited with their child as quickly as possible. It is our intention to make this happen. However, to ensure every child's safety and the safety of staff, specific procedures have been established for releasing students.

Parents are asked to adhere to the parent-child reunification procedures listed below. Staff will work hard to ensure these procedures take place without delay. However, please understand the process will still take some time: we ask for your patience when you arrive at the Parent-Child Reunion Area.

Parent-Child Reunion Procedures

1. **A Parent-Child Reunion Area will be established**. Parents will be notified at the time of the emergency of the Reunion Area's location. The location may not be at the school — the location will depend on the specifics of the emergency.
2. **You will be required to fill out a Student Release Request Form.** This ensures all students are accounted for at all times and students are only released to authorized individuals.
3. **Students will only be released to an individual designated as legal guardian or emergency contact** on the student's Emergency Card, which is completed at time of school registration. Please be sure to keep this information current with your school, as the school will only release a child to someone listed as an Emergency Contact — there will be no exceptions.
4. **Valid identification is required to pick up your child**. This is required to protect your child from any unauthorized individuals attempting to pick up students. Even if school personnel know you, you must still present I.D. as the school may be receiving assistance from other schools or outside agencies.
5. **You will be required to sign for the release of your child.** This is extremely important, as it ensures your child, along with other students, is accounted for at all times. Please do not just take your child from the school or evacuation center without signing for his/her release.
6. **Once you have been reunited with your child, please leave the area immediately**. This is for your own safety and that of your child.

If you are unable to pick up your child, he/she will be kept at the Parent-Child Reunion Center until alternate arrangements can be made. Your child will be supervised at all times.

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When an Emergency Occurs



ALTHOUGH YOUR NATURAL INSTINCTS IN AN EMERGENCY may be to go to the school to safeguard your child, please understand that doing so could impede the response to the situation. Going to the school may interfere with emergency crews' and school personnel's efforts to deal with the emergency. Extra vehicles and people at the site make the task more difficult. Please follow the instructions provided to you through the communications channels outlined below. **Please do not come to the school to pick up your child unless requested to do so.**

If you arrive at the school in the midst of an emergency, please respect the protocol in progress. While we understand personal circumstances or initial reactions might move you to do something contrary to the school's established procedures, we cannot compromise the safety of students or staff to accommodate individual requests that could put anyone at risk.

Please DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL and DO NOT CALL YOUR CHILD'S CELL PHONE.
Parents are asked not to call the school or their child's cell phone during an emergency.

- Phone systems need to remain available for handling the actual emergency.
- Overloading the system may mean the school cannot communicate with first responders.
- Calling your child's cell phone during an emergency may be putting them at higher risk by disclosing their location or drawing attention to them during a lock-down.
- Experts advise that under some circumstances cell phones and other electric devices may actually act as an ignition source for fires or explosions.

Keeping Informed during an Emergency

DURING AN EMERGENCY, it is unlikely you will be able to reach the school by phone. We will, however, make every effort to contact parents directly or by one of the methods noted below.

Crisis Notification Network and/or the Media - Parents will be alerted to emergency situations via the School's Crisis Notification Network (phone or electronic notifications via School Messenger) and local media. Stay tuned to local TV and radio stations for news alerts.

Website, Community Hotline - When appropriate, the Division will also keep parents informed by posting information regarding the emergency on the Division website, and recordings on the Division Community Hotline.

Website www.rockyview.ab.ca **Community Hotline 403-945-4000 x 4225**

Additional information regarding emergency procedures is included in your child's School Handbook and on the Division website. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your school.

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