

# New Hanover County Schools

## Emergency Operations Plan

### Summary

(January, 2013)

Developed by  
New Hanover County Schools  
Safety Team

(Updated August 2019)

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**The following summary provides an overview of the New Hanover County Schools Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The preceding “Table of Contents” provides the topics covered in the plan. This summary will include excerpts from the original document which will convey the general intent of the plan.**

The Introduction includes:

All public and private facilities and institutions are vulnerable to threatening circumstances and events which could cascade into disasters. As a public institution of learning, the New Hanover County School System realizes the importance of and need to mitigate, prepare for, and respond to emergency situations. The safety and well-being of our students, staffs, and community members are of utmost importance.

Our Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) was developed by a collaborative effort of numerous community agencies, such as law enforcement, fire services, health services, social services, emergency management officials, as well as school personnel, ranging from Parent and Volunteer Groups to School-Level teachers, counselors, and administrators to Central Office Administrators. The EOP was created to work in conjunction with the terms and procedures of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command Systems (ICS). These are used by emergency management personnel and first responders nation-wide.

Additional assistance was provided by Mr. Gregg Champlin, Natural Hazards Specialist with New Hampshire Emergency Management and Ms. Linda Mason, Emergency Manager with the Arizona Department of Health Services. Dr. Bob Hull, Director of the Kansas Center for Safe and Prepared Schools, provided invaluable assistance as this plan follows the Kansas Plan with modifications to meet the needs of New Hanover County Schools.

This plan will provide the basis for each school’s safety plan as well as for the non-school facilities (the 3 administrative complexes). Each site will develop its own plan due to the specific circumstances, needs and conditions at each site.

The New Hanover County Schools System also provides additional means to assist in helping maintain a safe environment including a District-Wide Safety Committee (consisting of a representative from each school and division) which meets as least twice per school year, a Crisis Management Team (consisting of representatives from each school level, Central Office divisions, PTA/PTO, and local partners, i.e. law enforcement, fire, emergency management, emergency medical support, and health department) which meets every other month, as well as site specific Safety Committees, which meet monthly.



**The following will provide the “Purpose”, “Situation, Assumptions and Limitations”, the “Concept of Operations”, the “Organization and Assessment of Responsibilities”, the “Direction and Control”, “Communication”, the “Administration and Logistics”, the “Plan Development and Maintenance”, and a listing of the “Authorities and References” of the EOP.**

#### Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to identify and support the actions of the school personnel when responding to man-made hazards, natural disasters, and or technological failures. This plan is meant to be used as a guide; however the need for flexibility is noted as different schools have unique needs and plans for those schools will reflect such. The expectation exists that training and practices of these procedures will occur on a regular basis.

#### Situation, Assumptions and Limitations

The New Hanover County School System consists of +24,000 students, +3,000 staff members, and +40 school campuses, in a small county in the southeastern corner of North Carolina, much of it surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean, the Intracoastal Waterway, and the Cape Fear River.

New Hanover County Schools are exposed to many hazards, which have the potential to disrupt everyday operations, such as hurricanes, fires, tornadoes, floods, tsunamis, hazardous materials incidents, and acts of terrorism. This plan provides a guide for positive, productive responses to such incidents; however, there is no guarantee that this plan will provide a perfect solution for emergency situations, nor does this plan attempt to address every possible emergency which may arise.

#### Concept of Operations

Any incident occurring on school grounds while staff and students are present will be responded to initially by school personnel. The staff is expected to take charge and manage the incident until it is resolved or until the command is shifted to someone more qualified with legal authority to take command. In an incident effecting New Hanover County Schools, the Superintendent or designee will activate the EOP. The principal or designee will activate the EOP at the occurrence of an incident at the school level.

National Incident Management System (NIMS) was created after a need was recognized to develop a systematic approach in dealing with incidents which guide governmental agencies at the local, state, and federal levels, non-governmental agencies, as well as the private sector, in smoothly planning for, responding to, and recovering from incidents. NIMS assists those involved in responding to incidents reduce the loss of lives and protect property and the environment by understanding their roles and responsibilities. The Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 and the U.S. Department of Education require that schools, as part of local agencies, must adopt NIMS if they receive Federal grants. Therefore, some New Hanover County Schools personnel will take courses in NIMS and Incident Command System.

The Incident Command System (ICS) provides a means of establishing an integrated organizational structure to the scene during an incident. ICS is used in any type of emergency situation, large or small in impact.

### Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

This section of the EOP establishes the operational organization that will facilitate the response to an incident. It contains information on the kinds of tasks to be performed by position and organization.

The principal and assistant principals are generally close by the scene of an incident as well as other staff members who are involved in the daily responsibilities of providing for the safety of our students; therefore many will be called upon to assist during a critical incident. The Incident Command System (ICS) uses a team approach to manage incidents. It is essential that roles are known and accepted by staff members so smoother, more productive results will be achieved during an emergency.

The EOP describes responsibilities for the following positions: “Principal/Building Administrator”, “Building Crisis Response/Safety Team”, “Teachers”, “Para-Professionals”, “Mental Health Professionals”, “School Nurses/First Responders”, “Custodians/Maintenance Personnel”, “Support Associates/Office Staff”, “Child Nutrition Staff”, “Bus Drivers”, “Other Staff (e.g. Itinerant Staff, Substitute Teachers, etc.)”, “Students”, and “Parents/Guardians”.

### Direction and Control

The Superintendent/designee will establish the objectives and provide general guidance for emergency response operations.

The Incident Commander will manage the situation at the site until local emergency response agencies arrive.

The school’s EOP will be activated to provide direction during an incident utilizing the ICS.

The District will implement principles of Unified Command when more than one agency has jurisdiction over aspects during an emergency situation.

### Communication

The need for clear, correct, and concise information to be communicated during an incident is vital. The two main categories of communication are “internal”, which involve those directly affected on site and “external”, which involve those working to manage the incident as well as parents/guardians and the general public.

The internal communication will occur by timely informing staff of the situation through use of phone trees, electronic devices, and/or meetings or debriefings. The Incident Commander will also keep Central Office informed of developments throughout the incident.

The external communication will occur by informing first responders of the details of the incident by the Incident Commander. Communications to parents will be transmitted through mass communication (i.e. Automated Calling System) and to the general public through the System Public Information Officer (PIO).

Some examples of tools used for this communication are: intercom systems, 2-way radios, air horns, standard telephones, cell phones, computers, and social media tools. In an extreme case/situation in which these means of communication are no longer operable, the schools will contact Central Office (or vice versa) through the use of portable radios (800 MHz) programmed for this type of communication between the emergency responders and the schools.

### Administration and Logistics

New Hanover County Schools shall keep all records necessary to document the response to and recovery from a disaster. The rationale for these records include creating historical records, recovering costs, addressing insurance or other needs and developing mitigation strategies.

### Plan Development and Maintenance

The Superintendent/designee is responsible for the development and maintenance of the EOP.

### Training for Staff

The expectation exists that all administrators will successfully complete at a minimum, ICS-100 and NIMS-700 courses. FEMA also provides additional courses which are offered on-line which are helpful to school personnel, such as IS-362 (Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools), IS-906 (Workplace Security Awareness), and IS-907 (Active Shooter).

### Authorities and References

The EOP has been developed with guidance from the following sources:

Robert T. Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act of 1988

Homeland Security Act of 2002

The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 44, Chapter 1 (October 1, 2002)

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (February 2003)

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 7 (December 2003)

Homeland Security Presidential Directive 8 (December 2003)

National Security Presidential Directives 20 & 51 (May 2007)

Kansas School District Emergency Operations Plan (2011)

North Carolina Public School Law:

115C-105.47

115C-276

115C-288

115C-307

New Hanover County School Board Policies

4000 Series

2013 School Safety Act (North Carolina)

North Carolina Center for Safer Schools—Active Shooter (May 2017)

The EOP contains Functional Annexes which describe methods and procedures for responding to all-hazards critical incidents. Procedures are the series of steps used to accomplish tasks during emergency situations. The all-hazards approach is based upon the three major strands of likely emergencies: people-caused, natural disasters, and technological or physical plant failures. The initial coordination of responses to emergency situations will be directed by the school administrator or the person assuming the role of the Incident Commander. Universal Emergency Procedures are included in the plan providing a brief outline of actions for the emergencies which have been included: “Bus Emergencies”, “Assault”, “Bomb Threat”, “Death of a Student/Staff”, “Disruptions/Intruder”, “Medical Emergencies”, “Poisoning”, “Earthquake”, “Fire”, “Lightning”, “Pandemic”, “Severe Weather & Floods”, “Tornado”, “Anthrax Threats”, “Chemical/Hazardous Materials Release”, “Gas Leak”, and “Utility Outage”. The six Universal Procedures to respond to the emergency situations are included: “Evacuation”, “Severe Weather Response”, “Lockdown”, “Shelter In Place”, “Off-site Evacuation and Reunification”, and “Bus Evacuation”.

Another section of the EOP contains Hazard or Threat Specific Annexes which describe strategies or procedures for managing specific hazards. These are included in the same sequence of those in the Functional Annexes (people-caused hazards, natural disasters, and technological or physical plant failures). No intent was made to cover all hazard specific annexes, but those listed are the more common hazards impacting a school.

The EOP concludes with Appendices which include “Crisis Kits/Evacuation Kits Contents”, “Emergency Contact Telephone Numbers for Central Office” staff as well as pages for specific “School Numbers”, “Requirements for Contacting Law Enforcement”, description of “School Crisis Teams”, “Emergency Card Communication System”, “Relocation Sites”, “NHCS Incident/Accident Report”, and “Additional Resources”.