

OVERVIEW OF the NORTH CAROLINA CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE CURRICULUM

Three Main Response Actions

Taking action before an emergency occurs can save lives, prevent injuries, and minimize property damage in the first moments during a crisis situation, whether this results from a natural disaster or a manmade crisis. Schools should update and practice crisis plans each year. Teachers should understand these plans and their roles within them, allowing them to implement emergency response protocols with confidence and structure.

Although every school's needs and circumstances are different, based upon their layout, location, and population, there are three basic response actions available in an emergency situation: **Lockdown, Evacuate, and Shelter in Place** – or a combination of these actions.

A very effective way to prepare to use one or more of these actions is to fully participate in the fire, lockdown, tornado, and earthquake drills schools conduct, and to practice them in varied settings to identify what vulnerabilities exist before an emergency occurs.

Lockdown

The first of the three actions is Lockdown. In a school setting there are several reasons a school might need to lockdown. One might be a visitor to the school who becomes irate and a danger to the school's occupants. Another might be a non-custodial parent or former spouse of a staff member who attempts to obtain access to a facility and do harm to others. Yet another, but highly unlikely, reason is an armed intruder or Active Shooter who may be a student, former student, parent, or indeed someone who is not affiliated with the school at all.

Tips for Lockdown drills: Ask division staff, school resource officers, or other first responders to observe lockdown drills and provide constructive feedback and recommendations for improvement. Timing drills and working to improve times so that responses are both fast and effective are highly recommended. Teachers might also practice locating room keys quickly.

Evacuate

The second main response action to an emergency is to Evacuate. Schools have long practiced evacuating by way of fire drills. Evacuations occur when the school building is not safe, or they can occur once a lockdown situation is resolved.

Tips for Evacuation Drills: Ask division staff or fire department officials to observe evacuation drills and provide constructive feedback and recommendations for improvement. As with Lockdown, timing and working to improve response capabilities can increase confidence. You should again time drills and work on improving times so that you can respond quickly and with confidence. Conducting drills at inopportune times such as during lunch or break periods, or during an assembly are encouraged so that any vulnerabilities or hindrances can be identified before an actual emergency. Reverse evacuation drills can be practiced right after a fire drill. Reverse evacuation means to re-enter the building as quickly as possible after evacuation procedures are completed and students are accounted for, or while staff and students are outside on athletic fields or playgrounds.

Shelter in Place

The third option is to Shelter in Place. Sheltering in place is necessary when external conditions make it unsafe to leave the building, but where locking down in a classroom is not necessary. **A special shelter in place is conducted for tornadoes and severe weather conditions.** This is called *duck, cover, and hold*. A combination of shelter in place and then evacuation may be necessary during such situations as earthquakes.

Tips for Shelter in Place (Tornado or Earthquake) Drills: Participating in the statewide Tornado drill which is conducted each March provides an opportunity to practice sheltering in place by simulating a tornado. Further practice for this type of response action is for a school administrator to announce and verbally simulate an earthquake drill. Staff and students should then shelter in place, pausing to ensure conditions (described over the intercom by the school administrator) are safe before evacuating. First responders and division staff can make recommendations about specific places to evacuate to during an earthquake in order to avoid danger from overhead power lines, broken lights, or fallen trees. Also, to avoid further safety hazards avoid evacuating to locations near water pipes, which may burst.