



# Tewksbury Township Board of Education

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Dear Tewksbury Families and Staff:

The safety of our children remains the highest priority for the Board of Education and the School Administration. I am writing to you today to provide you with information about our school safety and communication with families in an emergency.

Let me reassure you that our security measures at Tewksbury Schools are strong. Our School Safety and Security Plan is reviewed and updated each year with the help of our local Tewksbury Police. With their recommendations, we fine-tune our already strong security measures. We have a close relationship with the Tewksbury Police, with the added advantage that they are located next to Old Turnpike School. Officers visit our schools daily.

School security drills are performed regularly at each of our schools. NJ State Law requires that every school have at least one fire drill and one school security drill each month. School security drills include: Bus Drills, Hold in Place, Secure in Place, Lockdown, Evacuation, and Shelter in Place. These drills allow us to practice how to react if there were ever an emergency inside or outside our school buildings. Each time we have a security drill, we must inform parents via email that one took place that day at school.

As you may know, last month our district experienced a bus accident. We were lucky that no one was seriously injured. This incident offered the chance for our school district to review our bus safety protocols. After the accident, school officials met with the Tewksbury Police and the Tewksbury First Aid to reflect on our protocols and discuss best practices for our response in an emergency. This team felt that one area for refinement was helping parents understand what to do in an emergency. This led to the creation of a 'Crisis Communication Plan for Families'. Please take some time to review this plan below.

In times of need, we appreciate our supportive Tewksbury community and our Tewksbury first responders.

Thank you,  
Jennifer Shouffler, Ed.D

Tewksbury Township School District  
Crisis Communication Plan for Families

In the event of a crisis, our immediate concern is the health and safety of your children. We have created a *Crisis Communication Plan for Families* so that parents have an understanding of the school district's response in the event of an emergency.

In most emergencies, your children will remain and be cared for at the school they attend. In the event of an emergency that prohibits re-entry to a school building (such as a water main break or fire), students will walk or be transported via school transportation to the nearest and most appropriate location. Parents will be notified where they can pick up their child(ren).

The chart below lists certain types of emergencies, defines actions that will be taken, and outlines how the school district will communicate with parents. For a building-specific or bus-specific incident, only the parents who have a student in that building or on that bus will be notified; a districtwide alert will NOT be sent. Should an emergency occur, **PLEASE DO NOT TELEPHONE OR COME TO THE SCHOOL.** It is essential that attending personnel be uninterrupted in dealing with an emergency situation.

We have provided some important tips on how parents can support their children and the school district during an emergency. We know how stressful an emergency can be for all, therefore we appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

<p><b>EMERGENCY CLOSINGS/EARLY DISMISSAL</b></p> <p>When regularly scheduled school days are canceled, delayed, or closed early due to weather or other emergency conditions, information will be posted on the <a href="#">district website</a>.</p> <p>The district emergency alert system, <i>Realtime</i>, also will be used to notify parents. Go to the Realtime Parent Portal on the district website <a href="https://www.tewksburyschools.org/parents/parent-portal">https://www.tewksburyschools.org/parents/parent-portal</a> to register for phone, email, and/or text alerts. The time of announcements will depend on the storm or other emergency.</p>	<p><b>EVACUATION</b></p> <p>Used for certain emergency situations.</p> <p>In the event of a <i>school evacuation</i>, students and staff walk quietly and quickly outside the school to a predetermined staging area away from the building. In the event that the building is not cleared for re-entry, parents will be instructed on where to pick up their child.</p> <p>In the event of a <i>bus evacuation</i>, students will exit the bus and be moved to a safe staging area nearby.</p> <p>Parents should not attempt to pick up children from an evacuation site until advised to do so by school officials.</p> <p>Parents should follow instructions provided by email, voice, and text alerts via the district's emergency alert system. The district will send out alerts as warranted until the emergency situation is resolved.</p> <p>Information will also be posted on the <a href="#">district website</a>.</p>	<p><b>LOCKDOWN</b></p> <p>Used to secure school buildings that pose an immediate threat of violence in and around the school.</p> <p>Students and staff remain silent and out of view of windows/doors in locked classrooms.</p> <p>Law enforcement coordinates emergency response and no one is allowed to leave the building until the situation is declared safe.</p> <p>Students will not be released from school until the lockdown is over. Parents should not attempt to pick up their children or be present at school until advised to do so by school officials. Parents should not call the school.</p> <p>Parents should follow instructions provided by email, voice and text alerts via the district's emergency alert system. The district will send out alerts as warranted until the emergency situation is resolved.</p> <p>In a districtwide emergency, information also will be posted on the <a href="#">district website</a>.</p>	<p><b>SHELTER-IN-PLACE</b></p> <p>Most commonly used in the case of a medical emergency or other emergency situations when hallways need to remain clear. Students and staff remain in the classroom continuing regular instruction until cleared to return to the normal school day.</p> <p>May also be used in weather related emergencies.</p> <p>In most instances, parents will NOT be notified if a "Shelter in Place" has been instituted unless there is a clear reason to do so.</p> <p>If there is a reason for notification, parents should follow instructions provided by email, voice, and text alerts via the district's emergency alert system. The district will send out alerts as warranted until the emergency situation is resolved.</p> <p>In a districtwide emergency, information will be posted on the <a href="#">district website</a>.</p>
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## **IMPORTANT TIPS FOR FAMILIES DURING A SCHOOL EMERGENCY**

### **Stay calm and alert.**

In the event of a school emergency, please remain calm and know that the school district personnel and law enforcement are working to keep your child safe. Please keep your phone close and follow the directions provided by email, voice, and text alerts via the district's emergency alert system. The district will send out alerts approximately every 30 minutes until the emergency situation is resolved. For a building specific or bus specific situation, only the parents who have a student in that building or bus will be notified.

In a districtwide emergency, information also will be posted on the district website.

### **Please do not come to the school or emergency site.**

We understand your desire to go to the school, or the emergency site, and the need to see your child especially in a situation that feels scary. However, arriving at the scene before it is secure can interfere with the emergency response and possibly put you in danger. Additionally, by rushing to the school or site, parents can unintentionally create traffic jams that may block emergency responders from getting to the school/site or block the transportation of injured students/staff to emergency medical facilities. Families should not pick up their children unless given the direction to do so from district personnel.

### **If your child texts or calls you, please keep calm.**

We know that during school emergencies many of our students will try to call or text their parents or guardians. If this occurs, we ask that you stay calm and reassuring. Encourage your child to follow the directions of school staff. To prevent confusion or added safety risks, ask them to turn off their cell phone and refrain from using social media.

Make sure your contact information and all emergency contact information is accurate and updated in our *Realtime* information portal. District personnel will contact families when there is an emergency situation.

Be prepared with a photo ID. In the event that you are required to pick up your child, the district will follow a standard unification plan to ensure all students are safely returned to their families. Parents will receive notification of when/where to pick up their child. During a reunification, families and/or individuals listed as an authorized person to pick up your child should do the following.

- Follow signage and parking directions of the reunification location.
- Provide school personnel with a valid form of photo identification.(Please note that only approved adults with valid photo identification will be allowed to pick up students from an evacuation/reunification location.)
- Wait patiently as a district staff member retrieves and escorts your student to you.