

# **WAITS RIVER VALLEY SCHOOL**

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## **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FAMILY GUIDE**

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## **WRVS Emergency Preparedness Family Guide**

Hello WRVS Families! This brief guide is intended to communicate the work, focus areas, and intentions of emergency preparedness and response at WRVS. The topic of school emergency preparedness is fresh on the minds of many families as it is an area of frequent national dialogue and involves unquestionably the most precious pieces of our lives. The foremost assurance is important: as we continue to refine emergency preparedness at WRVS the priority will always be caring for our students and families. The WRVS Crisis Team wanted to improve communication and stimulate conversation by creating this guide, it is arranged in an FAQ style, and will be adapted as more questions arise. Please engage in these conversations at home, and always feel free to reach out to Carlotta or the WRVS School Board to engage in the discussion!

### **Who is the WRVS Crisis Team and what does it do?**

The WRVS Crisis Team consists of an 11-person group of faculty, staff, administrators and board members with wide ranging backgrounds including mental health, public safety & emergency preparedness. Many of these folks are parents and community members in their home lives! The group meets as necessary to address preparedness planning, refine guidelines and coordinate practices and drills as appropriate. The following are your WRVS Emergency Crisis Team Members:

- Carlotta Simonds-Perantoni, Principal
- Erica Thompson, First Grade Teacher
- Ann Schlott, School Counselor
- Patrick Butler, Building Operations Supervisor
- Carla Horniak, School Nurse

- Lisa Thompson, Main Office Team Member
- Kelly Smith, Main Office Team Member
- Ashley Jamele, Middle School Math Teacher
- Lori Bean-McIntire, Social Emotional Specialist
- Jeremiah Goyette, School Board Member
- Heather Lawler, Superintendent
- Marla Ianello, Assistant Superintendent

### **What type of emergencies does WRVS plan for?**

A wide range of emergencies could potentially impact school operations, including fire, weather of all types, suspicious items or persons, etc. As such, the emergency plan consists of:

- A basic plan of evacuation covering those emergency situations that would cause students and staff to leave the school.
- A basic plan of retention covering those emergency situations that would cause students and staff to remain in the school.
- A basic plan covering an emergency situation that might involve the buses. Information concerning the responsibilities of school personnel on duty during the emergency as well as teacher instructions for the various emergencies.

### **What type of training do we offer to staff?**

In addition to annual required retraining in general safety items required by district, state, and federal law, staff participate in in-house trainings on emergency procedures as well as nationally recognized ALICE training, AHA CPR and First Aid, etc.

## **Why aren't the emergency plans published publicly?**

Keeping the full emergency plan secure prevents the use of our emergency plan as a strategy to anticipate the response and/or harm students or staff with that information, additionally, any individual contact information or personal health information is kept secured appropriately to regulations while remaining accessible to those who need access in an emergency. More importantly, many of the plans are options-based responses, and are intentionally non-linear / non-traditional.

## **Ok, what is an options-based response?**

Emergencies are complicated, regardless of the nature of emergency, a completely linear traditional response often fails to adapt to variables like blocked egress, weather, time of day, or countless other factors. Modern emergency preparedness recognizes that the better action is to prepare staff and students in managing an emergency using their excellent training and sharp minds to meet these variables and adapt. Thus, many of the emergency planning algorithms involve decisions made during the emergency, as needs and variables change in the moment. Emergencies are dynamic, and our plans must be dynamic to be successful. When we drill, students and staff are often in leadership roles, an impressive and empowering thing to witness!

## **How often do we practice / drill these plans?**

State guidance is very specific and requires regular fire drills and a minimum number of evacuations per year, we meet and/or exceed these guidelines as well as conduct smaller scale practice during normal school operations and in the classroom as appropriate. Full scale evacuation is drilled twice a year.

### **What are we doing with local emergency response collaboration?**

During the preparation/planning, execution and debriefing of our drills, local emergency response is encouraged to participate, this includes input from local fire departments, Orange County sheriff's office, bus contractors, and the Vermont State Police. We continue to improve radio communications and interoperability given the limited connectivity in our valley. Many of these agencies come and participate in the drills we conduct.

### **When we must evacuate the school and/or move the students, what happens?**

Students and staff extensively practice options to safely egress the school building, and rendezvous at safe locations either close-by or more remotely depending on the nature of the emergency and the likely path to safety or other logistics (options based) Twice yearly we drill with the bus company a full-scale evacuation of students and staff which could arise from all manner of natural or manmade emergencies. The busses evacuate students from a number of predetermined rally points to a safe and secure off-site location where staff provide a safe, well organized, accountability check and ready the students to go home to their families. We safely conducted one of these drills last year with outstanding participation and performance from the students and staff. The building was vacant 4 minutes after the call to evacuate, within 8 minutes, students had all but vanished, and 21 minutes into the drill every student and staff member was already at or enroute to a safe, secure location. Each of these evolutions is a learning experience, and we take notes and record inefficiencies to improve for the next opportunity, just as all emergency drills should.

## **How can I help at home?**

Start the conversation at home, allow for safe space and time to discuss not just violence at school but in the world, listen to how these events are affecting each other and the community as a whole. Natural disaster and weather emergencies are fresh on our minds, be well prepared with backpack extras, warmth, footwear, car and home supplies. Update any individual health needs with the nurse's office.