

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Little Falls Community Schools, Little Falls Police Department, and Morrison County Sheriff's Office to Conduct Joint Emergency Management Exercise

LITTLE FALLS, MN — September 30, 2026 — Little Falls Community Schools, the Little Falls Police Department, and the Morrison County Sheriff's Office will join together on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, for a comprehensive emergency management training exercise at Little Falls Community Middle School.

The exercise will simulate a school lockdown in response to an active-threat situation, followed by a controlled evacuation and relocation of students to Camp Ripley.

This is a planned training exercise. There is no actual emergency or threat to Little Falls Community Middle School or the surrounding community.

The exercise is designed to test the ability of school personnel and emergency responders to work together through a complex emergency—from the initial response and building clearance through student accountability, evacuation, transportation, and relocation.

Preparing Together Makes Our Community Safer

The three organizations emphasize that effective emergency preparedness is a shared responsibility and that joint training is essential to an effective response.

"The safety and security of our students and staff is a shared responsibility, and that responsibility extends well beyond the walls of our schools," said Greg Johnson, Superintendent of Little Falls Community Schools. "Exercises like this allow our school personnel and emergency responders to practice together, communicate together, and learn from one another. Our goal is to make sure that when an emergency occurs, we are not meeting for the first time—we have already trained together and understand how we will work as a team."

The Little Falls Police Department and Morrison County Sheriff's Office will play key roles in the exercise, including responding to the simulated threat, establishing security, coordinating the evacuation route, and providing a law enforcement escort for the student transportation convoy.

"One of the greatest values of exercises like this is the opportunity to build relationships and establish a common operating picture before an actual emergency occurs," said Kyle Johnson, Chief of the Little Falls Police Department.

“In a real incident, there is no time to learn who does what or how different organizations communicate. Training together allows us to identify challenges, improve our coordination, and develop the trust that is critical when lives may depend on our response.”

The Morrison County Sheriff's Office will assist with perimeter security, evacuation route security, transportation coordination, and the marked law enforcement escort to Camp Ripley.

“Large-scale emergencies require multiple agencies to work as one team,” said Shawn Larsen, Morrison County Sheriff. “This exercise gives us an opportunity to test that teamwork in a controlled environment. We can identify gaps, address them, and improve our response before we face an actual emergency. The time we invest in training together is an investment in the safety of our students, staff, first responders, and community.”

Exercise Will Test Complete Emergency Response

The exercise will begin with a simulated active threat near the school's gymnasium. School administration will initiate the District's emergency alert and lockdown procedures.

Following the simulated neutralization of the threat, law enforcement will conduct a systematic building clearance. Students will be released from classrooms in an organized manner, while school staff use the District's CrisisGo emergency management system to maintain real-time accountability.

Students will then move in structured groups to the Exchange Arena. Once there, class rosters will be verified before students are transported to Camp Ripley by Palmer Bus Service and Strack Bus Service under a marked law enforcement escort.

At Camp Ripley, students will enter a secure reception facility where final student accountability will be completed.

The exercise will also involve the Little Falls Fire Department, Pierz Police Department, Royalton Police Department, Morrison County Health and Human Services, Palmer Bus Service, Strack Bus Service, and Camp Ripley National Guard Training Facility.

Learning From the Exercise

A critical component of the exercise will occur after the operational portion is complete.

Participating agencies will conduct a unified debrief to evaluate communication during the transition between locations, the ability to maintain student groups throughout evacuation and transportation, and logistical challenges associated with receiving a large student population at Camp Ripley.

The information gathered during the exercise will be used to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement in emergency procedures, communication, accountability, transportation, and interagency coordination.

“The real measure of an exercise isn’t whether everything goes perfectly,” said Mark Diehl, Executive Director of Operations for Little Falls Community Schools. “The value comes from identifying the things we can improve when the stakes are low, so that we are better prepared when the stakes are high. Bringing our school staff, law enforcement, fire, transportation, county services, and Camp Ripley partners together allows us to test the entire emergency response process—not just one piece of it.”

A Community Partnership

The October 14 exercise represents an ongoing commitment by Little Falls Community Schools and local public-safety agencies to strengthen emergency preparedness through collaboration and continuous improvement.

The organizations recognize that no single agency can manage a complex emergency independently. Strong emergency response depends upon established relationships, clear communication, defined responsibilities, and the ability to operate together as a unified team.

Community members may observe increased law enforcement, fire department, school bus, and other emergency response activity in the vicinity of Little Falls Community Middle School, the Exchange Arena, and along the route to Camp Ripley during the exercise.

Following the emergency management portion of the exercise, students will participate in planned activities at Camp Ripley before returning to normal school operations.

About the Exercise

Date: Wednesday, October 14, 2026

Start Time: Approximately 8:30 a.m.

Location: Little Falls Community Middle School, Exchange Arena, and Camp Ripley

Exercise: Lockdown, evacuation, and relocation

Purpose: Multi-agency emergency response training, student accountability, evacuation, transportation, relocation, and unified command

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