



PREPAREDNESS TIPS FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Beyond Back to School Night: Helping Schools, Students and Families Prepare for Emergencies

ARE YOU PREPARED?

Do you know which hazards are more common in your area of the country? Are some of your schools more vulnerable than others? Have you planned for weather and man-made emergencies with local first responders, staff, and students? What if you have to evacuate your school?

Youth are the future of this country and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) wants to help you ensure your staff, students and their families are safe during an emergency by helping them prepare before one occurs. This document provides tips, talking points, and emergency planning resources for school administrators.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Children comprise almost a quarter of our nation's population.
- About 50 million children are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools across the country.

What to Share

Back to School Night and PTA meetings are some of the best opportunities you'll have to communicate about preparedness information with parents and guardians. Here are some suggestions for what to share during these events as well as throughout the year:

- Your school's roles and responsibilities in planning for or responding to emergencies.
- Your communications plan/tool in place for emergencies. This could include a phone system that plays a message for all subscribers, an alert system that sends a text message to parents and guardians, a combination of these, or a more traditional "phone tree." However, messaging using phone numbers require maintaining current information for parents and guardians. This document provides [message scripts](#) by



[the type of incident](#). You can also download and share copies of Ready.gov's [Family Emergency Plan](#) with families and encourage them to create their own communication plans.

- Your school's procedures for evacuation, lockdown and reunification. One of the most important things for parents and guardians to do during an event that calls for students to be evacuated to another site or schools to be locked down is to remain calm. Knowing their children will be well taken care of until they are reunited with them will make lockdown and evacuation processes easier. Make sure you share information on your lockdown procedures, evacuation procedures and site(s), and reunification plans with parents and guardians. It may be helpful to summarize these plans, and, if possible, translate the plan or summary into languages spoken by parents and guardians with children who attend your school. [This pamphlet](#) defines terms and explains lockdown, evacuation and reunification steps to parents.
- What you have done in response to emergency (e.g., hurricane, earthquake) to improve your plans, and how parents and guardians can help plan for such an event.

Help with Planning

The Department of Education (ED) sponsors the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance website, which includes a resource repository and links to publications. [Click here](#) to visit and search the REMS website. Below we highlight

specific resources pulled from FEMA, ED and other agencies to help you with your emergency planning.

Plan Assistance. Need to draft or update your plan? Not sure your plan covers all four phases of emergency management? ED's [Practical Information on Crisis Planning](#) and [Creating Emergency Management Plans](#) can help. The REMS TA Center provides links to [basic school emergency management topics](#) (the four phases, for example) and [more advanced topics](#), such as conducting a safety audit and planning for large events.

Vulnerability Assessment. A vulnerability assessment is a tool that helps schools or districts identify and prioritize risks. What parts of your school are more vulnerable to a disaster than others? Are there things you can do to reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior at your school? [This guide](#) can help you better understand how to prepare for and lessen physical risks your district or individual schools might face. The REMS TA Center has [additional resources](#) on vulnerability assessment.

Drills and Exercises. [This ED PowerPoint presentation](#) can help you plan and implement tabletop exercises, drills, and full-scale exercises. [This link](#) takes you to an excerpt from a school plan that provides several ideas for drills and exercises, including threat and hazard analysis, bomb threats, and a hazmat situation. Sample discussion questions are also provided. [This School ShakeOut Drill Manual](#) provides schools with four options for earthquake drills and can be customized depending on need and resources.

TIP: Throw a “monkey wrench” into traditional drills and block usual exits, forcing school staff and students to be flexible and resourceful.

Reunification. In the event of an evacuation, you want your students, their parents, and your staff to remain calm and comfortable. While most school districts have evacuation plans, all could benefit from having a robust reunification plan. [This link](#) takes you to a sample parent/student reunification plan that can help you make decisions on how to carry out reunification, by hazard, and reunification forms you can tailor to your school/school district.

Planning for Students and Staff with Access and Functional Needs. Emergency planning for students with access and functional needs must take into account their specific needs, including equipment and medication, and how to ensure their safety in the event of an emergency. The [Los Angeles Unified School District](#) has a host of materials that can help you plan and respond to students with special needs.

“[Students] can’t learn in that kind of environment if they don’t feel safe. There is no doubt in my mind that we would have lost dozens if not hundreds of students in that storm and injuries would have been unfathomable if it happened during a school day.” Joplin Schools Superintendent C.J. Huff, talking about the benefit of installing community storm shelters in schools throughout the district. Read the full article [here](#).

Incorporating Preparedness into Curriculum. Schools across the country are making the move to include disaster preparedness as part of their curriculum, whether part of science, social studies, or another subject. [FEMA’s Catalogue of Youth Disaster Preparedness Education Resources](#) is a good place to start searching for programs that could meet your needs. [Teen Community Emergency Preparedness Teams](#) (Teen CERT) are gaining momentum across the country. These teams empower youth, providing them with training in disaster preparedness and emergency response.

FEMA Youth Preparedness

Youth preparedness is a FEMA priority; which is why they provide monthly technical assistance workshops nationwide. These practitioner-targeted workshops address educational standards, adaptability, partnership engagement, promotion, fundraising, inclusion and evaluation and sustainability. For more information on the FEMA’s youth preparedness work, visit these sites:

- [Citizen Corps Youth Preparedness Web Page](#)
- [Youth Disaster Preparedness Education Resources Catalogue](#)
- [Ready.gov](#) for Kids
- [Youth Preparedness: Implementing A Community-Based Program](#)

Get Involved, Share Your Stories! Do you want to learn more about what other community stakeholders around the country are doing to increase school and youth emergency preparedness? The REMS TA Center features [lessons learned](#) (examples of actual school emergencies) and [success stories](#) (profiles of specific activities, tools, or strategies).

You can also visit [Ready.gov](#), where you can register for news updates and sign up to be a [National Preparedness Month Coalition member](#). [FEMA’s Collaboration Community](#) allows users to submit new emergency preparedness ideas; [this link](#) takes you directly to those focused on youth. Finally, check out the [FEMA Blog](#),

where you can learn more about the FEMA Administrator's work, and share your comments.

Interested in Starting a Youth Preparedness Program?

Here are some tips to increase the likelihood of success:

- [Promote Interactive Activities within Families](#), such as the development of [a family emergency plan](#).
- [Give Special Consideration to Bilingual Students and School Staff](#), as they can serve as conduits of information to their friends and family who may not fully understand English.
- [Use Real World Events to Teach About Emergency Situations and Disasters](#). Materials in the public domain (media coverage of a hazard, checklists, FEMA resources, other government and nonprofit organizations) provide information on local hazards and appropriate preparedness and response actions.
- [Use Presentations by Local Emergency Management Practitioners](#) who are engaged in and supportive of preparedness activities.
- [Engage Partners](#). Youth preparedness cannot be the responsibility of only one organization. It requires the collaboration and support of a variety of organizations and individuals (e.g., after-school programs, the faith community, local branches of national organizations and clubs).
- [Integrate and Coordinate Emergency Preparedness for Students and Staff with Disabilities](#) and others with [access and functional needs](#) before, during, and after a disaster.

Links to More Information

- [Citizen Corps](#)
- [Community Emergency Response Teams \(CERT\)](#)
- [FEMA Youth Preparedness](#)
- [Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education \(ED\) Emergency Planning Website](#)
- [Ready Campaign](#)
- Email: citizencorps@dhs.gov