

**Ministry of Education  
Emergency and Crisis Response**

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**Guidelines for Maintaining Emergency Procedures for Elementary and Secondary Schools in Ontario for the 2020-21 School Year, while respecting public health advice related to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Introduction:**

- Based on emergency procedures that have already been established in Ontario schools, the following guidelines are being provided to help elementary and secondary schools ensure their emergency plans meet requirements, and to promote consistency across the province.

**BACKGROUND**

- The Provincial Model for a Local Police/School Board Protocol (the “Protocol”) provides policy direction for how police and schools interact. It outlines common principles and key elements upon which all local protocols between police services and school boards must be based.
- While the Protocol sets provincial expectations for local protocols, it also allows police services and school boards the flexibility to address service-delivery arrangements and unique factors and/or considerations that may affect individual jurisdictions.
- The Protocol includes a requirement that all elementary and secondary schools in Ontario work with their local police service to develop and implement lockdown and bomb threat procedures. The Protocol includes a requirement for schools to conduct two lockdown drills each school year.
- It is critical that when planning for the 2020-2021 school year, procedures for conducting emergency planning drills (e.g., lockdown, secure and hold, shelter in place drills) be aligned with current public health advice and measures.

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**WHAT THIS MEANS FOR SCHOOLS**

The Ministry of Education encourages school boards to review and make amendments, as required, to the Emergency and Crisis Response Plans to allow for compliance with public health advice measures related to COVID-19, such as physical distancing and masking requirements.

A minimum of two lockdown drills must still occur each school year, however, the way they are conducted may be modified for the 2020-21 school year.

Boards should ensure floor plans are updated to reflect identification of buildings, exterior doors, classrooms and restricted or closed areas as a result of COVID-19, and are posted and communicated accordingly.

### **Conducting Emergency and Crisis Response Drills:**

- A discussion, visual demonstration or combination of both could be used to provide an overview of the Emergency and Crisis Response Plans, including:
  - Identifying an emergency;
  - Procedures; and
  - Roles and responsibilities.
- Drills are conducted while maintaining physical distancing and wearing a face mask (as required).
- While a response to bomb threats may have historically been practiced through evacuation of the school, the requirement to *ensure that boards' staff, students, and other stakeholders are aware of their obligations/responsibilities within individual school plans*, can be accomplished through discussion and/or visual demonstration.
- Teachers are encouraged to do drills within classroom cohorts.

### **Note:**

- All emergency and crisis response drills (e.g., lockdown, secure and hold, shelter in place drills) or plans, must include instructions aligned with public health advice and measures regarding physical distancing, face mask protocol and promoting hand hygiene as appropriate.
- Schools should notify local emergency services in advance of scheduled drills and of changes to any floor plans.
- Other programs operating within the school (e.g., child care and early years programs) should be notified of changes to the Emergency and Crisis Response Plans.
- Please refer to the Guidance for Keeping Students Safe in School, attached as Appendix A for information related to fire drills.

**Please note that in the event of an emergency or crisis, public health advice related to COVID-19 may not be achievable, based on the response required.**