

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

## Background

The District recognizes that emergencies can occur which could bring harm to the students and staff at a school or District work site.

Emergencies such as fire, bomb threats, earthquake and threats to the safety of students, personnel and property may prohibit normal operations for an unspecified period of time.

Emergency preparedness is one component of comprehensive health and safety procedures for students and employees. Response to emergencies requires a good understanding of procedures and routines acquired through practice and drills as well as by following an established plan. Employees are to have an awareness of procedures to be able to respond to emergencies appropriately and effectively.

## Procedures

### 1. Decision-Making

- 1.1. Due to the range of potential emergencies and their nature, there is a need for relatively quick decision-making on the part of employees to protect and ensure the safety of students as well as themselves
- 1.2. In many cases, due to the 'crisis' nature of emergencies, the normal decision-making processes favoured by the District may not be possible. It is expected that students and employees follow the directions of those employees in charge of the situation or those of recognized community-based personnel trained to assist and advise.

### 2. Communication/Media

- 2.1. In certain situations, the media are active and anxious to report a 'story' for the public. However, the following shall guide District response.
  - 2.1.1. That the protection of privacy for the student, employee and their families is paramount unless indicated otherwise;
  - 2.1.2. That, at times, a report in the media may cause repetition of the event and thus cause anxiety and a potential threat to the safety of other students and employees;
  - 2.1.3. That investigations through the justice system may be ongoing and disclosure may have an impact on the privacy rights of suspects or accused and/or jeopardize the investigation;
  - 2.1.4. That students and employees have a right to go about their 'business' without undue interference.
- 2.2. Specific guidelines for the response to the media are contained in the **District's Crisis Response Manual (2000)**. Generally the Superintendent's office will work with the

media.

- 2.3. Staff may be informed on a 'need to know' basis, recognizing that the protection of privacy for the student, fellow employees and their families is paramount unless indicated otherwise.
- 2.4. When possible, principals or site supervisors shall contact the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall inform trustees at the earliest practicable time.

### 3. Discharge of Students

- 3.1. In an emergency where students have vacated District property without permission or with parents, or other adult supervisors, the District determines that its responsibility to the student has been discharged.

### 4. Duties and Responsibilities – Employees

- 4.1. In the event of an emergency, staff are expected to remain on the scene to ensure the safety of students until directed otherwise by the Principal and/or site supervisor.
- 4.2. Those staff with children or other dependents that require assistance are to have arrangements in place for their care by others. As the situation stabilizes, those employees with dependents shall be released from duty first.

### 5. Supervisory Responsibility – Site Specific Emergencies

- 5.1. Site-specific emergencies are less likely to require a declaration of the Emergency Program Act. In these situations, assistance from other schools, the District, and community and neighbourhood services is probable.
- 5.2. Should the emergency require employee supervision beyond regular operating times, the Principal or site Supervisor may require some or all employees to remain until the safety of children and students is assured.
- 5.3. Principals are encouraged to link with a neighbourhood plan. In these emergency circumstances, neighbourhood volunteers may assume responsibility for students at the discretion of the Principal or site Supervisor.

### 6. Supervisory Responsibility – Valley Wide Emergencies

- 6.1. Valley wide emergencies of a significant nature are likely to result in a declaration of emergency powers under the Emergency Program Act. This is declared by a mayor, chair of the regional District, or the lieutenant-governor. Under emergency powers:
  - 6.1.1. Those supervisors/adults acting in good faith are not liable for actions they have or have not taken;
  - 6.1.2. District personnel shall be under the jurisdiction of the Comox Valley Operations Centre.
- 6.2. In these situations, individual employees may be released from their responsibilities at the discretion of the Principal and/or site Supervisor in the following situations:
  - 6.2.1. Assumption of control of the situation by members of the Comox Valley Operations Centre or other community groups such as fire and/or police;
  - 6.2.2. Replacement by neighbourhood volunteers where the Principal and/or site Supervisor believes the safety of students is reasonably assured;

- 6.2.3. Assumption of control by Emergency Social Services;
- 6.2.4. Release of students to their parents/designate where the Principal and/or site Supervisor believes that the safety of students has been reasonably assured;
- 6.2.5. Where the Superintendent announces such action for individual schools/sites or all schools/sites.

Reference: Sections 17, 20, 22, 65, 85 School Act  
Emergency Program Act  
School Regulation 265/89  
School Earthquake Safety Guidebook

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