

## SAFETY DRILLS

### Evacuation (Fire) Drills

To be in compliance with the Code of Virginia § 22.1-137, the Board of Education's Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (SOA) (8 VAC 20-131-260), and Statewide Fire Prevention Code (Sections 403.5.1, 404.2.1, 404.2.2, 405.1, and 405.2).

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Each school must conduct:

- An initial fire drill within the first ten (10) days of the school year.
- Another drill within the first twenty (20) days of the school year, and

At least one (1) fire drill per month for the remainder of the school year.

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Each school holds a fire drill twice during the first 20 school days of each session and more often if necessary. Each school holds at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school session. Evacuation routes for students are posted in each room. No fire drills are conducted during periods of mandatory testing required by the Board of Education. Emergency evacuation drills shall be conducted at different hours of the day or evening, during the changing of classes, when school is at assembly, during recess or gym periods, or during other times. One required drill shall be held during the hours after sunset or before sunrise. Evacuations made necessary by the unplanned activation of a fire alarm system or by any other emergency shall not be substituted for a required drill. If a school opening model reflects an alternative attendance schedule, there will be a need to practice more drills to accommodate that schedule to give each student an opportunity to practice and understand the evacuation process and assembly areas.

### Lock-Down Drills

Each school has a drill at least twice during the first twenty (20) school days of each school session. Each school holds at least one (1) additional lock-down drill after the first sixty (60) days two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school session. Lock-down plans and drills are in compliance with the Statewide Fire Prevention Code, Va. Code §27-94 et seq. Each school provides the parents of enrolled students with at least 24 hours' notice before the school conducts any lock-down drill. Such notice is not required to include the exact date and time of the lock-down drill.

Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students are exempt from mandatory participation in lock-down drills during the first sixty (60) days of the school session. The superintendent/designee develops procedures to implement such exemption. Each pre-kindergarten and kindergarten student participates in each lock-down drill after the first sixty (60) days of each school session.

### School Bus Emergency Drills

~~\_\_\_\_\_—Emergency exit drills shall be practiced by all pupil riders at least twice a year, the first occurring during the first thirty (30) instructional days and the second in the second semester and shall include the school bus driver. Summer session evacuation drills should be performed as needed.~~

~~Each school having school buses holds a drill in leaving school buses under emergency circumstances at least once during the first ninety calendar days of each school session and more often if necessary.~~

#### Tornado Drills

There is at least be one (1) tornado drill every school year in every school.

#### Emergency Situations

In addition to the drills mentioned above, the School Board provides training to each student and employee at least once each school year on safety procedures in the event of an emergency situation on school property.

Adopted: July 1, 1993

Amended: August 23, 2001; August 10, 2006; August 8, 2013; September 22, 2016; June 14, 2018; September 12, 2019

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Legal Ref.: Code of Virginia, §§ 22.1-137, 22.1-137.1, 22.1-137.2, 22.1-137.3, 22.1-184.

Acts 2006, c. 164.

8 VAC 20-70-110.

8 VAC 20-131-260.

Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code

Cross Refs: EB, School Crisis, Emergency Management, and Emergency Response Plan

## **Safety Procedures**

### **High Winds, Severe Thunderstorms, Tornadoes, and Tornado Drills**

To prescribe procedures and responsibilities designed to provide protection from tornadoes and other severe storms.

#### A. National Weather Service (NWS)

A program of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) responsible for providing weather forecast information that is passed on to local radio and television stations and broadcast over NOAA Weather Radio stations.

#### B. Weather Radio

A small portable radio that is permanently tuned to one or more of the NOAA or NWS broadcast stations. Weather radios shall have an automatic warning alert tone that will sound when activated by the NWS prior to an emergency bulletin. Weather radios shall also have a battery backup power supply to maintain the operation of the radio in case of a power failure.

#### C. Severe Thunderstorm

A storm that is characterized by the presence of heavy rain, lightning and thunder, damaging straight-line winds that can reach 140 mph, and the possibility of large hail.

#### D. Tornado

A violently destructive rotating storm, accompanied by a funnel-shaped cloud that progresses in a relatively narrow path over land. Most tornadoes have winds less than 110 miles per hour (mph) and last from one to ten minutes. However, stronger tornadoes will last 20 minutes or longer and can have winds greater than 205 mph.

#### E. High Wind Watch

A situation identified and broadcast by the NWS in which the following conditions are possible:

1. Sustained winds of 40 mph or higher for one hour or more.
2. Wind gusts of 58 mph or higher for one hour or more.

#### F. High Wind Warning

A warning issued by the NWS when the following conditions are occurring or imminent:

1. Sustained winds of 40 mph or higher for one hour or more.
2. Wind gusts of 58 mph or higher for one hour or more.

G. Severe Thunderstorm Watch

A situation, identified and broadcast by NWS, in which conditions exist that may develop into a severe thunderstorm.

H. Severe Thunderstorm Warning

A warning issued by the NWS that severe thunderstorms are occurring.

I. Tornado Watch

A situation identified and broadcast by the NWS in which tornadoes are possible in the area. School staff members should remain alert for the warning signs of an approaching storm.

J. Tornado Warning

A warning issued by the NWS that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar in Albemarle County. Staff members of schools located within the area of the tornado warning must be prepared to enact emergency procedures to move students to safe areas.

K. Tornado Shelter Area

An area of the school that provides the best available protection to be used during a tornado.

IV. TORNADO SHELTER AREAS

The best available protection in a school is generally found on the ground floor away from windows and away from large free-span ceilings such as gymnasiums, cafeterias, auditoriums, and libraries.

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A. Hallways

Ground floor hallways will provide the largest volume of shelter area since they are free of furniture and usually located away from exterior walls. Avoid areas of the hall that can become exposed to broken glass and flying debris. Examples of these hazardous areas include halls with windows, skylights, glass doors, or doorless entrances to rooms that have windows.

B. Interior Rooms

Most ground floor rooms without windows can be potential shelter areas. Offices, conference rooms, workrooms, and restrooms offer good protection.

AVOID:

C. Auditoriums and Gymnasiums

Large-capacity rooms with free-span ceilings (no columns) must not be used for shelters. Even though rooms of this type may not have windows, they are extremely susceptible to structural collapse.

D. Boiler Rooms

Boiler rooms must not be used for shelter areas. These rooms usually have an exterior wall with windows, and there is a great potential for injury from a damaged steam or natural gas pipe.

E. Temporary Buildings

Temporary structures such as trailers, or any other non-masonry structure, provide limited protection from strong winds. Temporary structures must not be used for shelter areas.

V. TORNADO ALARM

Each school shall designate a special alarm to indicate that a tornado has been sighted and/or is approaching. **THE FIRE ALARM MUST NOT BE USED** because this could cause confusion, and some students might exit the building believing that a fire emergency exists. In addition, the NWS recommends that a backup alarm be available in case electrical power fails because it is not unusual for tornadoes to knock out electrical service as they advance through an area. Most schools have emergency generators. Schools without generators should have backup plans for emergency notification. Such plans may include the use of the school's portable two-way radios.

VI. WARNING SIGNS OF AN APPROACHING TORNADO

A. Severe Thunderstorms

Thunder, lightning, heavy rain, and strong winds often precede a tornado. Tornadoes occasionally develop in areas in which severe thunderstorm watches or warnings are in effect.

B. Dark Clouds

The sky will have very dark clouds, often greenish or nearly black.

C. Hail

A hailstorm often precedes a tornado, sometimes producing large ice pellets.

D. Noise

A tornado makes a very loud roaring noise that is similar to the noise made by a speeding freight train.

E. Funnel

A dark spinning column may be seen reaching down from the clouds above. Some appear as visible funnels extending only partially to the ground, but debris will be visible at ground level. Others might be obscured by rain or low clouds. Sometimes a roaring noise can be heard or a funnel cloud appears before a tornado warning has been issued.

## VII. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

A. High Wind, Severe Thunderstorm, or Tornado Watches

If a watch has been issued by the NWS, continue to monitor the weather reports. Advise staff members to stay alert for any of the weather reports. Also, advise staff members to stay alert for any of the warning signs of an approaching storm or tornado. If any of the warning signs occur, enact the emergency procedures for a warning. Check shelter areas and remove or secure objects that might cause injury, such as television carts, portable chalkboards, and easels.

B. High Wind Warnings

If a high wind warning has been issued by the NWS that includes a forecast for winds sustained or gusting in excess of 75 mph, notify teachers in temporary structures (trailers or any other non-masonry structures) to move their students to the main school building. It is not necessary to use tornado shelter areas. Any available rooms in the main building can be used, such as the media center, cafeteria, or gymnasium.

C. Severe Thunderstorm Warnings

Stay alert for warning signs of an approaching tornado. A severe thunderstorm does not necessarily mean that a tornado will occur, but a thunderstorm often precedes a tornado. In the event of a warning, students should not continue outdoor activities. If sustained winds from a thunderstorm exceed 75 mph, evacuate the occupants of all non-masonry buildings to the main building. It is not necessary to use the tornado shelter area until a tornado warning is issued or any of the common tornado warning signs are detected.

D. Tornado Warnings

When a tornado warning is issued, students and staff members must be prepared to evacuate to the shelter areas. Teachers in temporary structures (trailers or any other non-masonry structures) should move their students to the main school building. The principal, or his or her designee, will

assign staff members to monitor news media and their local weather conditions and take appropriate action when necessary, to include:

1. Sound the tornado alarm.
2. Direct students to sit on the floor in the shelter areas and wait for additional instructions.
3. Ensure that students with physical disabilities have safely reached their shelter areas.
4. When all students are assembled in the shelter areas, they should be instructed to respond to a specific command to assume a protective posture, facing interior walls and away from the direction from which flying debris may be expected to come. An appropriate command would be, "Everybody down. Crouch on your elbows and knees. Place your hands over the back of your head." It is essential that this command be instantly understood and obeyed.
5. Stay alert for warning signs of approaching tornado.

**DO NOT OPEN WINDOWS.** Once thought to be a way to minimize damage by allowing inside and outside atmospheric pressure to equalize, NOAA considers this practice unnecessary, and it allows damaging winds to enter the building.

If a warning is received near or during dismissal, the release of students shall not occur until the expiration of the warning. Buses that are occupied with students may report to the nearest school, discharge their students, and send them to the inside of the building, or, based on available information, the driver may continue on the route. This decision may be made by the driver and shall be based on the location of specific severe weather and with the interest of the students' safety paramount.

Parents will be allowed to pick up their students if they so choose. Releases to other caretakers must be specified on the student's emergency contact card or by direct contact with a parent or guardian. Outdoor activities are prohibited during a tornado warning including after-school activities. Principals and program managers are reminded that severe weather may occur at any time and they should not wait for formal notification if, in their judgment, a danger exists.

### VIII. STUDENTS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

#### A. Use of Elevators

Students in wheelchairs should use the elevator to evacuate from the second floor in the event that a tornado warning is issued. Although elevator use is prohibited in the event of a fire, the same danger does not exist during a tornado. The possibility of being trapped in an elevator with no electrical power during a tornado would not be life threatening.

#### B. Shelter Areas

Students with physical disabilities may find it impossible or injurious to crouch on the floor in a protective posture. It is best to direct students with physical disabilities to remain in their wheelchairs or to sit in chairs if they use walkers or crutches.

Students with physical disabilities will have protection equal to that of students in a protective posture if they are given shelter in a small room in the middle of the school. Student or faculty restrooms will provide good protection. Principals should include logistical planning in their tornado emergency procedures so that students with physical disabilities will have time to move to their shelter areas before the other students fill the hallways.

#### IX. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE OUTDOORS OR IN VEHICLES

##### Vehicle(s)

Cars and buses are extremely hazardous in tornadoes since they can be easily flipped and crushed. If you are in a vehicle and in the area of a tornado, do not try to outrun the funnel. Tornadoes can change direction and speed without warning.

If you are in a bus when a tornado is approaching, the bus driver should drive to the nearest school if time permits and evacuate the passengers to the school building. If you are unable to return to the school, seek shelter in a solidly built structure. Remember to avoid a structure that has a large free-span roof or a large amount of glass windows. Once inside, students should assume a protective posture.

##### Outdoor Shelter

If you are unable to get to a safe structure, or if the threat from a tornado is immediate, evacuate the bus and move away from it and any other vehicles. Seek shelter and assume the protective posture.

The primary feature to look for in determining an outdoor shelter should be a point below the average ground level. Look for a culvert, a ditch, or a ravine in which to take refuge and assume the protective posture. Be aware of the potential danger of rapidly rising storm water.

It is extremely important that students keep their heads down and covered so that they will be protected from any flying debris.

#### POST TORNADO EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

- A. Following the passage of a tornado, immediate and positive steps must be taken to maintain orderly supervision and to reduce the chance of further injuries.
- B. Before enacting the following procedures, make sure that the tornado threat has passed. Several tornadoes can occur simultaneously, and may change direction.

##### Supervision

Maintain order. Direct students to remain in place and not to move about.

Notification of Police and Fire departments

Contact the fire department by calling 911. Advise them of immediately known injuries and structural damage. Next, contact the chief operating officer at 434-296-5877.

Injury Assessment

Direct teachers to check their students for injuries. Provide any necessary first aid. Be able to identify the location and condition of the injured for the fire department personnel when they arrive.

Electrical Hazards

Warn students and staff members to avoid touching any electrical devices, any appliances, or any exposed cables. If there is structural damage, and if the following maneuver can be safely accomplished, shut off the main electrical disconnect switch and the natural gas main valve (if the school has one).

Structural Hazards

If a section of the school is partially collapsed, instruct the students to move away from that area. Walls and ceilings may be weakened and may collapse later. Loose items that were blown over or jarred loose can also be potential hazards. Care must be taken to avoid further injury from broken glass and debris.

Evacuation of the Building

In the event of major structural damage, evacuate students to the outside. Instruct teachers to maintain order and to keep their classes together. The names of missing students must be given to the principal so that this information can be passed on to the fire and rescue department personnel in order to maximize rescue efforts.

Fire Department Supervision

Once the fire department personnel have arrived, the fire department officer in charge is the commanding authority and makes all decisions, including those regarding crowd control and evacuation of the building.

TORNADO DRILLS

Student Training

1. Instruct all students in how to assume a protective posture
2. Instruct all students what the command will be to assume the protective posture. An appropriate

command would be, “Everybody down! Crouch on your elbows and knees. Place your hands over the back of your head.” It is essential that this command be instantly understood.

3. Tell students what hazards may be present during and after a tornado. Inform students where they should go in the shelter area.

At least one drill shall be conducted during the school year, ~~in March.~~

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#### ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

##### A. Shelter Area Plan

Identify the area(s) of the school that provide the best available protection and mark these areas on a copy of the school floor plan. Use the guidelines in section III to determine shelter areas.

##### B. Instructions for Staff Members

Ensure that all staff members know the procedures stated in this regulation. Teachers should be responsible for teaching the protective posture and the command to assume it.

##### C. Weather Radio

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Every school has been provided a weather radio. Maintain the weather radio so that it is able to receive emergency bulletin broadcasts. Establish a location in the main office where the automatic warning alert tone will be heard at any time during school hours. The NWS sends a test signal every Wednesday at approximately 11 a.m. If properly set, the automatic warning alert tone should sound at the beginning of the test message. Ensure that the station selector is set to receive the strongest signal available and the weather bulletins can be clearly understood. Occasionally check the nine-volt battery backup power supply by disconnecting the electrical cord from the receptacle while listening to the weather broadcast.

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