



**SCHOOL EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

***Conducting School
Lockdowns and
Hold-and-Secure***

School Emergency Management Plan—Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-And-Secure

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Conducting School Lockdowns and Hold-and-Secure

DEFINITIONS

emergency responders—police, fire department, or emergency health services personnel in uniform

evacuation—action taken to have all students, staff, and visitors leave the building in response to safety concerns, such as fire or smoke, bomb threat, chemical spill, etc.

exterior safe area—a temporary meeting point, in the vicinity of the school, for students and staff who are outside the building when a lockdown is initiated (The site must provide students and staff concealment from anyone at the school. If in the vicinity of the school, the exterior safe area could also be the “relocation site” or the “parent-student reunification site.”)

hold-and-secure—actions taken to control access to the school in response to a safety concern external to the school

lockdown—actions taken to conceal students in a secure location in response to a threat of violence inside the school

parent-student reunification site—a location away from the school and outside the area controlled by police during an incident where students will be reunited with parents/guardians after being released by the police following an incident at the school (This site may also be used to provide parents/guardians with information during the incident prior to its conclusion. Considerations for selection include access to the site that does not interfere with access to the school, sufficient parking for the expected number of vehicles, and outside of the view of the school. It could also be the “relocation site” if appropriate.)

person-in-charge—the school principal or designate (vice-principal or other staff person)

relocation site—a facility or site located a safe distance away from the school and used in the event of an evacuation from the school where students will not be allowed to re-enter the building (A second location should be selected in the event access to the primary site is not possible. Considerations for selection include the ability to provide shelter for students and staff and access to washrooms and telephones. This site may also be used as the “parent-student reunification site” or “exterior safe area” if appropriate.)

BACKGROUND

School emergencies vary greatly, in terms of the likelihood of occurring as well as the potential consequences. The nature of the emergency combined with the risk to student and staff safety will determine the appropriate response. School lockdown and hold-and-secure are two strategies that may be used to mitigate risk.

OBJECTIVE

A lockdown is conducted when it is determined that the safest response to a threat to physical safety is to have students and staff remain in a secure location until either the emergency is resolved or circumstances change and direction is given to evacuate and relocate.

RATIONALE

Emergencies are dynamic in nature. The exact location or the seriousness of the threat may not be confirmed and may move or change without warning. Having students and staff remain in a secure area mitigates risk by reducing their exposure to danger. Evacuations conducted in the absence of reliable information may result in a loss of student supervision and unnecessarily expose students to danger.

RESPONSIBILITY

The principal is responsible for the development and implementation of the school emergency management plan at the board's direction. The principal, as the person-in-charge, or the designate, is responsible for initiating a lockdown or hold-and-secure. Police are responsible for responding to and investigating violent incidents. During a violent incident, police will assume command and control of the response and investigation but will liaise and work closely with school administration and other emergency services throughout the process.

DESCRIPTION OF A LOCKDOWN

A lockdown is characterized by having all staff and students remain in a secure (locked or barricaded) location, such as a classroom or office. Normally, students are positioned in the corner of the room either sitting or lying on the floor. The goal is to avoid detection by remaining out of sight with window blinds closed and classroom lights turned off. Students and staff outside the building move immediately to a previously identified exterior safe area away from and out of site of the building. In addition, the building exterior doors are secured to prevent unauthorized persons from entering.

Exterior School Doors: The person-in-charge may choose not to secure the exterior school doors if they believe the threat is already inside the building and the act of locking the doors will place someone at risk. Factors that will influence this decision include whether responding police will be able to access the building if it is secured and if other strategies are in place to prevent innocent persons from entering a potentially dangerous situation. If the entrance is normally locked, a means for granting police entry will be required.

Fire Alarm: If the fire alarm is activated during a lockdown, staff must determine if it is safer to remain in the secure location or evacuate. If there are indications of fire or smoke, staff should determine the safest route and immediately evacuate to the exterior safe area or an approved interior location.

School Fire Safety Plan: Enhancements to the School Fire Safety Plan will be required to address actions to be taken during a lockdown. Collaborate with your Regional Deputy Fire Marshall and local law enforcement SAFE Plan Coordinator to complete the plan. Refer to *School Emergency Management Plan: Planning Guide* (Nova Scotia Department of Education 2008, page 9) for further assistance with the planning process. The *Planning Guide* can be accessed from the Nova Scotia Department of Education website, www.EDnet.ns.ca, by searching “School Emergency Management.”

Criteria for Initiating a Lockdown

A lockdown may be conducted for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to, the following:

- a violent, or potentially violent, incident inside the school
- an unauthorized visitor with unknown intent

Preparing for a Lockdown

As with building evacuations, lockdowns must be planned and practiced in order to ensure quick and safe implementation. The school must have a training plan that prepares staff and students to respond during a lockdown.

Building Considerations

Areas Where Students Congregate: All teaching spaces or other spaces where students may congregate should be examined to determine how quickly and effectively they can be secured. In addition, areas should be examined to determine where the students should be positioned to avoid detection. It may be necessary to prepare a covering for corridor windows that can be applied when the lockdown is announced. If an area such as the cafeteria, library, or gym cannot be secured quickly with students positioned out of sight, consideration should be given to moving students to a securable area. The space students are moved to must be immediately adjacent with access that allows for a rapid transition. If there is no adjacent securable space or students cannot be moved quickly, then it may be necessary to have them evacuate the building to an exterior safe area. This will require planning to ensure adequate supervision and a means of communicating with school administration. All rooms in the school should be labelled to assist way-finding by emergency responders. Number labels, rather than names, are the best practice.

Secondary Egress Door: Many classrooms have a secondary egress door, usually leading into an adjacent classroom. If such a door exists, it likely cannot be locked. As a result, empty adjacent classrooms may provide a means for unauthorized access. To prevent this, all classroom corridor doors should be closed and locked when rooms are not occupied. The best practice would be to have the classroom corridor door locked at all times. This would allow a teacher to secure the room by closing the door without needing to use a key.

Transition Times: Special consideration should be given to planning for lockdowns that occur during transition times including school commencement and dismissal, recess, lunch, and class change. Students and staff should be instructed to move immediately to the nearest securable area if a lockdown is announced during one of the noted transition times.

Portable Classrooms

Special consideration should be given to portable classrooms when planning for school lockdowns. If the public address system does not extend to the portable classroom, an alternate means of communicating must be developed. Staff and students located in portable classrooms should relocate to the main building during hold-and-secure if it is safe to do so. Portable classrooms should be labelled clearly (number or letter designation) to aid identification by emergency responders.

Exterior Safe Areas

During a lockdown, staff and students outside the building should move to a previously identified area or location away from and out of sight of the school building (usually off school grounds). If staff and students are normally located on two or more sides of the building when outside, multiple safe areas should be identified to reduce the necessity of passing too close to the school building.

Parent-Student Reunification Site

A location away from the school should be selected to serve as a parent-student reunification site. This site may also be the school's identified emergency relocation site; however, it should be recognized that for safety reasons the police may cordon off an area around the school. For this reason, the reunification site should be located outside any area the police may choose to secure. Consultation with police representatives may help determine where the reunification site should be. The school should ensure that parents/guardians receive information that directs them to go to the reunification site rather than to the school during a lockdown. Parents/guardians should receive this information early in the school year.

Releasing Students: It is important to discuss with the police when and how students will be released to their parents/guardians. Students may be considered witnesses to the event and need to be interviewed by police before being released.

Encounters with Police

Police officers entering a school that has reported a dangerous person will critically evaluate everyone they encounter as a potential threat. Therefore, for their safety, students and staff should be trained to respond in the following manner if they meet with police in the building during a lockdown:

1. Stop moving immediately.
2. Place your hands where they can be seen.
3. Follow directions quickly and precisely.

Substitute/Casual and Itinerant Staff

It is likely that there will be substitute, casual, and itinerant staff in the school when a lockdown is initiated. In preparation, these staff members should receive orientation regarding expectations and means to secure the classroom.

Bus Drivers and Other Board Staff

There is a high degree of likelihood that school bus drivers or other board staff will either be on site or en route to the school when a lockdown is called. Everyone present in the school when a lockdown is initiated is required to follow the direction of the person-in-charge and remain in a secure location until the incident is resolved or until directed otherwise. School bus drivers parked outside, or en route to the school, should be advised of the situation either through their dispatch or directly by the school. On receiving information that the school is in lockdown, school bus drivers should be directed to proceed to a previously identified staging area where they will wait for further direction. If practical, the staging area should also be the parent-student reunification site. If school bus drivers arrive at the school and observe a sign posted in the main entrance indicating the school is in lockdown, they should immediately alter their route to the staging area and confirm with their dispatch that the school is in lockdown. If board staff arrive at the school and observe a sign indicating the school is in lockdown, they should immediately leave the area and communicate with their office regarding further instructions.

Visitors (Parents/Guardians, Volunteers, Contractors, etc.)

It is likely there will be visitors in the school when a lockdown is initiated. Visitors in classrooms should be directed to stay with the teacher until the event has been resolved. Visitors elsewhere in the building should be directed to a secure location.

Building Tenants

Agreements should be reached with any groups or agencies who share or rent space within the school building. The agreements may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- how a school initiated lockdown will apply to the group or agency
- how the school will communicate with the group or agency during an emergency
- additional duties/responsibilities of the group or agency during a lockdown

Emergency Medical Situations

Staff should be as prepared as practical to manage medical emergencies without leaving the secured area during a lockdown. Students and staff with known life threatening medical conditions such as anaphylaxis and asthma should have their prescribed medications on hand for administration. Staff should report any life threatening illnesses or injuries to the administration immediately without leaving the secured area.

Washroom Considerations

Experience has shown that students and staff may be required to remain in lockdown for considerable time. At the same time students and staff must not leave a secure area during a lockdown. Consideration should be given to addressing physiological (washroom) needs during an extended lockdown.

Emergency Communications Plan

The school should have an emergency communications plan for school lockdowns. The plan should specifically identify a means for timely communication, throughout the duration of the emergency, between the person-in-charge and

- staff
- responding emergency services
- school board administration
- parents/guardians (as appropriate)

The emergency communications plan should also identify a means for staff to initiate urgent communications with the person-in-charge throughout the duration of the emergency.

Initiating a Lockdown

The person-in-charge will normally be responsible for deciding when lockdown or hold-and-secure will be initiated; however, if the person-in-charge is not immediately available, any staff person with access to the public address system should be given the authority and training to initiate a lockdown.

In the case of a lockdown, as it is with a fire alarm, speed in initiating a lockdown is essential to minimize the risk of injury. It is far better to err on the side of caution and initiate a lockdown at the first indication of danger rather than wait until the danger is confirmed.

Once the decision is made, the person-in-charge will use the most expedient means to initiate the lockdown. If the person-in-charge

chooses to use the public address system to initiate a lockdown, he or she should use plain, clear language, with specific directions. For example,

“Attention all staff, initiate lockdown now.” “Attention all staff, initiate lockdown now.” “Attention all staff, initiate lockdown now.”

NOTE: It is imperative that the script chosen to initiate a lockdown is used consistently across the entire school board. The script should be posted in the immediate vicinity of the public address system to aid the person making the announcement. If there is any area within the building or in the immediate vicinity outside the building where the public address system cannot be heard, an alternative means of communicating a lockdown to these areas will have to be considered.

Terminating a Lockdown

Terminating a lockdown shall be communicated to each classroom individually by the person-in-charge, and/or the police, by using a master key to enter the room. If a master key is not available or the entrance is otherwise secured, a means of identifying the person requesting entry should be used.

Specific Staff Duties

The following lists of duties form the foundation of a lockdown and should remain consistent in every school. The duties should only be altered if there is a clearly identified reason for doing so.

Person-in-Charge

1. Announce the lockdown with simple, clear directions, for example: *“Attention all staff, initiate lockdown now.”* (Repeat three times.)
2. Initiate contact with 911 to request assistance as appropriate. (For questions you should be prepared to answer, refer to the Communications Plan section of the *School Emergency Management Plan: Template*.)
3. Initiate contact with the school board emergency answering service, or appropriate school board staff person, as soon as practical to inform them of the situation and request assistance.
4. Liaise with the responding emergency services.
5. Take all actions necessary to ensure the safety of students, staff, and visitors.

Administrative Assistant/Secretary

1. Follow the directions of the person-in-charge.
2. If the person-in-charge is not immediately available, initiate lockdown.
3. Lock the doors to the administrative offices.
4. Assist with communications.

Teachers/Teacher Assistants

1. If it is safe to do so, check the area immediately outside the classroom for students and bring them inside. If assigned to do so, check nearby washrooms for students and bring them to the classroom.
2. Lock the classroom doors or otherwise secure the room from entry.
3. Turn off all lights, close exterior window blinds, cover interior windows if required, and position students in the classroom where they cannot be seen from the corridor.
4. Ensure that all students remain in the classroom.
5. Turn off personal cell phones and do not use them except for emergency communications.
6. Direct students to turn cell phones off and to not use them until directed to do so.
7. Ensure that all students remain calm and quiet.
8. Check attendance and note the names of missing students and students from other classes.
9. DO NOT respond to class change or dismissal bells.
10. **DO NOT** open the classroom door for any reason during a lockdown (see next point).
11. If the fire alarm is activated during a lockdown, determine if it is safer to remain in the secure location or evacuate. If there are indications of fire or smoke, determine the safest route and immediately evacuate to the exterior safe area or other approved interior location.
12. If not supervising students, take refuge in a secure location unless directed otherwise by the person-in-charge.

Students

1. Follow the directions of the teacher.
2. Turn cell phone off. Do not use it unless directed by a staff person.
3. If there is no teacher in the classroom, close and secure the door, take cover, and wait for staff or police to find you.
4. If in an unsupervised area (washroom, change room, etc.), and it is safe to do so, quickly move to a supervised classroom; otherwise take shelter out of sight and wait for staff or police to find you.
5. Remain calm and quiet.

Additional Staff Duties

Determine what, if any, duties staff may have if they are not supervising students when a lockdown is initiated. Any potential duties should be carefully considered for life-safety risk. If the duty involves a high degree of risk, which cannot be mitigated, then alternative strategies must be developed. Duties may include but are not limited to the following:

- placing a “School in Lockdown” sign at the main entrance
- granting building entry to uniformed police officers
- checking washrooms and corridors for students not in a secure location
- assisting with emergency communications, both internal and external

DESCRIPTION OF HOLD-AND-SECURE

Hold-and-secure is characterized by restricting students to remain in the classroom, or in the building, but not necessarily to cease other activity. Students and staff outside the building (including those in portable classrooms) re-enter immediately.

Exterior building doors are secured. Staff are assigned to prevent students and staff from exiting the building, and allow students and staff to enter the building. Depending on the reason for initiating a hold-and-secure, it may be appropriate to close window blinds and turn off lights.

CRITERIA FOR INITIATING HOLD-AND-SECURE

Hold-and-secure may be conducted for a variety of reasons including, but not limited to,

- a fight inside or outside the school
- an animal threat
- a police action in the neighbourhood
- a hazardous substance release outside the school (For additional information, see the Hazard-Specific Planning section of the *School Emergency Management Plan: Planning Guide*.)

INITIATING HOLD-AND-SECURE

If the person-in-charge decides to initiate hold-and-secure, plain, clear language, with specific directions, should be used. The script used should be distinct from that used to initiate a lockdown. For example,

“Attention all staff the school is now in hold-and-secure.” “Attention all staff the school is now in hold-and-secure.” “Attention all staff, the school is now in hold-and-secure.”

Additional directions to staff and students may be added as appropriate, for example,

- in the event of a fire alarm, “evacuate to the outside” or “remain in the school until otherwise advised”
- “movement is restricted, ignore class change bells”
- “close blinds” or “turn off lights”

TERMINATING HOLD-AND-SECURE

- The person-in charge will consult with the lead emergency response agency prior to terminating the hold-and-secure if it was initiated in response to a call from police or fire.
- Terminating hold-and-secure may be done by the person-in-charge in consultation with emergency responders by means of a general announcement over the public address system.

Staff Duties

While not as time critical as a lockdown, staff should still be aware of expectations and follow directions immediately.

Person-in-Charge

Announce the lockdown with simple, clear directions, such as, **“Attention all staff, the school is now in hold-and-secure.” (Repeat three times.)**

- Provide additional direction as appropriate, such as “close blinds and turn off lights.”
- Initiate contact with the school board emergency answering service, or appropriate school board staff person, as soon as practical to inform them of the situation.
- Liaise with the responding emergency services.
- Take all actions necessary to ensure the safety of students, staff, and visitors.

Administrative Assistant/Secretary

- Follow the directions of the person-in-charge.
- If the person-in-charge is not immediately available, initiate hold-and-secure.
- Assist with communications.

Teachers/Teacher Assistants

- Follow the directions of the person-in-charge.
- If not supervising students, report to the administration office for assignment.

Students

- Follow the directions of the teacher.
- Do not attempt to leave the building.

TRAINING DRILLS

All schools shall conduct a minimum of two lockdown drills each school year. To reduce the risk of generating psychological trauma or fear, drills should never be conducted without warning. It is recommended that schools become comfortable conducting lockdown drills while students are static (in class) before advancing to drills while students are moving (recess, lunch, class change). It is also recommended that neutral observers (school officer, school board staff member, etc.) be present to assist in evaluating the success of the drill.

Before the Drill

1. Prepare a draft of how the lockdown drill should proceed (who does what, when, and how).
2. Conduct a staff-only training session followed by a walk-through. All school staff should participate in the training.
3. Conduct a debrief of the staff-only walk-through.
4. Prepare communications to be sent home advising of an upcoming drill (see “Sample Letter to Parents/Guardians” on page 15).
5. Prepare developmentally-appropriate training for students (see Training for Students below).
6. Have teachers conduct classroom walk-through practices.
7. Advise the school resource officer or police dispatch of the drill date and time. This is done to avoid someone mistakenly reporting an actual event.
8. Advise the school board administration of the drill date and time.

During the Drill

1. Record how long it takes to clear hallways (maximum 30 seconds).
2. Check to ensure doors are secured.
3. Check if anyone can be seen through classroom windows or doors during a lockdown drill.
4. Check for anyone found in hallways/washrooms.

After the Drill

1. Have teachers conduct a classroom debrief with students (age appropriate).
2. Conduct a staff debrief.
3. Implement any recommended changes to your school emergency plan.
4. Plan future practice drills.

Training for Students

- The key message when preparing young students for lockdown drills should note how staying in the classroom will keep them safe in some types of emergencies. Caution should be exercised when giving examples to avoid unnecessary fear or trauma.
- Older students should be given a more direct explanation of why lockdowns drills are practiced. At the same time, it is important that the likelihood of an incident be placed in perspective.
- As with fire drills, students should be expected to remain quiet and follow the teacher's directions.
- Teachers should be aware of students that may become excessively fearful during a lockdown.
- All students should receive instruction that if they are out of the classroom when a lockdown is announced, they are to go immediately to the nearest classroom or office where a staff member is present. Older students should be instructed to find concealment if they are not able to enter a supervised classroom or office.
- Students in washrooms should be instructed to return to class immediately if possible. Otherwise, they should be instructed to remain out of site in the washroom and wait for a staff member to find them.
- Students approaching a school during a lockdown should immediately leave the area. If practical, students should be directed to go to a previously determined alternate site (exterior safe area, relocation site, or parent-student reunification site).
- Students in possession of cell phones should be instructed that cell phone use may interfere with emergency communications, contribute to inaccurate information provided to emergency responders, and potentially alert an assailant to their location.

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Date

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The safety and security of our students and staff are a top priority for *[insert name of school]* and the *[insert name of school board]*. We have been implementing a number of measures as part of a comprehensive plan aimed at ensuring our school remains a safe place for our students to learn.

One of the procedures our school will be employing is a “lockdown drill.” During a lockdown drill, classroom doors are secured and the students remain inside the room until instructed by the teacher to resume their activities. All exterior doors are locked and no one is permitted to enter or leave the building. Students are isolated within the school when circumstances make it safer to stay in the classroom rather than evacuate. Just as we prepare our students to properly respond to a fire drill, they also need to be aware of the proper response during a lockdown drill. These drills should be treated with the same level of importance as fire drills. Please be assured that staff at our school will spend time discussing the importance of this procedure with students prior to conducting a drill. We will also take time after the drill to remind them that it was only a practice and there was no danger. Please take the time to speak with your son/daughter about this procedure and reinforce its importance. We practice these drills to ensure our school remains a safe place for teaching and learning.

Please contact me if you have any questions about lockdown drills. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Regards,

Principal

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