Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs
Bureau of Fire Services

Fire Marshal Bulletin – 2

Fire, Tornado and Security Drills
Kindergarten – 12th Grade

The lack of periodic safety drills in many of our schools, dormitories and other public buildings has become a matter of serious concern to the Bureau of Fire Services (BFS) and other members of the fire service.

CLASSROOM BUILDINGS

Fire Drills

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(3) establishes the number of required fire drills:

- A minimum of 5 fire drills are required for each school year for a school that operates any of grades kindergarten to 12.
- Three (3) of the fire drills shall be held by December 1 of the school year.
- Two (2) shall be held during the remaining part of the school year, with reasonable intervals between each drill.

An individual's best protection during a fire is the ability to exit a burning building quickly. Therefore, it is vital that an evacuation plan be in effect for all buildings, and that it be practiced during fire drills.

The evacuation plan should include the following:

- Directions to meet at a predesigned location away from the building to be free from danger and to have an account for students, teachers, employees and faculty.
- The predesigned location should be clear of fire lanes and any other areas that may be traversed by the fire department and other emergency personnel.

The BFS recommends that school officials and other owner representatives of the facilities work with their local fire officials in developing an evacuation plan and conducting fire drills. This will not only assure a swift evacuation, but will greatly assist the fire department with building familiarity and faster access.

Tornado Drills

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(4) requires that a minimum of 2 tornado safety drills be conducted each school year. At least 1 of the tornado safety drills shall be conducted during March of the school year. These drills shall be conducted for the purpose of preventing injuries caused by severe weather.

In order to remain proactive in tornado preparedness, school officials must conduct tornado shelter drills in accordance with Michigan law. All tornado drills must include:

- Staff and student participation.
- An audible signal independent of the school fire alarm and movement to shelter areas as primary components.

The BFS has met with the Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (MCSWA) and other interested organizations and departments in an effort to develop additional direction for officials responsible for implementation of tornado safety drills within educational facilities. For further details refer to pages 6-7 of this Bulletin.

School Security Lock- Down Safety Drills

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(5) requires a school that operates any of grades kindergarten to 12 shall conduct a minimum of 3 drills in which the occupants are restricted to the interior of the building and the building is secured:

- At least 1 of these drills shall be conducted by December 1 of the school year.
- At least 1 shall be conducted after January 1 of the school year, with a reasonable spacing interval between each drill.
- A drill conducted under this subsection shall include security measures that are appropriate to an emergency such as the release of a hazardous material or the presence of a potentially dangerous individual on or near the premises.

The governing body of a school shall seek input from the administration of the school and local public safety officials on the nature of the drills to be conducted under this subsection. For additional information regarding Emergency Planning for Schools, including Security Drills, please contact the Michigan State Police, Emergency Management & Homeland Security via their website or by calling 517-336-6464.

Many schools have already increased security using a layered defense plan to prevent unwanted intruders from gaining access to school facilities. Some of the key elements put into place include distributing emergency preparedness procedures, providing a secured vestibule at the main entrance, and eliminating exterior door handles on many non-entrance doors. Some schools have fire rated classroom doors which will require the barricade device to be listed for installation on the door.

In order to maintain a safe classroom, schools have been locking their doors and exploring the use of devices to barricade the classroom door. Barricade devices are permissible if these devices are not affixed to the classroom door and do not violate normal door hardware or the Schools Fire Safety Rules. It is important that these barricade devices be removable from both sides of the door. The release method from the opposite side of the classroom might not be advertised for obvious security reasons but will allow staff to open the door if the device is ever used improperly.

These barricade devices are put in place, during lock-down drills or actual emergencies by a teacher or other school staff members, who are properly trained according to their facility's emergency exit plan. Following a lock-down, the barricade device is removed and the door returns to normal use. After a drill is completed, the school shall record the drill in accordance with PA 12 of 2014.

Please refer to Fire Marshal Bulletin – 15, K-12 Classroom Door Latch Devices that violates New and Existing School, College, and University Fire Safety Administrative Rules (School Fire Safety Rules).

Reporting Requirements

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(7, 8):

For a school that operates any of grades kindergarten to 12, the governing body of the school shall ensure that documentation of a completed school safety drill and for a school operated by a school district or intermediate school district, the documentation may be posted on the district website. The documentation posted on the website shall include at least all of the following:

- Is posted on its website within 30 school days after the drill is completed.
- Is maintained on the website for at least 3 years.
- The name of the school.
- The school year of the drill.
- The date and time of the drill.

- The type of drill completed.
- The number of completed drills for that school year for each type of drill required under subsections (3) to (5).
- The signature of the school principal or his or her designee acknowledging the completion of the drill.
- The name of the individual in charge of conducting the drill, if other than the school principal.

Not later than ***September 15*** of each school year:

- The chief administrator of a school that operates any of grades kindergarten to 12, or his or her designee, shall provide a list of the scheduled drill days for the school buildings operated by the school, school district, intermediate school district, or public school academy to the county emergency management coordinator appointed under section 9 of the emergency management act, 1976 PA 390, MCL 30.409.
- A scheduled drill that is not conducted on a scheduled drill day due to conditions not within the control of school authorities, such as severe storms, fires, epidemics, utility power unavailability, water or sewer failure, or health conditions as defined by the city, county, or state health authorities, will not result in a violation of this section as long as the school conducts the minimum number of drills required under subsections (3), (4), and (5), the school reschedules the drill to occur within 10 school days after the scheduled date of the canceled drill, and the chief administrator notifies the county emergency management coordinator of the rescheduled date for the drill.
- The county emergency management coordinator shall provide this information to the appropriate local emergency management coordinator appointed under that section, if any, and, consistent with applicable federal, state, and local emergency operations plans, to the department of state police district coordinator and the county sheriff for the county or the chief of police or fire chief for the municipality where the school is located, or the designee of the sheriff, chief of police, or fire chief. The information provided under this subsection is exempt from disclosure under the freedom of information act, 1976 PA 442, MCL 15.231 to 15.246.

Cardiac Emergency Response Plans

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(12) the governing body of a school that operates any of grades kindergarten to 12 shall adopt

and implement a cardiac emergency response plan for the school. The cardiac emergency response plan shall address and provide for at least all of the following:

- Use and regular maintenance of automated external defibrillators, if available.
- Activation of a cardiac emergency response team during an identified cardiac emergency.
- A plan for effective and efficient communication throughout the school campus.
- If the school includes grades 9 to 12, a training plan for the use of an automated external defibrillator and in cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques.
- Incorporation and integration of the local emergency response system and emergency response agencies with the school's plan.
- An annual review and evaluation of the cardiac emergency response plan.

DORMITORIES

Fire Drills

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(1,3) requires that a minimum of 8 fire drills be conducted each school year. If weather conditions do not permit fire drills to be held at least once a month, then:

- At least (5) fire drills shall be held in the fall of each year.
- Three (3) fire drills shall be held during the remaining part of the school year.

An individual's best protection during a fire is the ability to exit a burning building quickly. Therefore, it is vital that an evacuation plan be in effect for all buildings, and that it be practiced during fire drills.

The evacuation plan should include the following:

- Directions to meet at a predesigned location away from the building to be free from danger and to have an account for students, teachers, employees and faculty.
- The predesigned location should be clear of fire lanes and any other areas that may be traversed by the fire department and other emergency personnel.

The BFS recommends that school officials and other owner representatives of the facilities work with their local fire officials in developing an evacuation plan and

conducting fire drills. This will not only assure a swift evacuation, but will greatly assist the fire department with building familiarity and faster access.

Tornado Drills

Pursuant to the Fire Prevention Code, PA 207 of 1941, MCL 29.19, Section 19(4) requires that a minimum of 2 tornado safety drills be conducted each school year. At least 1 of the tornado safety drills shall be conducted during March of the school year. These drills shall be conducted for the purpose of preventing injuries caused by severe weather.

In order to remain proactive in tornado preparedness, school officials must conduct tornado shelter drills in accordance with Michigan law. All tornado drills must include:

- Staff and student participation.
- An audible signal independent of the school fire alarm and movement to shelter areas as primary components.

The BFS has met with the Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (MCSWA) and other interested organizations and departments in an effort to develop additional direction for officials responsible for implementation of tornado safety drills within educational facilities.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR TORNADO DRILLS

The Bureau of Fire Services met with the Michigan Committee for Severe Weather Awareness (MCSWA) and other interested organizations and departments in an effort to develop additional direction for officials responsible for implementation of tornado drills within educational facilities. The following general tornado safety guidelines, developed in part by MCSWA, are offered in that spirit:

- School officials should work in conjunction with local emergency management coordinators to develop a tornado response plan which establishes tornado shelter areas and also plans for monitoring and evaluating tornado drills. Local emergency management coordinators are listed on the Internet at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/LocalDir_external_320561_7.pdf
- Each facility should have a plan dictating exactly what to do when a tornado alarm sounds. Time is of the essence, and you may have only seconds to act. All school personnel should be familiar with established tornado procedures and review them periodically.
- Every school room and hallway should have a tornado shelter route diagram posted in plain view. Schools that have basements should designate them as

shelters. Schools without basements should designate interior hallways on the ground floor, away from exterior walls, as shelter areas. Gymnasiums, auditoriums and other rooms with large, free-span roofs should not be utilized as shelter areas.

- The school tornado alarm must be independently operable and emit a distinctly different sound than the school fire alarm. Never use the school fire alarm to sound a tornado warning. The tornado alarm should be equipped with a back up electrical source in the event of power failure. Student and staff response to a tornado alarm must be immediate.
- Safe, orderly movement to the shelter area is crucial. Students should walk, not run, to the designated area. Classroom doors should be closed after students are evacuated to the shelter area. Do not open windows in the classroom; time is better spent seeking shelter. The school tornado response plan should include procedures to assist students with disabilities in getting to the shelter area.
- The tornado response plan must also assign specific staff with responsibility to remove students from playgrounds or other outdoor areas during a tornado and direct them to the designated shelter area. The plan must also provide coaches and athletic directors with guidance in the event severe weather occurs during athletic events.
- Students in portable or temporary classrooms must be evacuated to designated shelter areas or predetermined safe exterior areas such as ditches, culverts or ravines. They must be instructed to get on their knees, with their hands placed over their heads.
- Students assembled in designated tornado shelter areas, should be instructed to get on their knees in a prone position, making sure their heads face interior walls, while placing their hands behind their heads.
- School buses should not be operated during a period of tornado warning. If a tornado warning is issued or severe threatening weather is observed at dismissal time students should be moved to designated tornado shelter areas in the school. The school tornado response plan should provide bus drivers with information identifying potential shelters along their routes. Drivers must be prepared to move students to the nearest shelter if a warning is issued or threatening weather is observed. In the event there is no immediate shelter, students should evacuate the bus to a ditch, culvert, ravine or low lying area and assume the protective position until the threat of severe weather has passed.

- The tornado weather service issues a tornado **watch** when the possibility of tornados exists, and issues a tornado **warning** when an actual tornado has been spotted or exists on radar. Educational facilities should have an NOAA Weather Radio with a warning alarm tone in order to receive severe weather information directly from the National Weather Service. Upon receiving notification of a tornado watch, the principal should alert staff members. During a tornado watch, specific teachers or other school staff members should be designated to monitor commercial radio or television for tornado warnings, even if the school has a NOAA Weather Radio tone-alert system.