

Emergency Preparedness – Questions and Answers

Question: What is emergency preparedness?

Answer: The objective of an Emergency Preparedness Plan is to provide for the safety and security of all who are in a Lester B. Pearson School Board facility at the time of an emergency. The Lester B. Pearson School Board Emergency Preparedness Policy involves a continuing activity of planning, educating, rehearsing and reviewing.

Q: Why has the policy been updated?

A: LBPSB Policy on Policy Development requires that a review of each LBPSB policy by the appropriate sub-committee be carried out within an 8 year period, or two council mandates, whichever is the lesser, followed by a report to Council. The last time the policy had been revised was in 2002.

Q: What changes have been made in the policy?

A: One of the major changes between the 2002 policy and the updated 2014 policy is that the procedure forms in the original policy have been removed and placed into a separate procedural guide. The school board remains in close contact with local police and other officials so that when federal, provincial and municipal guidelines and protocol for preparation and responding to emergencies are updated, the procedural guide will be updated in a timely manner.

Q: How can I stay informed?

A: The Lester B. Pearson School Board broadcasts emergency messages using a variety of mechanisms including telephone voice messaging, email and the media. General emergency messages, including school and centre closings due to inclement weather, are posted on the school board website.

Q: How will my child's school/centre handle an emergency situation?

A: All schools and centres have an emergency preparedness plan. The specifics of each plan differ for each building. Each plan does include the designation of a crisis management team; development of evacuation, shelter-in-place, and lockdown procedures; identification of one or more evacuation sites; provisions for training personnel and updating the plan;

checklists for dealing with specific types of incidents; and resources for help before, during and after an event.

Q: What is a lockdown?

A: Certain emergency situations may make the evacuation of a building difficult or impossible, but require that steps be taken to shield students and staff from harm. In these cases, a lockdown may be initiated. When a lockdown occurs within a school or centre, students remain in their classrooms or another protected location, away from potential danger. In these situations, faculty remain responsible for students and will ensure that none of them leave safe areas, while other staff will secure entrances, ensuring that no unauthorized person enters or leaves the building.

Incidents occurring in the greater community may sometimes also necessitate a lockdown to protect students and staff from harm. Should this occur, parents will be allowed access to their children as soon as is safely possible.

Q: What is shelter-in-place?

A: Shelter-in-place is a process that is initiated should the environment outside the building become hazardous due to an incident which release hazardous air into the environment. This process involves sealing the school to the outside environment to the extent possible by closing all windows and doors, and shutting down the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC). This will minimize the amount of contaminated air drawn into the building.

Shelter-in-place is not a long-term solution. It is suitable when the evacuating the building could be dangerous. As soon as the air outside the building is safe for parents and students to breathe, parents will be able to pick up their children.

Q: What is an evacuation?

A: An evacuation is the orderly exit of a building's entire population. The schools and centres of the LBPSB generally evacuate to a safe location on the grounds of the school or centre. A common example of an evacuation is a fire drill. In severe circumstances, it might be necessary to evacuate off-site, which may or may not require bus transportation.

Q: What is a reunification site?

A: If students are evacuated from a school or centre, and are not able to return to the building, parents will be informed of the location of a designated area called a reunification site by telephone or mass-messaging system. Students will be available for pick-up at the reunification site.

Q: Are students allowed to have cell phones at their school or centre?

A: Students are allowed to have cell phones at school/centre according to the policy in the student handbook. In the event of an emergency, students will be allowed to use their phones to communicate with parents unless otherwise specified by the principal/centre director for safety reasons. During an emergency cell phone circuits may become overloaded, interfering with the student's ability to communicate.

Q: Can I call the school/centre to contact my child?

A: Parents are asked not to call the school/centre in emergency situations so that phone lines can remain accessible for handling the safety and security concerns of students and staff. The school board will communicate directly with parents/guardians by phone, email and/or text messaging using the contact information provided by the school or centre.

Q: What happens if an emergency occurs while students are on a field trip?

A: The impacts of any emergency situation on field trips will depend on the specifics of the situation. If the situation warrants, the field trip will be canceled. All school buses are equipped with radio communications through the transportation office. If a field trip is under way and must be recalled, buses would be directed to return to the school or a designated safe area. Parents/guardians will be notified via phone, email and text messaging using contact information provided to the school or centre.

Q: How can students, parents and the community support emergency preparedness at the Lester B. Pearson School Board?

A: Stay informed, stay calm, and ensure that all student and parent contact information is accurate (telephone numbers and email addresses). Practice emergency preparedness in your home and talk to your children routinely about specific family response to emergency. Create and discuss backup plans for childcare with the adults responsible to provide this care in the absence of a parent.