

## **KSFM 2024-011 - KSFM Prevention Information Release**

**To: Kansas K-12 Schools**

**Date: October 1, 2024**

**Subject: School Drills**

Emergency planning in K-12 schools is crucial for protecting students and staff. Preparedness and education are key to maintaining a safe environment in schools.

Without a plan, students and staff alike will likely panic, scatter, and ultimately make a scary situation even more frightening. The main function of drills is to build muscle memory “in an actual emergency, things are very stressful, and the first thing that goes is our cognitive functioning. Our minds go blank, and our bodies do what they’re trained to do... it’s like we go on autopilot.”

When it comes to fire safety in schools, creating an emergency action plan is key. Educational institutions house many students and staff, making it imperative to implement stringent fire prevention measures and ensure the safety of all individuals on the premises.

### **Common fire safety requirements for schools include:**

**Fire alarm systems:** School fire alarm systems must be fully functional, regularly tested, and maintained to ensure they are always in reliable working order.

**Fire extinguishers:** Accessible fire extinguishers should be available throughout the school campus, both inside and out, and maintained according to the manufacturer’s guidelines.

**Exit and signs:** Schools must have clear and unobstructed exit routes with properly illuminated exit signs leading to safe gathering points away from the buildings.

**Fire drills:** Fire drills should be conducted regularly so students and staff can practice emergency evacuation procedures and assess their effectiveness.

**Crisis drills:** Crisis drills should be conducted regularly so students and staff can practice emergency evacuation procedures and assess their effectiveness.

**Tornado drills:** Tornado drills should be conducted regularly so students and staff can practice emergency evacuation procedures and assess their effectiveness.

**Fire prevention measures:** Prevent fire hazards by handling flammable substances safely, decluttering heating equipment, servicing electrical systems, and keeping exit routes school clean and clear.

It’s important for schools to work closely with local fire departments and authorities to ensure compliance with all relevant fire safety regulations. Fire safety is a shared responsibility, and maintaining a safe learning environment requires the collaboration of school administrators, staff, students, and the local community.

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## Here are some key steps for implementing drills:

### Procedure

#### Fire drills-

- ✓ Shall be least four fire drills each school year.
- ✓ Each fire drill shall be conducted during school hours at a time other than the regular dismissal time at the close of the day's session.
- ✓ Each fire drill shall be unannounced and shall be conducted by the use of the regular fire alarm system.
- ✓ Each fire drill shall include all floors, wings, and sections of each building.
- ✓ Each person shall vacate the building they are occupying during the fire drill, and teachers and administrators shall accompany their pupils from the buildings and account for each pupil within their authority.

#### Tornado drills-

- ✓ Shall conduct at least two tornado drills during each school year.
- ✓ Each tornado drill shall be conducted during school hours at a time other than the regular dismissal time at the close of the day's session.
- ✓ Each tornado drill shall be unannounced and shall be conducted using a means of alerting that is different from the fire alarm and crisis alarm.
- ✓ Each tornado drill shall include all floors, wings, and sections of each building, and each person in the building shall take refuge in a designated tornado safety area.

#### Crisis drills-

- ✓ Shall conduct at least three crisis drills during each school year.
- ✓ Each crisis drill shall be conducted during school hours at a time other than the regular dismissal time at the close of the day's session.
- ✓ Each crisis drill shall be unannounced and shall be conducted using a means of alerting that is different from the fire and tornado alarms.
- ✓ Each crisis drill shall include all floor, wings, and sections of the building.

### Necessary Steps to take:

- ✓ Inform local fire authorities about planned drills.
- ✓ Each drill shall be **unannounced**. Fire drills shall be conducted by the use of the regular fire alarm system, other drills shall use a means of alerting that is different from the fire alarm
- ✓ Assign staff members to monitor the evacuation process and report any issues.
- ✓ Ensure that all evacuation routes are well-marked and unobstructed.
- ✓ Verify that doors in exit pathways open easily and outward.
- ✓ Ensure that students and staff are aware of primary and alternate evacuation routes.
- ✓ Designate an appropriate location where all students and staff must gather during the drill.
- ✓ Teachers should take attendance to ensure that all students are accounted for.
- ✓ Confirm that a reliable communication system is in place to communicate with staff and students during the drill.
- ✓ Ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to appropriate communication aids.
- ✓ Observe the entire evacuation process, noting any issues or delays.

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- ✓ Pay attention to how students and staff respond to the alarm and instructions.
- ✓ After the drill, hold a debriefing session with staff (and students) to discuss what went well and what needs improvement.
- ✓ Document any problems or areas for improvement identified during the drill.
- ✓ Review the results of the drill and make necessary adjustments to the emergency plan.
- ✓ Ensure that any identified issues or non-compliance with evacuation procedures are addressed promptly.
- ✓ Keep records of all drills, including the date, time, and observations.
- ✓ Maintain records of attendance during drills.
- ✓ Provide additional training or information to staff and students based on the findings of the drill.
- ✓ Encourage feedback from staff and students on the drill experience and make necessary improvements.
- ✓ Report the successful completion of the fire drill to local fire authorities if required.

**For questions and to assist you in complying with the requirements, the KSFM has a section on its website devoted to Schools.**

**Please visit <https://www.firemarshal.ks.gov/213/Pre-K-through-12-Schools>**

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