

RCW 28A.320.125 Safe school plans—Requirements—Duties of school districts and schools—Drills—Rules—First responder agencies. (1)

The legislature considers it to be a matter of public safety for public schools and staff to have current safe school plans and procedures in place, fully consistent with federal law. The legislature further finds and intends, by requiring safe school plans to be in place, that school districts will become eligible for federal assistance. The legislature further finds that schools are in a position to serve the community in the event of an emergency resulting from natural disasters or human-induced disasters.

(2) Schools and school districts shall consider the guidance and resources provided by the state school safety center, established under RCW 28A.300.630, and the regional school safety centers, established under RCW 28A.310.510, when developing their own individual comprehensive safe school plans. Each school district shall adopt and implement a safe school plan. The plan shall:

(a) Include required school safety policies and procedures;

(b) Address emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery;

(c) Include provisions for assisting and communicating with students and staff, including those with special needs or disabilities;

(d) Include a family-student reunification plan, including procedures for communicating the reunification plan to staff, students, families, and emergency responders;

(e) Use the training guidance provided by the Washington emergency management division of the state military department in collaboration with the state school safety center in the office of the superintendent of public instruction, established under RCW 28A.300.630, and the school safety and student well-being advisory committee, established under RCW 28A.300.635;

(f) Require the building principal to be certified on the incident command system;

(g) Take into account the manner in which the school facilities may be used as a community asset in the event of a community-wide emergency; and

(h) Set guidelines for requesting city or county law enforcement agencies, local fire departments, emergency service providers, and county emergency management agencies to meet with school districts and participate in safety-related drills.

(3) To the extent funds are available, school districts shall annually:

(a) Review and update safe school plans in collaboration with local emergency response agencies;

(b) Conduct an inventory of all hazardous materials;

(c) Update information to reflect current plans, including:

(i) Identifying all staff members who are trained on the national incident management system, trained on the incident command system, or are certified on the incident command system; and

(ii) Identifying school transportation procedures for evacuation, to include bus staging areas, evacuation routes, communication systems, parent-student reunification sites, and secondary transportation agreements; and

(d) Provide information to all staff on the use of emergency supplies and notification and alert procedures.

(4) School districts are encouraged to work with local emergency management agencies and other emergency responders to conduct one tabletop exercise, one functional exercise, and two full-scale exercises within a four-year period.

(5) (a) Due to geographic location, schools have unique safety challenges. It is the responsibility of school principals and administrators to assess the threats and hazards most likely to impact their school, and to practice three basic functional drills, shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation, as these drills relate to those threats and hazards. Some threats or hazards may require the use of more than one basic functional drill.

(b) Schools shall conduct at least one safety-related drill per month, including summer months when school is in session with students. These drills must teach students three basic functional drill responses:

(i) "Shelter-in-place," used to limit the exposure of students and staff to hazardous materials, such as chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants, released into the environment by isolating the inside environment from the outside;

(ii) "Lockdown," used to isolate students and staff from threats of violence, such as suspicious trespassers or armed intruders, that may occur in a school or in the vicinity of a school. Lockdown drills may not include live simulations of or reenactments of active shooter scenarios that are not trauma-informed and age and developmentally appropriate; and

(iii) "Evacuation," used to move students and staff away from threats, such as fires, oil train spills, lahars, or tsunamis.

(c) The drills described in (b) of this subsection must incorporate the following requirements:

(i) A pedestrian evacuation drill for schools in mapped lahars or tsunami hazard zones; and

(ii) An earthquake drill using the state-approved earthquake safety technique "drop, cover, and hold."

(d) Schools shall document the date, time, and type (shelter-in-place, lockdown, or evacuate) of each drill required under this subsection (5), and maintain the documentation in the school office.

(e) This subsection (5) is intended to satisfy all federal requirements for comprehensive school emergency drills and evacuations.

(6) Educational service districts are encouraged to apply for federal emergency response and crisis management grants with the assistance of the superintendent of public instruction and the Washington emergency management division of the state military department.

(7) The superintendent of public instruction may adopt rules to implement provisions of this section. These rules may include, but are not limited to, provisions for evacuations, lockdowns, or other components of a comprehensive safe school plan.

(8) (a) Whenever a first responder agency notifies a school of a situation that may necessitate an evacuation or lockdown, the agency must determine if other known schools in the vicinity are similarly threatened. The first responder agency must notify every other known school in the vicinity for which an evacuation or lockdown appears reasonably necessary to the agency's incident commander unless the agency is unable to notify schools due to duties directly tied to responding to the incident occurring. For purposes of this subsection, "school" includes a private school under chapter 28A.195 RCW.

(b) A first responder agency and its officers, agents, and employees are not liable for any act, or failure to act, under this subsection unless a first responder agency and its officers, agents, and employees acted with willful disregard. [2022 c 77 § 1; 2021 c 223 § 1. Prior: 2019 c 333 § 10; 2019 c 84 § 1; 2017 c 165 § 1; 2013 c 14 § 1; 2009 c 578 § 10; 2007 c 406 § 1; 2002 c 205 § 2.]

Effective date—2021 c 223: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect July 1, 2021." [2021 c 223 § 4.]

Findings—Intent—2019 c 333: See note following RCW 28A.300.630.

Intent—2019 c 333: See note following RCW 28A.320.124.

Findings—2002 c 205: "Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the government's primary role in protecting the health, safety, and well-being of its citizens has been underscored. The legislature recognizes that there is a need to focus on the development and implementation of comprehensive safe school plans for each public school. The legislature recognizes that comprehensive safe school plans for each public school are an integral part of rebuilding public confidence. In developing these plans, the legislature finds that a coordinated effort is essential to ensure the most effective response to any type of emergency. Further, the legislature recognizes that comprehensive safe school plans for each public school are of paramount importance and will help to assure students, parents, guardians, school employees, and school administrators that our schools provide the safest possible learning environment." [2002 c 205 § 1.]

Severability—2002 c 205: "If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [2002 c 205 § 5.]

Effective dates—2002 c 205 §§ 2, 3, and 4: "(1) Sections 2 and 4 of this act are necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and take effect immediately [March 27, 2002].

(2) Section 3 of this act takes effect September 1, 2002." [2002 c 205 § 6.]