



Department of Public Safety

Division of Fire Safety

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TO: Superintendents, Principals and School Safety Stakeholders

FROM: Daniel French, Secretary, Vermont Agency of Education
Michael Desrochers, Director, Division of Fire Safety

SUBJECT: Egress Evacuation, School Bus and Options Based Response Drills (2021-2022)

SCOPE:

With the increasing need to remain flexible due to the evolving health care crisis, we are providing the following school safety drill guidance with a specific focus on keeping all students, faculty, staff and visitors to our schools safe and healthy. Prior to the Pandemic, 6 Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drills and 5 (Lockdown) drills were required throughout the school year. Under the new guidance, only 1 Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill will be required within the first 30 days of opening and the other 5 Egress Fire Drills may be instructional. Under the new guidance, Violent Intruder Drills will be conducted within 30 days of the start of the fall and spring semesters. These Violent Intruder Drills will be discussion/instructional based.

Fire/Evacuation Drills:

- Emergency evacuation plans are designed to evacuate the school in the most efficient and safe manner without panic. Without practicing drills, occupants including faculty will not know how to implement their emergency action plans.
- Young children (K, 1 and 2) and new teachers who have never participated in an Egress Fire Drill may not know how to properly execute an emergency evacuation plan.
- School fires and other emergency conditions may arise warranting the complete evacuation of the school in a timely manner thus, schools must be prepared to initiate emergency evacuations.



Guidelines:

1. Within the first 30 days of students returning to class, all students, faculty and staff must participate in an Egress (Evacuation) Fire Drill consisting of full evacuation of the school. *The school will have full flexibility* in how this is achieved as long as within the first 30 days the school can document in the registry all students have participated in an Egress (evacuation Fire Drill). This drill may be spread out through multiple days.
2. Subsequent Egress Fire Drills will be conducted every other month through instruction. The instruction guidance must include the following information;
 - Time and Date of the Instruction
 - Duration of the instruction
 - Specific guidance and instruction on how the students will exit the classroom (walk) and where they would meet outside away from the school.
3. The Division of Fire Safety has created an educational on-line resource center to assist teachers in providing virtual instruction. Most messaging spans 3-5 minutes and includes age specific guidance which we hope you find useful. If you have any questions regarding fire safety education please contact Micheal.Greenia@Vermont.gov <https://firesafety.vermont.gov/pubed/remote>

Options Based Drills for Potentially Violent Situations

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Guidance document, “Creating School Active Shooter/Intruder Drills” states, “*Safety drills need to incorporate a lockdown response but also an “option-based” approach. An option-based approach means that there are different actions educators and students can take if confronted by an active shooter/intruder (e.g., run away, keep out, and hide). The district needs to evaluate which approach is best and to adapt that approach to the developmental level of their students, including for students with disabilities, language barriers, and mobility needs.*” We encourage all school administrators to review the document mentioned about for best practice information on the development, delivery, evaluation and mental health support when developing your future school safety drill initiatives: <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/creating-school-active-shooter-intruder-drills>

For those schools utilizing a traditional “**Lockdown**” approach to a Violent Intruder, we recommend the following instructional guidance:

The term LOCKDOWN means “LOCKS, LIGHTS, OUT OF SIGHT” Students, faculty and staff (full and part-time) should be trained to:

- Move out of the line of sight of the doorway and windows
- Maintain silence

- Turn off cell phones

Teachers/staff (full and part-time) should be trained to:

- Lock classroom door(s)
- Turn lights off
- Move out of the line of sight of the doorway and windows
- Maintain silence
- Do not open the door
- Take roll, account for students (if safe to do so)

Suggested Classroom Activity: Start with a classroom discussion or question and answer session in which the teacher explains what a Lockdown is and under what circumstances a Lockdown might be used. A Lockdown would be used in situations when there is a violent threat inside the school building. *Remember to utilize age appropriate language when having these discussions.*

Discussion points could include that a Lockdown means locking classroom doors and other access points to keep students safe, moving everyone to a location in the classroom that is out of the line of sight of windows and doorways, and having everyone remain silent.

Consider having the students practice the classroom Lockdown procedure. The teacher would begin by locking the door(s), shutting off lights, pulling down window coverings/shades, while students move to the predesignated area in the classroom where they will all be out of sight of all windows and doorways.

For those schools who utilize the Run, Hide, Fight methodology for response to a Violent Intruder:

What is **Run, Hide, Fight**?

Run, Hide, Fight is the US Department of Homeland Security's recommended actions to be taken when responding to a Violent Intruder.

- Does **NOT** replace current safety protocols for evacuation, sheltering in place or other emergency response procedures.
- **DOES** give additional tools that may be used to respond to a Violent Intruder.

The **Run, Hide, Fight** concept is to:

Run – if you can safely escape the area of the threat, you must make a decision based on the best information available

Hide – find a safe location to hide and avoid detection and potentially reinforce “harden” your location

Fight – when faced with no other option, you may need to confront an active threat with the resolve that you will survive the encounter

Run

- Can be faculty, staff or student initiated
- Have an escape route and plan that includes identified assembly areas located a safe distance away from the incident (Accountability)
- Leave personal belongings behind
- Must be prepared to change evacuation/run routes based on situational awareness
- Be prepared to transition to a lockdown /hide or fight option based on situational awareness
- Keep your hands visible

Hide and Reinforce - Take steps to barricade, reinforce or fortify your location

- Hide in an area out of the view of the potential threat
- Lock doors and use items such as desks, chairs, bookshelves to barricade the door
- Silence cell phones

Fight

- Last option for survival
- Must assess individual capabilities
- Enhance survivability by utilizing available resources (fire extinguisher, books, heavy objects) to defend or protect yourself
- Consider developing a plan with others in your location to determine the best options for your survival (Swarming, distraction)

Suggested Classroom Activity: Start with a classroom discussion or question and answer session in which the teacher explains the principles of the Run, Hide, Fight response methodology. ***Remember to utilize age appropriate language when having these discussions.*** Teachers should reinforce that these principles should ONLY be put into action when confronted with a violent situation. Faculty, staff and students should discuss the different response options available to them and reinforce the importance of being aware of what is taking place around them. (**Situational Awareness**). Faculty, staff and teachers should discuss the difference between the orderly evacuation during a fire drill and the (**Run**) response when confronted with a violent intruder. Teachers and staff should discuss and potentially demonstrate how simple classroom materials such as desk, chairs and other heavy objects can be used to reinforce the doors of their classrooms or office spaces. The “fight” option should

only be discussed in the context of this being a last resort. Faculty and staff may want discuss how to overwhelm or distract the intruder while trying to “run” or discuss what in the room could be used to potentially subdue the intruder or mitigate the threat.

School leadership teams may want to refer to the School Safety Drill Instructional Guide Power Point Slide Deck found on the Vermont School Safety Center’s website, here:

<https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/news/school-safety-drill-guidance-and-resources>

Please find a list of additional resources you may find useful when developing your future school safety drill initiatives:

<https://iloveguys.org/>

<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/creating-school-active-shooter-intruder-drills>

<https://www.alicetraining.com/about-us/>

<https://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/>

For questions on any of the Armed Intruder drill guidance please contact Vermont’s School Safety Liaison Officer Rob Evans at revans@margolishealy.com or (802) 839-0448 or visit the Vermont School Safety Center’s website at: <http://schoolsafety.vermont.gov/>

Vermont School Bus Evacuation Drill Guidance

Vermont State Law Title 23 V.S.A. § 1285 requires school authorities conduct school bus evacuation drills twice a year for any student who is transported in a school bus. This includes students who ride the bus to and from home as well as those who may ride it during a field trip, sporting event or other school related activity. The following are some guidelines to follow when instructing students on safe riding practices and conducting an evacuation drill.

- Conduct the instruction and drill once at the beginning of the school year and once after the Winter Holiday Break
- Have the driver conduct the actual drill and instruction. School Administration should be present and observe.
- Do front and rear exit drills
- Show students how to use roof hatches and emergency exit windows
- Instruction should include:
 - Emergency procedures
 - Expected behavior on the bus and at bus stops
 - Loading / Unloading procedures, including roadway crossing
- Remember any student who will potentially ride a school bus must take part in these drills.