



---

*Department of Public Safety*

**Division of Fire Safety**

Berlin Administrative Office  
1311 US Route 302 – Berlin – Suite 600  
Barre, VT 05641  
Firesafety.vermont.gov

(phone) (802)479-7561  
(fax) (802) 479-7562

**DATE: July 21, 2022**

**TO: Superintendents, Principals and School Safety Stakeholders**

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

**SUBJECT: New Guidance regarding Egress Evacuation and Options Based Response Drills**

**SCOPE:**

With the 2022/23 school year rapidly approaching, updated guidance is being provided pursuant to (Evacuation) Fire Drills and (Options Based Response to a Violent Intruder) drills. The updated guidance is a departure from the COVID pandemic operational stance and will be a return to the pre-pandemic drill process and schedule. This process as outlined herein, will allow for fire egress drills to be conducted while affording school leadership discretion with regards to alternating between fire egress drills and Options Based Response to Violent Intruder Drills. Options Based Response to Violent Intruder Drills will still be required to be conducted within 30 days of the start of the fall and spring semesters.

**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.
- 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:**

In order to adapt to the ever-changing challenges faced by schools today, the Division of Fire Safety and the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team has developed this amended schedule for Emergency Egress and Options Based Drills.

The inclusion of this new schedule into the Schools Emergency Plan will fulfill



the Emergency Egress Drill requirements outlined in the NFPA Life Safety Code and Title 16 VSA, Section 1481.

This schedule must be followed in all schools whether private or public. Records must be kept of all such drills and be available upon request for review.

Month	Egress Drill	Options Based
September	Required Egress Only	Required
October	Required Egress Only	
November		Required
December	Either Egress or Relocation	
January		Required
February	Either Egress or Relocation	
March		
April	Either Egress or Relocation	
May		
June	Either Egress or Relocation	

**\*\*Note: Egress (evacuation) drills** shall result in a complete evacuation of the school. The first two egress drills shall result in the complete evacuation of the school. The remaining four (4) fire drills, at the discretion of the school, may alternate between a relocation drill and an egress drill. The purpose of a **Relocation Drill** is to provide schools an opportunity for practicing the relocation of students to an alternate location (building) in the event the primary school building is compromised in such a way that it cannot safely be occupied. **Relocation drills** can be coordinated for the end of the school day in such a manner where the school community can practice the relocation process and parents can become familiar with the process of picking up their children at this alternate site.

**Options Based Response to a Violent Intruder** - Since 2015, the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team has been strongly encouraging schools and school districts to move away from the traditional (Lockdown) approach to an active shooter. In reviewing the different response methods and researching the data related to past active shooter incidents, we have learned that no one size response plan fits each active shooter incident and that teachers, administrators and students need to have an “options based response approach” that is available to them, based on the specific set of circumstances they are dealing with at the time of the incident.

**Guidelines:**

During the months of September, November (2022) and January (2023), we require schools to conduct “options based response drills” where faculty, staff and students demonstrate their ability to respond to these types of situations.

Prior to conducting these drills, school leadership teams may want to review, 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 above 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>

**Announcing Options Based Response to a Violent Intruder Drills:** We highly recommend all “Options Based Response to Violent Intruder” drills be announced immediately prior to the drill being conducted. This will limit the anxiety associated with these drills and ensure these drills are conducted in a safe and effective manner.

**Announcing Fire Drills:** Drills should be announced on the day of the scheduled drill, but unlike the “options based drills” do not require an announcement immediately prior to the physical activation of the alarm.

Schools may also want to consider informing families of these drills as they additional back to school resources with their school communities.

**When conducting all drills, schools have the flexibility to plan these drills for dates and times that minimize disruption to the academic day.**

While we are aware that some schools have adopted A.L.I.C.E. (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) or other response methodology, the Vermont School Safety Center and the Vermont School Crisis Planning Team strongly encourages all schools to adopt the Run, Hide, Fight methodology for responding 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 hide or fight option based on situational awareness
- Keep your hands visible

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

- Lock doors and use items such as desks, chairs, bookshelves to barricade the door
- Turn lights off
- Hide in an area out of the view of the potential threat (try to ensure students and staff are not all congregated in one area)
- If safe to do so, close all window shading
- Maintain silence
- Do not open 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)

## **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.

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