



## **School Emergency Information for Parents/Guardians**

A school crisis can take several forms, including chemical spills or gas leaks, winter storms, students in crisis, or an active threat in or near the school. The nature of a school crisis dictates what sort of response protocol school officials will put in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff. When a situation arises at your child's school, it is important to know these terms:

- ✓ **Hallway Closure:** This response is enacted to clear the hallways and provide privacy and support for a student in personal crisis. There is typically no danger to other students and staff during this particular response. Classroom instruction continues as normal during this response.
- ✓ **Lockdown – Human Threat:** Lockdown procedures are enacted in response to true threats either inside or near the school. All interior and exterior doors are locked, and then depending on the nature of the incident, classrooms may decide to barricade or evacuate. Students will not be released to parents while a lockdown is in progress.
- ✓ **Shelter-in-Place:** Students take shelter in designated areas to protect them from hazardous materials or severe weather. No entry into or exit from the school will be allowed until an all-clear announcement is made. Students will not be released during a shelter-in-place.
- ✓ **Evacuation:** Students are moved safely away from areas impacted by circumstances causing the physical structure, air quality and/or the learning environment to become unsafe. No entry into the school will be allowed until an all-clear announcement is made. Students will not be released during an evacuation.
- ✓ **Reunification:** In the event of certain emergency situations, students will be taken from an evacuation rally point to a reunification site. This occurs when reentry into the school facility that same day is not possible. When this response is enacted, school officials will provide information regarding the student's specific location to parents/guardians. This may be communicated via a variety of sources in our district, including the website, through Blackboard automated phone and/or email messages, and by our local media outlets. Students will be released only to parents/guardians who are documented as emergency contacts and who present a picture ID such as a driver's license, military ID, or passport. This procedure is necessary to account for the whereabouts of all students. The reunification process can be time-consuming, so parents are urged to be patient.



West Fargo Public Schools conducts drills in each of the areas described above (plus fire and tornado drills) several times each year in the schools across our district. These drills serve as an educational opportunity for students and staff alike; they also ensure that the procedures we have in place are feasible (and practiced) in the event of a real emergency. Students and staff are asked to take these drills seriously, and to respond as they would in a real situation.

Perhaps a less-known fact than the one about school drills is that our parents also have responsibilities during school emergencies.

In a school emergency, the first instinct as a parent is to pick up the telephone and start calling the school or rush up to the school to get your child/children. The truth is, this only complicates matters from a safety and security standpoint. Here is a brief list of tips for parents to follow in an emergency:

- ✓ DO:
  - Stay close to your phone and email.
  - Monitor local radio and TV reports for regular updates and instructions.
  - Rely only on official communications from the school.
- ✓ DO NOT:
  - Rush to your child's school, as your presence could interfere with emergency responders.
  - Phone your child or your child's school. Staff and students are discouraged from using cell phone communication for safety reasons. It's important to keep lines of communication open for emergency response. Staff will be focusing on students' safety, rather than answering calls.

Prior to an emergency, parents can also assist the district by ensuring that their child's emergency contact information is complete, accurate, and current. This will help the school and the district communicate pertinent information to you in a timely manner.

For further information regarding school safety and security at West Fargo Public Schools, please contact School Safety & Security Coordinator Heather Leas at (701) 356-2000 or [hleas@west-fargo.k12.nd.us](mailto:hleas@west-fargo.k12.nd.us).