

Emergency/Crisis Handbook



Introduction	2
What is an emergency/crisis?	2
What do schools do to prepare or practice for emergencies?	3
Emergency/Crisis Plan	3
Emergency Response Drills	3
Preparedness - What should parents do to prepare for an emergency?	3
What will the school do in the event of an emergency?	4
Schools may use the following response (protective) actions:	5
What should parents do and not do in the event of an emergency?	6
Emergency Communications	7
Recovery after a crisis	8

Introduction

The safety and security of our students and staff are top priorities for the Walworth Joint School District #1. This communication explains some of the procedures that have been planned and practiced in the event of an emergency at our school. This brochure offers guidelines for preparedness, what parents should and should not do, and what the school will do in the event of an emergency. Communication procedures and student release procedures are also outlined.

School administrators work closely with local law enforcement, fire, emergency medical services and emergency management personnel to ensure our Emergency/Crisis Response Plan reflects appropriate practices and our school is prepared for emergencies.

Our comprehensive emergency plan addresses a multitude of potential incidents, not because we expect them to occur, but because we want to be prepared in case they do. For security reasons, specific details are not made available to the public; however, parents and students have a vital role and it is important that you know what to do in an emergency. Please review information in this communication to make sure you and your child understand the emergency procedures.

What is an emergency/crisis?

An emergency/crisis is any unexpected incident that could possibly put your child's safety at risk. It could be anything from a disruption in utilities to a terrorist activity and could affect one child or the entire school district. School officials, and sometimes emergency responders, will evaluate the seriousness of each situation and determine the best action to respond quickly, safely and appropriately. Advanced planning and preparation can minimize the risks in any emergency situation.

What do schools do to prepare or practice for emergencies?

Emergency/Crisis Plan

Our school prepares for emergencies in a number of ways. We have an emergency/crisis plan that defines the roles and responsibilities of staff in supporting the school's response to an emergency and identifies spaces or locations to be utilized by the school when an emergency occurs. The school safety plans are updated on an annual basis.

Emergency Response Drills

Schools also conduct emergency response drills throughout the school year. These drills provide a valuable opportunity for students and staff to practice what to do in the event of an emergency at school. The drills also allow school administration to assess the readiness of students and staff in responding to a potential emergency. Parents most likely will not be notified by the school as to the date or time when the drills are scheduled. **Parents and visitors are not allowed to enter the school until an emergency response drill has been completed.**

Preparedness - What should parents do to prepare for an emergency?

Parents have an invaluable role in preparing their children for emergencies. Listed below are some of the ways you can help them understand that if an emergency occurs at school, teachers and school officials are trained to handle the situation.

- Reassure your child(ren) that you will be contacted by the school and you will be reunited with them as soon as it is safe to do so.
- Be sure **emergency contact information** is current and correct. If an e-mail address, work, home or cell phone number changes, please update it immediately by contacting the school office.

- Keep the school officials informed of any **medical conditions or physical limitations** your child may have or medications your child may be taking. Provide the necessary medical supplies and medication for daily use and an additional supply to carry your child through an emergency. Please consult your child's physician for questions about the appropriate amount of medication or supplies.
- **Identify who is authorized to pick up your child if you are not able to respond.** Make sure their contact information is current and correct. Please understand your child will only be released to parents and persons identified on the emergency contact list. **Discuss this information with your child.**
- Make sure your child knows their parent or guardian's **name, address and phone numbers.** If there is only one parent or guardian, your child should have contact information for a second responsible adult.
- Talk with your child about the importance of remaining calm and following instructions in the event of an emergency. If an emergency occurs while they are at school, their teacher will provide them with appropriate instructions and information.
- Let your child know they could be moved to another location until you can pick them up. **Explain the term "evacuation"** so they are not afraid of being evacuated from their school.
- Explain that **cell phones should not be used** during an emergency unless directed to do so by a teacher. Emergency responders will depend on non-interrupted cell phone service for communication. If students and parents are trying to contact each other, cell phone circuits may become overloaded, interfering with the ability of emergency personnel to communicate vital information. **Student cell phone use is prohibited during an emergency and will be taken by school staff.**
- Whenever you are on school grounds, or at a school function, remain alert to activity in and around the school. Report any suspicious activity to school staff so they can investigate. School staff members can be identified by their school ID tags.
- In the event you are unable to notify a school staff member please call 911.

What will the school do in the event of an emergency?

What we do in an emergency depends on the situation and the specifics of the incident. Depending on the severity of the threat or emergency, additional measures may include: sheltering-in-place, evacuating students from the building or closing the school early.

If emergency responders are called to the scene, we will work with them in a unified command to determine which plan should be implemented. While every school has pre-established plans of action, evacuation sites, and family reunification plans, these plans must remain flexible as conditions change. **Parents will be informed as soon as we have done everything we can to ensure the safety of students and when it becomes possible to provide accurate and helpful information.**

Schools may use the following response (protective) actions:

At all times our building is secure; this includes all exterior doors being locked. In the event of an emergency no one is permitted to enter or exit the building until school officials, often working in conjunction with law enforcement, have determined it is safe to do so.

- **Emergency School Closing** - This procedure will take place when school administrators determine students are safer at home than at school. This most often occurs due to loss of utilities or a weather emergency. Parents will be notified that school(s) will be closing. Under normal circumstances students who normally ride the bus will be transported home and parents will be notified.
- **Building Secure** - A building secure is utilized when an event or situation may or has occurred that is not an immediate threat to safety but is disruptive and/or has the potential of becoming more serious. The purpose of the building secure response action is to alert staff and students to a possible safety threat and minimize exposure by keeping students inside while continuing normal operations. Students who are outside may or may not be moved inside the school.
- **Lockdown** - A lockdown response action represents the highest level of building security. It is utilized when a dangerous situation threatens the safety / life of the students, staff and visitors within the school. During a lockdown no one is allowed to move throughout the school.
- **Evacuation** - If it is unsafe for students and staff to remain inside the school building, the school will be evacuated. Students and staff may remain on school grounds until the building is safe to re-enter or be relocated to a safe location off school property, depending on a variety of circumstances. In the event of an off-campus evacuation, school administrators will work with emergency officials to move students to a pre-designated safe location(s). Parents will be notified by the school district regarding the situation and applicable instructions.
- **Off-Site Family Reunification** - Students are moved off-site when school officials determine students and staff should not re-enter the building until it is rendered safe. Several off-site locations are determined in advance, but are not shared with parents until an incident unfolds. School officials will choose the best reunification site at the time of the incident depending on

the circumstances of the emergency. Parents will be notified of the family reunification site as soon as it is tactically appropriate to do so. Our main priorities in an off-site evacuation are student safety and accountability. We want to make sure students are released to authorized individuals and a sign-out procedure will be initiated. In the event of an off-site school evacuation, parents will be provided information as to where the reunification site is located. Parents or authorized adults will be required to show photo identification in order to pick up a child. The process may take some time because we want to make ensure reunification is made with authorized individuals.

- **Important Reminders:** It is important for parents to understand that if a critical incident occurs, students will be dismissed to parents only when it has been deemed safe to release students. The length of time a school remains in a response action is based on the situation at hand, and could be a few minutes or hours. ***It is possible that when a response action has been initiated at a school, it may involve keeping students beyond the regular school day. It is never our intention to hold students unnecessarily, and we will not do so except to ensure their safety.***

What should parents do and not do in the event of an emergency?

The most helpful parental responses to a school emergency are to remain calm and wait for accurate information. We understand it is a natural instinct for parents to want to rush to their child. It is important for you to understand that, during such an event, the school and emergency responders have made preparations to deal with these incidents. Your cooperation in an emergency is essential to the safe and swift resolution of the incident. **Please do not call the school. It is essential to keep phone lines open so school officials can make outgoing emergency calls.** If students are ill or injured, the parents of those students will be notified first.

Please do not go to the school or scene of the crisis/emergency. As we have learned from past school emergencies, one of our greatest challenges is how to manage an onslaught of parents and concerned citizens rushing to the scene to “help.” By doing so, parents can inadvertently create traffic jams that may block emergency responders from getting to the scene or leaving if necessary to transport injured staff or students to emergency medical facilities.

- Remain calm, follow procedures, and cooperate with school and public safety officials.
- Remain close to the phone listed as the emergency contact on file at the school.
- Understand that emergency pickup procedures are different than routine pick-up procedures. In the event you are notified to pick up your child at school or at the designated family reunification site, bring a photo identification card. If you must send someone else to pick up your child, be sure it is someone who is listed on school records as an authorized individual and they are in possession of a photo ID. **Your child will not be released to anyone who is unauthorized or who cannot provide appropriate identification.**
- Follow emergency procedures. If you are asked to pick up your child, you will be requested to follow the checkout procedure established for emergencies. The reunification system was developed to ensure the safety of students and it is vital that the procedure be followed.
- Remain in designated areas at the family reunification site.
- Be patient. It is essential that the family reunification procedure be carried out in an orderly manner so we can protect and account for all of our students.
- Please do not call or text your student.

Emergency Communications

- **How will parents be notified during a situation at school?**

Our first priority is to ensure all students are safe, accounted for, and under adult supervision. As soon as it is possible to do so, the District Administrator and/or designee will communicate information to parents and the community **only** via the District's Facebook Page www.facebook.com/walworthj1 (You do not need to be a registered member of Facebook to see our page)

- **How will parents be notified after a situation at school?**

1. School Messenger (phone notification to parents and staff): An automated phone message and or e-mail to parents and staff in emergencies.
2. A Letter Home
3. Walworth Jt. School District #1 District Webpage (www.walworth.k12.wi.us)
4. Walworth Jt. School District #1 Facebook Page (www.facebook.com/walworthj1)

Recovery after a crisis

The school officials understand that a traumatic event in a school or in the community can have an emotional impact on staff and students. Walworth Jt. School District #1 has a trained team of professionals who can respond to the school during and after a critical incident to provide assistance.

An excellent website on emergency readiness is www.ready.gov.