

Emergency Response Procedures

By now, you are all aware of the tragic shooting that has taken place in an elementary school in Newton, Connecticut. All such events have impact on local schools and cause us to evaluate our emergency response procedures. The simplified approach for school administrators who may have to respond to many unique situations is to recognize that, in reality, school districts have only one of two choices to make no matter what the emergency – **STAY or GO**. In emergency response terminology, this means **SHELTER or EVACUATE**. Every action then becomes a subset of these responses.

If we decide to **SHELTER** the subsets are:

- **LOCKDOWN** (imminent threat is within the building – no movement within the building: everyone locks down where they are)
- **LOCKOUT** (threat is exterior to the building – all exterior doors are secured: limited entry and exit from the building – often normal activities continue within the building)
- **SHELTER-IN-PLACE** (threat of or actual weather related incident or bomb threat - move occupants to a pre-determined safe place within the building)

If we decide to **EVACUATE** the subsets are:

- **ON-SITE EVACUATION** (exterior to the building on school grounds)
- **OFF-SITE EVACUATION** (pre-determined off site location – may or may not be school owned)
- **EARLY DISMISSAL** (students return to their homes - may not be feasible for younger children)

Response actions may be initiated by the school district or emergency response agencies, usually the police department. Either way, a pre-defined understanding of how communication will occur must be established with the local police precincts. Each school district is encouraged to meet with the local police precinct commander to establish this procedure and document it in their emergency response plan. This should then be practiced, as required under the SAVE legislation, in every school building in the school district in cooperation with the police department. Nassau BOCES routinely assists school districts by training school safety teams to understand their mission and also in designing both tabletop and full-scale exercises to test their plans.

The following “Quick Guides” for Lockdown, Lockout, Shelter-In-Place, and Evacuation are provided through a collaborative effort between the New York State Education Department, New York State Police, New York State Office of Homeland Security and the New York State Emergency Management Office.

Lockdown - Quick Guide (Threat Inside the Building)

- Lockdown will be announced by intercom, public address system, or otherwise. Do not use codes. Call 911 and report your situation. Consider a lockout for adjacent school buildings as well.
- **Immediately** gather students from hallways and areas near your room into your classroom or office. This includes common areas and restrooms immediately adjacent to your classroom.
- **Lock** classroom door(s) and have students take a seated position on the floor next to the wall out of view from the door window. Stay out of sight.
- **Do Not** cover windows.
- Leave the window blinds and lights as they are.
- Document and Attend to any injuries as well as possible.
- **No One** should be allowed to enter or leave a classroom or office under any circumstances.
- **Do Not** answer or communicate through your locked door.
- **Do Not** allow anyone into your 'secured' area.
- **Do Not** answer a classroom telephone.
- **Do Not** respond to a Fire Alarm unless imminent signs of fire are observed. Doing so could compromise the safety of those already secured.
- **Do Not** talk within your secured area, except only as absolutely necessary.
- **Do Not** respond to the intercom, public address system, or other announcements.
- **Take Attendance** – include additions. Missing students' last known locations should be noted. Keep this record for when you are released from the lockdown.

Lockdown will end ONLY when you are physically released from your room by emergency responders or other authority.

* *Responding law enforcement should have master key to conduct the release. Do not rely on school personnel with keys to be available to assist in the release.

Lockout - Quick Guide (Threat Outside the Building)

- Lockout will be announced by intercom, public address system, or otherwise. Use plain language to announce the lockout.

- If a school is in lockout because they were notified by police of a local situation, there is no need to call to advise police of the lockout. However, the school should keep the police advised of any change in status to your building.

- If the school is initiating the lockout due to a situation or potential incident discovered at the school, they should advise police of your lockout and what you may be anticipating.

- **Lock all** exterior doors and windows.

- **All** outside activities are terminated.

- **Entry** to the building is gained only on a one-on-one basis, and only through a locked and monitored door.

- Classes otherwise **continue** as normal.

- **Lockout** is lifted when the external threat is resolved. **Notification** of such resolution may be through any means appropriate for the respective building.

- Upon resolution of an incident and termination of the lockout, **contact police** to advise them of such.

Shelter in Place - Quick Guide

For a Generic/Non-specific Bomb Threat:

- **Announce** “Shelter in Place.” Instruct everyone to remain where they are and scan their respective area for anything out of the ordinary.

- **Call 911.**

- **Activate** School Building-Level Safety Team. **Instruct** them to **scan** common areas for anything unusual.

**Effective bomb threat response relies on the notion that information contained in a threat cannot be considered definitive; but rather, as clues which place the validity of the threat on a gradient scale between hoax (generic) and credible (specific, i.e. – date, time, location, method).*

- If no device is found, **decide** whether to continue school or evacuate. The school district administration may consult with police to make their decision.

- If a device is found, follow step 3 for “A Specific Bomb Threat.”

For a Specific Bomb Threat:

- **Announce** “Shelter in Place.”

- **Call 911.**

- **Activate** School Building-Level Safety Team. **Instruct** them to find an internal location to move the school population to, scan and clear the location and a route to it. **Move** those in the affected area to the established and cleared location.

- **Assist** first responders as necessary.

For a Weather-Related Situation:

- **Announce** “Shelter in Place” with instructions to go to the hallway or an internal room without windows and sit down on the floor.

- **Activate** Building-Level Safety Team.

- **Call 911** for any emergency assistance if needed.

Evacuation - Quick Guide

For a Building-Specific Bomb Threat or other Emergency:

- **Announce** “Evacuation.”
- **Call 911**
- **Activate** Building Search Team to check exit routes and evacuation areas.
- **Evacuate** building to pre-determined sites and account for students.
- **Assist** responding authorities.
- **In consultation** with Police, determine whether it is safe to return to the building, remove students/staff to another location, or dismiss.
- **Shelter** remaining students as necessary. Activate re-unification plan.