

I. Policy Statement

The Board of Education of Howard County recognizes that there will be occasions when it is necessary to respond to emergency incidents that threaten the safety or health of students and employees, or are disruptive to the operation of a school, multiple schools, or the school system. Advanced preparation and planning minimize risks inherent in any emergency. In certain instances, it may be necessary to take protective action, which may include closing a school, multiple schools, or the entire school system as a safety or health measure.

It is the intent of the Board to resume all normal operations, including instruction, as soon as feasible following an emergency.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the process and establish criteria by which the school system prepares for and responds to incidents that threaten the safety or health of students and employees or are disruptive to the operation of a school, multiple schools, or the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS).

III. Definitions

Within the context of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A. Advisory Group – The executive-level advisory body for HCPSS’ emergency management that sets the direction for the system’s disaster response and recovery.
- B. Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) – Procedures to ensure that the capability exists to continue essential functions during and after an extended emergency.
- C. Crisis – A traumatic event involving a student or employee that interrupts the normal day-to-day functioning of a school.
- D. Crisis Intervention Team – A team of individuals trained to provide immediate and long-term consultation and direct support to school communities following a crisis. The two crisis intervention team levels include:
 - 1. System-Level – A system-wide team of individuals trained to provide immediate crisis support as well as providing coordination of support professionals needed to support long-term recovery to students and employees.

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2. School/Facility-Level – A building team trained in immediate crisis response for students and employees after an incident.
- E. Emergency – A serious, unexpected, and often dangerous incident that has the potential to disrupt operations within the school system and which requires immediate response to protect students, employees, visitors, the school system, or property. Emergency levels include:
1. Level I Emergency – An emergency isolated to an individual school site.
 2. Level II Emergency – An emergency that has a limited system-wide impact. These emergencies would most likely affect several schools within the system.
 3. Level III Emergency – An emergency that has a system-wide impact. These emergencies can affect all schools in the system, or occur at an individual school or multiple schools but affect the entire system.
- F. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) – A location for centralized policy direction and control of emergencies. The EOC locations include:
1. Howard County Government EOC – Located within the Howard County Office of Emergency Management.
 2. Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) EOC – Located within the Department of Education.
- G. Emergency Release Procedures – The steps utilized following an emergency or pre-emergency when a school needs to release students to parents in a manner different from a normal release of students.
- H. Family Reunification Plan – A process to re-establish contact between students and parents after an incident.
- I. First Responder – A member of local, state, or federal law enforcement and/or the fire and rescue department.
- J. Functional Annex – Chapters within the HCPSS System-Level Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) that includes a description of a “function”, when to use a “function”, and the proper procedures required.
- K. HCPSS Command Staff – Individuals assigned to manage the HCPSS EOC during a level II or level III emergency. The command staff includes, but is not limited to, the Incident Commander, Safety Officer, Superintendent’s Cabinet, and Division Chiefs.
- L. HCPSS System-Level Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) – A multi-hazard approach for the school system to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from

the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk to the people, property, and operations of the school system.

- M. Howard County Government Emergency Operations Plan – A comprehensive emergency management plan incorporating all aspects of pre-emergency preparedness and post-emergency response, recovery, and mitigation.
- N. Incident Commander – The individual who provides command, control & direction of response during an emergency.
- O. Non-School Facility Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) – An emergency operations plan created specifically for non-school facilities within the school system that addresses the roles of non-school based employees in handling all levels of emergencies.
- P. Parent – Any one of the following, recognized as the adult(s) legally responsible for the student:
 - 1. Biological Parent – A natural parent whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 2. Adoptive Parent – A person who has legally adopted the student and whose parental rights have not been terminated.
 - 3. Custodian – A person or an agency appointed by the court as the legal custodian of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 - 4. Guardian – A person who has been placed by the court in charge of the affairs of the student and granted parental rights and responsibilities.
 - 5. Caregiver – An adult resident of Howard County who exercises care, custody, or control over the student but who is neither the biological parent nor legal guardian as long as the person satisfies the requirements of the Education Article, §7-101(c) (Informal Kinship Care) or has been issued a U.S. Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) Verification of Release form entering into a custodial arrangement with the federal government.
 - 6. Foster Parent – An adult approved to care for a child who has been placed in their home by a state agency or a licensed child placement agency as provided by the Family Law Article, §5-507.
- Q. People with Access and Functional Needs – A function based term for “special needs populations” as provided by the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). It reflects a need rather than a condition, diagnosis, or label. Individuals may have additional needs before, during and after an incident in functional areas.

- R. School Specific Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) – An emergency operations plan created specifically for individual schools within the school system that addresses the roles of school-based employees and administrators in handling all levels of emergencies.
- S. Unified Command – A process by which all levels of emergency responders work together to respond to the disaster or incident. School administrators, school district personnel, and first responders coordinate emergency response efforts and report to one Incident Commander.

IV. Standards

A. Preparedness

1. HCPSS System-level, School-specific, and Non-school Facility Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with access and functional needs, the Maryland Safe to Learn Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
2. The HCPSS will have a recovery plan that addresses the immediate, short-term, and long-term recovery process for the school system.
3. The HCPSS will have a COOP that provides guidance and processes for immediate recovery after an incident.
4. The Director of Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response serves as the HCPSS Incident Commander and will ensure that the school system plans and implementation procedures are developed and employees are trained regarding emergency preparedness.
5. HCPSS will have an EOP for each school and non-school facility in consultation with other health and safety officials within the community. Copies of each EOP are kept at the school or non-school facility and electronically in the Office of Safety and Security.
6. All HCPSS EOPs align with the Howard County Government EOP. HCPSS will maintain three separate emergency plans:
 - System-level plan – Provides guidance for managing an incident that affects multiple schools or the entire district.
 - School-specific plan – Provides guidance for managing an incident at a school.
 - Non-school facility plan – Provides guidance for managing an incident at a non-school facility.

7. Employees will receive annual emergency training commensurate with their level of responsibility under their EOPs.
8. A School-Based Crisis Intervention Team that includes administrators, student services employees, and other members as identified by the school administrator, will address the social-emotional needs of students and employees that result from an emergency or crisis.

B. Response

1. In times of emergency, the priority of the HCPSS will be the safety of all students, employees, and other individuals in a school system building, on school system property, or during a school-sponsored off campus event.
2. The HCPSS will have three activation levels (Level I, II, and III) for all HCPSS EOPs. HCPSS will manage school system incidents utilizing the HCPSS EOPS, independent of the Howard County Government EOP.
3. The HCPSS will participate with the Howard County Government Emergency Operations Center (EOC) if the nature of the incident demands such participation.
4. Emergency release procedures will be utilized as appropriate in a response.
5. Emergency communications to employees, parents, and the community will be coordinated through the HCPSS EOC based on the communication requirements detailed in the HCPSS System-level EOP.
6. School or building administration will assume their responsibility as Incident Commander and will work jointly within the command system established by first responders and, when appropriate, the HCPSS command staff for the school system under a unified command process. Similarly, at a non-school facility, the senior leader on site will assume the responsibility of the Incident Commander.

C. Recovery

1. When emergencies require the evacuation of students from school buildings and/or non-school facilities, school system employees will follow the HCPSS Family Reunification Plan to ensure that students are reunited with their parents as soon as it can be safely accomplished.
2. In accordance with the Crisis Intervention Resource Manual, the school system will provide psychological support services for immediate, short-term, and long-term recovery.
3. To recover any needed school days, when incidents require that schools are closed for more days than those allocated on the academic calendar, the Superintendent

may seek a waiver of the 180-day requirement by applying to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

D. Continuity of Operations

The COOP will be used to ensure continuation of essential system operations in emergencies that require long term recovery.

E. Weather-Related Emergency Preparedness and Response

1. Weather-related emergencies follow the provisions described in Section IV. Standards A-D of this policy as appropriate.
2. At times when inclement weather threatens the safety of students and employees, the Superintendent/designee may dismiss early, close, or delay the opening of a school, schools or the school system. The decision to dismiss early, close, or delay the opening of a school occurs by examining the following criteria:
 - a. Review weather forecasts supplied by AccuWeather Winter Storm Services.
 - b. Discuss with MD Department of Transportation and Howard County Government regarding snow emergencies.
 - c. Have internal discussions based on all information prior to making the decision to close or delay schools or dismiss early.

V. Responsibilities

- A. The Director of Security, Emergency Preparedness and Response will ensure that the EOPs and COOPs are developed and implemented. The Director will provide appropriate training for employees at each school and non-school facility and will annually assess the EOPs to monitor effectiveness.
- B. The Director of Transportation/designee will assess conditions in certain weather-related incidents and make recommendations to the Superintendent on emergency closures due to inclement weather based on the transportation functional annex of the HCPSS System-level EOP.
- C. The Chief Communication, Community/Workforce Engagement Officer will establish the procedures for the dissemination of school closing and other emergency announcements and ensure that parents and employees are informed of emergency communication procedures at the start of each school year.
 1. Internal Emergency Communications – Appropriate Board of Education employees affected by, or involved in the emergency will receive information as soon as possible following the emergency.

2. External Emergency Communications – Employees, families, and community leaders affected by the emergency will receive information as soon as possible following the emergency.
- D. The Superintendent/designee will authorize a single school, multiple schools, or system-wide closure when emergency conditions warrant and will consult with or provide notification to the Board as appropriate.
- E. The Superintendent/designee will ensure the continuity of operations and the coordination of recovery efforts in the event of an extended emergency based on the COOP and the Recovery Plan.
- F. In the event of an early dismissal, the school-based administrator will ensure that all students are released in accordance with established school dismissal procedures. Elementary students will be released in accordance with instructions provided annually by parents on the emergency procedures form.
- G. The Executive Director of Program Innovation and Student Well-Being will activate the cluster Crisis Intervention Team when needed to help support students, employees, and school communities following a crisis.
- H. An HCPSS employee who supervises a school-sponsored afterschool, evening, weekend, or off-campus event or activity will ensure the safety of all participants, and will coordinate the immediate emergency response for HCPSS until relieved or the incident is resolved.

VI. Delegation of Authority

The Superintendent is authorized to develop appropriate procedures to implement this policy.

VII. References

- A. Legal
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §§9-104, 4-205, 6-401(d), 6-501(f), Title 9
 - Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-103
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. 12131 et seq.
 - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. 1400-1487
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, 29 U.S.C. Sec. 794
- B. Other Board Policies
 - Policy 1040 Safe and Supportive Schools
 - Policy 10020 Use of School Facilities
- C. Relevant Data Sources

- D. Other
 - Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)
 - HCPSS Non-School Facility Emergency Operations Plans
 - HCPSS System-Level Emergency Operations Plan
 - HCPSS School-Specific Emergency Operations Plans
 - Howard County Government Emergency Operations Plan

VIII. History

ADOPTED: January 5, 1971
REVIEWED:
MODIFIED:
REVISED: August 24, 1989
January 13, 2005
April 12, 2012
March 14, 2019
EFFECTIVE: July 1, 2019

I. Definitions

Within the context of these implementation procedures, the following definitions apply:

- B. Emergency Procedures – Incident specific measures used to ensure the safety of students and employees.
1. Active Assailant – Procedures for when one or more subjects participates in a random or systematic pattern of violence demonstrating their intent to continuously inflict serious bodily injury on another person or persons.
 2. Drop, Cover, and Hold –The appropriate action to reduce injury and death during earthquakes.
 3. Evacuation – A process where students and employees exit the school or support facility due to fire, smoke, or utility emergency.
 4. Lockdown – The confinement of people inside secured rooms for safety measures. Used when a serious threat exists to the campus that requires students, employees, and visitors to remain in a locked room/facility for safety.
 5. Modified Lockdown – Secures the building and safely shelters all students, employees and visitors inside the school building. School business and classroom activities continue as normal. A school will go on modified lockdown if there is a threat in their neighborhood that does not directly endanger the occupants of the school.
 6. Reverse Evacuation – A process where students or employees enter the building due to severe weather or other immediate threat outside the school or support facility.
 7. Shelter-in-Place – Taking refuge in interior rooms within your facility, or rooms with no or few windows. In many cases, local authorities will issue advice to shelter-in-place via TV or radio.
- C. Floor Captain – The individual tasked with implementing the Howard County Public School System (HCPSS) Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs).

- D. Hazard – Natural or manmade potential source or cause of harm or difficulty where the need to protect students, employees, visitors, and property is of the utmost importance according to the comprehensive analysis in the Howard County Office of Emergency Management’s Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA).
1. Natural Hazard – A source of harm or difficulty created by a meteorological, environmental, or geological phenomenon.
 2. Manmade Hazard – A hazard that originates in some way from human activity. Manmade hazards include adversarial/intentional hazards and technological/accidental hazards and create an immediate risk, or present an imminent danger to the students, employees, or school community.
- E. Incident Command System – A management system designed to enable effective and efficient incident management by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure.
- F. Protective Action – A specific, pre-defined response used in emergency incidents to ensure the safety and well-being of those involved, such as school closing, closing of a support facility, or emergency procedures, such as, lockdown, modified lockdown, sheltering in place, evacuation, etc.

II. Emergency Management Guidelines

A. Preparedness

To prepare for emergencies, HCPSS performs regular reviews of the HCPSS EOPs, training plan, and any updates made to the Howard County EOP.

B. Planning

Each Division Chief will implement the system-level Continuity of Operations Plans (COOPs), and EOPs. They will review and maintain each of these plans on an annual basis. HCPSS annually reviews the following information:

1. Hazard (Threat) Analysis – A review of schools by region based on natural and manmade hazards for all schools and support facilities in the district.
2. Concept of Operations – Describes the level of emergency and provides a process breakdown and examples of types of emergencies that fall in each level.
3. Roles and Responsibilities during an Emergency – Provides high-level guidance of roles, responsibilities, and tasks for school system employees functioning in specific roles during an emergency.

4. The Office of Safety and Security will coordinate the development, implementation, and annual evaluation of the system-level, school-specific EOPs, non-school facility EOPs, and the HCPSS COOPs in accordance with national, state, and local emergency standards.
5. The Chief Communication, Community/Workforce Engagement Officer will review and publicize school system procedures for communicating emergency information to school system employees and to the community on an annual basis.
6. Principals/designee will maintain their school-specific EOP on an annual basis.
7. The building administrator/designee will assign employees with the Floor Captain responsibilities. The Floor Captain will review and update their facility-specific EOP on an annual basis.

C. Resourcing

1. The Office of Safety and Security will coordinate the delivery of emergency resources such as 800 MHz radios, incident kits, weather radios, etc. as required to ensure communication with the EOC during an incident.
2. The Department of Program Innovation and Student Well-Being will provide support to Crisis Intervention Teams and school administrators during the immediate aftermath of an incident.
3. The Office of Safety and Security and the Department of Program Innovation and Student Well-Being will provide school-based emergency kits and supply replacements as needed.

D. Training

1. The Office of Safety and Security will provide training to employees based on their assigned roles in the system-level EOC or the school-specific Incident Command System. Employees assigned to specific EOC roles must comply with the minimal requirements pertinent to their role in an incident.
2. The Office of Safety and Security will provide training to appropriate employees on the use of two-way radios and conduct an annual evaluation of the radio communication system.
3. The Office of Safety and Security will maintain training plans. Annually, the training and exercise plans which define the approach to comprehensive emergency training of all employees will be reviewed.

E. Exercising

1. The Office of Safety and Security follows the State of Maryland requirements for evacuation drills in public schools. The Office of Safety and Security, in conjunction with local officials has developed the following breakdown for drills and exercises as follows:
 - a. Five (5) evacuation drills
 - b. Two (2) reverse evacuation drills
 - c. Two (2) active assailant drills
 - d. One (1) shelter-in-place drill
 - e. One (1) lockdown drill
 - f. One (1) drop, cover, hold drill.
2. The building administrator for each administrative facility will conduct the following drill and exercises:
 - a. Three (3) evacuation drills
 - b. Two (2) active assailant drills
 - c. One (1) drop, cover, hold drill.
3. The Office of Safety and Security will maintain a comprehensive training program that includes classroom based, small group settings, table top exercises, small scale exercises, and full scale exercises to ensure continual understanding of emergency response procedures and incident management.

F. Response

Any incident or emergency response performed by HCPSS follows the procedures outlined in the functional annex section of the EOPs. On a regular basis, HCPSS reviews the functional annexes to ensure best practice and alignment with federal, state and local law or guidance.

G. Communication

1. When the school system determines closing schools based on inclement weather or other emergencies, all after-school and evening activities and all school and non-school-sponsored activities scheduled in school facilities are canceled. This does not apply to early dismissals that are scheduled as part of the academic calendar.
2. At times when inclement weather threatens the safety of students and employees, the Superintendent/designee may close or delay the opening of schools or the school system, or dismiss early. The Board will be notified of the decision.

3. If an emergency results in a closure, a late opening, or an early dismissal, HCPSS employees will work in compliance with the provisions of their respective collective bargaining agreement, office/department supervisor, or administrative directive.

H. Immediate Efforts

1. The School Administrator will implement their school-specific EOP during an emergency.
2. The Floor Captain will implement their support facility-specific EOP during an emergency.
3. The Office of Safety and Security will activate the EOC as appropriate and follow the system-level EOP.
4. The Chief Communication, Community/Workforce Engagement Officer will provide appropriate communications based on the system-level EOP.

I. Transition to Recovery Management

The Office of Safety and Security will provide management support during the transition from the response phase of an incident to the recovery phase of an incident.

J. Recovery

There are three phases of recovery: immediate, short-term, and long-term. Based on the EOP, HCPSS performs these phases based on information in our Reunification, Recovery, and Continuity of Operations plans.

1. Immediate

Immediately following incident response, HCPSS moves into the recovery process.

2. Short-term

- a. Each Division Chief will implement the system-level COOP, EOP, and related functional annexes as required during an emergency.
- b. The HCPSS Recovery Plan will be enacted based on the complexity and duration of the recovery period.

3. Long-term

The designated Recovery Manager will be the main point of contact for recovery and will oversee the entire recovery process depending on the complexity and duration of the recovery period.

III. References

Hazard Identification & Risk Assessment Howard County, MD

IV. History

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