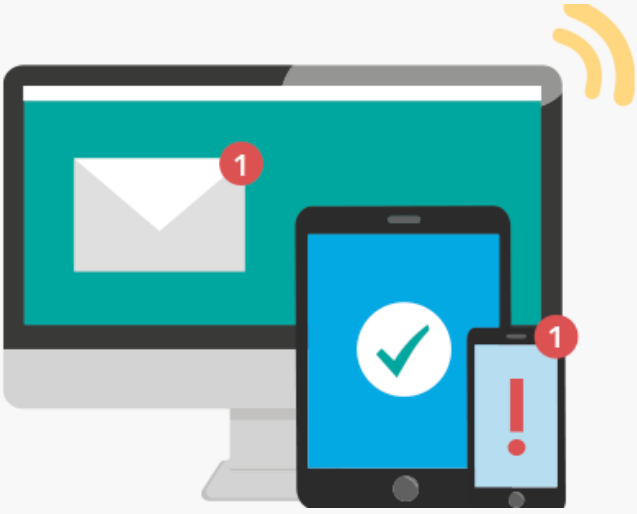
School Safety and Emergency Management

Monthly Minute: Communication

November 2026

Monthly Minute is a newsletter providing insight and tips on potential threats and hazards brought to you by the Oregon Department of Education.



November often brings rain and colder weather. Grabbing that sweater or rain jacket may be first on the list, but that will soon change. Soon we'll be bundling up in winter coats. While we're grabbing those jackets, we also need to prepare our whole school community for more than just the cold weather. The best tools in our school-preparedness toolbox include situational awareness and communication—communication with students, staff, their families and our local emergency responders.

In this edition, we will provide examples and explain actions to prepare our schools for winter through situational awareness and communication. The first step in preparing for the coming change in weather is to know your area's environmental risks, including local weather patterns. In areas affected by recent wildfires, there could be an increased risk of flooding and landslides. These may have dangerous effects on transportation, life safety and communication. Freezing temperatures also worsen these risks. Stay connected with your local area weather reports so you get an early warning for impending storms.

Include your local and county emergency responders, as well as public works, in your awareness activities. It's one thing to read a weather report. It's another to know what roads or power lines may be affected. Your school's immediate vicinity may seem relatively safe and unaffected, but your students may be coming from a remote location without power or with obstructed roads—staying in communication with public works can provide this crucial information and help guide your decision about the day's activities.

If we have a way to maintain awareness of coming weather hazards, then we need to have a plan to communicate our response to them. A good communications plan will address two major areas: internal and external communications. Internal communications refer to information shared to those inside the building and among our staff, including transportation personnel. When planning internal communications, consider: method (PA system, email, hand-held radios), alerts (what we say to elicit a response), and reports (how can students or staff

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This Month… Conduct a Secure drill this month. Review communications plans and Communicable Disease Management Plans ahead of winter weather that keeps students indoors.

Up Next… December's Monthly Minute will cover response priorities during an emergency. Conduct a Hold drill in December.

Conduct a Secure Drill this month.

Hold! in your room or area. Clear the halls.

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Review your Communicable Disease Management Plan ahead of winter weather that forces school activities indoors. People confined in close spaces can quickly spread infectious diseases if prevention measures are not implemented ahead of time. Check out the following links for resources:

- **ODE page on school-level communicable disease planning.**
- **Oregon Health Authority resource page for schools and daycare centers.**



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notify school leadership of changing conditions or other emergencies?). Have a plan for each of these areas and practice your plan.

External communications are what we communicate to those in our school community outside our building. How do we communicate with parents or guardians about changing conditions? Do we have a plan to share information with local media outlets about emergency responses or school closures? Draft templates for these messages today to save yourself from the stress of how to explain emergency conditions in the future.

Remember to communicate early and often with your community partners, your families and your staff.

Letting people know what is expected in an emergency ahead of time will help reinforce the need to follow protocol for everyone's safety. Early communication will also demonstrate your commitment to safety! To recap:

- Have a way to keep your school community aware of changing conditions. Be prepared to send out **emergency communication** if a response is necessary.
- Have local and county emergency responders, as well as public works on speed dial for both awareness and communication.
- Have (and practice) a communication plan that addresses both internal and external communication. **Go here to view an example communications plan.**

Contact Information

Scan or click the QR code to visit the School Safety and Emergency Management website with additional school emergency preparedness resources, and **to sign up for the monthly training** and technical assistance sessions.

Resources

Go to our EOP Resources page for help on this and to find an example communications plan.

SSEM: Emergency Plans and Drills guidance, including communication plan considerations.

Oregon Emergency Management local contacts list.