

School Safety and Emergency Management

Monthly Minute: Special Event Planning September 2026

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



It's the most wonderful time of the year: back-to-school season! Kids are headed back to classrooms, auditoriums, football fields and gymnasiums. Friends will be made, lessons learned, and growth will take place. All these expectations rely on a daily, safe return to family and loved ones—not just from time in the classroom, but also from their other special events everyone is looking forward to. Every one of them will require safety planning including the games, dances, plays and other events.

Similar to the school's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), special event planning should start with the **assembly of a planning team**. Include key people, such as family groups or representatives, student leaders, teachers, school nurses, security and first responders

when planning for large and special events. Use this team to assess risks from known threats and hazards that could disrupt your event. These would include weather conditions and other environmental hazards that could affect not just the success of the event, but the safety of all participants.

During the planning process, be sure to incorporate the **Incident Command System (ICS)** fundamentals in the event plan to improve organization and adaptability in case of an emergency. Clearly identify the leader of the event and ensure that they have an appropriate span of control. No more than three to seven people should be reporting to any one person. Further, every person helping to run the event should only be reporting to one supervisor to avoid conflicting instructions. Use common language that can be understood by others when planning and running the event.

Communicate the necessary details of the plan and the event with prospective attendees well ahead of the event. Early communication should include expectations of attendees, how to access the event, and how to gain accessibility assistance if needed. For instance, if ushers are needed for mobility assistance, how can an attendee get that assistance?

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This Month... Be sure to conduct your evacuation and lockdown drills early this year. Bring your local emergency responders in to review procedures and confirm best practices.

Up Next... October's Monthly Minute will cover earthquake awareness month. The Great Oregon Shakeout happens and it's time to "drop, cover and hold on."



Conduct a Lockdown drill in September.



Conduct an Evacuation drill in September.



Conduct an earthquake drill in October.



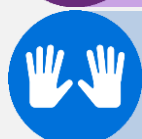
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Below are the recommended drills you should plan for and conduct. These drills come from the I Love U Guys Foundation. You can find information and free printable materials on their website at <https://iloveuguyss.org/>



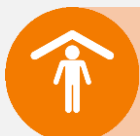
Hold! in your room or area.
Clear the halls.



Secure! Get inside. Lock outside doors.



Lockdown! Locks, lights, out of sight.



Shelter! Hazard and safety strategy.



Evacuate! (A location may be specified)



Earthquake and tsunami drills.

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The planning team's job is not done at the conclusion of the event. Be sure to schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss what went well, what needs were not met, and how the event can be run better and safer next time. Capture those notes and include them in the planning for future events.

Additional considerations for special event planning:

- Communicate, communicate, communicate! Let attendees know what to expect ahead of time and use signage, ushers, and security staff to direct traffic and manage expectations.

- Plan specifically for response to a medical emergency. Identify responsible staff and equip them with readily available trauma kits and AEDs.
- Deliberately plan for individuals with **access and functional needs** to accommodate them safely during any emergency. For these events, you also want to consider family members in addition to your students.
- In warmer weather, make sure to have water, shade and cooling locations available to prevent and treat heat-related illnesses.

Contact us for assistance on special event planning.

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 **threat and hazard resources page** for help on this and to find a calendar of emergency preparedness topics and monthly drills.

SSEM: **Emergency Plans and Drills Guidance: Access and Functional Needs.**

Oregon Emergency Management **local contacts list.**