

School Safety and Emergency Management

Monthly Minute: Summer Exercises

July 2025

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



Summer has brought quiet to an otherwise busy atmosphere. Most students and staff have made themselves scarce even if there are a few sticking around for summer programs. Facility updates are finally getting done. Floors are getting waxed, and paint is getting touched up, but the halls are otherwise empty. The school is recovering from this last year and getting ready to start a new one. While the buildings are slowly getting ready for the new school year, now is the time to prepare ourselves with planning.

No plan is complete without testing it to find what works, what doesn't and what needs improvement. One of the most effective methods for ensuring readiness is through a table-top exercise (TTX). These exercises provide a powerful platform for testing, refining and reinforcing our response plans which

ultimately bolster the safety and preparedness of our students and staff.

While things are quiet, this is the perfect time to sit down with your team and run through a couple TTX scenarios. This can be done by simply conducting a discussion of **what protocols you would use** in response to common incidents. Your TTX can also be a pre-planned, minute-by-minute scenario you've developed that walks everyone through an event.

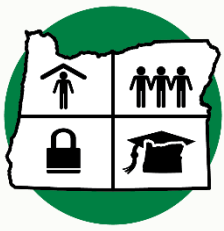
The goal of these exercises is to ensure that staff are familiar with the protocols and actions necessary when a disruptive event occurs. Focus less on the scenario and more on the procedures used to respond to a scenario. For example, one TTX scenario could cover what the school would do in response to **a fire in the science lab**. Such a situation would make the building unsafe to occupy. Participants should select the Evacuate protocol to effectively respond. Focus on evaluating how that protocol is carried out because whatever makes the building unsafe to occupy may not always come from the science lab.

TTXs have several significant benefits. Most importantly, they keep staff familiar with response procedures which takes out the guess work during a disruptive event. They also encourage collaboration, strengthen relationships and enhance coordination during emergencies. The goal is that staff will have a reference point from these discussions and exercises that will better inform their own response and

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This Month... Conduct a table-top exercise (TTX) with your staff. Be sure to include first responders in these scenario-based discussions. **Visit the SSEM website** for samples of some scenario-based TTXs you can use in your school or district.

Up Next... In August we will review considerations for the beginning of the year.



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participation in the organizational structure of the school or district's emergency response.

Here are a few things to keep in mind when planning and conducting a TTX:

- **Include your first responders in your TTXs:** It is okay to occasionally conduct scenario-based exercises internally with your staff, but the true purpose of emergency planning is to understand how everyone involved will respond and interact with each other.
- **Keep an open mind and permit critical discussion:** Don't let the discussion devolve into a finger-pointing

session but do make sure to use the session to identify improvement points.

- **Revisit past events:** If your school had an event or near miss this last year, revisit your response to that event: what happened? What went well, what went right and what can you do better next time?

There are a number of resources available for TTX development and implementation. Visit our website for [a few samples of scenario-based TTXs](#). If you would like help developing or implementing a TTX for your school or district, check out [our contacts page](#) and reach out to us in the School Safety and Emergency Management program.

Summer Learning Safety

With summer activities comes the hazard of extreme heat and reduced air quality. Stay ahead of heat-related illnesses and respiratory and cardiovascular health effects by bookmarking two important resources: Oregon Health Authority's page on [preventing heat-related illnesses](#) and the Environmental Protection Agency's page on [wildfires and indoor air quality](#).



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

[ODE's page on Emergency Operations Plan resources](#) including sample TTXs.

[Schoolsafety.gov resource page](#) for exercise starter kits

Sign up for local alerts: [oralert.gov](#)

Oregon Emergency Management [local contacts list](#).