



School Safety and Emergency Management

← Monthly Minute: Transportation Safety →

March 2024

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



The month of March brings us Spring Break and all the anticipation that comes with looking forward to the conclusion of this school year with graduation and summer break. It's also a time when we can get a bit complacent with safety practices and procedures. Consider this a reminder to review your practices and procedures so you are ready when it really matters.

The easiest planning considerations for schools are those for which we have the most control: when students are in their classrooms, the halls are empty, and we know where everyone is. However, a disaster can strike at any time and it is important to know ahead of time what you

need to do to ensure students and staff are safe and to make sure they are reunified safely. Avoid complacency by reviewing procedures for times that aren't as convenient.

When it comes to transportation safety, consider all places and all times, not just when the buses show up to your building for a new school day. What if the alarms go off as the busses are picking up students near their homes? Or if a wildfire shifts to the path of the busses as they make the rounds in the afternoon to reunite children with their families?

The most chaotic event for your school could be an active threat just as the buses are arriving or right as they are preparing to depart. During the school day, it will be easy to call for a "Secure!" drill, getting everyone inside and locking the outside doors. But if the busses are on their way in, you don't want to expose arriving students to a potential threat. Two things can help mitigate the chaos when it has reached its peak: a school staff and transportation team that has freshly reviewed their emergency procedures, and a solid communications plan.

Make sure to regularly brief transportation staff

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This Month... Conduct an Evacuate! Drill. Review transportation safety procedures and consider conducting or reviewing bus evacuation drills.



Evacuate! (A location may be specified)

Up Next... April's Monthly Minute will address violence prevention. Conduct a Lockdown! Drill in April.



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Violence Prevention

Next month we will review the topic of violence prevention. But it's not too early to get a jump start on it now. It is everyone's job to say something if they see something. Check out the [First Observer Plus training](#) by the Transportation Security Agency. It will give your transportation staff the knowledge needed to identify suspicious activity.



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on your primary and alternate reunification sites so they know where to go in case the area around the school has become unsafe. Also make sure your communications plan includes alternate points of contact and methods for contacting in case a radio or a cell phone is lost or broken. Nothing will induce more panic in a person than when a single and usually reliable resource is no longer available to help with an emergency.

Considering all places and all times will help us better manage stressful situations. The following planning considerations can improve school transportation safety before, during, and after the school day:

- Identify alternate reunification sites where buses can go or stage if there is a disruption before they arrive or after they depart.
- Have a communications plan in place between school staff and bus drivers.
- Train, and practice bus emergency procedures including evacuation drills.
- Coordinate communication and response with your local city/county emergency responders.
- Ensure your planning considerations include students with access and functional needs, such as communication and mobility aids.

Contact us at this link or through the QR code below to get help with this or any other emergency preparedness topic.

Contact Information

Scan the QR code below or [click this link](#) to connect with a regional school emergency management professional for help on this or any other school emergency topic.



Join us on the **2nd Wednesday of every month at 8:30am** to get assistance with this or other emergency preparedness topics: [Calendar invite!](#)

Additional Resources

Oregon Department of Education [Pupil Transportation home page](#).

Oregon Pupil [Transportation manual](#): regulations and responsibilities.

[School Bus Safety](#) from US Dept. of Transportation.

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