

POP QUIZ: IS YOUR SCHOOL READY?

How well would your school respond to a disaster? How would people respond in the first few minutes? Do people know what to do? Schools and communities in Maine face all kinds of potential hazards, both natural (winter storms, tornadoes, fires, floods, earthquakes) and man-made (hazardous material spills, acts of violence). Being prepared to address such hazards requires thorough and comprehensive planning. How ready are you?

Take this test to find out!

1. Does your school have an emergency response plan?
2. Did the plan result from an all hazards risk analysis?
3. Does your plan address every hazard that could result in injury, death, or significant damage to school property?
4. Does the plan include responding to disasters?
5. Does the plan include recovering from disasters?
6. Was the plan developed in cooperation with local emergency responders (i.e. fire, law enforcement, emergency medical, emergency manager)?
7. Were school transportation supervisors, nurses, facilities managers/custodians and food service staff included in designing your plan?
8. Were parents and students included in creating your plan?
9. Does the plan identify alternative sites that can be used for shelter?
10. Does your plan include bus accidents that may occur while en route to school activities?
11. Do your bus drivers have two ways to contact help in the event of an emergency?
12. Do your bus drivers have copies of medical permissions and allergies for all students on board.
13. Does your plan address prompt notification and instructions for parents for at school and away from school emergencies and disasters?
14. Do you have a separate document that identifies preparedness, response, mitigation, recovery, and resource shortfalls with a plan, and a time line for correcting them?
15. Does the emergency plan include an Incident Command System?
16. Have two alternates for all school emergency response positions been named?
17. Have incident command responsibilities been assigned along with back-up responsibilities?
18. Does the plan include a system of accountability for all students and adults in the building?
19. Does the plan include a system for releasing students to their parents?
20. Does the plan include both primary and secondary evacuation routes?
21. During evacuation drills, are primary exits regularly blocked to test the secondary evacuation routes?
22. Is the plan practiced through regular drills and exercises that include more than fire drills?
23. Are both evacuation and reverse-evacuation drills practiced?
24. Are shelter-in-place drills practiced?
25. Are lock-down drills practiced?
26. During drills, are student and staff accountability systems tested?
27. During drills are communication systems tested?
28. Are systems for evacuation and response during cold weather ever tested?
29. Does each classroom have a shelter in place kit, and a grab and go kit?
30. Are non school emergency responders and managers included in drills and practice exercises?
31. After drills and exercises is a review held and needed changes made to the emergency plan?
32. Does the plan include a system for regular review and updating?
33. Are new staff and substitutes trained on your emergency plan?
34. Do you have a staff buddy system for emergencies to pair experienced staff with newer staff?

If you were able to respond to **YES** to all of these questions, congratulations, your school is probably well prepared to respond to almost any type of disaster. Obviously, any **NO** or **NOT SURE** responses point to areas where present plans and systems might be improved. If you had more than five **NO** responses, your school quite likely would face serious problems in the event of a real disaster.