

KEEPING ALL STUDENTS SAFE



Schools are among the safest places a child can be. One reason is the extensive planning that schools do to protect the children in our care.

Every Frederick County public school has a student safety plan, with staff prepared to manage situations from severe weather incidents to power outages and more. In addition, local safety experts—including the Frederick County Office of Emergency Management, Sheriff's Department, police, fire marshal and many others—stand ready to assist as needed.

Parents can help keep children safe by understanding and following these school security procedures:

- **Shelter in place:** Sometimes schools protect students by keeping them indoors away from hazardous materials in the air outside and turning air handlers off. This might occur as a precaution, for example, if a truck carrying chemicals had an accident on the highway near a school.
 - In a **partial lockdown**, parents and authorized visitors may enter and leave the school. Schools conduct activities as usual inside the building, however, students are not allowed outside unsupervised.
 - In a **full lockdown**, interior and exterior doors are locked. Students, staff and others are instructed not to enter or leave the school until the situation is clear. Parents will keep students safest by waiting until the lockdown is lifted, not coming to the school, and staying informed through methods described later in this publication.
- **Evacuate students to an alternative location:** Every school has procedures for moving students out of the building as a safety precaution. This might happen, for example, if a fire alarm is activated. Several times each year, students have practice drills to evacuate the school and assemble at a safe distance until instructed it is safe to re-enter. In addition to outdoor locations, school staff or local safety officials may direct students to a nearby school or other community building. There is also a reverse evacuation procedure in which students and staff are brought back into the building to protect them from a dangerous situation outside.
- **Drop, Cover and Hold:** In the event of an earthquake, students and staff drop to the ground, taking cover under a sturdy desk or table and holding onto something sturdy until shaking stops; they carefully exit the building afterward.
- **Severe Weather:** During severe weather, such as a tornado, students and staff seek shelter immediately using interior hallways. They are brought in from portables and outside activities. They stay away from windows and doors with glass and avoid rooms with free-span ceilings such as gyms and cafeterias.
- **Avoid. Deny. Defend.™:** In the event of violence or the threat of violence on school premises, staff will instruct students to move as quickly as possible away from the threat to avoid danger, to *deny* access with barriers and remain quietly out of sight and, if necessary, to aggressively *defend* themselves.

(Please see additional information on the next page)



FREDERICK COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- **Dismiss students early:** There are times when conditions such as a water or power outage may cause schools to dismiss students early.
 - Pre-arrange emergency back-up care with a neighbor or relative.
 - Teach your child what to do in case school closes when you are not at home.
 - Keep your child's Student Information Card emergency contact information current, including the name and number of a family member or neighbor who is usually available when you are not.

How can parents get information in an emergency situation?

FCPS communicates multiple ways in an emergency:

- ✓ www.fcps.org The school system's Web home page displays systemwide emergency bulletins and updates.
- ✓ **Social Media:** In systemwide emergencies, FCPS posts information on Facebook and Twitter @FCPSMaryland. [If you see a social media post that concerns you, instead of re-posting it, directly message FCPS on social media or notify a school administrator so FCPS can investigate the matter.]
- ✓ **Email and Texts:** FCPS uploads parent email addresses to create accounts in our FindOutFirst service, used for sharing routine school news and emergency communication. Parents may add a mobile number to their account at www.fcps.org/fof to get text messages, sent only when schools must unexpectedly close.
- ✓ **Radio/Television:** The FCPS Public Affairs Department asks local radio and television stations to announce urgent news, and we post it on FCPS TV (Comcast channel 18). In the event of weather-related closing, FCPS contacts numerous regional radio and TV stations.
- ✓ **Phone:** There may be times we have to ask parents not to call the school directly because we need to keep phone lines open to remain in touch with safety experts. If that happens, we will ask the news media to announce an alternative number for urgent communication.

Keeping schools safe is everyone's responsibility. We recommend if you See Something, Say Something, and when it comes to social media, please *Report It, Don't Repost It*. Schools collaborate with local, state and federal health, safety and emergency personnel and parents. To communicate concerns about threats to school or student safety, please call your local school and speak with an administrator. Another useful resource is the Maryland Safe Schools Tip Hotline: 1-877-636-6332, toll-free.

