

TORNADO DRILLS RULES AND PROCEDURES

In accordance with the policy of the board of education, tornado drills will be scheduled by the principal at least two times per school year in order to ensure the best possible plan has been established and to ensure all students and personnel know what they are to do when a signal for a tornado drill is given. Tornado drills must be conducted in September and March of each school year. The principal or designated staff member shall submit a copy of the drill plan for the building to the superintendent's office during the first month of school. Tornado drills are to be held on different days of the week at different hours of the day.

Definition of Terms

A **tornado watch** indicates that, within a period of several hours, a tornado may strike in a designated area.

A **tornado warning** indicates a tornado has been spotted or indicated on radar and that the tornado is likely to strike in a designated area immediately or within the next hour.

Procedures

When a tornado warning has been received, the superintendent or designated administrator shall notify all schools in the area. Upon being notified of a tornado warning, the principal or designated staff member must check weather conditions in the area to determine if it is necessary for students to be moved into the refuge areas. A designated staff member will monitor commercial radio or TV for tornado warnings, even if the school has a NOAA weather radio tone-alert system.

It is not necessary for schools to wait for the "weather alert" before moving students into the refuge areas. If the principal or designated staff member deems it advisable to move students into the refuge areas, this should be done immediately. Designated staff members will be assigned to bring in children from playgrounds or other outdoor areas during a tornado warning.

Each principal or staff representative will need to use individual best judgment as to when students should leave the refuge areas and return to the classrooms.

Refuge Areas

Students housed in single story buildings should be moved into a safe room, basement or the interior corridors that are not parallel to the tornado's path (usually from the southwest).

Students housed in single story buildings that do not have a safe room or corridors should seek refuge under tables, desks, etc. preferably away from areas containing glass.

In situations where some of the students are housed in annexes adjacent to the main building, students should be moved from the annex into the main building when space is available.

Avoid the use of large enclosed areas not designated as safe rooms, such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias, or other rooms with wide, free-span roofs as places of refuge.

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If a school bus is caught in the open when a tornado is approaching, the children will be escorted to a nearby ditch or ravine and made to lie face down, hands over their heads. They should be far enough away from the bus so that the bus cannot topple onto them.

Planning Security Drills

When developing a tornado security drill, selecting refuge areas to be used should be the first consideration. After refuge areas are determined, the following should be accomplished:

1. Assign and fit the students into the refuge areas. Adjustment may be necessary.
2. Conduct drills with one or two rooms at a time.
3. Determine the position(s) to be taken in the refuge areas and explain them to the students. The following positions are recommended:
 - A. Down on knees, lean forward, cover as much of exposed body as possible by crossing arms and burying the face in the arms.
 - B. Cross legs, sit on the floor, and cover face with folded arms. (Students should turn their backs to natural light.)
4. Determine the signal to be used for the security drill and ensure all school personnel and students know how to distinguish it from other signals. Establish a backup alarm to be used in the event of a power failure, e.g. a battery-operated bullhorn, hand-cranked siren, or hand bell.
5. Conduct a building drill and make any changes necessary to improve the plan.

Teacher Responsibility

The classroom teacher has the responsibility of preparing the students for the drills as well as the real emergency. Information given by the teacher will do much to protect the emotional health of the child. Statements by uninformed or poorly informed individuals can cause students to become emotionally upset. It would seem psychologically sound to teach all students the usable facts that can be understood at their intelligence level. There cannot be a quick course of instruction once a tornado has struck.

Preparation of the Building

Close the outside doors on the side from which the tornado is approaching.

Open outside doors on the side of the building opposite to the approaching tornado. Doors must be fastened securely so there is no danger of their blowing shut. Tapered wedges and/or doorstops should be used for this. All inside doors leading into corridors must be left open.

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The custodian or alternate **MUST** turn off the gas on the outside of the building when a tornado warning has been received.

Variety

It is recommended that tornado drills be held under all kinds of conditions and circumstances and from all parts of the building in order to prepare students for any emergency that would make it necessary for them to be moved into the refuge areas. Among these would be the following situations:

- From regular classrooms
- From regular classrooms with a blocked exit
- From assemblies
- When some of the students are in the classrooms and others are on the school grounds or in the cafeteria
- When students are in the process of changing classes
- Any other situation in which students might be found
- From the cafeteria
- From a bus

Dismissal from School

School will not be dismissed because of a tornado warning.

Children will not be permitted to leave school during a tornado warning alert in the immediate area. However, parents may go to the school and get their children. Parents should contact the principal's office and let a member of the school staff get the student from the classroom. When parents go to the classroom, it excites the other students and disrupts teaching.

If, at dismissal time, a storm is approaching and it is believed the children will not have time to reach home before it strikes, children should be kept in the building until it is deemed safe to dismiss them. School buses will not be used during tornado warnings.