

As a leading insurer of schools, EMC Insurance Companies encourages schools to perform training, tabletop exercises and drills for emergency events that could impact the safety of their students and staff. Emergency preparations should be based on an all-hazards approach as recommended by local, state and federal emergency agencies and not exclusively on any single hazard.

Precautions for Minimizing Injuries During Drills

When performing exercises and drills, there are some important safety precautions you should consider so that injury to staff and/or students is minimized, while still providing appropriate education and preparation. Five important safety precautions to take during exercises and drills are:

- Do not perform drills at full speed (no running)
- Do not allow physical contact between participants
- Do not use simulated or real weapons
- Do not require anyone to exit through windows, move furniture or climb on furniture
- Participants should stay on their feet or be seated (they should not leave the floor in any way)

Security Best Practices

EMC recommends these six security best practices for prevention and response to violent threats to your schools:

- 1. Establish student/staff communications and trust.** Students may observe behavior or overhear a conversation that concerns them, but don't know how to report it or don't want to be identified as the reporter. Establish and promote a clear communication procedure so students know how to report concerns and can be assured their identities are protected. These confidential communications between students and staff members can help prevent violent events from occurring.
- 2. Control building access.** Many schools can do a better job controlling access to their buildings. Simple solutions are locking all perimeter doors at all times and admitting visitors and vendors through a controlled process. A variety of options can work as long as each individual requesting access to your building is screened.
- 3. Create layers of security.** Keeping unwanted visitors out of the building is just the beginning. Additional barriers need to be placed between potential intruders and the students and staff. Options include installing lockable doors in all classrooms or providing a securable safe room for those areas without a door.

- 4. Make observation easier.** Staff and students need to be able to observe their surroundings for possible threats. Provide unobstructed sight lines at entrances, parking lots, and into and out of classrooms. Natural observation is better than observation provided through technical means, such as security cameras.
- 5. Implement emergency lockdown procedures.** Every school should have lockdown procedures. Once a procedure is in place, it should be practiced regularly. Make sure you can communicate lockdowns throughout the building and outside the building. Best practices recommend three levels of lockdown to accommodate the various situations you may encounter:
 - **Clear the Halls** — Use for medical emergencies or locker searches when you want to limit student and staff traffic in the halls.
 - **Exterior Lockdown** — Protect staff and students from outdoor incidents that occur on or near school property by keeping them inside.
 - **Lockdown** — Use for interior or exterior situations that are dangerous and could impact staff and students at any time.

All lockdown training should include a discussion of how to evacuate staff and students in the event that they are in locations where lockdowns are not possible or when escaping the potential threat makes more sense than locking down.

- 6. Practice routinely.** Once you have security policies, lockdown procedures and emergency programs in place, you must train all staff members and students so they understand both the procedures and their specific roles. Implementing a program without dedicating the necessary time to train and practice is nearly the same as having no security program at all.