

FPS Safety and Security

Commonly Asked Questions and Answers Regarding Schools and Homeland Security Issues

The following may be reproduced and utilized as a tool for the education and awareness of FPS employees as well as of Farmington/Farmington Hills parents and community members. Included are recommendations for the District's response to color-code changes within the Homeland Security Advisory System as well as guidelines for "shelter in place" protocols.

Q. 1. Has FPS developed any guidelines for safe schools planning and emergency response?

A. 1. In 1998, FPS began a collaborative project with our local law enforcement and emergency responder agencies to upgrade our protocols and procedures for safe schools planning. In January 2000, the FPS Board of Education formally approved our Guidelines for Safe Schools Planning and Crisis Management. Our guidelines are comprehensive in nature and utilize an all-hazards approach to crisis management and safe schools planning. Additionally, unified code responses have been conveyed to our local law enforcement and emergency responders to maintain consistency in language and response tactics. Further, updated building site plans have been shared with our local law enforcement and fire department agencies.

Key components of our guidelines include preparedness/prevention, response and recovery. (See Safe Schools Planning Chart)

All employee units were directly involved with the planning of these guidelines and representatives from all units, as were law enforcement and emergency responder personnel, all continue to serve on the District's Safe Schools Advisory Committee. The roles and responsibilities for educators, law enforcement and first responders/fire officials have been collaboratively developed, reviewed and approved by all Executive Staffs. Each school building has assembled and trained a Crisis Management team; the team, led by a building administrator, manages the guidelines at the building level.

At the District level, an Administrative Response Team, led by the Safe Schools and Student Services Department, in conjunction with the School/Community Relations Department, coordinates and manages communication and incident response. Additionally, a Crisis Response Committee has been formed, comprised of District social workers, psychologists and counselors to address the emotional and mental health needs of employees and students as a result of a crisis or trauma.

Specific security measures included within the FPS safe schools guidelines include, but are not limited to:

- Ongoing communication and collaboration with local law enforcement and emergency responders.
- All hazards response protocols and procedures which have been distributed to all employees, as well as to local police and fire departments.
- Upgraded protocols and procedures for emergency drills to include evacuation, tornado, shelter-in place and three levels of lockdowns.
- School door numbering to aid public safety response.
- Strict visitor/volunteer controls.
- Limited access to buildings.
- Annual building security walk-throughs facilitated by our local law enforcement agencies.
- Multiple emergency crisis kits assembled and housed within all buildings.

Working in collaboration with:

- Farmington Public Schools Safe Schools Advisory Committee
- Farmington/Farmington Hills Call to Action Coalition
- 47th District Court
- Farmington Hills Fire Department
- Farmington Hills Police Department
- Farmington Public Safety Department
- Oakland County Circuit Court

Prevention Components

- ATOD Violence Prevention
- Early Intervention/Referral Teams
- Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation
- Anger Management
- Anti-Bullying
- Anti Harassment/Diversity
- Student Leadership Opportunities

Response/Recovery Components

- General Building Security
- Communications/Media Response
- Incident Response/Crisis Management
- Incident Recovery
- Standards of Conduct
- Codes of Conduct
- Student Handbooks
- Truancy Prevention Protocols
- Attendance & Discipline Policies
- District Administrative Incident Response Team

Q. 2. What is an “all-hazards approach” to planning security response protocols?

A. 2. An “all-hazards” approach means that the District has developed response protocols to respond to any thinkable critical incident that may directly impact our schools to include natural disasters, biological outbreaks, as well as incidents by persons intent on causing harm or injury to others.

Q. 3. How has FPS prepared for the threat of terrorist attacks?

A. 3. FPS Response:

Since 9-11-01 and subsequent events, intense focus has been on emergency preparedness and preventative measures to protect our country. While the risk is considered to be small in Michigan, we still have the duty and responsibility to remain in a heightened awareness and to assure that our Guidelines for Safe Schools Planning and Crisis Management are consistently implemented and enforced throughout our school buildings.

The key principles of any emergency preparedness are collaboration, planning and practice. In the event of the threat of terrorism, any action taken by FPS will depend upon the level of the threat, and the advice of local, state and federal agencies. Be reassured that the safety of students and our employees will always be the primary concern in any decision.

Law enforcement Response:

In the event that security may be threatened within the Farmington/Farmington Hills community, officer shifts and duties will be authorized by law enforcement officials dependent upon the intelligence information received. Based upon information received, law enforcement officials will gauge what direct effect an incident may have upon our community to determine an appropriate and necessary response.

Q. 4. How does FPS respond to the color-coding within the nation's Homeland Security Advisory System? What will FPS do if the system designates a Code Red?

A. 4. The Homeland Security Advisory System is a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist attacks to Federal, State and local authorities and to the American people.

The five color codes, representing graduated threat conditions, are designed to provide a consistent frame of reference for information. Heightened threat conditions may be declared for the entire nation. However, a heightened condition may also be declared for a specific Geographic area or sector.

FPS routinely encourages vigilance and a heightened state of awareness to maintain safety and security within our school buildings. FPS also monitors the ongoing implementation of our security measures as outlined by our guidelines. Green (Low), Blue (Guarded) and Yellow (Elevated) Codes do not impose additional elevated response protocols for the District.

The Orange (High Condition) will always necessitate immediate communication with our local law enforcement agencies to assist us in determining an appropriate response based upon the level of threat to the Farmington/Farmington Hills community. In the event that the Homeland Security Advisory System activates a Code Orange, FPS will maintain

ongoing communication with local law enforcement. Through collaborative assessments, school buildings will be directed to take further security measures as necessary.

Code Red (Severe Condition) may reflect a severe risk of terrorist attacks. In the event that the Homeland Security Advisory System activates a Code Red, FPS will immediately institute its Building Lockdown protocols. All doors will be locked and building personnel will continually monitor the main door. Daily building activities will continue as usual. Depending upon additional information, further emergency needs will be made in collaboration with police and fire. This may include the closing or evacuation of schools. Should this be the case, parents should tune into local radio and television, as well as the District's cable channel TV-10 for updates.

Q. 5. How will the FPS parent community be informed should an incident occur within our school community?

A. 5. Building Crisis Management teams have developed communication plans to inform parents should a disruption occur within a school building, during the school day. Communication plans may include, but not be limited to written letters, School Messenger phone calls, List Serv messages or phone fan-outs. In addition, we will continue to update parents and the community regarding safety and security through the District's web site (www.farmington.k12.mi.us) and the District's cable channel, TV-10. The information on the web site can be found under "Site Map A-Z," under "School Safety."

However, should a community-wide incident occur, police and fire will immediately engage a multi-agency unified response and establish a system to support the entire community. The Red Cross, whose charter is to handle disasters by providing mass care and feeding, will coordinate shelter needs. TV, radio and the Emergency Alert System (EAS) will assist with communication needs. Law enforcement will assist with the managing of evacuation routes as necessary.

Additionally, should an incident of this magnitude occur, it is imperative that parents realize that access to schools might be restricted beyond the District's control. **In such instances, parents should not call schools, as phone lines must be accessible for emergency communications.** Parents should remain attuned to public notices on radio and television regarding updates and remember that student and employee safety is our first priority. Should students and employees need to be evacuated to an alternate site, they will be safely transported and parents will be informed of the reunification location via the local radio and television stations, as well as the District's cable channel, TV-10. **For safety reasons, school districts do not widely publicize alternate sites, nor the specificities of security protocols.**

Q. 6. What is a "shelter in place" protocol? Are school districts stockpiling food and water for long-term sheltering? In case of a chemical threat, are schools prepared with duct tape and plastic sheeting?

A. 6. Much conflicting information, regarding “shelter in place” protocols exist on web sites or through media articles. From numerous conversations with representatives from the Michigan State Police and our local law enforcement and fire departments, the following credible and reasonable explanations and recommendations are being made by FPS.

“Shelter in place” is an emergency response tool to protect students and employees in the event of a potential exposure to a dangerous chemical in the atmosphere. If a dangerous chemical were released in the community and posed a threat to FPS during the school day, affected schools or all school buildings would be directed by public safety officials to ensure that all students and employees are inside the building, to shut down all heating, ventilation and cooling systems (HVAC) and to close and secure all windows and doors. The neutral atmospheric pressure created by these actions would create a barrier and help keep chemical agents from leaking into the building. Duct tape and plastic sheeting would not be necessary.

Most of the envisioned emergency situations would be localized, short-term (hours, not days) events and would not call for long-term supplies. Therefore it is not necessary, nor recommended, that schools stockpile three days worth of food and water inside each facility for each child/employee. Remember, for long-term sheltering, the Red Cross would assume coordination of food and shelter for our community.

During a “shelter in place” response, emergency responders would secure the affected school building(s) and no one would be allowed in or out of the building until authorized personnel issue an all-clear signal.

Should there be a widespread chemical threat to our community, regional HAZMAT teams, under the direction of the Michigan Emergency Management Division of the State Police, would coordinate with the Red Cross, local first responders and public safety officials to enter affected areas and to establish community-wide shelters. School buildings would also be utilized as sites for community shelters. Multiple agencies have been training and preparing to support our community in the event of a crisis of such magnitude.

Q. 7. What is the difference between a chemical and a biological threat?

A. 7. As stated earlier, a chemical threat is defined when there may be a hazardous amount of a potentially dangerous chemical within the atmosphere. A biological threat involves the deliberate use of biological weapons or devices intended to spread disease-producing organisms or toxins or a pandemic flu outbreak. Funding through the CDC has allowed Michigan to enhance our ability to respond to acts of bioterrorism, or pandemic flu outbreaks across the entire state. This includes coordinating emergency management activities and enhancing disease detection and reporting, thereby improving Michigan’s health alert network. In reality, any biological threat would most likely manifest as an illness.

In the event that situations appear to be biologically threatening to the community, emergency responders, or our public health authorities, would notify the public through a variety of media networks. The potential for school closings might exist; however, an incident of this nature would most likely not manifest as a spontaneous emergency.

Q. 8. How might I assist FPS and my community during these tense times?

A. 8. Be vigilant and attuned. Always report anything suspicious to building administration and/or your local law enforcement agency. Remind your children to never bring any item to school that may risk the safety and welfare of your child and others. Additionally, remind your children that we will not tolerate verbal or inappropriate threatening statements or acts, even jokingly, that may frighten or disturb others. Stay accurately informed, and educate as well as reassure others regarding safety and security measures within your school(s) as well as within your community. Dispel rumors. Reassure children that they are safe. Remain connected with your schools to provide support as needed.

Additionally, prepare homes with similar security plans to include response and recovery efforts, and how to recognize and respond to any form of an emergency.

Q. 9. How does FPS safety and security guidelines apply to before and after school activities?

A. 9. The District is in direct contact with community agencies and organizations which include, but are not limited to, the Farmington Family YMCA, (Y Child Care), Middle School Youth Centers, the City of Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation and Special Services Departments to maintain consistent sharing of information regarding security updates. Should security needs disrupt planned activities, program supervisors will be involved with emergency planning.

Q. 10. What is the District's policy regarding the use of cell phones by students during the school day? Can my child bring a cell phone to school in case of an emergency?

A. 10. Students may possess a cell phone while in school. However, the cell phone must be kept out of sight, turned off and shall not be used during school hours, while riding in any school vehicle or during school-sponsored events whereby the use of the cell phone would be a disruption. Additionally, while the District understands parent/guardian concerns regarding the use of cell phones during an emergency, it is imperative that phone lines/air waves remain accessible for emergency responders and crisis managers.

Suggested Web Site Resources

- www.fhready.org
- www.ed.gov/emergencyplan
- www.ready.gov
- www.redcross.gov
- www.nea.org/crisis

FPS Safety and Security Guidelines for Classrooms: Monitoring the Emotional Safety of our Children

The following are general guidelines for supporting children through any difficult time, as well as specific recommendations generated by the District's Crisis Response Committee which is comprised of trained and certified social workers, psychologists and counselors.

- Children of all ages need comfort during high stress times.
- Provide support for children's concerns; validate feelings.
- Listen as children speak; respect their fears or emotions.
- Often a paramount concern for children revolves around the need for reassurances regarding the safety of "their world."

Specific Recommendations from Crisis Response Team:

- If additional support is needed, refer questions/concerns to counselors, social workers or psychologists.
- Reassure students that many within our schools and community are trained and prepared to assist in maintaining safety and security within our schools.
- Continue to reinforce the District's Anti-Bullying, Conflict Resolution and Peer Mediation programs should conflicts arise among students.
- Above all, be vigilant; maintain a heightened sense of awareness and always report anything suspicious to a building administrator.