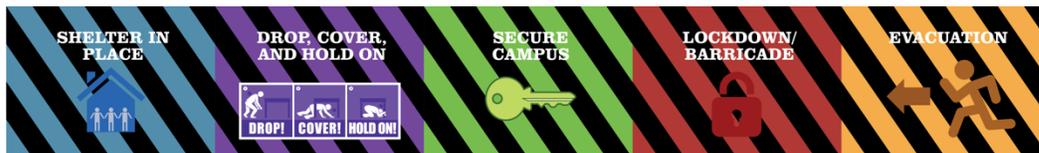


The Big Five Emergency Communication Guide and Templates

COMPANION TO THE BIG FIVE ADMINISTRATOR PACKET



2025-26 School Year



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GENERAL THREAT OF VIOLENCE

1. Prepare - Overview

Preparation can help ensure that your emergency-related communication is effective and de-escalates an emergency situation while not generating additional problems. If your communication is not timely, accurate, and consistent, you may be dealing with the fallout for months after the emergency itself is over.

Being proactive in your communication helps build confidence in your commitment to school safety. The absence of factual information will often generate misinformation, speculation, panic, and responses by key audiences that do not help resolve the situation. Conversely, communicating early demonstrates that you have nothing to hide and that your district is dealing with the critical incident in a responsible manner. Your preparation will help you be a proactive and competent communicator when an emergency arises.

Your preparation efforts should include the following:

- Know and practice The Big Five Emergency Procedures
- Establish communication roles
- Identify the people who will fill those roles
- Set location and prepare communication center and supplies
- Identify key stakeholder groups and make sure information is up-to-date and accessible
- Establish channels for communicating with each stakeholder group
- Update and review communication guidelines and templates
- Prepare parents, students, staff, and other stakeholders for emergency situations

This guide is intended to support The Big Five Emergency Administrator Packet. For a copy of the packet, please contact the San Mateo County Office of Education.

Remember...

Prepare - Overview

We are always communicating, whether we are saying anything or not. It is just a matter of whether we are doing it well.

2. Know and Practice The Big Five Emergency Procedures

The Big Five Emergency Procedures have been adopted by all San Mateo County school districts and law enforcement agencies. By knowing and practicing these procedures, your district should be more organized and confident in what you need to do when an emergency arises. Being clear on when and how to implement each of The Big Five procedures can reduce confusion, as everyone has a better idea of what their role is and the steps they need to follow.

The following is a summary of The Big Five Emergency Procedures. For a copy of the San Mateo County's The Big Five Emergency Procedures Administrator Packet, please contact the San Mateo County Office of Education.

ACTION	DESCRIPTION
	<p>For external environmental threats, medical emergencies, or tsunami warnings (outside the danger zone). Actions may include closing windows, sealing vents, and shutting down HVAC systems.</p>
	<p>Implement during an earthquake or explosion to protect building occupants from flying and falling debris. Students and staff must immediately drop, cover, and hold on during the incident. May be followed by evacuation.</p>
	<p>For potential threats of violence nearby: Return to assigned classroom. Close and lock all doors. Remain inside and continue with learning.</p>
	<p>Initiate for an immediate threat of danger to occupants of a campus or school building and when any movement will put students and staff in jeopardy. Once implemented, no one is allowed to enter or exit rooms for any reason unless directed by law enforcement.</p>

Know and Practice The Big Five Emergency Procedures



Implement when conditions outside the building or off-site are safer than inside or on-site. Requires moving or directing students and staff to move from school buildings to a pre-determined safe location.

3. Establish Communication Roles

Depending on the nature of the emergency, several people may need to be involved in communication activities. As part of your preparation, you should establish needs and roles, identify the people for each role, and make sure they understand what they need to do and how their efforts fit into the larger emergency response. In many cases, the same person may play many or all of the roles.

These questions will help guide planning with your communication team. Note that one person may need to fill several roles, however, back-up people should be identified for each role.

- Who will serve as incident commander?
This person will have the final say on what is communicated.

- Who will be responsible for communication both at the site and at the district?
Make sure you have back-ups who can take over and/or assist if needed.

- Who will prepare and communicate messages?
They will need The Big Five Emergency Communication Guidelines and Templates.

- Who will communicate with the district or the site?

- Who will communicate with the Incident Commander?

- Who will answer phones? They will need some coaching.

- Who will post to social media and update the website?

Establish Communication Roles

- Who will translate messages?
- Who will liaise with parents?
- Who will serve as employee liaison to keep employees (and, at times, their families) fully informed of the incident and response efforts?
- Who will serve as community liaison?
- If needed, who will liaise with the media, preferably at a pre-determined off-site location?
- Who will handle communication after the emergency?
- Who can we turn to for help if needed—other districts, County Office of Education, etc.?

4. Establish a Communication Center

As part of your preparation, it will be essential to establish where your communication center will be based. This might be at the district, on site, or virtual. The location and type of center will vary depending on the type of crisis. For example, the communication needs, constraints, and challenges for a Shelter in Place emergency response will be very different than those of a Lockdown/Barricade response. Thus, flexibility and the ability to pivot depending on the circumstances will be important.

The following points will be useful to consider and address as you identify and establish your communication centers.

- Where will your communication center be located – at district, on site, virtual?

- How will the type of emergency protocol impact where your center will be located?

Supplies you may need depending on the emergency:

- Networked computers
- Phones – land and cell
- Printer
- Television
- Copy machine
- Office supplies
- Charged computer and phones and back up chargers
- Emergency Communication Pack – charged computer, phones, contact lists
- Easily accessible contact information for school parents and families of staff, board members, district families and staff, County Office of Education, neighboring schools, and local media
- Emergency information for students and staff
- Account and log-in information for website, social media, communication platforms

5. Identify Key Stakeholders or Audiences

During an emergency, some people need information sooner than others. Staff members and students on the site are the most critical audience. Their need for information should always take precedence. District staff and others helping resolve the situation are also critical stakeholders. Parents, guardians, and board members need information early and updates regularly. The list continues from there. Other schools in the district, neighboring schools, and the surrounding community may also need to be notified. Depending on the incident, the larger community may also have a need to know, and the media can help you reach that audience.

Who are your stakeholders?

The following is an example of what your list might look like. You may want to work through the list in this order or divide it into groups or tiers based on how urgently they will require information. Depending on the emergency, you may not need to reach out to all of these groups.

- Staff, students, others on site
- District staff and others who might support efforts to resolve the situation
- Parents and guardians of students on site
- Board members
- Other district staff, schools, and parents
- County Office of Education
- Neighboring schools and other neighbors
- Local leaders
- Media

As you prepare, make sure you have contact information for all of these audiences. This information needs to be easy to access even if your network goes down during an emergency.

Identify Key Stakeholders or Audiences

If you are not communicating with your key stakeholders in languages they can understand, then you are not communicating effectively with them. Make sure templates you use are translated and that someone is on hand to update those messages to reflect the actual emergency before you send them.

6. Establish and Use Communication Channels Before an Emergency

Once you have identified your audiences during an emergency, you can determine the best way to reach them. Just remember that an emergency is not the time to start using a new communication channel. Part of your preparation is to regularly use your communication channels so there is no learning on the job when a crisis hits and so users come to expect communication from you on those channels.

Communicating early demonstrates you have nothing to hide and that your organization is dealing with the critical incident in a responsible manner. Throughout the crisis, communicate regularly to avoid creating an information vacuum.

Review of Communication Channels

Website

Research shows that communicating through an organization's website is a good way to communicate effectively and efficiently with all of your audiences during a crisis. Other communication channels are effective at getting the word out quickly, but the website is a place where information can be updated easily and in more detail. Ideally, the other channels direct the various audiences or stakeholders to the website.

Mass Notification System

A message delivered almost instantly to parents and guardians through your mass notification system is probably the best way to communicate quickly. Setting it up so it targets multiple channels (text, phone, email) helps ensure the information gets out to the largest number of people. Use the message to also direct parents to your website for regular updates. Set up templates in the system in advance so all you need to do is make edits to reflect the situation and send them. Be sure to regularly update parent contact information and test the system.

Phone Hotlines

Prerecorded messages allow parents and guardians to access important information by calling the school and accessing the line through the phone menu. Principals can post a brief statement about an emergency and what the school is doing and direct callers to other resources, such as the website, for detailed information.

Social Media

While parents might not be reviewing your website regularly, many will be checking social media often. Social media is a good way to get information out quickly to a large number of people. Post frequent, brief, and pertinent updates throughout the duration of the crisis, even if there is nothing new to report. Remember, a crisis is not the time to begin to using social media in earnest. Build

and nurture your social media channels all year long. Also, if your social media accounts are set up so that parents and others can comment on your posts, be sure to monitor those comments to identify and respond to concerns in your community and correct any misinformation.

Guidelines and Templates

Visit Section 10, Guidelines and Templates, for a step-by-step communication guide that corresponds to each of The Big Five emergency protocols as well as sample templates for each communication channel. Be sure to review the guide and edit it to reflect your respective stakeholders and organization, translate the guide as necessary, and have staff practice working through the steps and templates.

Back-Up Plan

When an event occurs that impacts large numbers of people, cellular networks can become overwhelmed and jammed, making it difficult to get through by voice or text message. Cell phone batteries can become quickly depleted in an emergency, so be prepared with a backup plan for voice communication. This might include a recorded message at the school or an old-fashioned telephone tree.

What channel(s) will you use for the stakeholders you previously identified?

7. Work with the Media

Depending on your event, you may or may not want to reach out to the media. You can do this passively through your social media channels or take a more proactive approach with emails to reporters. In many cases, you won't have a choice; the media will reach out to you. Being prepared to work with the media can make a difference on how your situation, competency, and even commitment to safety is communicated to your parents and the larger community.

Like other parts of your emergency communications plan, a crisis shouldn't be the first time you engage with the media. Earning and maintaining the trust of local media before an emergency is vital to communicating with the media during a crisis. Relationships make a difference. Share newsletters with the media, invite local reporters on campus to view programs in actions, and/or have periodic one-on-one conversations with local reporters.

Tips for Working with the Media

- Be prepared. Be honest. Be brief. Be accessible.
- Understand all the facts, especially technical ones, and stick to them.
- Keep cool. Do not become defensive; do not lose your temper or argue.
- Develop a written statement to be read and handed out.
- Determine where members of the media can gather in the case of a major emergency. This will likely be off-campus but within view of the school.
- Stress concern for student safety and positive actions taken by the school or district.
- Do not make statements about responsibility until all the facts are known.
- Pause and collect your thoughts before you respond to reporters' questions.
- The interview is not over until the reporter leaves. Always be careful about what you say in the presence of a reporter before or after an interview. The microphone may still be on.
- Do not respond to negative questions by repeating words that inflame the situation: *"Yes, it is a real tragedy that..."*
- Be alert to statements that begin with: *Is it true that ...? Are you really saying that ...?* How do you respond to ...? Are you aware that ...?
- Avoid "what if" questions. You cannot predict the future.
- Do not say, "No comment." Instead, try "I will have to check into the matter. What is your deadline? I will get back to you."
- Do not speak "off the record." The cost can be too high if that agreement is not respected.
- Avoid using education jargon or acronyms.

Work with the Media

- If you update news releases during the day, be sure the time of release is at the top of the page.
- Know what is being done to help staff and students cope with the situation.

–Adapted from the National School Public Relations Association’s (NSPRA’s) *The Complete Crisis Communication Management Manual for Schools*

8. Communicate after the Emergency

Once a crisis and the corresponding response has been completed, your communication work is not over. Depending on the nature of the emergency and your response, your communication needs and work might actually escalate at this point. However, being prepared and following good communication procedures can help mitigate some of your follow-up work.

In most cases, you may simply want to take some time as a team to review what went well and what could have been done differently. You will then want to act on the list of improvements you identified. A summary of this reflection could also be shared with parents, which would demonstrate your commitment to safety, transparency, and improvement.

If the emergency had an impact on your school or district beyond special steps you took for a couple of hours during the school day, you should call a meeting for parents to go through the day, your response, and the follow-up. If someone was injured or damage to the building occurred, you will want to provide updates on that as well. Be sure your legal team is actively engaged.

If you experience injuries (or worse), extensive damage to facilities, compromises to computer security, or students out of school for multiple days, your post-emergency communications efforts will be demanding and extensive. Parents, the community, the media, your board, and local leaders will want answers—how did this happen, why did this happen, what could have been done differently, and what will be done so this does not happen again? Formal investigations may occur, media may camp outside the school and talk to parents, and it may be hard to focus on anything else.

If you are faced with this type of challenging situation, remain calm, factual, empathetic, and focused on learning and improvement. Even though more than just the media may be attending your public meetings, you should review *Tips for Working with the Media* on the previous page. The following recommendations can also help bring some order and credibility to your efforts:

- Make sure that your primary stakeholders receive information before or at least at the same time as outside audiences.
- Consider updating your website 1) on a regular basis (e.g., 2:00 p.m. every day) even if there is no new information and 2) as important new information becomes available.
- Be responsive to requests for all-school meetings.
- You may also want to conduct a daily press conference.
- At your press conference, keep the time for questions short. Read your statement, take a couple of questions, and remind people to check your website for updates.

Communicate after the Emergency

- While you may hire an outside consultant to help advise you on communications, the Superintendent should interact with parents and conduct the press conferences. People want to hear from the Superintendent who should be very present and visible at this time.
- To minimize detrimental mental health impacts on students and staff, use trauma-informed approaches. Specific recommendations can be found in The Big Five Administrator Packet.
- Again, be honest, transparent, and caring.

9. Prepare Parents Before an Emergency Happens

Once the district's plans and communication protocols are in place and district and site staff have been briefed and given time to review and practice, it is time to focus on your greatest partner in promoting school safety and effective communication: parents and guardians. If they are informed, engaged, and clear on their role in school safety from the beginning, they will likely be of greater help during an emergency and more supportive after the fact.

As stated previously, be sure to communicate with parents on channels they use or will pay attention to and practice that communication all year long. Use summer communication to ask parents to update and provide more comprehensive contact information, as well as review The Big Five School Emergency Guidelines and the Role of Parents in an Emergency points below. Back-to-School Night is an important time to share this information again and confirm that you have critical contact information. You will want to be clear on what the school is doing to keep students safe and what parents can do to support that effort.

What the School is Doing to Keep Students Safe

- Share highlights of your emergency plan. (Do not share the plan or post it online.)
- Provide a summary of The Big Five Emergency Protocols.
- Review measures in place to prevent or reduce the risk of crime, violence, and other safety hazards. For example, highlight security upgrades you have made, threat assessment training and protocol trainings you have held, and safety reviews you have conducted.
- Explain how you will communicate in the case of an emergency. For example, communication will likely be handled through the district and provided through official channels, such as the website, social media sites, and phone and email messages.
- Share your predetermined reunification site and note that this could change depending on the situation.
- Notify them of your plans to periodically test the emergency communication system. If parents notice that they are not receiving any test alerts, they should contact the school.
- Reiterate your commitment to the safety of your students.
- Emphasize your commitment to communicate as early and often as possible.
- Ask for patience if communication is not as fast as they would like. Again, the safety of the students comes first and staff will address that first.

What Parents Can Do to Keep Students Safe

- Make sure their emergency contact information is up-to-date and comprehensive.
- Make sure your list of adults who are authorized to pick up their child is up-to-date and that those adults know to always carry their ID with them. Children will not be released to anyone who is unauthorized or cannot provide appropriate identification.
- Make sure the school has information about any special needs their child may have.
- Check their phone/email every morning before they come to school in case there is a problem on campus.
- Check established communication channels regularly.
- During an emergency, parents should not call the school. It is essential to keep phone lines open so school officials can make outgoing emergency calls. If students are ill or injured, the parents of those students will be notified first.
- During an emergency, parents should not go to the school. One of the greatest challenges facing school officials and first responders is how to manage an onslaught of parents. Parents might also inadvertently create traffic jams that may block emergency responders from getting to the scene or leaving if necessary to transport injured students or staff to emergency medical facilities.
- Parents should not reach out to their child during an emergency at school. The students need to be focused on what they should be doing and, in some cases, they need to be quiet.
- For parents of older children, make sure they feel encouraged and safe to subscribe to “see something – say something.”
- Encourage their children to take drills seriously, to listen carefully, and follow directions.

10. Communication Guide & Templates for Use During an Emergency

This section of the manual includes a step-by-step guide for each The Big Five emergency protocol as well as corresponding templates to help jumpstart your emergency communication efforts. The templates cover initial communication through reflection once the event is over. This section should be reviewed once the steps in the earlier sections of this manual have been completed. For example, you will need to identify your stakeholder groups and the best ways to reach them before you can customize the materials in this section.

Using the Guidelines and Templates

The first time you pull out these guidelines and templates should not be when you are in the process of responding to an emergency. Take time to customize them for your district and/or school. This includes listing primary and secondary stakeholders and preferred communication channels for each stakeholder group. You may need to translate the templates to save time when an emergency arises and ensure that your communication with parents is effective and equitable.

The communication guide and templates address immediate and interim communication, communication once the situation is resolved, and communication the next day when the dust has settled a bit. As addressed in Section 8, *Communication after an Emergency*, your communication efforts may go on for months after the event. These templates do not address that situation. Sometimes, the only opportunity you will have to communicate is after the event is over, since ensuring student safety is your first priority and some events are resolved quickly. In that case, use the guide to help you reach all of the stakeholders you identified, with your primary audience being contacted first; that you have the facts and timeline clear; and that your messages are consistent regardless of who delivers them.

When an emergency hits and you are able to begin communicating, go to the section that reflects the type of emergency response you are employing: Shelter in Place; Drop, Cover, and Hold On; Secure Campus; Lockdown/Barricade; or Evacuation. Work your way through the document until the event is resolved.



Shelter in Place – Communication Plan

Shelter in Place is a short-term measure implemented to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment and prevent exposure to airborne contaminants or threats posed by wildlife, fire in the community, external chemical releases, or other hazards. It may also be implemented during a medical emergency or tsunami warning (unless the school is directly in the tsunami danger zone). It may include closing and sealing doors, windows, and vents; shutting down the classroom/building heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems to prevent exposure to the outside air; and turning off pilot lights. Students and staff may freely move about indoors, but no one should leave the designated space until directed by fire officials, law enforcement, or site administration.

Communication Steps

1. Notify staff of decision and provide update on plan.
2. Complete the [information inventory and planning form](#). Use this information to create communication messages for different channels. Receive approval from the Incident Commander on information to be shared.
3. Communicate with primary stakeholders, which would likely include staff, parents, and board members (set your list).
 - Use pre-established channels. (e.g., mass notification system for text, email, and phone messages; website posts; social media posts)
 - Use [draft templates](#) for each channel and edit as appropriate.
 - Prepare [talking points](#) for those answering phones.
4. Communicate with secondary stakeholders, including other schools in the district, area schools, the County Office of Education, and neighbors (set your list).
5. Ensure that all staff answering phones have the talking points and understand that they are not to provide information beyond the talking points without prior approval.
6. [Repeat as more information becomes available](#).
7. If the situation escalates to evacuation, use the [Evacuation emergency response section](#) of the communications plan.
8. When the incident is resolved, [provide an update](#) through the same channels.

9. Within the next 24 hours, [prepare an update](#) addressing what happened, sharing what the school did to keep students safe, and reiterating the district's commitment to safety.
10. Consider holding a parent meeting within a few days of the event.

Immediate Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Use this form to gather and organize the information you will share in your initial and subsequent communication on various channels. Be sure to have it approved by the School Incident Commander. Remember: Focus on just the facts. Do not speculate. Be as transparent as possible.

Why did we go into Shelter in Place? Get specifics so you understand the threat.

When did the incident take place?

Who has been involved since the incident began? *(e.g., XYZ Police Department, District Office, Superintendent)*

What are first responders doing to address the situation? *(e.g., Shutting down the classroom/building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to prevent exposure)*

What are we doing about the incident? *(e.g., Closing and sealing all doors and windows, continuing instruction indoors)*

Who do we need to notify about this incident? *(e.g., Parents, staff, others in the district, neighbors, San Mateo County Office of Education)*

When must we notify parents about changes in student dismissal, in case the situation is not resolved?

What should parents do at this point in time? *(e.g., Stay inside, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal)*

Other notes:

Templates – Immediate Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Name of School(s) is/are] in Shelter in Place at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to an environmental hazard. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Poor air quality, medical emergency, tsunami warning, Police are currently responding to a mountain lion in the area.]

School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear by fire officials, law enforcement, or site administration. [Add in more details about your response, e.g. Students and staff can move about freely indoors with windows and doors securely closed and heating or air conditioning units off.]

Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students safe. We urge parents and other visitors to avoid going outside or calling our office until they are notified that normal school activities have resumed. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open.

We will update this webpage as more information becomes available.

*Remember to add a time stamp to your original post.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Name of School(s)] is now in Shelter in Place due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, medical emergency, tsunami warning, an environmental hazard in the area]. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At the request of the [Name Police Department], [Name of School(s) is/are] in Shelter in Place due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, medical emergency, tsunami warning, an environmental hazard in the area]. School activities will continue as normal within

classrooms until we are given the all-clear. [Add in more details as needed, e.g. Students and staff can move about freely indoors with windows and doors securely closed.]

The [Name Police Department] requests that you please avoid going outside or calling the school until the Shelter in Place is lifted. Visit our website for more information and updates at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Name of School(s) is/are] in Shelter in Place at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, medical emergency, an environmental hazard in the area]. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Police are currently responding to a mountain lion in the area.]

School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear. [Add in more details as needed, e.g. Students and staff can move about freely indoors with windows and doors securely closed.]

Please remember that we work very hard to keep your children safe. The [Name Police Department] requests that you avoid going outside or calling our office until you are notified that the Shelter in Place emergency response has been lifted. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication.

Please visit our website for more information and updates at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 109 Characters:

[Name of School(s) is/are] now in Shelter in Place due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, an environmental hazard in the area]. More at [Website address].

Approx. 234 Characters:

[Name of School(s) is/are] now in Shelter in Place at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, an environmental hazard in the area]. School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

Please avoid going outside or calling the school until the Shelter in Place order is lifted. More info at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s) is/are] in Shelter in Place, at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, an environmental hazard in the area].
- [Report what the hazard is.]
- Shelter in Place is a short-term measure implemented to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment and prevent exposure to airborne contaminants or threats posed by wildlife, fire in the community, external chemical releases, or other hazards. It may also be implemented during a medical emergency or tsunami warning (unless the school is directly in the tsunami danger zone).
- Shelter in Place includes closing and sealing doors, windows, and vents; shutting down the classroom/building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to prevent exposure to the outside air; and turning off pilot lights.
- Students and staff may freely move about inside the buildings, but no one should leave the designated space until directed by fire officials, law enforcement, or site administration.
- School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.
- We are cooperating with first responders to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- Please avoid going outside or calling the office until the Shelter in Place order has been removed.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.

Communication Guide & Templates for Use During an Emergency – Shelter in Place

- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Interim Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

New information. Use the following questions to gather and organize any new information to share with stakeholders through your various channels. If the situation will impact regular dismissal, confer with the Incident Commander about alternative plans. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

No new information before regular dismissal time. Confer with the Incident Commander about how the situation may impact regular dismissal. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

What new information do I have about the incident? *(If you will report anything about harm to children or staff, be sure to mention that parents/relatives of the injured children/staff have been notified.)*

Has our response to the incident changed? If so, how?

If the incident impacts regular dismissal, answer the following questions:

Why does the incident impact regular dismissal?

What is the alternative plan at this point? *(e.g., Students will stay in class doing fun projects until we are given the green light that it is safe to let them leave their building; once we know they can leave, we will notify parents, open the gates, and begin the dismissal process)*

What should parents do at this point? (e.g., *Do not go outside, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today*)

Other notes:

Templates – Interim Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name] Police Department has asked that [School(s)] remain in Shelter in Place for the time being. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice].

Again, Shelter in Place is a short-term measure implemented to isolate students and staff. School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear by fire officials, law enforcement, or site administration. [Add in more details as needed, e.g. Students and staff can move about freely indoors with windows and doors securely closed.]

Parents and visitors should avoid going outside or calling our office until Shelter in Place is lifted. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

More information will be shared as it becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Add a time stamp to all updates on your website and maintain a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Share any new information, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has asked that [School(s)] remain in Shelter in Place for the time being. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has asked that [School(s)] remain in Shelter in Place for the time being. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice].

Again, Shelter in Place is a short-term measure to isolate students and staff. Parents and visitors should avoid going outside or calling our office until Shelter in Place is lifted. Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has asked that [School(s)] remain in Shelter in Place for the time being. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice].

Again, Shelter in Place is a short-term measure to isolate students and staff. School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear. [Add in more details as needed, e.g. Students and staff can move about freely indoors with windows and doors securely closed.]

The [Name Police Department] requests that you avoid going outside or calling our office until you are notified that the Shelter in Place order has been lifted. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe. Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

[Share any new update, e.g. The [Name] Police Department has asked that [School(s)] remain in Shelter in Place for the time being. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice.] More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s) is/are] in Shelter in Place, at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, an environmental hazard in the area].
- [Report what the hazard is.]
- At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has asked that [School(s)] remain in Shelter in Place for the time being. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice].
- Shelter in Place is a short-term measure implemented to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment and prevent exposure to airborne contaminants or threats posed by wildlife, fire in the community, external chemical releases, or other hazards. It may also be implemented during a medical emergency or tsunami warning (unless the school is directly in the tsunami danger zone).
- Shelter in Place includes closing and sealing doors, windows, and vents; shutting down the classroom/building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to prevent exposure to the outside air; and turning off pilot lights.
- Students and staff may freely move about inside the buildings, but no one should leave the designated space until directed by fire officials, law enforcement, or site administration.
- School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.
- We are cooperating with first responders to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- Please avoid going outside or calling our office until the Shelter in Place order has been removed.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.

Communication Guide & Templates for Use During an Emergency – Shelter in Place

- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency information, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Situation Resolved Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

How has the situation been resolved?

Will this impact how students and/or staff spend the rest of the day? If so, how? *(e.g. we will have lunch recess, we will have regular dismissal)*

Will this impact school tomorrow? If so, how? *(This might not be known at this point.)*

Other notes:

Templates – Situation Resolved Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

The Shelter in Place order was lifted for [Name of School(s)] at [time], after [share details, e.g. air quality improved, the [Name Police Department] suspended its investigation in the area. Include more information about the incident and its outcome, e.g. The mountain lion was captured and transported to a safe location.]

Normal school activities will resume. [Address potential impact on dismissal. Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] We appreciate your understanding and patience.

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. [Include any other relevant information, e.g. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Remember to add a time stamp to all updates on your website and add a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The Shelter in Place order has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. Normal school activities will resume. [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The Shelter in Place order was lifted for [Name of School(s)] at [time].

Normal school activities will resume. [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to

parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.] You can visit our website for more information at [Website address].

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The Shelter in Place order was lifted for [Name of School(s)] at [time], after [share details, e.g. air quality improved, the [Name Police Department] suspended its investigation in the area. Include more information about the incident and its outcome, e.g. The mountain lion was captured and transported to a safe location.]

Normal school activities will resume. [Address potential impact on dismissal. Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] We appreciate your understanding and patience.

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] or contact the school. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 155 Characters:

The Shelter in Place order has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. Normal school activities will resume. More info [about student dismissal] at [Website address].

Approx. 313 Characters:

The Shelter in Place order has been lifted for [Name of School(s)].

Normal school activities will resume. [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] was/were placed in Shelter in Place at [time], at the request of [Name] Police Department [share reason, e.g. poor air quality, an environmental hazard in the area].
- [Report what the threat was.]
- As of [time], the Shelter in Place order has been lifted.
- [Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. Air quality has improved, No students or staff were in harm's way.]
- [Share information about student dismissal.]
- Shelter in Place is a short-term measure implemented to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment and prevent exposure to airborne contaminants or threats posed by wildlife, fire in the community, external chemical releases, or other hazards. It may also be implemented during a medical emergency or tsunami warning (unless the school is directly in the tsunami danger zone).
- Shelter in Place could include closing and sealing doors, windows, and vents; shutting down the classroom/building heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to prevent exposure to the outside air; and turning off pilot lights. The response varies depending on the incident.
- Students and staff may freely move about inside the buildings, but no one should leave the designated space until directed by fire officials, law enforcement, or site administration.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- You can learn more about our emergency response protocol at [Website address].
- Thank you for partnering with us to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.

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- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however, the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Next Day Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Spend some time reflecting on the incident using the planning form below. Decide which non-emergency channels to use (e.g. non-emergency message through mass notification system, social media posts, letter in backpack).

What went well during our response to the incident?

What did not go well during our response to the incident?

How can we improve our response for this type of incident?

What information would be good to share with parents and/or the school community? *(e.g. grief counselors will be on hand to support students, continued commitment to student safety)*

Where can stakeholders go to find information about our emergency response protocols or related resources?

Other notes:

Templates – Next Day Communication

Example Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

At [time and day], [Name] School was placed in Shelter in Place [share reason, e.g. due to poor air quality, at the request of the [Name Police Department] as it responded to [the specific event in the area, e.g., a mountain lion was found in the neighborhood]]. The school remained in Shelter in Place until [time] when [share reason, e.g. when the air quality improved, when police notified us that the situation was contained].

Shelter in Place is one of five immediate action responses to emergencies practiced among schools in San Mateo County, as part of The Big Five Emergency Guidelines. It is a short-term measure implemented to isolate students and staff from the outdoor environment and prevent exposure to airborne contaminants or threats posed by wildlife, fire in the community, external chemical releases, or other hazards. It may also be implemented during a medical emergency or tsunami warning outside of the tsunami danger zone.

We wish to thank you for your patience and understanding as we responded to the incident. Our primary concern is always for the safety of our students and staff, and we appreciate your partnership in ensuring that our schools are a safe space for all to learn.

We also want to thank our school and district teams for their seamless transition to Shelter in Place and for ensuring the safety of our students.

You can learn more about Shelter in Place and the other The Big Five Emergency Guidelines on our website at [Website address]. If you have any questions about the incident or school safety more generally, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Thank you for helping us maintain a safe learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Superintendent



Drop, Cover, and Hold On – Communication Plan

Drop, Cover, and Hold On is the immediate action taken during an earthquake or explosion to protect students and staff from flying and falling debris. In an event causing falling debris, students and staff should immediately drop to the floor, duck under a sturdy desk or table, cover their head with arms and hands, and hold onto furniture or something sturdy. Evacuation should only occur if there is damage to the building, a fire occurs, or the school is in a tsunami zone.

Communication Steps

1. Notify staff of decision and provide update on plan.
2. Complete [information inventory and planning form](#). Use this information to create communication messages for different channels. Receive approval from Incident Commander on information to be shared.
3. Communicate with primary stakeholders, which would likely include staff, parents, and board members (set your list).
 - Use pre-established channels that are in working order. (e.g., mass notification system for text, email, and phone messages; website posts; social media)
 - Use [draft templates](#) for each channel and edit as appropriate.
 - Prepare [talking points](#) for those answering phones.
4. Communicate with secondary stakeholders, including other schools in the district, area schools, the County Office of Education, and neighbors (set your list).
5. Ensure that all staff answering phones have the talking points and understand that they are not to provide information beyond the talking points without prior approval.
6. [Repeat as more information becomes available](#).
7. In the event of an explosion, earthquake, or other event causing falling debris where the situation escalates to evacuation, use the [Evacuation emergency response section](#) of the communications plan.
8. When the incident is resolved, [provide an update](#) through the same channels.
9. Within the next 24 hours, [prepare an update](#) addressing what happened, sharing what the school did to keep students safe and reiterating the district's commitment to safety.
10. Consider holding a parent meeting within a few days of the event.

Immediate Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Use this form to gather and organize the information you will share in your initial and subsequent communication on various channels. Be sure to have it approved by the School Incident Commander. Remember: Focus on facts. Do not give the names of any students. Do not speculate. Be as transparent as possible.

Why did we initiate Drop, Cover, and Hold On? Get specifics so you understand the threat.

When did the incident take place?

Who has been involved since the incident began? *(e.g., XYZ Fire Department, District Office, Superintendent)*

What are first responders doing to address the situation? *(e.g., inspecting the building for structural integrity, assessing the damage, treating wounded)*

What are we doing about the incident? *(e.g., cooperating with the XYZ Fire Department as they inspect)*

Who do we need to notify about this incident? *(e.g., Parents, staff, others in the district, neighbors, San Mateo County Office of Education)*

When must we notify parents about changes in student dismissal, in case the situation is not resolved?

What should parents do at this point in time? *(e.g., follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today)*

Other notes:

Templates – Immediate Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]. Staff and students immediately responded, following the Drop, Cover, and Hold On emergency response protocol. [Share any other immediate actions taken by staff, e.g. Staff called first responders to the scene and deployed security/our Search and Rescue Team to check for fires, status of utilities, and structural and nonstructural damage.]

[Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities are reported among students and staff, All buildings are intact] at this point in time. [XYZ Fire Department] is currently [describe action, e.g. on its way, assessing the damage, treating the wounded, inspecting the building].

We urge parents and other visitors to avoid coming to the school or calling our office until we have completed assessing the situation. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to ensure the safety of our students and staff. We will update this webpage as more information becomes available.

*Remember to add a time stamp to your original post.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]. [Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities were reported among students and staff, the XYZ Fire Department is currently assessing the damage.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]. [Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities are reported among

students and staff, All buildings are intact, Minimal damages and injuries are reported] at this point in time.

The [Name Fire Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling our office until they have completed assessing the situation. Please visit our website for more information as it becomes available at [Website address].

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]. Staff and students immediately responded, following the Drop, Cover, and Hold On emergency response protocol. [Share any other immediate actions taken by staff, e.g. Staff called first responders to the scene and deployed security/our Search and Rescue Team to check for fires, the status of utilities, and structural and nonstructural damage.]

[Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities are reported among students and staff, All buildings are intact] at this point in time. [The XYZ Fire Department] is currently [describe action, e.g. on its way, assessing the damage, treating the wounded, inspecting the building].

The [Name Fire Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling our office until we have completed assessing the situation. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to ensure the safety of our students and staff. More information will be shared as it becomes available. Please visit our website for more the most current information and updates: [Website address].

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 162 Characters:

[Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]. [Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities were reported among

students and staff, XYZ Fire Department is currently assessing the damage.] More at [Website address].

Approx. 388 Characters:

[Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time].
[Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities are reported among students and staff, All buildings are intact, Minimal damages and injuries are reported] at this point in time.

The [Name Fire Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling our office until we have completed assessing the situation. Please visit our website for more information as it becomes available: [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]
- Staff and students immediately responded, following the Drop, Cover, and Hold On emergency response protocol.
- [Share any other immediate actions taken by staff, e.g. Staff called first responders to the scene and deployed security/our Search and Rescue Team to check for fires, status of utilities, and structural and nonstructural damage.]
- [The XYZ Fire Department] is currently [describe action, e.g. on its way, assessing the damage, treating the wounded, inspecting the building.]
- [Share the status of the situation, e.g. Phone lines are down, No fatalities are reported among students and staff, All buildings are intact] at this point in time.
- We urge parents and other visitors to avoid coming to the school or calling our office until we have completed assessing the situation. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open.
- Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Interim Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

New information. Use the following questions to gather and organize any new information to share with stakeholders through your various channels. If the situation will impact regular dismissal, confer with the Incident Commander about alternative plans. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

No new information before regular dismissal time. Confer with the Incident Commander about how the situation may impact regular dismissal. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

What new information do I have about the incident? If you will report anything about harm to children or staff, be sure to mention that parents/relatives of the injured children/staff have been notified.

Has our response to the incident changed? If so, how?

If the incident impacts regular dismissal, answer the following questions:

Why does the incident impact regular dismissal?

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What is the alternative plan at this point? (e.g., After all students and staff are accounted for, we will notify parents and begin the dismissal process; Parents can meet students at the established reunification point at ####.)

What should parents do at this point? (e.g., Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today.)

Other notes:

Templates – Interim Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. Students were evacuated from [Name of School(s)], We are still assessing the situation and accounting for all students and staff, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice, The [XYZ Fire Department] is still treating the wounded and assessing the damage, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified.]

The [Name Fire Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling the office until we have completed assessing the situation. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

[Include any other relevant information, e.g. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.] More information will be shared through this website as it becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Add a time stamp to all updates on your website and maintain a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Share any new information, e.g. Students were evacuated from [Name of School(s)], We are still assessing the situation and accounting for all students and staff, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice, The [XYZ Fire Department] is still treating the wounded and assessing the damage.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. Students were evacuated from [Name of School(s)], We are still assessing the situation and accounting for all students and staff, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice, The [XYZ Fire Department] is still

treating the wounded and assessing the damage, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified].

The [Name Fire Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling the office until we have completed assessing the situation. Please visit our website for more information as it becomes available at [Website address]. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. Students were evacuated from [Name of School(s)], We are still assessing the situation and accounting for all students and staff, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice, The [XYZ Fire Department] is still treating the wounded and assessing the damage, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified].

The [Name Fire Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling the office until we have completed assessing the situation. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Please visit our website for more information as it becomes available: [Website address]. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

[Share any new update, e.g. share any new update, e.g. Students were evacuated from [Name of School(s)], We are still assessing the situation and accounting for all students and staff, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice, The [XYZ Fire Department] is still treating the wounded and assessing the damage, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified.] More at [Website].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time]
- Staff and students immediately responded, following the Drop, Cover, and Hold On emergency response protocol.
- [Share any other immediate actions taken by staff, e.g. Staff called first responders to the scene and deployed security/our Search and Rescue Team to check for fires, the status of utilities, and structural and nonstructural damage.]
- The [XYZ Fire Department] is currently [describe action, e.g. on its way, assessing the damage, treating the wounded, inspecting the building].
- [Share the status of the situation, e.g. Students were evacuated from [Name of School(s)], We are still assessing the situation and accounting for all students and staff, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice] at this point in time.
- Parents and relatives of any injured children and staff have been notified.
- We urge parents and other visitors to avoid coming to the school or calling the office until we have completed assessing the situation.
- Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website] to learn about our emergency response protocol.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.

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- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Situation Resolved Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

How has the situation been resolved?

Will this impact how students and/or staff spend the rest of the day? If so, how? *(e.g. we will cancel classes until the school is determined safe, we will have regular dismissal)*

Will this impact school tomorrow? If so, how? This might not be known at this point.

Other notes:

Templates – Situation Resolved Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Share the current status, e.g. [Name of School(s)] students have been evacuated and are cleared for reunification with their families, [Name of School(s)] has/have been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There will be no changes to student dismissal, All students will be reunified with family members at ####. Please bring photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out, There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] We appreciate your understanding and patience.

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. [Include any other relevant information, e.g. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Remember to add a time stamp to all updates on your website and add a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Share the current status, e.g. [Name of School(s)] students have been evacuated and are cleared for reunification with their families, [Name of School(s)] has/have been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].] [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There will be no changes to student dismissal, All students will be reunified with family members at ####. Please bring photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out, There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Share the current status, e.g. [Name of School(s)] students have been evacuated and are cleared for reunification with their families, [Name of School(s)] has/have been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There will be no changes to student dismissal, All students will be reunified with family members at ####. Please bring photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out, There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] You can visit our website for more information at [Website address].

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Share the current status, e.g. [Name of School(s)] students have been evacuated and are cleared for reunification with their families, [Name of School(s)] has/have been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There will be no changes to student dismissal, All students will be reunified with family members at ####. Please bring photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out, There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.]

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address]. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 128 Characters:

[Share the current status, e.g. [Name of School(s)] students have been evacuated and are cleared for reunification with their families, [Name of School(s)] has/have been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].] More info [about student dismissal] at [Website address].

Approx. 367 Characters:

[Share the current status, e.g. [Name of School(s)] students have been evacuated and are cleared for reunification with their families, [Name of School(s)] has/have been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There will be no changes to student dismissal, All students will be reunified with family members at ###. Please bring photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out, There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

More info [about student dismissal] at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Type of Incident, e.g. an earthquake, an explosion] hit [Name of School(s)] at [time].
- Staff and students immediately responded, following the Drop, Cover, and Hold On emergency response protocol.
- [Share any other immediate actions taken by staff, e.g. Staff called first responders to the scene and deployed security/our Search and Rescue Team to check for fires, status of utilities, and structural and nonstructural damage.]
- [Share actions taken by first responders, e.g. the [XYZ Fire Department] assessed the buildings, the [XYZ Fire Department] assisted in evacuating students and staff.]
- The [XYZ Fire Department] is currently [describe action, e.g. treating the wounded].
- [Share the status of the situation, e.g. [Name of School(s) has/have] been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department].
- Parents and relatives of any injured children and staff have been notified.
- [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There will be no changes to student dismissal, All students will be dismissed from the reunification point at ###. Please bring photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out.]
- Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).

Communication Guide & Templates for Use During an Emergency – Drop, Cover, and Hold On

- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however, the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Next Day Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Spend some time reflecting on the incident using the planning form below. Decide which non-emergency channels to use (e.g. non-emergency message through mass notification system, social media posts, letter in backpack).

What went well during our response to the incident?

What didn't go well during our response to the incident?

How can we improve our response for this type of incident?

What information would be good to share with parents and/or the school community? *(e.g. grief counselors will be available, continued commitment to student safety)*

Where can stakeholders find information about our emergency response protocols or related resources?

Other notes:

Templates – Next Day Communication

Example Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

At [time and day], [Name] School was hit by [name of incident, e.g. earthquake], causing [share any immediate effect, e.g. the phone lines to go down, the power to go out].

Staff and students immediately responded, following the Drop, Cover, and Hold On emergency response protocol. [Share any other immediate actions taken by staff, e.g. Staff called first responders to the scene and deployed security/our Search and Rescue Team to check for fires, the status of utilities, and structural and nonstructural damage.]

[Share any actions taken by first responders, e.g. the [XYZ Fire Department] assessed the buildings, The [XYZ Fire Department] assisted in evacuating students and staff].

[Share any interim communications, e.g. Students and staff were then evacuated and reunified with families at [time], The [XYZ Fire Department] completed a full search of the school to assess the damage.]

[Share the status of the situation, e.g. The school has been declared safe by the [XYZ Fire Department], Minimal damage was made to the school, Parents and relatives of any injured children and staff have been notified.]

We wish to thank you for your patience and understanding as we responded to the incident. Our primary concern is always for the safety of our students and staff, and we appreciate your partnership in ensuring that our schools are a safe space for all to learn.

We also want to thank our school and district teams for their seamless transition to Drop, Cover, and Hold On, and for ensuring the safety of our students.

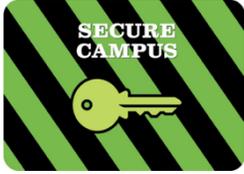
You can learn more about Drop, Cover, and Hold On and the other The Big Five Emergency Guidelines on our website at [Website address]. If you have any questions about the incident or school safety more generally, please do not hesitate to give me a call.

Thank you for helping us maintain a safe learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Superintendent



Secure Campus – Communication Plan

Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community. Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter. The objective is to protect against a potential threat at large in the community from coming onto campus. Secure Campus differs from Lockdown/Barricade in that it allows classroom instruction to continue. Students and staff remain in Secure Campus status until an all-clear is issued by the School Incident Commander.

Communication Steps

1. Notify staff of decision and provide update on plan.
2. Complete [information inventory and planning form](#). Use this information to create communication messages for different channels. Receive approval from the Incident Commander on information to be shared.
3. Communicate with primary stakeholders, which would likely include staff, parents, and board members (set your list).
 - Use pre-established channels. (e.g., mass notification system for text, email, and phone messages; website posts; social media posts)
 - Use [draft templates](#) for each channel and edit as appropriate.
 - Prepare [talking points](#) for those answering phones.
4. Communicate with secondary stakeholders, including other schools in the district, area schools, the County Office of Education, and neighbors (set your list).
5. Ensure that all staff answering phones have the talking points and understand that they are not to provide information beyond the talking points without prior approval.
6. [Repeat as more information becomes available](#).
7. If the situation escalates to lockdown/barricade, use the [Lockdown/Barricade emergency response section](#) of the communications plan.
8. When the incident is resolved, [provide an update](#) through same channels.
9. Within the next 24 hours, [prepare an update](#) addressing what happened, sharing what the school did to keep students safe and reiterating the district's commitment to safety.
10. Consider holding a parent meeting within a few days of the event.

Immediate Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Use this form to gather and organize the information you will share in your initial and subsequent communication on various channels. Be sure to have it approved by the School Incident Commander. Remember: Focus on facts. Do not give the names of any students. Do not speculate. Be as transparent as possible.

Why did we go into Secure Campus? Get specifics so you understand the threat.

When did the incident take place?

Who has been involved since the incident began? (*e.g., XYZ Police Department, District Office, Superintendent*)

What are first responders doing to address the situation? (*e.g., Searching the neighborhood, police on campus*)

What are we doing about the incident? *(e.g., Gates are locked, instruction will continue, recess will be held indoors)*

Who do we need to notify about this incident? *(e.g., Parents, staff, others in the district, neighbors, San Mateo County Office of Education)*

When must we notify parents about changes in student dismissal, in case the situation is not resolved?

What should parents do at this point in time? *(e.g., Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today)*

Other notes:

Templates – Immediate Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Name of School(s) is/are] in Secure Campus at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to reports of a potential threat in the neighborhood. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution.]

Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community. Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter. School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students safe. The [Name Police Department] requests that parents and other visitors avoid coming to the school or calling our office until they are notified that normal school activities have resumed. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff and keep our communication channels open.

We will update this webpage as more information becomes available.

*Remember to add a time stamp to your original post.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Name of School(s)] is now in Secure Campus due to a potential threat in the area. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At the request of the [Name Police Department], [Name of School(s)] is/are now in Secure Campus due to a potential threat in the neighborhood. School activities will continue within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

The [Name Police Department] requests that you avoid coming to the school until Secure Campus is lifted. Please visit our website for more information and updates at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Name of School(s)] is/are in Secure Campus at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to reports of a potential threat in the neighborhood. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution.]

Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community. Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter. School activities will continue within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

Please remember that we work very hard to keep your children safe. The [Name Police Department] requests that you avoid coming to the school or calling our office until you are notified that normal school activities have resumed. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication.

More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 113 Characters:

[Name of School(s)] is now in Secure Campus due to a potential threat in the area. More at [Website address].

Approx. 362 Characters:

A precautionary Secure Campus order has been issued for [Name of School(s)] at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to a potential threat in the area. School activities will continue within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

The [Name Police Department] requests that you avoid coming to the school until the Secure Campus order is lifted. More information at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s) is/are] in Secure Campus, at the request of [Name Police Department] due to a threat of potential violence in the area.
- [Report what the threat is.]
- Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community.
- Secure Campus is not Lockdown/Barricade. When implemented successfully, Secure Campus prevents potential threats from coming onto campus.
- Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter.
- We are cooperating with law enforcement to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- School activities will continue within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.
- Please avoid coming to the school or calling the office until the Secure Campus order has been removed.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address.]
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Interim Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

New information. Use the following questions to gather and organize any new information to share with stakeholders through your various channels. If the situation will impact regular dismissal, confer with the Incident Commander about alternative plans. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

No new information before regular dismissal time. Confer with the Incident Commander about how the situation may impact regular dismissal. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

What new information do I have about the incident? If you will report anything about harm to children or staff, be sure to mention that parents/relatives of the injured children/staff have been notified.

Has our response to the incident changed? If so, how?

If the incident impacts regular dismissal, answer the following questions:

Why does the incident impact regular dismissal?

What is the alternative plan at this point? *(e.g., Students will stay in class doing fun projects until we are given the green light that it is safe to let them leave their building; once we*

know they can leave, we will notify parents, open the gates, and begin the dismissal process; and/or we will meet at the established reunification point at ####)

What should parents do at this point? (e.g., *Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today*)

Other notes:

Templates – Interim Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [XYZ Police Department] has notified us that one suspect has been apprehended. However, they will continue to search the area until they are certain there are no other suspects in the area. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice]. The Police have asked that [School(s)] remain in Secure Campus for the time being.

Again, Secure Campus is a precautionary measure. The objective is to protect against a potential threat at large in the community from coming onto campus. School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

The [Name Police Department] requests that parents and visitors avoid coming to the school or calling our office until Secure Campus is lifted so that a safe environment can be maintained and our staff can respond quickly to emergency communications. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

More information will be shared as it becomes available on this webpage. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Add a time stamp to all updates on your website and maintain a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Share any new information, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that one suspect has been apprehended. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice.] Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain(s) in Secure Campus for the time being. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that one suspect has been apprehended. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice]. The Police have asked that [School(s)] remain in Secure Campus for the time being.

Again, Secure Campus is a precautionary measure, however the [Name Police Department] requests that parents and guardians should avoid coming to the school or calling our office until Secure Campus is lifted. Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that one suspect has been apprehended. Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice]. Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain in Secure Campus for the time being.

Again, Secure Campus is a precautionary measure. The objective is to protect against a potential threat in the community from coming onto campus. School activities will continue as normal within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.

The [Name Police Department] requests that you avoid coming to the school or calling our office until you are notified that normal school activities have resumed. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

[Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that one suspect has been apprehended.] Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain in Secure Campus for the time being. More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] is/are in Secure Campus, at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to a threat of potential violence in the area.
- [Report what the threat is.]
- Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community.
- Secure Campus is not Lockdown/Barricade. When implemented successfully, Secure Campus prevents potential threats from coming onto campus.
- Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter.
- The objective of Secure Campus is to protect against a potential threat in the community from coming onto campus.
- We are cooperating with law enforcement to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- School activities will continue within classrooms until we are given the all-clear.
- Please avoid coming to the school or calling the office until the Secure Campus order has been removed.
- You can visit our website for updates regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep your children safe.
- Thank you for partnering with us to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander].

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.

- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency information. But, that the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Situation Resolved Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

How has the situation been resolved?

Will this impact how we spend the rest of the day? If so, how? *(e.g. we will have lunch recess, we will have regular dismissal)*

Will this impact school tomorrow? If so, how? This might not be known at this point.

Other notes:

Templates – Situation Resolved Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

The Secure Campus order was lifted for [Name of School(s)] at [time], after the [Name Police Department] suspended its [fill in action taken by police, e.g. search for suspects] in the area. [Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital. Their parents were notified.]

Normal school activities will resume. [Address potential impact on dismissal. Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community. Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter.

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. [Include any other relevant information, e.g. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Remember to add a time stamp to all updates on your website and add a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The Secure Campus order has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. Normal school activities will resume. [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The Secure Campus order was lifted for [Name of School(s)] at [time].

Normal school activities will resume. [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.] You can visit our website for more information at [Website address].

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The Secure Campus order was lifted for [Name of School(s)] at [time], after the [Name Police Department] suspended its [fill in action taken by police, e.g. search for suspects] in the area. [Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]

Normal school activities will resume. [Address potential impact on dismissal. Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community. Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter. The objective is to protect against a potential threat in the community from coming onto campus.

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address]. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 152 Characters:

The Secure Campus order has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. Normal school activities will resume. More info [about student dismissal] at [Website address].

Approx. 309 Characters:

The Secure Campus order has been lifted for [Name of School(s)].

Normal school activities will resume. [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] was/were placed in Secure Campus at [time], at the request of the [Name Police Department] due to a threat of potential violence in the area.
- [Report what the threat was.]
- As of [time], the Secure Campus order has been lifted.
- Secure Campus is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community.
- Secure Campus is not Lockdown/Barricade. When implemented successfully, Secure Campus prevents potential threats from coming onto campus.
- Secure Campus requires locking all classroom/office doors and closing entrance and exit points on the school's perimeter; however school activities continue as normal as possible.
- The objective of Secure Campus is to protect against a potential threat in the community from coming onto campus.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- You can learn more about our emergency response protocol at [Website address].
- Thank you for partnering with us to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander].

Tips for Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however, the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Next Day Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Spend some time reflecting on the incident using the planning form below. Decide which non-emergency channels to use (e.g. non-emergency message through mass notification system, social media posts, letter in backpack).

What went well during our response to the incident?

What did not go well during our response to the incident?

How can we improve our response for this type of incident?

What information would be good to share with parents and/or the school community? *(e.g. grief counselors will be on hand to support students, continued commitment to student safety)*

Where can stakeholders go to find information about our emergency response protocols or related resources?

Other notes:

Templates – Next Day Communication

Example Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

At [time and day], [Name] School was placed in Secure Campus at the request of the [Name Police Department] as it responded to [the specific event in the area, e.g., an incidence of domestic violence at a residence two blocks from school.] The school remained in Secure Campus until [time] when law enforcement notified us that the situation was contained.

While the school was in Secure Campus, students and staff remained in their classrooms with the doors locked. However, teaching continued as usual.

Secure Campus is one of five immediate action responses to emergencies practiced among schools in San Mateo County, as part of The Big Five Emergency Guidelines. It is a precautionary measure against the threat of potential violence in the surrounding community.

We wish to thank you for your patience and understanding as we responded to the incident. Our primary concern is always for the safety of our students and staff, and we appreciate your partnership in ensuring that our schools are a safe space for all to learn.

We also want to thank our school and district teams for their seamless transition to Secure Campus and for ensuring the safety of our students.

You can learn more about Secure Campus and the other The Big Five Emergency Guidelines on our website at [Website address]. If you have any questions about the incident or school safety more generally, please don't hesitate to give me a call.

Thank you for helping us maintain a safe learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

[Name]
Superintendent



Lockdown/Barricade – Communication Plan

Lockdown/Barricade is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade. Students are to remain in designated classrooms or lockdown locations at all times with doors locked and barricaded, until cleared by law enforcement or site administration. This response is considered appropriate for, but not limited to, threats of extreme violence outside the classroom, gunfire, or immediate danger in the surrounding community.

Note: if your current location is on Lockdown/Barricade, complete the communication steps below only when it is safe to do so. Additionally, in the event of a violent intruder on campus, you must think on their feet to quickly determine the best course of action. Refer to The Big Five Administrator Packet for more on Think On Your Feet.

Communication Steps

1. Notify staff of decision and provide update on plan.
2. Complete [information inventory and planning form](#). Use this information to create communication messages for different channels. Receive approval from Incident Commander on information to be shared.
3. Communicate with primary stakeholders, which would likely include staff, parents, and board members (set your list).
 - Use pre-established channels. (e.g., mass notification system for text, email, and phone messages; website posts; social media posts)
 - Use [draft templates](#) for each channel and edit as appropriate.
 - Prepare [talking points](#) for those answering phones.
4. Communicate with secondary stakeholders, including other schools in the district, area schools, the County Office of Education, and neighbors (set your list).
5. Ensure that all staff answering phones have the talking points and understand that they are not to provide information beyond the talking points without prior approval.
6. [Repeat as more information becomes available](#).
7. When the incident is resolved, [provide an update](#) through same channels.

8. Within the next 24 hours, [prepare an update](#) addressing what happened, sharing what the school did to keep students safe and reiterating the district's commitment to safety.
9. Consider holding a parent meeting within a few days of the event.

Immediate Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Use this form to gather and organize the information you will share in your initial and subsequent communication on various channels. Be sure to have it approved by the School Incident Commander. Remember: Focus on facts. Do not give the names of any students. Do not speculate. Be as transparent as possible.

Why did we go into Lockdown/Barricade? Get specifics so you understand the threat.

When did the incident take place?

Who has been involved since the incident began? (*e.g., XYZ Police Department, District Office, Superintendent*)

What are first responders doing to address the situation? (*e.g., On their way to the school, On-site addressing the threat*)

What are we doing about the incident? *(e.g., Working alongside law enforcement to contain the situation)*

Who do we need to notify about this incident? *(e.g., Parents, staff, others in the district, neighbors, San Mateo County Office of Education)*

When must we notify parents about changes in student dismissal, in case the situation is not resolved?

What should parents do at this point in time? *(e.g., Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today)*

Other notes:

Templates – Immediate Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence on/or near the campus, at the request of law enforcement]. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution.]

Our staff and students' safety is our top priority. DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted.

Lockdown/Barricade is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on the campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade. Students are to remain in designated classrooms or lockdown locations at all times with doors locked and barricaded, until cleared by law enforcement or site administration.

We will update this webpage as more information becomes available.

*Remember to add a time stamp to your original post.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement].

DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement].

Your child's safety is our top priority. DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. Please visit our website for more information and updates at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement]. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution.]

Your child's safety is our top priority. DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted.

Lockdown/Barricade is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on the campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade. Students are to remain in designated classrooms or lockdown locations at all times with doors locked and barricaded, until cleared by law enforcement or site administration.

Please visit our website for more information and updates: [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 190 Characters:

[Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement]. DO NOT come to the school or call until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. More at [Website address].

Approx. 368 Characters:

[Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement]. [Add in specific details approved by the Incident Commander for distribution.]

Our staff and students' safety is our top priority. DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until we announce that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] is now in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement].
- DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted.
- Lockdown/Barricade is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on the campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade.
- Students are to remain in designated classrooms or lockdown locations at all times with doors locked and barricaded, until cleared by law enforcement or site administration.
- We are cooperating with law enforcement to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Interim Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

New information. Use the following questions to gather and organize any new information to share with stakeholders through your various channels. If the situation will impact regular dismissal, confer with the Incident Commander about alternative plans. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

No new information before regular dismissal time. Confer with the Incident Commander about how the situation may impact regular dismissal. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

What new information do I have about the incident? If you will report anything about harm to children or staff, be sure to mention that parents/relatives of the injured children/staff have been notified.

Has our response to the incident changed? If so, how?

If the incident impacts regular dismissal, answer the following questions:

Why does the incident impact regular dismissal?

What is the alternative plan at this point? (e.g., Once it is safe for students to leave, we will notify parents, open the gates, and begin the dismissal process; and/or we will meet at the established reunification point at ###)

What should parents do at this point? (e.g., Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today)

Other notes:

Templates – Interim Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that a suspect has been apprehended, First responders are on the scene and giving medical attention to staff and students, Students and staff are being evacuated to a secure location, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice]. Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain in Lockdown/Barricade for the time being.

Again, DO NOT come to the school or call our office until Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. These measures maintain the safest environment possible for our students and staff. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

We will update this webpage as more information becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Add a time stamp to all updates on your website and maintain a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Share any new information, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that a suspect has been apprehended, First responders are on the scene and giving medical attention to staff and students, Students and staff are being evacuated to a secure location, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice.] Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain(s) in Lockdown/Barricade for the time being. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that a suspect has been apprehended, First responders are on the scene and giving medical attention to staff and students, Students and staff are being evacuated to a secure location, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice]. Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain in Lockdown/Barricade for the time being.

DO NOT come to the school or call our office until Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. These measures maintain the safest environment possible for our students and staff. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[The [Name Police Department] has notified us that a suspect has been apprehended, First responders are on the scene and giving medical attention to staff and students, Students and staff are being evacuated to a secure location, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice]. Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain in Lockdown/Barricade for the time being.

DO NOT come to the school or call our office until Lockdown/Barricade is lifted. These measures maintain the safest environment possible for our students and staff. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

[Share any new information, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that a suspect has been apprehended, First responders are on the scene and giving medical attention to staff and students, Students and staff are being evacuated to a secure location, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice.] Law enforcement has asked that [School(s)] remain(s) in Lockdown/Barricade for the time being. More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] is still in Lockdown/Barricade [share the specific incident, e.g. due to gunfire on campus, due to a threat of extreme violence outside the classroom, at the request of law enforcement].
- [Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that a suspect has been apprehended, The [Name Police Department] is conducting a thorough search of the building, First responders are on the scene and giving medical attention to staff and students, Student dismissal has been delayed until further notice].
- DO NOT come to the school or attempt calling the office until you are notified that Lockdown/Barricade is lifted.
- Lockdown/Barricade is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on the campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade.
- Students are to remain in designated classrooms or lockdown locations at all times with doors locked and barricaded, until cleared by law enforcement or site administration.
- We are cooperating with law enforcement to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander].

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency information. But, that the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].

- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Situation Resolved Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

How has the situation been resolved?

Will this impact how we spend the rest of the day? If so, how? *(e.g. students will be evacuated or cleared room to room, families can reunify with students at ###)*

Will this impact school tomorrow? If so, how? This might not be known at this point.

Other notes:

Templates – Situation Resolved Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

The order to Lockdown/Barricade has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. [Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that there is no longer an immediate threat on campus]. [Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way. Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.]

[Include any other relevant information, e.g. Classes are cancelled until further notice, If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Remember to add a time stamp to all updates on your website and add a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The order to Lockdown/Barricade has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. [Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that there is no longer an immediate threat on campus].

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The order to Lockdown/Barricade has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. [Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that there is no longer an immediate threat on campus].

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

The order to Lockdown/Barricade has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. [Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that there is no longer an immediate threat on campus]. [Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way. Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.]

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address]. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 125 Characters:

The order to Lockdown/Barricade has been lifted for [Name of School(s)]. [Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that there is no longer an immediate threat on campus]. More info [about student dismissal] at [Website address].

Approx. 315 Characters:

The order to Lockdown/Barricade has been lifted for [Name of School(s)].

[Share any new update, e.g. The [Name Police Department] has notified us that there is no longer an immediate threat on campus].

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] has been lifted from Lockdown/Barricade.
- [Share details about the outcome of the incident approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified].
- [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents].
- [Include any other relevant information, e.g. Classes are cancelled until further notice, If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol].
- Lockdown/Barricade is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on the campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade.
- Students are to remain in designated classrooms or lockdown locations at all times with doors locked and barricaded, until cleared by law enforcement or site administration.
- We are cooperating with law enforcement to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander].

Tips for Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.

- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however, the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Next Day Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Spend some time reflecting on the incident using the planning form below. Decide which non-emergency channels to use (e.g. non-emergency message through mass notification system, social media posts, letter in backpack).

What went well during our response to the incident?

What did not go well during our response to the incident?

How can we improve our response for this type of incident?

What information would be good to share with parents and/or the school community? *(e.g. grief counselors will be on hand to support students, continued commitment to student safety)*

Where can stakeholders go to find information about our emergency response protocols or related resources?

Other notes:

Templates – Next Day Communication

Example Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

At [time and day], [Name] School was placed in Lockdown/Barricade in response to [the specific incident, e.g., an active shooter on campus.] The school remained in Lockdown/Barricade until [time] when police notified us that the situation was contained.

While the school was in Lockdown/Barricade, [students and staff remained in their classrooms with the doors locked and barricaded. Some students and staff escaped safely from campus.]

[Share details about the outcome of the incident approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]

[Include any other relevant information, e.g. Classes are cancelled until further notice, grief counselors will be available to staff, students and relatives.]

Lockdown/Barricade is one of five immediate action responses to emergencies practiced among schools in San Mateo County, as part of The Big Five Emergency Guidelines. It is implemented when the imminent threat of violence or gunfire is identified on the campus, or the school is directed by law enforcement to implement Lockdown/Barricade.

We wish to thank you for your patience and understanding as we responded to the incident. Our primary concern is always for the safety of our students and staff, and we appreciate your partnership in ensuring that our schools are a safe space for all to learn.

We also want to thank our school and district teams for their seamless transition to Lockdown/Barricade and for ensuring the safety of our students.

You can learn more about Lockdown/Barricade and the other The Big Five Emergency Guidelines on our website at [Website address]. If you have any questions about the incident or school safety more generally, please don't hesitate to give me a call.

Thank you for helping us maintain a safe learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Superintendent



Evacuation – Communication Plan

Evacuation is implemented when conditions make it unsafe to remain in the building. This action provides for the orderly movement of students and staff along prescribed routes from inside school buildings to a designated outside area of safety. Evacuation is considered appropriate for, but not limited to, bomb threats, chemical accidents, explosions or threat of explosions, fires, and earthquakes. In the event of an explosion, earthquake, or other event causing falling debris, evacuation will be preceded by a Drop, Cover, and Hold On protocol.

Communication Steps

1. Notify staff of decision and provide update on plan.
2. Complete [information inventory and planning form](#). Use this information to create communication messages for different channels. Receive approval from Incident Commander on information to be shared.
3. Communicate with primary stakeholders, which would likely include staff, parents, and board members (set your list).
 - Use pre-established channels. (e.g., mass notification system for text, email, and phone messages; website posts; social media posts)
 - Use [draft templates](#) for each channel and edit as appropriate.
 - Prepare [talking points](#) for those answering phones.
4. Communicate with secondary stakeholders, including other schools in the district, area schools, the County Office of Education, and neighbors (set your list).
5. Ensure that all staff answering phones have the talking points and understand that they are not to provide information beyond the talking points without prior approval.
6. [Repeat as more information becomes available](#).
7. When the incident is resolved, [provide an update](#) through the same channels.
8. Within the next 24 hours, [prepare an update](#) addressing what happened, sharing what the school did to keep students safe and reiterating the district's commitment to safety.
9. Consider holding a parent meeting within a few days of the event.

Immediate Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Use this form to gather and organize the information you will share in your initial and subsequent communication on various channels. Be sure to have it approved by the School Incident Commander. Remember: Focus on facts. Do not give the names of any students. Do not speculate. Be as transparent as possible.

Why did we go into Evacuation? Get specifics so you understand the threat.

When did the incident take place?

Who has been involved since the incident began? (*e.g., XYZ Police Department, District Office, Superintendent*)

What are first responders doing to address the situation? (*e.g., Clearing the school of students and staff*)

Communication Guide & Templates for Use During an Emergency – Special Templates

What are we doing about the incident? *(e.g., Assisting students and staff, including those with special needs, in evacuating to a safe location)*

Who do we need to notify about this incident? *(e.g., Parents, staff, others in the district, neighbors, San Mateo County Office of Education)*

When must we notify parents about changes in student dismissal, in case the situation is not resolved?

What should parents do at this point in time? *(e.g., Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today)*

Other notes:

Templates – Immediate Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated [at the request of the [Name Fire Department]] due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus.

[Share details about the current situation approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Minimal injuries have been reported, The [Name Fire Department] is assisting in the evacuation, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified.]

The [Name Fire Department] urges parents and other visitors to avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication.

Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students safe. We will update this webpage as more information becomes available.

*Remember to add a time stamp to your original post.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated [at the request of the [Name Fire Department]] due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus.

[Share details about the current situation approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Minimal injuries have been reported, [Name Fire Department] is assisting in the evacuation, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified].

The [Name Fire Department] requests that you please do not come to the school unless notified. Please visit our website for more information and updates at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated [at the request of the [Name Fire Department]] due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus.

[Share details about the current situation approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Minimal injuries have been reported, The [Name Fire Department] is assisting in the evacuation, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified].

The [Name Fire Department] urges you to avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication.

Please remember that we work very hard to keep your children safe. Please visit our website for more information and updates: [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 119 Characters:

[Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus. More at [Website address].

Approx. 368 Characters:

[Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus. [Share details about the current situation approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Minimal injuries have been reported, [Name Fire Department] is assisting in the evacuation, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified].

The [Name Fire Department] asks that you avoid coming to the school at this time. More information at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] students and staff are now being safely evacuated due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus.
- [Share details about the current situation approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Minimal injuries have been reported, [Name Fire Department] is assisting in the evacuation, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified].
- We are cooperating with first responders to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- Please avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to address the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Interim Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

New information. Use the following questions to gather and organize any new information to share with stakeholders through your various channels. If the situation will impact regular dismissal, confer with the Incident Commander about alternative plans. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

No new information before regular dismissal time. Confer with the Incident Commander about how the situation may impact regular dismissal. The Incident Commander should approve all interim communication.

What new information do I have about the incident? If you will report anything about harm to children or staff, be sure to mention that parents/relatives of the injured children/staff have been notified.

Has our response to the incident changed? If so, how?

If the incident impacts regular dismissal, answer the following questions:

Why does the incident impact regular dismissal?

What is the alternative plan at this point? (e.g., Students will gather at the designated evacuation site; once we know they can leave, we will notify parents, open the gates, and begin the dismissal process; and/or we will meet at the established reunification point at ###)

What should parents do at this point? (e.g., Do not come to school, do not call, follow our set communication channels for further information on the situation and any impact on regular dismissal today)

Other notes:

Templates – Interim Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

At this time, [Share any new information, e.g. All students have been evacuated from school buildings, The [Name Fire Department] is currently responding to the incident], Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] Students and staff will remain in the evacuation assembly area until further notice.

The [Name Fire Department] asks that parents and visitors avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

More information will be shared as it becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Add a time stamp to all updates on your website and maintain a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians

[Share any new information, e.g. All students have been evacuated from school buildings, The [Name Fire Department] is currently responding to the incident, Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] Students and staff will remain in the evacuation assembly area until further notice. More at [Website address].

Phone Call (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new information, e.g. All students have been evacuated from school buildings, The [Name Fire Department] is currently responding to the incident, Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your

student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents]. Students and staff will remain in the evacuation assembly area until further notice.

The [Name Fire Department] asks that you avoid coming to the school or calling our office for the time being. Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available.

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

At this time, [share any new information, e.g. All students have been evacuated from school buildings, The [Name Fire Department] is currently responding to the incident, Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents]. Students and staff will remain in the evacuation assembly area until further notice.

The [Name Fire Department] urges you to avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time. This allows us to maintain a safe environment for our students and staff, as well as respond quickly to any emergency communication. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Please visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address]. More information will be shared as it becomes available. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

[Share any new information, e.g. All students have been evacuated from school buildings, The [Name Fire Department] is currently responding to the incident, Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] Students and staff will remain in the evacuation assembly area until further notice. More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Name of School(s)] students and staff are now safely evacuated due to [specify the incident, e.g. an earthquake, a bomb threat, explosion, fire] on campus.
- [Share details about the current situation approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. Minimal injuries have been reported, The [Name Fire Department] is assisting in the evacuation, Parents and relatives of the injured children and staff have been notified, Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents].
- We are cooperating with first responders to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- Please avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Responding to Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to resolve the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency information. But, that the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Situation Resolved Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

How has the situation been resolved?

Will this impact how we spend the rest of the day? If so, how? *(e.g. we will have lunch recess, we will have regular dismissal)*

Will this impact school tomorrow? If so, how? This might not be known at this point.

Other notes:

Templates – Situation Resolved Communication

Website Message*

Audience(s): Everyone

[Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.]

[Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.]

As always, we strive to stay focused on learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. [Include any other relevant information, e.g. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] to learn about our emergency response protocol.] Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

*Remember to add a time stamp to all updates on your website and add a copy of earlier messages at the bottom.

Text Message

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, the [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents, and we appreciate your understanding and patience.] More at [Website address].

Phone Call

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.] You can visit our website for more information at [Website address].

Email (through mass notification system)

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Other Schools/Parents in the District

[Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.]

[Include more information about the outcome of the incident, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ###. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.] We appreciate your understanding and patience.

As always, we strive to support student learning in a secure instructional environment, however we are prepared for the unexpected. If you have any questions or concerns, please visit [Website address] or contact the school. Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe.

Social Media

Audience(s): Parents and Guardians, Neighbors, Media, Community

Approx. 190 Characters:

[Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, The [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.] More info [about student dismissal] at [Website address].

Approx. 446 Characters:

[Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, The [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.]

[Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents. We appreciate your understanding and patience.]

Thank you for partnering with us to keep our schools safe. More at [Website address].

Talking Points for Answering Phone Calls

Approved Information for Distribution:

- [Share information about the current status as appropriate e.g. [School(s)] students and staff are cleared for dismissal, The [XYZ Fire Department] have declared [School(s)] safe for students and staff to return to the building. Normal school activities will resume.]
- [Share details about the outcome of the incident approved by the Incident Commander for distribution, e.g. No students or staff were in harm's way, Three students were injured and taken to the hospital and their parents were notified.]
- [Include school-specific dismissal information as necessary, e.g. Students can reunify with family members at ####. Please bring a photo ID, and be prepared to sign your student out. There may be significant delays in our release of individual students to parents.]
- We are continuing to cooperate with first responders to ensure the safety of our students and staff.
- Please avoid coming to the school or calling our office at this point in time.
- You can visit our website for information regarding the incident at [Website address].
- Please remember that we work very hard to keep our students and staff safe.
- [Share other information approved for distribution by the Incident Commander.]

Tips for Phone Calls:

- Focus on school safety
- Display empathy
- Stick to the facts
- Do not share sensitive information (e.g. information infringing on student privacy or affecting the outcome of the situation)
- Share steps that the school/district has taken to address the situation
- Share how the caller can get more information as it becomes available

For Calls from the Media:

- Write down their name, station/paper/etc., and contact information.
- Let them know you will share the information with staff managing communication.
- Share only the approved information for distribution (above).
- Write down their questions.
- Let them know you need to keep this line open for emergency communication, however, the district will provide up-to-date information on its website at [Website address].
- Give the information you collected to the lead communications staff member.

Next Day Communication

Information Inventory and Planning Form

Spend some time reflecting on the incident using the planning form below. Decide which non-emergency channels to use (e.g. non-emergency message through mass notification system, social media posts, letter in backpack).

What went well during our response to the incident?

What did not go well during our response to the incident?

How can we improve our response for this type of incident?

What information would be good to share with parents and/or the school community? *(e.g. grief counselors will be on hand to support students, continued commitment to student safety)*

Where can stakeholders go to find information about our emergency response protocols or related resources?

Other notes:

Templates – Next Day Communication

Example Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

At [time and date], [Name] School was evacuated in response to [the incident, e.g., a bomb threat, earthquake, fire]. The school remained evacuated until [time], when [Share details about the outcome of the incident, e.g. students were reunited with their families, the [XYZ Fire Department] cleared the campus, students and staff returned to their normal school activities].

Evacuation is one of five immediate action responses to emergencies practiced among schools in San Mateo County, as part of The Big Five Emergency Guidelines. You can learn more about Evacuation and the other The Big Five Emergency Guidelines on our website at [Website address].

We wish to thank you for your patience and understanding as we responded to the incident. Our primary concern is always for the safety of our students and staff, and we appreciate your partnership in ensuring that our schools are a safe space for all to learn.

We also want to thank our school and district teams for their efforts to evacuate the school and for ensuring the safety of our students.

If you have any questions about the incident or school safety more generally, please don't hesitate to give me a call. Thank you for helping us maintain a safe learning environment for our students.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Superintendent

General Threat of Violence

Threats of violence can have a major impact on a school community. Most threats are non-credible, yet the potential for serious injury and damage requires that every threat be taken seriously.

Clear, concise, and timely communication to staff, students, and families is important in mitigating fear, panic, and confusion when a school receives a violent threat. Schools and districts should coordinate their communication to the community with law enforcement to ensure consistent messaging.

Example Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

[When - earlier this morning, at lunch, last night], we received a threat concerning an act of violence [or be more specific - received a bomb threat, suspicious package, etc.] at school. We immediately contacted the [police department/sheriff's office] and have been working with them to determine the credibility of the threat and any possible risk to students, staff, or the school site.

[List actions you have taken and next steps, such as those included below. Select the paragraph/s closest to the action you have taken and adjust as needed.]

1. The police determined that the threat was not credible, and we have decided to continue with the school day as scheduled. Since the safety of our students and staff is our top priority, we will continue to monitor the situation and update you if there is any change.
2. We are continuing to evaluate the situation and will provide an update once we have one. In an abundance of caution, we have [evacuated the campus, evacuated the building mentioned in the threat, positioned police around the campus, moved into Secure Campus, etc.].

We ask that you stay away from campus and avoid contacting your child as that can elevate their stress and distract them when they need to listen to school staff.

Since the safety of our students and staff is our top priority, we will continue to monitor the situation and update you if there is any change. We will also post any updates on our website [include link].

3. We have not been able to determine the credibility of the threat; therefore, in an abundance of caution, we have decided to dismiss school at [xx a.m./p.m.]. We will follow our [regular, special pick up process]. [Provide details on the student release process, if appropriate.]

Since the safety of our students and staff is our top priority, we will continue to monitor the situation and update you if there is any change that may impact school tomorrow. We will also post updates on our website [include link].

4. Since we are concerned about the credibility of the threat, we have evacuated the school buildings and will dismiss students from our [off-campus location] beginning at [time].
[Address student release process.]

Since the safety of our students and staff is our top priority, we will continue to work with law enforcement to more fully assess the situation and risk. We will update you if there is any change that may impact school tomorrow. We will also post updates on our website [include link].

Thank you for your collaboration and patience.