

## **STAYING SAFE**

During any emergency, our first priority is the safety of students and staff. To respond effectively to any school crisis, Prairie Valley School Division has an emergency response protocol for all schools and buses that aligns with individual school safety plans. We have prepared this guide to help parents understand our division-wide protocols.

Throughout the year, schools conduct training and drills to help prepare students and staff for possible emergencies. These drills teach students and staff to act quickly and help to minimize anxiety during a real emergency. When a school experiences an emergency, the school incident commander – the most responsible person at site, typically the principal – assesses the situation and decides on a course of action. Support from staff in the Education Centre is always available.

## **REDUCING RISK**

While there are an infinite number of potential emergencies, Prairie Valley School Division has developed procedures to mitigate the risk of harm to our students and staff during an emergency. The following are responses to potential safety risks that students and staff practice during the school year.

### **EVACUATION**

An evacuation requires all students and staff to leave the school and go to an alternate location. Depending on the reason, students and staff might remain at a predetermined muster point until the school is declared safe to re-enter or staff might lead students to a predetermined off-site safe zone. This site could be a town hall, church or community rink. Each school has identified a designated evacuation location in its safety plan.

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCY**

A Medical emergency protocol is activated when the incident is beyond the scope of the school's first aid trained staff. It could include situations where a student, staff member or guest has incurred such symptoms as loss of consciousness, absent pulse, broken bones or extensive bleeding. In these situations, the school calls 911.

### **LOCKDOWN**

Lockdowns are a response to physical threats to students and/or staff inside the building. During a lockdown, all doors to and within the school are locked. No one is permitted in or out of any area once locked. Students and staff must respond very quickly to a lockdown command to get to a predetermined safe location in the school before doors are locked. No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the lockdown is lifted. The decision to lift a lock down is made by the RCMP in consultation with the school incident commander.

### **HOLD AND SECURE**

Hold and secure measures are implemented in response to physical threats outside the school. During a hold and secure, all entrance doors to the school are locked and students and staff are secure in the building. No one, other than law enforcement, is permitted access to the building until the hold and secure is declared to be lifted. The decision to lift a lock down is made by the RCMP in consultation with the school incident commander.

### **SHELTER IN PLACE**

Shelter in place measures are implemented during environmental emergencies such as severe weather events or chemical spills. During a shelter in place, students and staff retreat to predetermined safe zones to seek shelter. Students and staff who are outdoors move to safe zones within the school. Each school's emergency response plan identifies the safest location for its occupants. Students and staff are not released or dismissed until the incident commander has determined it is safe for all to do so.

### **SCHOOL BUS EMERGENCY**

Situations might occur where protocols are needed to address the safety and security of school bus passengers. These might include collisions, mechanical failures or situations requiring passengers to either evacuate a bus or stay on a bus for safety reasons. Although school bus drivers are the site incident commanders, their first order of protocol is to notify the Transportation Office so that they have the support of transportation and Education Centre staff as well as school administrators, depending on the situation.

## OBTAINING ACCURATE INFORMATION DURING AN EMERGENCY

It is unlikely you will be able to reach the school by phone. Official notifications including in-progress status reports and end of emergency reports will be communicated to parents and guardians via School Messenger.

While social media might be active with information, it is important to know that Prairie Valley School Division does not communicate via any social media applications or channels as part of its emergency response protocol. Multiple sources of information could compromise a successful end to a dangerous situation.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP DURING AN EMERGENCY?

Although your natural instinct in an emergency will be to safeguard your child, please understand that going to the school may interfere with emergency services and school personnel efforts to deal with the situation.

In addition, phone systems need to remain available for handling the actual emergency so please do not call the school and do not call your child's cell phone. Calling your child's cell phone during an emergency might put them at higher risk by disclosing their location or drawing attention to them during a lockdown.

Please follow the instructions provided to you through School Messenger. **Please do not come to the school to pick up your child unless requested to do so.**

If you arrive at the school in the midst of an emergency, please respect the emergency response protocol in progress. We cannot compromise the safety of students or staff to accommodate individual requests that could put others at risk.

After an emergency incident, students and staff might need extra support. Prairie Valley School Division has social workers and other specialists trained in post-emergency event counselling and support. If you have

concerns about your child after a school emergency, contact the principal.

## REUNITING WITH YOUR CHILD

To ensure the safety of every student, specific reunification procedures are in place at each school for releasing students as quickly and efficiently as possible following an emergency incident.

Parents are asked to learn, respect and adhere to the parent-child reunification procedures developed by the school. All schools have reunification plans that generally follow the Public Safety Canada guidelines below.

1. Confirming with emergency responders that it is safe to proceed with reunification of parents and students.
2. Ensuring that students do not leave on their own.
3. Verifying and documenting that an authorized adult is taking custody of a student by cross-referencing student information system records with proof of identification.
4. Establishing separate parent check-in and student assembly locations.
5. Communicating between the parent check-in and student assembly locations.
6. Avoiding confusion during the reunification process, including protecting students and parents or guardians from the media.
7. Accounting for technology barriers faced by students, staff, parents and guardians.
8. Addressing language access barriers faced by students, staff, parents and guardians.

Please understand that depending on the situation, location and number of students involved the process will take some time. We ask for your patience when you arrive at the reunification site.

If you have questions about the reunification plan at your child's school, please contact the principal.

**Thank you for your support and cooperation in helping to keep our children safe!**

