



Safety Drills During COVID-19

COVID-19 has changed the way we live and interact with each other. We must now consider all things through the COVID-19 lens and school safety drills are no exception. It is still best practice to conduct safety drills in the same manner that they would be carried out in an actual emergency with an additional layer of response to address the public health threat of COVID-19.

Considerations for drills during a COVID-19 pandemic response:

- Implement and maintain 6 feet physical distancing.
 - Consider staggering classroom releases.
 - Check the corridor and exit the classroom when there is room.
- Enforce the use of masks or face coverings.
- Provide hand sanitizer and/or hand washing stations after exiting and entering the building.
- Keep in mind that when a threat poses an imminent or substantial threat to life, the threat response must take precedent over the health risk(s) of COVID-19. In these scenarios, physical distancing and masking take back seats to sheltering and/or evacuation to protect lives and prevent injury.

School safety drills are set in statute which precludes the MN Fire Marshal Division, the MN School Safety Center or MN Department of Education from issuing a variance on them. State statute require drills to be accomplished when 20 or more staff and students are in the buildings. ([MN Statute 121A.035](#) and [121A.037](#))

Fire Evacuation Drills

- Five fire drills are required to be conducted with students each school year, with the first one conducted within the first 10 days of school.
- Although both students and staff are to participate in drills, there's no need for schools using the hybrid model to increase the number of drills beyond five. It's not necessary for each student to participate in all five fire drills, since not all students will be on-site at the same time.
- Maintain physical distancing throughout the evacuation drill.
 - The purpose of a drill is for both students and staff to practice the implementation of the school's fire safety and evacuation plan so occupants will be better prepared during an actual emergency (Minnesota currently averages 41 school fire events per year).
 - There's no time limit for completing an evacuation drill, so there's no need to rush or conduct the drill in an unsafe manner. Take the extra time necessary to maintain proper physical distancing during evacuation, when staging outdoors, and when reentering the building.

Have questions? Send an email to the Minnesota State Fire Marshal Division at: fire.code@state.mn.us



Lockdown Drills

- Five lockdown drills are required each school year.
- When, where and with whom, these drills are conducted is flexible.
- The Minnesota School Safety Center is a non-regulating authority, but considers it best practice to conduct at least one lockdown drill with staff only prior to student arrival on campus.
 - Tabletop or scenario-based drills work well for these staff only exercises.
 - Online training can also be conducted to familiarize staff with procedures and expectations.
- Although both students and staff are to participate in drills, there is no need for schools using the hybrid model to increase the number of drills beyond five. It is not necessary for each student to participate in all drills, since not all students will be on-site at the same time.
- Maintain physical distancing throughout the drill.
 - The purpose of the drill is for both students and staff to practice and implement the lockdown plan so occupants will be better prepared during an actual emergency.
 - There is no time limit for completing the drill so there is no need to rush or conduct the drill in an unsafe manner. Take the extra time necessary to maintain proper physical distancing.
 - Practice moving small groups to safe locations while emphasizing appropriate physical distancing.
 - Provide video training to inform students and staff on current best practices in lockdown incidents.
 - Teachers could discuss lockdown practices, demonstrate appropriate techniques and identify safe space locations in the room.

Have questions? Send an email to the MN School Safety Center connie.forster@state.mn.us

Tornado/Severe Weather Drills

- One tornado/severe weather drill is required to be conducted with students each school year.
- There is no need for schools using the hybrid model to increase the number of drills.
- Maintain physical distancing throughout the drill.
 - The purpose of a drill is for both students and staff to practice the implementation of the tornado/severe weather procedures so occupants will be better prepared during an actual emergency. There's no time limit for completing the drill, so there's no need to rush or conduct the drill in an unsafe manner. Take the extra time necessary to maintain proper physical distancing.
 - Explain procedures during local siren tests to all students.
 - Move students to the shelter location one classroom or group at a time.
 - Identify one way traffic to reduce congestion and crossing paths.
 - Apply clear signage to identify shelter locations and point out signage on a regular basis.

Have questions? Send an email to the MN School Safety Center connie.forster@state.mn.us

The [Minnesota School Safety Center](#) cares about the safety of all schools. The MnSSC provides training and resources to schools to help them prepare, respond, mitigate and recover from all emergencies.