School Emergency Program

for Rocky View Schools

A GUIDE FOR PARENT AND GUARDIANS

Issued September 2012

A Message from the Superintendent

Safety is essential to the learning environment.

The moment a child's safety is jeopardized, learning stops.

ROCKY VIEW SCHOOLS'S FIRST PRIORITY DURING AN EMERGENCY is the safety of all our students and staff. The Division has developed an Emergency Response Plan to deal with a wide range of emergency situations that may impact our school community. The Plan works in concert with other local emergency preparedness plans. The Division-wide plan and those plans tailored specifically to each individual school are reviewed and revised annually and, if required, after an emergency.

Each school has an on-site emergency team composed of school staff. The schools regularly provide staff with emergency training and practice various emergency drills with students and staff. A Division-based Emergency Response Team has also been established to assist schools in responding to emergencies.

While the Plan is built using protocols and procedures, the particular actions taken during any emergency greatly depend on the specifics of the incident. The main objective of the response is to always ensure the safety of our students and staff.

Rocky View Schools works in close collaboration with local and provincial emergency personnel to ensure plans are coordinated with appropriate agencies. The Division and schools' plans do not replace the authority of law enforcement, fire or EMS. First responders are specially trained to deal with emergencies, criminal activities and extenuating circumstances. School staff members work in full co-operation and consultation with these agencies.

As a security precaution, the specifics of our emergency response plans are confidential and are not released. However, this guide outlines the key elements of the Plan and answers the basic questions parents frequently ask regarding emergency preparedness. I hope you find this guide helpful.

Thank you for your support and assistance in our safety efforts.

Sincerely,

Greg Bass, Superintendent

©2008 Hour-Zero Crisis Consulting Ltd.

Keeping Safe

WHEN A SCHOOL IS CONFRONTED WITH AN EMERGENCY SITUATION there are few possible courses of action the school may take; what that action is will depend on the specifics of the incident. A school may choose to do any or all of the following:

Shelter-in-Place	During a Shelter-in-Place, students and staff retreat to classrooms or another safe area to seek shelter. This includes having any students or staff members who are outdoors come back into the school. Generally, Shelter-in-Place is used during an environmental emergency such as severe storms or chemical spills affecting air quality. Each school's emergency response plan identifies the safest location for its occupants and how to seal a room from possible hazardous conditions.
Lock-Down	Lock-Downs are usually used in response to acts or threats of violence to students and/or staff, including any such activities in the general vicinity of the school. During a Lock-Down all outside doors to the building and rooms within the school are locked. No one is permitted in or out of any area once the area has been locked. Students and staff must respond very quickly to a Lock-Down command to ensure they get to a safe location before the doors are locked. Parents are not permitted access to the building or to their children until the Lock-Down is over.
Evacuation	An Evacuation requires all students and staff to leave the school and go to an alternate location. In some cases this may mean only going outside and away from the school building until it is safe to re-enter the school. In other cases, students and staff may need to go to an evacuation centre. Parents would be informed of the alternate location via the school's Crisis Notification Network.
Dismissal	Under some circumstances it may be determined that it is best to dismiss students to their homes and families as expeditiously as possible. Should this be the case, every attempt will be made to alert the emergency contact for each student of the situation and to ensure young students are not left unsupervised.

Schools conduct drills throughout the year to rehearse emergency procedures. In addition to the procedures described above schools also practice protocols such as: "On-Alert", which is an early warning system; "Duck-Cover-Hold", which is a method of protecting vital body parts from harm during things such as tornados or earthquakes; and conduct fire drills.

These drills and exercises are precautionary actions designed to prepare students and staff to act quickly and to minimize a child's fear should a real emergency occur.

Reuniting with your Child

©2008 Hour-Zero Crisis Consulting Ltd.

WE RECOGNIZE THAT WHEN AN EMERGENCY OCCURS parents will be worried and want to be reunited with their child as quickly as possible. It is our intention to make this happen. However, to ensure every child's safety, specific procedures have been established for releasing students.

If a situation merits, school staff may decide to do a "controlled release" of students. This means a **Parent-Child Reunion Area** will be set up and parents will be required to adhere to specific procedures to pick up their child. Staff will work hard to ensure this process takes place without delay. However, please understand it will not happen instantaneously and we ask for your patience when you arrive at the Parent-Child Reunion Area. Parents will be notified at the time of the emergency where the Reunion Area is located.

Parents are asked to adhere to the parent-child reunification guidelines listed below:

Please do not come to the school to pick up your child unless requested to do so. Although your natural instincts in an emergency may be to go to the school to safeguard your child, please understand that doing so may significantly degrade the overall ability to respond to the situation. Going to the school may interfere with emergency crews' and school personnel's efforts to respond to the situation. While it may seem logical that every student taken by a parent reduces the number of children a school needs to care for, in a fast-moving situation that requires careful coordination, extra vehicles and people at the school actually make the task of keeping track of all students more difficult. Please follow the instructions provided to you through the communications channels outlined on the back page.

You will be required to fill out a Student Release Request Form. This ensures all students are accounted for at all times and that students are only released to authorized individuals.

Students will only be released to an individual designated as legal guardian or emergency contact on the student's Emergency Card, which is completed at time of school registration.

Valid identification is required to pick up your child. This is required to protect your child from any unauthorized individuals attempting to pick up students. Even if school personnel know you, you must still present I.D. as the school may be receiving assistance from other schools or outside agencies.

You will be required to sign for the release of your child. This is extremely important, as it is our only means of ensuring all students are accounted for at all times. Please do not just take your child from the school or evacuation centre without signing for his/her release.

Once you have been reunited with your child, please leave the area immediately. This is for your own safety and that of your child.

If you are unable to pick up your child, he/she will be kept at the Parent-Child Reunion Centre until alternate arrangements can be made. Your child will be supervised at all times.

Keeping Informed during an Emergency

©2008 Hour-Zero Crisis Consulting Ltd.

DURING A REAL EMERGENCY you probably won't be able to reach the school by phone. Staff will be busy responding to the emergency and the needs of students first. School phone lines will be tied up with personnel communicating with emergency services or the school may already be evacuated. We will, however, be making every effort to contact parents, either directly, or by one of the methods noted below.

Crisis Notification Network and/or the Media

Parents will be alerted to emergency situations via:

- the Division or School's Crisis Notification Network (telephone, e-mails or electronic notification) Parents may be asked to assist by relaying messages through a telephone calling tree;

  The *Crisis Notification Network* is the system used by the Division and/or school to enable them to communicate with the parents, staff and selected community members through the use of telephone, internet or other communication services and/or systems.

- local radio and television station broadcasts.

Please DO NOT CALL THE SCHOOL and DO NOT CALL YOUR CHILD'S CELL PHONE.

Phone lines need to be kept accessible. Parents are asked not to call the school or their child's cell phone during an emergency as the phone lines/system needs to remain available for handling the actual emergency. Overloading the phone system may mean that the school will not be able to communicate with first responders. In addition, experts advise that under some circumstances cell phones and other electric devices may actually act as an ignition source for fires or explosions.

Website and Community Hotline

The Division will also keep parents informed by posting information and updates regarding the emergency on the Division website and voice recordings on the Division Community Hotline.

- **Division website at www.rockyview.ab.ca**
- **Community Hotline 403-945-4000 x 4225**

Additional Information

Additional information regarding emergency procedures is included in your child's School Handbook and on the District website. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact your local school or:

ROCKY VIEW SCHOOLS

Angela Spanier, Information Officer

Phone: 403-945-4012 E-mail: aspanier@rockyview.ab.ca

Again, thank you for your support and assistance in our safety efforts.

©2008 Hour-Zero Crisis Consulting Ltd.