



THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

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Superintendent of Schools

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Broward County, Florida**

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October 1, 2018

Over the past weeks, we have received inquiries and concerns regarding the frequency of safety drills and fire alarm systems. The safety and security of our students and staff are our highest priorities. Emergency drills are intended to help students and staff know what to do should an actual emergency arise. We want to provide you with information on safety procedures and practices in our schools.

Fire alarm systems and fire drills

For many years, school districts have been required to conduct monthly fire alarm/egress drills as outlined and required by law. Schools are required to conduct ten fire drills every school year. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) provides the requirements and guidance for the process and frequency regarding conducting fire/egress drills. The specific NFPA codes, which guide fire alarm/egress drills, are 101: 15.7.2.3 and 101: 15.7.2.4.

Schools are required to sound the fire alarm during a fire/egress drill and evacuate the building(s). If a fire alarm sounds during the course of the school day, students and staff must relocate to evacuate the school. Staff is not allowed to silence the alarm. Students and staff may return to their classrooms once the all clear has been given by the administration. In an actual fire emergency, students and staff may only return to their classrooms once the all clear has been given by the local fire department responding to the alarm. Every school has an emergency preparedness manual that outlines the steps that must be taken when the fire alarm sounds whether for a planned drill or unplanned alarm.

Emergency code drills

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Act now requires schools to conduct critical incident drills as often as they conduct fire drills. For Broward County Public Schools, this is satisfied by conducting a code red drill. In addition to conducting ten fire drills, schools must now also conduct ten emergency code (code red) drills every school year.

During the drills, staff and students adhere to the protocols and procedures for critical incident drills.

The District monitors schools to ensure the code red drills are conducted in accordance with the new legislation. If a school is placed on lockdown during the course of the school day, the school may count the lockdown procedure toward the requirement to hold the drill for a particular month.

Threats of school violence

The Marjory Stoneman Douglas Public Safety Act also considers threats of violence in schools as a crime -- a second degree felony. These threats may include using any words -- in writing, verbally or via social media -- in a threatening manner that mentions guns or any type of violence using weapons or hurting someone.

All threats are taken seriously, as they create insecurity across school communities. In recent weeks, there have been a number of incidents involving minors making false threats intending to conduct violence at schools. Regardless of whether these threats are intended as a joke or not, they are now considered a second-degree felony under the new law. As a result of this alarming trend, we are encouraging parents and guardians to talk to your children about their behavior on social media and other outlets. Students can potentially face criminal charges, in addition to facing school discipline consequences, for making threats of school violence. The law does not differentiate between a joke, a prank or a serious threat.

Our District partners with local law enforcement to ensure our schools are able to maintain safe learning environments. Thank you for your support and understanding that the safety of our schools is the collective responsibility of our entire community.

Sincerely,



Robert W. Runcie