

*EMERGENCY RESPONSE PROTOCOL*

## Severe Weather and Natural Disasters

Depending on Assistance Needed, Call:	
Fire and EMS Department	202-727-1600
Security	
Maintenance	
EST Manager	
Other	

### Situation Description

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters, though rare, can occur at anytime and may affect the safety of the school population without warning. Preplanning for severe weather and natural disasters is necessary to protect students and staff, as well as, building contents.

## *Earthquakes*

Few areas of the world, including the District of Columbia, are free from the danger of earthquakes. Earthquakes occur quickly, without warning. Falling or flying debris causes most injuries and/or deaths.

### Procedures

#### *Immediate response during the quake—*

- If indoors, stay there.
- Take cover under desks, tables, or other heavy furniture, or in interior doorways or narrow halls.
- Stay away from windows and beware of falling objects.
- If outdoors, move away from the building, if possible.
- Avoid utility poles and overhead wires.
- If on a bus, the driver should stop quickly and as safely as possible in an open area away from overpasses, road cuts, etc. Stay in the bus.

#### *Followup response after the quake—*

- Evacuate the building following the “EVACUATION” procedures.
- Notify Maintenance and Security.
- Notify the EST.

- Do not re-enter the building until authorities have checked for possible structural damage, leaking gas lines, and other utility disruptions.
- Complete appropriate reporting forms.

## ***Floods***

Many areas in Washington, DC, are subject to flood. Flooding may be caused by heavy rain, tidal surge from tropical storms off the coast, river flooding, or when stormwater runoff overwhelms drainage systems.

Even a small innocent creek can become a raging torrent capable of destruction. Except in the case of flash flooding, the onset of most floods is a relatively slow process with buildup taking several days. Know the local history of flooding for your area. When conditions dictate, have someone monitor the weather via radio to determine if severe weather conditions are approaching your area. The National Weather Service issues two types of Flood Alerts:

- ***Flood Watch***—is issued when conditions are favorable for flooding within the designated watch area.
- ***Flood Warning***—is issued when a flood has been reported or is imminent. Protective measures should be taken immediately.

### **Procedures**

- ***Immediate response***—If conditions dictate, contact the EST to determine whether students should be relocated to the predetermined flood relocation site.
- ***Followup response***—Contact Maintenance. Complete appropriate reporting forms.

## ***Thunderstorms (Electrical Storms)***

Thunderstorms are a frequent occurrence in the District of Columbia. Lighting, damaging winds, and hail often accompany them. Quite often, a thunderstorm is a prelude to a tornado. When conditions dictate, have someone monitor the weather via radio to determine if severe weather conditions are approaching your area. The National Weather Service issues two types of Severe Thunderstorm alerts.

- ***Severe Thunderstorm Watch***—When conditions are favorable for severe thunderstorms to develop in your area, a severe thunderstorm watch is issued.
- ***Severe Thunderstorm Warning***—When severe thunderstorms are occurring in your area, a severe thunder warning is issued.

### **Procedures**

#### ***Immediate Response***—

- If conditions dictate, follow the *Severe Weather Safe Area* procedures.
- If you are outside and lightning is seen or thunder heard, move inside at once. Do not seek shelter under isolated trees or close to wire fences, playground equipment, or shelters located in exposed locations.

- During a Severe Thunderstorm Watch or Warning for your area, cancel outside recess and physical education classes. Even if there is no wind or rain, lightning is always a threat. Stay indoors and do not venture outside unless absolutely necessary.
- During a Severe Thunderstorm Warning, relocate all students from portable classrooms to main school building.
- Stay away from open doors and windows, metal objects, electrical appliances, and plumbing until the storm has passed.
- Keep telephone use to a minimum during storms.
- Television sets, computers, and other electrical equipment and appliances should be unplugged to the extent possible.
- If caught outside during a thunderstorm, keep away from isolated trees and other electrically conductive elevated objects such as overhead wires. Move away from tall things (trees, towers, fences, or power lines) and metal objects (umbrellas, motorcycles or bicycles, wire fences, etc) since they all attract lightning. Avoid open spaces, wire fences, sheds, or shelters not fully enclosed. Seek shelter in thick timber or a ravine. Get into a crouching position.
- If in a vehicle, stay inside. Vehicles offer excellent lightning protection. Do not touch exposed metal parts. Do not park vehicles under electrical lines or isolated trees.

**Followup response**—For cleanup of debris, fallen trees, fallen wires, or other facility damage, notify maintenance. Complete appropriate reporting forms.

## *Tornadoes*

Tornadoes are local storms with whirling winds of tremendous speeds that can exceed several hundred miles per hour. When conditions dictate, have someone monitor the weather via radio to determine if severe weather conditions are approaching your area. The National Weather Service issues two types of Tornado Alerts:

- **Tornado Watch**—when conditions are favorable for tornadoes to develop in your area.
- **Tornado Warning**—means that a tornado has been sighted and protective measures should be taken at once.

### **Procedures**

#### ***Immediate response***—

- Follow thunderstorm procedures above.
- If conditions dictate, follow the *Severe Weather Safe Areas* procedures.
- When participating in outside activities, watch and listen for signs of danger. Signals for an approaching tornado include dark-greenish sky, clouds moving to form a funnel, large hail, or loud roar (like a freight train).
- If time permits, immediately evacuate students and personnel from temporary structures like manufactured trailers to a stronger shelter
- Go to designated shelter areas or interior halls on the lowest floor. Stay away from open areas.
- If there is not sufficient time to take shelter, go to an inside wall of the room, away from the windows. Squat on floor next to a wall, or get under desks/furniture by

squatting or lying prone on the floor, face down. If a book can be picked up easily, hold it over your head.

- **If outdoors**—try to take shelter in a basement or sturdy building. Or, lie in a dry ditch with hands covering your head, but watch and listen for flooding and be aware you're a bigger target for lightning. And if you hear or see water, move since it can carry lightning's electrical charge!
- **If in a vehicle**—*Get out.* Take shelter in a building or lie flat in a ditch with hands covering head (but be aware you're a bigger target for lightning when lying flat and listen for flooding!).

**Followup response**—For cleanup of debris, fallen trees, fallen wires, or other facility damage, notify Maintenance.

## Winter Storms

The major dangers for winter storms are intense cold and the breakdown of transportation due to poor visibility and road conditions. Severe weather warnings are issued by the National Weather Service. When threat of severe weather exists, monitor radio/television for bulletins issued for your Local Education Agency (LEA). The EST will provide additional information and instructions as necessary.

There are several important winter weather terms you should know:

- **Winter Weather Advisory**—indicates cold, ice, and snow are expected in the area.
- **Winter Storm Watch**—indicates the potential for severe winter weather such as heavy snow or ice is possible within a day or two (24–48 hours).
- **Winter Storm Warning**—indicates severe winter conditions have begun or are about to begin.
- **Blizzard Warning**—refers to heavy snow and strong winds producing blinding snow (near-zero visibility) and life threatening wind chills for three hours or longer.
- **Freezing Rain**—refers to rain that freezes when it hits the ground, creating a coating of ice on roads and walkways.
- **Hail**—is rain that turns to ice while suspended and tossed in the air from violent updrafts in a thunderstorm.
- **Sleet**— is rain that turns to ice pellets before reaching ground.
- **Frost/Freeze Warning**—indicates below freezing temperatures are expected in the area.

### Procedures

Follow the cancellation, early dismissal, and delayed opening announcements relative to snow and/or ice conditions.

#### **Preparations**—

- Personnel should avoid over exertion shoveling snow or working outside since cold can put strain on the heart and cause a heart attack (even in children!).
- During outdoor activities, watch for signs of cold related illness—students/personnel playing or working out in the snow can cause exposure. Several indications individuals may require medical attention include:

- ***Frostbite***—occurs when an individual experiences loss of feeling in fingers, toes, nose or earlobes, or they turn very pale.
- ***Hypothermia***—occurs when an individual starts shivering a lot, speech slows, stumbling, or feels very tired.

If workers or students exhibit any of these signs, get inside and quickly seek medical help.