

# Taking the Lead in an Emergency

**THE EVENTS OF RECENT YEARS—FROM THE TERRORIST** attacks of 9/11 to Hurricane Katrina to school shootings—have taught us some hard lessons. We know we have to be better prepared in emergency situations. School administrators are faced with the extremely daunting responsibility of keeping their students and staff safe. There are, however, a number of resources to help them in that task, and many of them are free from government sources, such as the “Bomb Threat Response” CD-ROM developed by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools.

The first step is prevention whenever possible, and that begins with a safety audit of school buildings and grounds. The U.S. Department of Education offers a guide on preparing your school for a crisis, with suggestions that include connecting with community emergency responders to identify local hazards and determining major problems in your school with regard to student crime and violence. The department’s Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program’s “The Three R’s to Dealing with Trauma in Schools: Readiness, Response and Recovery” is intended to help schools with

strategies to incorporate the mental health needs of students and staff into their safe-school plans, and illustrates promising school-based models that help schools prevent and respond to trauma.

Good planning and preparation is necessary for an effective response to a crisis, so the Department of Education guide suggests gathering information about your



facility that includes maps and the location of utility shutoffs. There should also be procedures in place for communicating with staff, students, families and the media in the event of a crisis.

The Department of Education’s Emergency Response and Crisis Management Technical Assistance Center suggests creating “go-kits”—portable emergency supply kits. Administrators, teachers and others—perhaps school nurses or building engineers—should have kits with supplies they need for their particular responsibilities.

The Administration “go-kit” suggested contents include a list of all students (and descriptions of those with special needs), a list of school personnel, the school’s emergency procedures, key contact information for the district crisis team, a parent-student

reunification plan and utility turnoff procedures. Equipment should include battery-operated flashlight (and batteries), a whistle, an emergency communication device and a first-aid kit with instructions. It is also suggested that the administrator wear something such as a hat or brightly colored vest to provide visibility and identification as a leader.

Classroom teachers should also have a kit of supplies that includes the list of students and their special needs, a list of classroom personnel and the school’s emergency procedures. In addition, they should have activities that can be used to keep their students occupied—and hopefully somewhat calm.

The American Red Cross also offers an extensive list of recommended supplies for a school to have in stock in case of emergency. These include water, a first aid kit, sanitation supplies, food, and tools such as a pry bar, pick ax, hammer, shovel, pliers, utility shutoff wrench, and barrier tape. What you need will vary depending on a number of factors, such as the most likely hazards for your area, how close emergency assistance is and the commuting distance for the majority of your students.

If you determine that a crisis is occurring at your school and can identify the type of crisis, you will know what the proper response should be—whether that is evacuation, lockdown or shelter. The Department of Education’s guide says the response should include maintaining communication among all relevant staff, establishing what information needs to be communicated to students, families and the community, monitoring how first aid is being administered, and deciding if more



equipment and supplies are needed.

When the crisis has been resolved, it is important to “return to learning and restore the infrastructure as quickly as possible.” This means restoring the physical part of the facility as well as the school community. For a school administrator, recovery includes monitoring how staff members are assessing students with regard to emotional impact, identifying available follow-up interventions, and conducting debriefings. There are usually lessons to be learned from a crisis, and these should be incorporated into training and revisions of the school’s emergency preparedness plan.

For postsecondary educational institutions, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Office for Domestic Preparedness offers “Campus Public Safety: Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism Protective Measures,” which suggests that



colleges and universities establish a working relationship with the supervisory agent at the nearest FBI field office, the regional Joint Terrorism Task Force, and state and local officials. It also offers suggestions for deterrence, such as establishing a management team directly responsible for the campus emergency operations plan; updating your risk assessment inventory; assessing areas such as your video monitoring and the physical barriers to sensitive buildings; and ensuring the adequacy of your emergency alert and communication system.

Whether it is at a K–12 school or a post-secondary institution, and whether it is terrorism, a tornado or in-school violence, there will be no time when leadership is more needed than during a crisis. That leadership begins with having a plan that includes prevention of harm to your staff, students and school, response to the emergency at hand, and finally recovery and a return to the job of education. **I**

## Prepare for the Challenges of Career and Technical Education



Educators are challenged every day as social and economic issues change. Acquiring a wide scope of knowledge is vital to the success of administrators and teachers of career and technical education programs.

American Tech’s Professional Education series addresses important issues in education from teaching methods to legal issues. Texts are written by knowledgeable authors from the career and technical education profession.

American Tech also provides textbooks and instructor materials for some of today’s most desired technical skills. Call today for the new 2006 catalog.



YOUR PARTNER IN LEARNING

**800-323-3471** 

 american technical publishers, inc.  
1155 West 175th Street • Homewood, IL 60430-4600  
708.957.1100 • Fax 708.957.1101

## Preparing a Plan

For resources to assist in emergency planning, response and recovery here are some places to turn.

American Red Cross  
**[www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/supply.html](http://www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/supply.html)**

“Bomb Threat Response: A Free Interactive Planning Tool”  
**[www.threatplan.org](http://www.threatplan.org)**

“Campus Public Safety: Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism Protective Measures”  
**[www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/campusafe.html](http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/campusafe.html)**

“Complete Crisis Planning Guide for Schools and Communities”  
**[www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf](http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/crisisplanning.pdf)**

Emergency Response and Crisis Management Technical Assistance Center  
**[www.ercm.org](http://www.ercm.org)**

“The Three R’s to Dealing with Trauma in Schools: Readiness, Response and Recovery”  
**[www.walcoff.com/prevention](http://www.walcoff.com/prevention)**

Rothstein Catalog on Disaster Recovery  
“Emergency Management Plan for Public and Private Schools”  
**[www.rothstein.com/data/dr700.htm](http://www.rothstein.com/data/dr700.htm)**