

## **HCBOE Web Site, Parents Page, Safety and Emergency Preparedness**

Safety is our number one priority. The Houston County School System is committed to taking proactive measures to protect the safety of all our students and staff members. We have made preparations to deal effectively with emergency situations that could occur in or around the school while classes are in session. While we hope that a natural disaster or other serious incident never occurs, our goal is to be as prepared as possible for any potential emergency. Our priority at all times is to protect all students and staff from harm.

### **Safety Plans**

All of our schools have safety plans. The plans are designed by school administrators, staff members, law enforcement, emergency responders and public health officials. The plans are regularly reviewed and updated. They are also approved by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency. They include procedures to respond to a variety of crisis incidents. School personnel practice the drills associated with some of these specific emergencies on a regular basis (i.e. fire, tornado or school intruder).

**Houston County schools** have been recognized by the Office of Homeland Security-Georgia Emergency Management Agency and commended for the system's and schools' safety plans.

### **Emergency Procedures Flipchart**

In addition, an Emergency Procedures flipchart is provided to schools which gives step-by-step actions to take in case of an emergency. These procedures are placed in every classroom and reviewed with faculty and staff. Emergency scenarios covered are:

- accident, serious injury or illness;
- after-hours building emergency;
- bomb or bomb threat;
- closing of school due to weather;
- death of a staff member or student;
- fire;
- hostage or terrorist;
- weapon on campus;
- student abduction or runaway;
- student disruptions such as civil disturbances;
- school bus accident;
- tornado watch or warning and natural disasters;
- utility emergency;
- community evacuation, hazardous materials and radiological incident;.

## **School System Safety Committee**

A School System Safety Committee also meets regularly. This committee consists of school administrators, school resource officers, law enforcement and community leaders who meet to discuss safety procedures, review plans and receive crisis response training. Crisis response, management and communication are discussed. Representatives of local fire and police agencies, the county health department and the state highway patrol talk about their respective roles during an emergency situation and hold "table top discussions" centered on sample crisis scenarios.

## ***No Child Left Behind Act***

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is a federal law guiding reforms in the nation's public schools. It went into effect on January 8, 2002. One goal of NCLB is to make schools safer. Key points of the NCLB as it pertains to safety follow.

- **Encourage laws to be aggressively enforced.** No child can learn in a climate of fear. One of the most important lessons learned from September 11 is that we must be prepared for the worst. There should be a community-wide effort to look out for child safety at every level of government.
- **Require states to report on school safety to the public.** NCLB encourages schools to work closely with law enforcement and the community to enforce truancy, suspension and expulsion policies, and criminal laws.
- **Protects teachers so they can teach and maintain order.** Discipline problems have been compounded by increased lawsuits impairing teachers' ability to maintain discipline and enforce rules. NCLB protects teachers, principals and school professionals from frivolous litigation when they take reasonable actions to maintain order in the classroom.
- **Anticipate the potential for violence in schools.** Violence prevention programs must meet specific principles of effectiveness and be based on scientific research with evidence that programs will reduce violence and drug use. Under NCLB, states must report school safety statistics to the public on a school-by-school basis, and districts must use federal school-safety funding to establish a plan for keeping schools safe and drug free. These plans must include: appropriate and effective discipline policies; security procedures; prevention activities; student codes of conduct; and a crisis management plan for responding to violent or traumatic incidents on school grounds.
- **Provide a way for students to leave dangerous schools.** NCLB requires schools to implement a statewide policy giving students the choice to attend a safe

public school within the district if he or she: attends a public elementary or secondary school that does not meet state and local guidelines; or becomes a victim of a violent crime while on school property. Houston County has zero schools designated by the State as “persistently dangerous.”

### **Tips for protecting your child**

- Go over school safety and discipline policies with them.
- Encourage your child to take the drills seriously.
- Discuss how to respond safely to threats from bullies. Tell your child not to join in when people are bullying.
- Make sure your child knows how to reach you at all times.

### **Resources**

📖 Read about how the Houston County School System is **planning ahead**.

### **Emergency Messages**

The Houston County School System announces emergency messages, when necessary, using a number of media:

- General emergency messages, including early and late school openings and closings, are posted on the system Web site, <http://www.hcbe.net>.
- Automated emergency telephone calls are made using our crisis communication calling system.
- Emergency messages are posted to Cox Channel 17 and ComSouth Channel 10.
- Public Service Announcements are sent to local TV and radio stations for broadcast to include:
  - **Radio**
    - WNNG 1350 AM
    - WPGA 100.9 FM
    - WQBZ 106.3 FM
    - WRBV 101.7 FM
    - WIBB 1280 AM
    - WEBL 102.5 FM
    - WPCH 96.5 FM
    - WMUM (GPB) 89.7 FM

- **Television**
  - 13 WMAZ
  - 24 WGXA
  - 41 WMGT
  - 58 WPGA

## **School Procedures**

Each Houston County school's safety plan includes procedures to respond to a variety of situations. In general, each plan involves the designation of a crisis management team, development of evacuation, shelter-in-place procedures, lockdown procedures, preparation of a portable critical response kit that contains key information and supplies, designation of one or more appropriate evacuation sites, provisions for training personnel and updating the plan, checklists for dealing with specific types of incidents and resources for help before, during and after an event. All Houston County schools' plans have been reviewed within the last twelve months, and school crisis teams have received training.

### **ACCIDENT, SERIOUS INJURY OR ILLNESS**

**DEFINITION:** Emergency where one may be sick or injured. Immediate concern is to aid the sick or injured student/staff member.

**SIGNALS:** Serious injury: May want to use code YELLOW to keep everyone in rooms and provide privacy for victim.

#### **STEPS OF ACTION:**

1. Contact the building principal/building administrator and stay with the sick/injured student or staff member.
2. Disperse the crowd, if necessary.
3. Contact parent(s), guardian(s)/family, emergency services, school Med Tech (elementary/middle schools), and school nurse.
4. Utilize first aid/follow universal precautions (see back of manual).
5. Inform staff/students as needed.
6. Complete accident report form and file in office if appropriate.

## **CLOSING OF SCHOOL - SNOW OR ICE**

**DEFINITION:** Snow, ice or extremely cold weather, close school buildings

**SIGNALS:** None

**STEPS OF ACTION:** During the school day:

1. Crisis Communication System will call all parents and school administrators.
2. Dismiss walkers if appropriate.
3. Students will remain in rooms until buses and/or parents arrive.
4. School personnel will depart as necessary.
5. Refer to After-School Program manual for procedures (elementary schools).

Before the school day:

1. Listen to local radio and television broadcasts.
2. Crisis Communication System will call all parents and all employees.

### **ROLES:**

Principal • Notify staff as needed.

- Check on building as weather permits.
- Call emergency numbers if necessary.

Custodians • Come in early on the first day back and check steps, stairs and sidewalks.

- Place caution signs as needed.

## **FIRE**

**DEFINITION:** A fire in the building or on the premises requiring the evacuation of the building.

**SIGNALS:** Ringing of the fire alarm.

**STEPS OF ACTION:**

1. Report fire to office; pull alarm/intercom, if available.
2. Close all windows and doors to confine fire.

3. Evacuate building to assigned places at least 500 feet from building.
4. Take class lists of students.
5. Move to \_\_\_\_\_ in the case of inclement weather when feasible.

**ROLES:**

- Principal
- Supervise evacuation and check for injuries.
  - Assign roles to auxiliary persons as needed.
  - Keep access roads open.
  - Administer first aid.
- Secretary
- Call Fire Department by calling 911 and Superintendent's Office: 988-6256 or 988-6257.
  - Take emergency information folder to include names, addresses, and phone numbers for all students and staff.
- Teachers
- Evacuate.
  - Use color-coded cards (GREEN, YELLOW, RED) to indicate status.
  - Take roll.
- Staff
- Report to principal when area is clear.
  - Check restrooms and other areas for students and faculty.

**Parent Procedures**

In order for our emergency response plans to be effective, we must depend on the cooperation and assistance of many people, such as local police and fire departments. We also depend upon the parents of our students to support our efforts. Your cooperation is vital to helping us protect the safety and welfare of all children and school employees. Therefore, we ask parents to observe the following procedures during a crisis situation:

**Do:**

- **Cooperate with school administrators** to ensure the safety of all concerned.
- **Visit the school system's Web site.**
- **Check your phone** for a message from our crisis communication automated calling system.
- **Tune in** to Cox channel 17 or ComSouth channel 10.
- **Check local TV and radio stations.** Tune your radio to WNNG 1350 AM, WPGA 100.9 FM, WQBZ 106.3 FM, WRBV 101.7 FM, WIBB 1280 AM, WEBL 102.5 FM, WPCH 96.5 FM, WMUM (GPB) 89.7 FM, or stay tuned to TV channels 13 WMAZ, 24 WGXA, 41 WMGT and 58 WPGA for emergency announcements and status reports. The announcements will usually include instructions on where, when and how you should pick up your child.
- **Talk to your children.** Emphasize how important it is for them to follow instructions from their teachers and school officials during an emergency.

**Do not:**

- **Do not telephone the school.** We understand and respect your concern, but it is essential that the telephone system be available for emergency communications.
- **Do not come to the school or evacuation location until you are instructed to do so.** It may be necessary to keep the streets and parking lot clear for emergency vehicles. If evacuation is required, students may be transported to a location away from the school. You'll be notified of this through a variety of **emergency message methods**.

**Frequently Asked Questions about Safety and Emergency Preparedness**

1. What is **emergency preparedness**?
2. How can I **stay informed**?
3. How will my child's school **handle an emergency situation**?
4. What is **lockdown**?
5. What will Houston County do if an act of war or other emergency situation occurs while students **are in school**?
6. What is **shelter-in-place**?
7. What if my child is riding a **school bus at the time of a crisis**?
8. Can I **pick up my child**?

**What is emergency preparedness?**

Houston County has taken steps to ensure your child's safety while in school. Each school has developed a safety plan and every classroom has an Emergency Procedures flipchart. Emergency preparedness is basically preparing the steps you will take in the event of an emergency, such as contact information, communications, and evacuation plans. Drills help staff and students know what to do in the event of an emergency.

## **How can I stay informed?**

The Houston County School System announces emergency messages, when necessary, using a variety of methods to include the Internet, telephones, television and radio.

- General emergency messages, including early and late school openings and closings, are posted on the system Web site, <http://www.hcbe.net/>.
- Automated emergency telephone calls are made using our crisis communication calling system.
- Emergency messages are posted to Cox Channel 17 and ComSouth Channel 10.
- Public Service Announcements are distributed to local TV and radio stations for broadcast.

## **How will my child's school handle an emergency situation?**

Every Houston County school has a safety plan. Each plan is individualized based on such things as the age of students and the location of the campus. The response to each situation will differ based on the specifics of that situation.

In general, each plan involves the designation of a crisis management team; an evacuation plan; shelter-in-place; lockdown procedures; preparation of a portable critical response kit that contains key information and supplies; designation of one or more appropriate evacuation sites; provisions for training personnel and updating the plan; checklists for dealing with specific types of incidents; and resources for help before, during and after an event.

All Houston County schools' safety plans have been reviewed within the last twelve months, and school crisis teams have received training. Contact your child's principal for more information.

## **What is lockdown?**

An emergency may prevent the safe evacuation of a school building and require steps to isolate students and faculty from danger by instituting a school lockdown. During a lockdown, all classroom doors, offices and exterior doors are locked and all students are kept in classrooms or other designated locations that are away from the danger. Faculty members are responsible for accounting for students and ensuring that no one leaves the safe area. School personnel secure building entrances to ensure that no unauthorized individuals enter the building.

## **What will Houston County do if an attack or other emergency situation occurs while students are in school?**

The specific actions taken by Houston County in any emergency situation - both systemwide and at individual schools - will depend on the specifics of the situation. Any action taken would depend on several factors, including the level of threat and the advice of local, state and federal agencies. The safety of students and staff members will be the primary concern in any decision.

## **What is shelter-in-place?**

Shelter-in-place is a short-term solution to a short-term problem. If an accident or attack that created contaminated air occurred in the nearby area, everyone would be brought indoors, including those in portable classrooms. Building personnel would close all windows and doors and shut down the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC). This would create a neutral pressure in the building, meaning the contaminated air would not be drawn into the building.

Shelter-in-place is a short-term measure (measured in minutes or hours, not days) designed to use a facility and its indoor atmosphere to temporarily separate people from a hazardous outdoor environment. The alternative would be to evacuate into a hazardous situation, thereby causing harm to all involved.

No stockpiling of water and food is needed for shelter-in-place. Any event of a magnitude that required such stockpiling would require that we all take our direction from the federal emergency management officials. Parents are concerned that, during a shelter-in-place activity, they couldn't pick up their children and might be separated from them for long periods of time. That will not happen; if the air outside the school is safe for parents to breathe, it is safe for their children to breathe. School system personnel have developed a plan that uses the best possible method for ensuring the safety of students and staff members in this type of crisis. Remember, it is not the school system's intention to keep children from their parents. Houston County personnel are merely endeavoring to keep children safe for parents until the parents can pick them up.

## **What if my child is riding a school bus at the time of a crisis?**

School bus drivers will be in contact with the Houston County School System Transportation Department for instructions in the event a crisis occurs while students are in transport. Bus drivers will be informed to use common sense and not travel toward the crisis location. Parents will be informed of the parent-student reunification center location via the automatic notification system, system Web site and local media.

## **Can I pick up my child?**

This decision is made based upon the advice of law enforcement. Generally parents are allowed to pick up their children unless public safety officials have declared a shelter-in-place response, or there is some other reason why access to the facility is restricted, such

as emergency vehicles needing to get through to the building. During any emergency, school personnel will maintain as safe and normal environment for children within the school as is possible. School is not automatically canceled in emergency situations. Remember, school may be the safest place for children to be during the situation.

Read about Houston's [safety and security measures](#).

## **Houston County Schools' Safety and Security Measures**

The Houston County School System continues to refine its safety planning and to be vigilant about the safety of its students and employees. Security measures include:

1. Close coordination and emergency planning with local emergency responders, including police and fire departments.
2. Close coordination with the Houston County Health Department and North Central District Health Department.
3. Comprehensive systemwide safety plan.
4. Individual school safety plans, updated within the last 12 months.
5. Employee training in crisis management and communication, including tabletop exercises.
6. Local police officers, as school resource officers, present in all secondary schools.
7. Visitor check-in policy

Our [Pandemic Influenza Response Plan](#)

## **Other Resources**

Resources for [Disaster/Emergency](#) »

Resources for [Grief and Tolerance](#) »

Resources for [Health and Wellness](#) »

Resources for **Stranger Safety** »  
Resources for **Violence and Terrorism** »

## **Disaster/Emergency**

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
  - **The Youngest Victims:** Disaster Preparedness to Meet Children's Needs
  - **Family Readiness Kit:** Preparing to Handle Disasters
- **American Association of School Administrators**
  - **The Central-Office Role** in School Emergencies
- **American Red Cross**
  - **Get Prepared, Prepare at School**
  - **Back-to-School Safety Tips**
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**
  - **Are You Ready?** A Guide to Citizen Preparedness
  - **FEMA for Kids**-Includes information about disaster planning for schools, and information for teachers about talking to kids about terrorism
  - **Safety Checklist**
  - **Tornado Information**
  - **Hurricane Information**
- **National Association of School Psychologists**
  - **School Safety and Crisis Resources**
- **American School Counselor Association (ASCA)**
  - **Crisis in the Schools**
- **National Education Association**
  - **School Crisis Guide**
- **National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)**
  - **Tornado FAQ's**
- **U.S. Department of Education**
  - **Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools**-Offers research-based practices designed to assist school communities identify warning signs early and develop prevention, intervention, and crisis response plans
- **U.S. Department of Homeland Security** has two Web sites that provide information to help citizens prepare for a variety of situations:
  - <http://www.ready.gov>

- <http://www.ed.gov/emergencyplan>
- **Other**
  - **The Council of Chief State School Officers School Health Project**
  - **Educators for Social Responsibility** This Web site has more than 50 lesson plans for teachers on topics such as war, peace, anthrax, and hate crimes. The site also includes guides for talking with youth about terrorism, and action ideas for schools and students.
  - **National Emergency Management Association (NEMA)**

## **Grief and Tolerance**

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
  - **Advice on communicating with children about disasters**
- **National Association of School Psychologists**
  - **School Safety and Crisis Resources**

## **Health and Wellness**

- **Centers for Disease Control**
  - **Division of Adolescent and School Health (DASH)**
  - **Emergency Health Services**
  - **Public Health Practice Program**, which includes both a state and a local Emergency Preparedness and Response Inventory, tools for rapid assessment of response capacity
  - **Smallpox Outbreak Response Plan and Guidelines**
  - Quicklinks to CDC information on:
    - **Anthrax**
    - **Influenza**
    - **Lead in Drinking Water**
    - **Pandemic Influenza**
    - **Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)**
    - **Smallpox**
    - **Staphylococcus aureus**
- **National Association of School Psychologists**
- **Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)**
- **North Central Health District**
- **U.S. Department of Education**
  - **Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools**

## **Stranger Safety**

- [Stranger Safety Tips for Children](#)
- Children's Hospital: [Straight Talk about Stranger Safety](#)

## **Violence and Terrorism**

- **Centers for Disease Control**
  - [Biological and Chemical Terrorism: CDC Strategic Plan for Preparedness and Response](#)
  - [Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response](#), which includes information about biological, chemical, and radiological terrorism and related planning and response efforts
  - [Radiation Emergencies](#)
  - [Terrorism Emergencies](#)
- **Education Development Center**
  - [Beyond Blame: Reacting to the Terrorist Attack](#) for grades 6 through 12
- **National Association of School Psychologists**
  - [School Safety and Crisis Resources](#)
- **U.S. Department of Education**
  - [Suggestions for Educators Meeting the Needs of Students in the Aftermath of September 11th](#)
- **Other**
  - [The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials \(ASTHO\) Responds to Terrorism](#)
  - [Homeland Security](#) web page provides up-to-date information and advice for states on homeland security and bio-terrorism issues.

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