



School Safety and Emergency Management

Monthly Minute: Communication Plans

November 2024

Monthly Minute is a newsletter providing insight and tips on potential threats and hazards brought to you by the Oregon Department of Education.



November can bring increased rainfall and colder weather. Grabbing that sweater or rain jacket may be first on the list, but that will soon change and we'll be bundling up with winter coats. While we're grabbing our jackets, we also need to prepare our whole school community for cold weather. The best tools in our school-preparedness toolbox include situational awareness and communication—communication with students, staff, their families and our local emergency responders.

In this edition we will provide examples and explain actions to prepare our schools for winter through awareness and communication. The first thing to do in preparation for the coming change in weather is to know your area's environmental

risks including local weather patterns. In areas affected by recent wildfires, there could be an increased risk of flooding and landslides. These could have dangerous effects on communication, transportation and life safety. Freezing temperatures could worsen these risks. Stay connected with your local area weather reports so you get an early warning for impending storms.

Include your local and county emergency responders, as well as public works, in your awareness activities. It's one thing to read a weather report. It's another to know what roads or power lines may be affected. Your school's immediate vicinity may seem relatively safe and unaffected, but your students may be coming from a remote location without power or with obstructed roads—crucial information that public works could provide which will inform your decision on the day's activities.

If we have a way to maintain awareness of coming weather hazards, then we need to have a plan to communicate our response to them. A good communications plan will address two major areas: internal and external communications. Internal communications are what we communicate to those inside the

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This Month... Conduct a Secure drill this month. Review communications plans and Communicable Disease Management Plans ahead of winter weather that keeps students indoors.



Conduct a Secure Drill this month.

Up Next... December's Monthly Minute will cover what to do in the first minutes of an emergency and how to mentally prepare with checklists and situational exercises.



Conduct an Evacuation Drill in December.



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Review your Communicable Disease Management Plan ahead of winter weather that forces school activities indoors. People confined in close spaces can quickly spread infectious diseases if prevention measures are not implemented ahead of time. Check out the following links for resources:

- [ODE page on school-level communicable disease planning.](#)
- [Oregon Health Authority resource page for schools and daycare centers.](#)



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building and who are a part of our staff—including transportation staff. Things we should consider for internal communications are: method (PA system, email, hand-held radios), alerts (what we say to illicit a response), and reports (how can students or staff notify school leadership of changing conditions or other emergencies?). Have a plan for each of these areas and practice your plan.

External communications are what we communicate to those in our school community outside our building. How do we communicate with parents or guardians about changing conditions? Do we have a plan to share information with local media outlets about

emergency responses or school closures? Draft templates for these messages today to save yourself the stress of how to explain emergency conditions in the future.

To recap:

- Have a way to keep your school community aware of changing conditions. Be prepared to send out **emergency communication** if a response is necessary.
- Have local and county emergency responders, as well as public works on speed dial for both awareness and communication.
- Have (and practice) a communication plan that addresses both internal and external communication. **Go here to view an example communications plan.**

Contact Information



Scan or click the QR code to visit the School Safety and Emergency Management website with additional school emergency preparedness resources, and to **sign up for the monthly training and technical assistance sessions.**

Additional Resources

Go to our [EOP Resources page](#) for help on this and to find an example communications plan.

[SSEM: Planning for students and staff with access and functional needs.](#)

Oregon Emergency Management [local contacts list.](#)