School Critical Emergency Guidelines

Information for School Authorities

Alberta

School Critical Emergency Guidelines | Alberta Education and Childcare

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Contents

Purpose and Overview **3**

School Critical Emergency Planning **3**

Roles and Responsibilities **4**

School Authority 4
Superintendent/Head of School 5
Principal/School Leader/School Leader Designate 5
Teachers, Educational Assistants, and School-Based Support Staff 6
Custodial, Maintenance, Transportation, and Office Staff 6
Children and Students 6
Parents/Guardians 6
Volunteers and Visitors 7
Community Partners and First Responders 7

Emergency Management **7**

Prevention and Mitigation 7
Preparedness and Response 8

Examples of a Critical School Emergency 8
School Critical Emergency Planning Team 8
Threats and Hazard Assessment 9
Off-Site Learning Environments 9
Drills 9
Drill Type 10
Documenting Drills 10
Training and Education 10
Standard Emergency Response Protocols 10
Communication protocols with health and emergency services 11
Recovery 11
Communication 11
Transition from Response to Recovery 12
Recovery Supports and Resources 12
Restoration and Reopening of School Buildings 12
Continuity of Operations 12

Review and Continuous Improvement **12**

Annual Communication **12**

Conclusion **13**

Definitions **14**

Helpful Resources **15**

School Critical Emergency Standards Checklist **16**

Purpose and Overview

Under the *Education Act*, students are entitled to a safe and caring learning environment. School authorities, principals, teachers, and staff members all contribute to creating and maintaining safe environments in which learning can continue, even when unexpected events occur.

School authorities in Alberta are responsible for establishing conditions that support the safety, well-being, and learning of students while also providing safe and healthy workplaces for staff members and others who may be present at school sites. Emergency preparedness and response in school sites are grounded in Alberta legislation and form part of the broader responsibility of school authorities to develop and implement plans to address foreseeable risks and disruptive events in schools.

Ministerial Order [#029/2026] establishes the School Critical Emergency Standards that set out the minimum provincial requirements for emergency management that school authorities and schools must address within their local context. The standards complement, and do not replace, other requirements related to health, safety, and building standards.

The purpose of these guidelines is to support school authorities in Alberta to implement the requirements set out in the School Critical Emergency Standards by providing practical and adaptable guidance for school safety and emergency planning. The guidelines include suggestions, examples, and considerations to support implementation and are not intended to establish any additional requirements.

Emergency management is a continuous and shared responsibility, involving school authorities, staff members, children, students, parents, first responders, and community partners. Planning for emergencies is not a one-time task, but an ongoing process that strengthens readiness, builds confidence, and supports effective action.

Throughout these guidelines, emphasis is placed on the ability of school authorities and their partners to plan for, prepare for, and respond to emergencies, recognizing that effective emergency management in school sites relies on clear role definition, collaboration, and adaptability, with individuals understanding their responsibilities, acting within their authority, and working collectively with parents and community partners to improve safety and support the continuity of learning.

These guidelines will be reviewed regularly to make sure they are accurate, relevant, and up to date.

School Critical Emergency Planning

In accordance with the standards, all school authorities are required to have a School Authority Critical Emergency Framework, and all schools are required to have a School Critical Emergency Plan.

A School Authority Critical Emergency Framework is a compilation of the policies and procedures for a school authority that address School Critical Emergency prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. The requirement for a School Authority Critical Emergency Framework applies to any Alberta public or separate school board, Francophone regional authority, operator of a charter school, person responsible for the operation of an independent school, or independent ECS operator as defined in the Early Childhood Services Regulation.

The School Authority Critical Emergency Framework must include:

- Prevention and Mitigation strategies to reduce the likelihood of a Critical School Emergency;
- Preparedness and Response strategies for a Critical School Emergency; and
- Recovery procedures following a Critical School Emergency.

A School Critical Emergency Plan is developed by the principal or independent early childhood services (ECS) operator for each school operating under a school authority for deployment during a Critical School Emergency and describes how a school prepares for, responds to, and recovers from critical emergencies that may affect students, staff members, or school operations.

Each school and ECS program operating under a school authority must have a School Critical Emergency Plan for deployment during a Critical School Emergency. The School Critical Emergency Plan should align with the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and reflect the specific context of the school, including its physical environment, student population, staffing, and surrounding areas. Plans are most effective when they are practical, accessible, and understood by staff members.

The following guidelines are intended to support school authorities and principals to develop the School Critical Emergency Plan.

The School Critical Emergency Plan:

- identifies foreseeable hazards and risks relevant to the school and its activities, including consideration of building layout, site conditions, student population needs, and seasonal and environmental factors;
- establishes a chain of command, including clearly defined roles and responsibilities for emergency response, escalation, and recovery activities;
- establishes response protocols using clear communication methods, such as scripted announcements, multiple communication channels (e.g., intercom, text alert systems, or radios), and defined internal reporting pathways, to support consistent messaging to children, students, staff members, and others in the building;
- accounts for all individuals during an emergency with attendance tracking systems, visitor sign-in/out procedures, and verification processes such as staff members' roll calls or designated reporting points to support accurate headcounts and follow-up on missing persons;
- ensures the timely provision of first aid and medical assistance during a Critical School Emergency;
- establishes modifications to critical emergency procedures for off-site learning environments, including both episodic activities (e.g. field trips) and regularly scheduled outdoor or community-based programming (e.g. outdoor classrooms);
- establishes procedures for responding to after-hours and off-site critical emergencies, including the use of alternate shelter options and contingency actions to maintain safety when emergency services are delayed or unable to respond immediately;
- determines when buildings and grounds are safe, including post-incident inspection processes, coordination with emergency responders or maintenance personnel, and defined criteria for re-entry decisions following a Critical School Emergency; and
- prepares for key critical emergency scenarios such as armed assailant situations, bomb threats, emergency weather events, and fire or explosion, with consideration of site-specific risks, communication approaches, and response actions tailored to each type of incident.

The School Critical Emergency Plan is not a standalone document. It works alongside the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework, other relevant school authority policies, occupational health and safety requirements, and local authority emergency arrangements.

Both the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and each School Critical Emergency Plan must be clearly communicated to staff members, students, and parents on an annual basis. Communication should support awareness of emergency preparedness expectations, response procedures, and recovery processes appropriate to each audience.

The standards also require annual review of the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and each School Critical Emergency Plan to ensure they remain current, effective, aligned with provincial requirements, and responsive to any changes in local risks, operations, or community needs. Lessons identified through drills, exercises, and emergencies can inform these annual reviews and can be used to update and improve the documents over time. This continuous improvement approach supports readiness and resilience and helps ensure the documents remain relevant.

Roles and Responsibilities

School Authority

Clear roles and responsibilities support effective school safety and emergency planning. The school authority is ultimately responsible for ensuring they meet the requirements set out in the standards. The school authority establishes the overall School Authority Critical Emergency Framework that complies with the standards across its schools and ensures that each school under its operation develops a School Critical Emergency Plan that adheres to its framework. As employers under Alberta occupational health and safety legislation, school authorities have responsibilities related to worker safety, training, and emergency preparedness. Specifically, school authorities are responsible for:

- establishing a School Authority Critical Emergency Framework that complies with these standards no later than January 4, 2027;

- ensuring that each school under its operation develops a School Critical Emergency Plan that adheres to its School Authority Critical Emergency Framework no later than April 5, 2027;
- communicating the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and the School Critical Emergency Plan to staff members, students, and parents annually;
- reviewing the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and the School Critical Emergency Plan annually;
- providing confirmation that the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and each School Critical Emergency Plan are in compliance with these standards in a form acceptable by the Minister; and
- at minimum, including elements detailed in section 7 of the standards in the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework.

As part of implementing the standards, school authorities are also responsible for determining the roles and responsibilities within their local context. When staff members, children, students, parents, and community partners understand their responsibilities, actions during critical emergencies become more coordinated, timely, and appropriate to the situation.

Superintendent/Head of School

The superintendent provides overall leadership for school safety and emergency planning within the school authority and plays a key role in embedding preparedness as a core, system-wide priority. Their responsibilities may include:

- providing direction and oversight for the implementation of the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and School Critical Emergency Plans across their schools;
- supporting principals and school leaders in fulfilling their responsibilities;
- coordinating system-level communication with parents, partners, and government as needed;
- facilitating access to supports and resources during emergencies; and
- overseeing continuity of operations and recovery planning when learning is disrupted.

Senior leadership supports consistency across schools while allowing flexibility to respond to local conditions.

Principal/School Leader/School Leader Designate

Under the standards, the principal, school leader, or school leader designate is responsible for ensuring their school has a current School Critical Emergency Plan. Principals also play a key role in leading school-based safety and emergency planning and for supporting preparedness and coordinated action during emergencies affecting the school. Key responsibilities may include:

- conducting required drills to support preparedness;
- supporting staff members' understanding of procedures and standard response protocols;
- coordinating response actions at the school level based on the situation;
- communicating with the school authority, parents, and external partners as needed; and
- supporting recovery activities, including the return to learning.

The principal, school leader, or school leader designate also carries responsibilities as a supervisor under occupational health and safety legislation, including providing guidance and oversight to support safe actions during emergencies.

Teachers, Educational Assistants, and School-Based Support Staff

Teachers, educational assistants, and other school-based support staff play a critical role in implementing the School Critical Emergency Plan and supporting student preparedness knowledge, skills, and confidence. Their responsibilities may include:

- being familiar with the School Critical Emergency Plan;
- participating in training and practice activities;
- supporting students during emergencies by following established procedures and direction;
- maintaining reasonable supervision and supporting accountability, as circumstances allow; and
- reporting safety concerns, hazards, or incidents through appropriate channels.

Staff members' responsibilities may vary depending on roles and assignments, but all staff members contribute to maintaining safe and orderly learning environments.

Custodial, Maintenance, Transportation, and Office Staff

Custodial, maintenance, transportation, and office staff members support school safety through their roles in facilities, operations, logistics, and ongoing preparedness activities. Their responsibilities may include:

- supporting access control, building safety, and infrastructure needs during emergencies;
- assisting with communication, coordination, or logistical support;
- maintaining readiness of safety equipment and resources, as assigned; and
- supporting safe movement of students and staff members during response.

These staff members contribute essential operational knowledge and support to school safety efforts.

Children and Students

Children and students are expected to participate in activities outlined in the School Critical Emergency Plan in ways that are appropriate to their age and developmental level. Supporting student preparedness, confidence, and understanding is an important part of implementing the School Critical Emergency Plan. Children's and students' responsibilities may include:

- participating in drills and practice activities;
- following instructions from staff members during emergencies; and
- reporting safety concerns to a trusted adult.

Supporting children's and students' understanding of emergency procedures helps build a school culture where everyone plays a role in promoting safety and well-being.

Parents/Guardians

Parents and guardians are key partners in school safety and emergency planning. Their role may include:

- keeping their child's contact information current;
- understanding school safety procedures and expectations;
- following school and school authority directions during emergencies; and
- supporting their child's well-being during recovery and return to learning.

Clear communication with parents before, during, and after incidents supports calm, orderly responses and child and student safety.

Volunteers and Visitors

Under Alberta occupational health and safety legislation, most volunteers are considered workers. As a result, volunteer-related expectations, responsibilities, and procedures should reflect applicable occupational health and safety requirements.

Volunteers and visitors are expected to follow school safety procedures while on school property or participating in school-sponsored activities. School leaders should ensure that volunteers and visitors are aware of relevant safety procedures and understand expectations during emergencies.

Community Partners and First Responders

Schools and school authorities may work with community partners, including emergency services and local authorities to inform planning and when incidents require external support.

Collaboration with community partners supports coordinated responses, shared understanding of roles, and smoother transitions from response to recovery when broader assistance is required.

Emergency Management

Emergency management follows a cyclical approach that recognizes emergencies as complex, evolving events. The standards establish obligations for school authorities to plan for and respond to emergencies using an integrated cycle consisting of:

1. Prevention and Mitigation
2. Preparedness and Response
3. Recovery

These phases are not linear. Actions in one phase influence and strengthen the others, and multiple phases may occur at the same time during complex or prolonged events.

Prevention and Mitigation

Prevention and mitigation are core components of emergency management and are reflected in provincial and national emergency management frameworks.

Prevention and mitigation are integrated into everyday planning and operations rather than treated as standalone emergency measures. This includes identifying hazards, assessing risks, and taking reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood of emergencies occurring and minimizing their potential impacts. In school contexts, these activities take place before a Critical School Emergency has occurred and are central to creating safer learning environments. This reduces reliance on more disruptive response actions and supports continuity of learning.

As outlined in the standards, school authorities are required, at minimum, to have prevention and mitigation strategies, which include:

- Ongoing staff member safety training.

It is recommended that safety training is supported through structured training programs, which are role-relevant and aligned to staff members' responsibilities. School authorities may also consider maintaining records of staff members' completion of required safety training and setting schedules to update or refresh training.

- School building access requirements for children, students, staff members, and visitors.
  - Some considerations for school authorities may be how they will manage or designate entry points, and visitor management procedures, such as requiring identification.
- Maintenance of critical emergency supplies, documents, and equipment, including, at a minimum: up-to-date floor plans to guide first responders, School Critical Emergency Plan documents, and first aid supplies in accessible locations.
  - It is recommended that responsibility for maintaining emergency supplies, documents, and equipment be clearly assigned, with processes in place to ensure these resources remain accessible if designated staff members are unavailable.

Prevention and mitigation are ongoing processes. As schools and communities change, risks evolve, and lessons are learned from past incidents, school authorities and schools are expected to regularly review and adjust prevention and mitigation strategies.

By focusing on prevention and mitigation, school authorities and schools strengthen overall resilience, reduce the impacts of emergencies, and support safe, stable learning and working environments.

Preparedness and Response

Preparedness involves the activities undertaken to ensure school authorities and schools are ready to respond effectively when critical emergencies occur. This includes establishing clear plans, developing shared understanding among staff members and students, and maintaining the capacity to act under a wide range of conditions. Preparedness goes beyond readiness to respond; it involves building the knowledge, skills, and habits that help reduce the impact of critical emergencies and support smoother recovery when they occur.

Response includes the actions taken during or immediately before an emergency to protect life, reduce harm, and stabilize the situation. In schools, response actions are focused on the safety of students and staff members, and others present, while supporting calm, clear, and timely decision-making. Response efforts may involve protective actions, communication with parents and partners, coordination with local authorities or emergency services, and ongoing assessment of changing conditions. The standards require the following preparedness and response strategies for a Critical School Emergency:

- establishing a school critical emergency planning team at the school authority level and for each school operated by the school authority;
- a process for assessing threats and hazards specific to the local context;
- practice drills and exercises;
- ongoing training and education for staff members, children, and students, including, at a minimum, familiarizing staff members, children and students with their respective roles and responsibilities described in the School Critical Emergency Plan;
- standard response protocols, including, at a minimum: “evacuation,” “shelter-in-place,” “lockdown,” “hold and secure,” and “all clear”; and
- communication protocols with health and emergency services.

Examples of a Critical School Emergency

Category	Relevant Examples
Site/Location-Based	Structural failure, power outage, gas leak/shut-off, carbon monoxide, fire, explosion, water main break, mechanical failure, vehicle crash, wildlife
Biological/Chemical/Medical	Chemical exposure, drug exposure, biohazard cleanup, disease/pandemic, heat/cold exposure, heart attack/stroke, slip/trip/fall, mental health crisis
Violence	Bomb threat, suspicious package, robbery, active assailant, aggressive behaviour/threats, physical assault, kidnapping
Extreme Weather/Natural Disasters	Tornado, windstorm, snow/ice storm, hailstorm, flood, earthquake, wildfire

School Critical Emergency Planning Team

The standards require a school critical emergency planning team be established at the school authority level and for each school or early childhood services program operating under a school authority. School authorities will determine their specific responsibilities, which could include coordinating planning, maintaining documentation, and supporting communication and response during emergencies. Key participants may include principals, teaching and support staff member representatives, as well as community partners and first responders.

Threats and Hazard Assessment

Under the standards, school authorities must establish a process for assessing threats and hazards specific to their local context. To do this, school authorities may consider use of a structured, ongoing process to identify and assess threats and hazards specific to the local context, drawing on available data sources, incident history, environmental conditions, and community risk information. This planning should not be limited to school buildings but should also consider off-site learning environments that students and staff members may visit.

Off-Site Learning Environments

Off-site learning environments, such as field trips, outdoor education, work-experience placements, athletics, and other school-sponsored events held away from school property, present unique safety and emergency considerations. While these activities occur outside the school site, responsibility remains with the school authority and school. Emergency planning for off-site learning environments supports continuity, consistency, and alignment with school-based safety expectations.

Some considerations for planning for off-site learning environments include:

- the location and environment in which the activity will take place, including known hazards and access to emergency services;
- how supervision will be maintained throughout the activity;
- how emergency information will be shared with the school authority, parents, and relevant partners if required;
- how changing conditions, such as weather or transportation disruptions, may affect safety;
- how the School Critical Emergency Plan connects with local authority or community emergency arrangements;
- ensuring staff members and volunteers are aware of key procedures, roles and communication expectations; and
- ensuring children and students understand basic safety instructions appropriate to the activity and their development level.

Emergency planning for off-site learning environments does not require separate emergency management plans but should include appropriate modifications to existing emergency procedures to ensure effective response if an incident occurs.

By incorporating off-site learning environments into broader emergency planning and preparedness, school authorities and schools help ensure consistent safety practices, reduce risk, and support effective responses should an emergency arise away from the school site.

Drills

Drills provide opportunities to practice emergency procedures in a structured and consistent manner and are a requirement under the standards. When planning for drills, consideration should be given to the standard response protocols set out in the standards. School authorities must also continue to meet all applicable legislative requirements related to drill type and frequency.

Drills are important because they:

- reinforce emergency response training;
- prevent panic by improving preparedness;
- build confidence and increase knowledge for children and students;
- help identify gaps in the School Critical Emergency Plan;
- create an opportunity for staff members to demonstrate competency; and
- promote ongoing staff members' engagement.

Drill Type

Schools may consider the following drill options:

Drill Type	Description
Full-scale drills	Involve children, students, teachers, and staff members in a realistic emergency scenario (e.g., fire, lockdown, or evacuation). May include coordination with local emergency services, such as fire departments or police. Can involve full school evacuation or lockdown procedures.
Role play drills / mock emergency exercises	Simulated emergency situations where children, students and staff members practice each step of the School Critical Emergency Plan. Can be planned or surprise drills but should avoid causing panic or distress.
Tabletop drills	Classroom or staff members' meeting discussions where participants walk through emergency scenarios step-by-step. No alarms or evacuations are required.
Learning engagement exercises	Short discussions during class or assemblies about emergency preparedness (e.g., "What would you do if there was a fire alarm?"). Helps reinforce awareness and problem solving.

Documenting Drills

Schools are encouraged to maintain clear and consistent records of all safety drills to support continuous improvement and accountability. Maintaining these records helps schools monitor trends over time, reinforce effective practices, and ensure that identified issues are addressed in a timely manner. Regular review of drill documentation can support a safer and more prepared school environment.

Training and Education

Ongoing training and education for staff members, children, and students to build familiarity with emergency procedures and an understanding of how to apply their roles and responsibilities as outlined in the School Critical Emergency Plan are required under the standards. Training may include classroom discussions about emergency roles and procedures, orientation for staff members on the School Critical Emergency Plan and related protocols, and regularly scheduled refreshers to ensure everyone remains familiar with the Plan and any updates.

Standard Emergency Response Protocols

Implementation of standardized emergency response protocols supports a consistent and coordinated response to critical school emergencies. At a minimum, these protocols should include procedures for evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, hold and secure, and all clear situations. Staff members, children, and students should be familiar with the purpose and application of each protocol so that appropriate actions can be taken quickly and effectively during an emergency. There should be recognition that professional judgement is required to apply the standard responses appropriately and flexibility is key as situations may arise that require transition from one response to another. Practising standard emergency response scenarios in age-appropriate ways will help build school readiness to respond to critical school emergencies.

The following guidelines support implementation of the required standard response protocols and provide additional context on how these protocols are operationalized in school sites.

They include:

- "Evacuation" for when conditions require staff members, children, and students to vacate the school building and/or school grounds.
  - This could include predetermined evacuation routes, designated assembly areas, procedures to support individuals with additional needs, and headcount or attendance verification at evacuation points. Evacuation is used when it is safer to be outside the school building than inside.
- "Shelter-in-place" for when conditions require staff members, children, and students to remain indoors.

  - This could include identification of secure interior locations, procedures for restricting movement within the building, and communication methods to provide updates and instructions while occupants remain indoors. Shelter-in-place is used when remaining inside the school is safer than moving outside.
- “Lockdown” for when there is a violent threat inside the school building.
  - This involves securing classroom and school building entry points, minimizing visibility from exterior areas, maintaining silence and concealment, and limiting communication to essential updates from designated authorities. Lockdown is used when there is an immediate risk of harm inside the school building.
- “Hold and secure” for when there is a violent threat outside the school building.
  - This could involve restricting exterior access while maintaining normal internal operations where appropriate, monitoring external threats, and clear communication to occupants regarding movement restrictions. Hold and secure is used when a potential concern or risk is present outside the school, but there is no immediate threat inside the building.
- “All clear” to signal the conclusion of the Critical School Emergency.
  - This involves structured communication methods to confirm the conclusion of the critical emergency, guidance for safe movement to resume normal operations, and processes for post-incident reporting and follow-up actions.

Using a set of clearly defined protocols helps schools act quickly and confidently during critical emergencies while protecting students’ and staff members’ safety.

Communication protocols with health and emergency services

Communication protocols with health and emergency services are a requirement under the standards. Considerations for developing the communication protocols include maintenance of up-to-date contact information, defined roles and responsibilities for initiating contact, and clear procedures for coordinating information exchange during a critical emergency to support timely and effective response.

Preparedness and response are an ongoing process. Changes in facilities, staffing, student populations, community conditions, or identified risks require plans and practices to be reviewed and updated. Feedback from training, drills, and following a Critical School Emergency supports continuous improvement and readiness.

Recovery

Recovery focuses on restoring learning environments, supporting well-being, and returning schools to routine operations following a Critical School Emergency. Recovery may occur over a short or extended period, depending on the nature and impact of the event.

The following section provides additional considerations for school authorities and schools to implement the required recovery procedures set out in the standards, which include:

- communicating with parents, guardians, and community members to provide information about the Critical School Emergency, and the reunification of students and children with their families;
- supporting the transition from response to recovery;
- connecting children, students and staff members with necessary and relevant recovery supports and resources as applicable;
- restoring and reopening school buildings in a secure manner; and
- ensuring continuity of operations and minimizing interruptions to in-person learning.

Communication

Communication processes should identify how and when information will be shared with parents, guardians, and community members during and following a Critical School Emergency. Communication methods should support the timely dissemination of accurate information and may include multiple channels to account for potential disruptions to normal communications. Communication procedures should also address reunification of children

and students with their families and may include clearly designated reunification sites, staff members assigned to verify identity and release students, and structured procedures to ensure safe and orderly return of children and students to parents/guardians.

Transition from Response to Recovery

Transition from response to recovery includes phased planning that shifts focus from immediate safety actions to stabilization of learning environments, emotional supports, and operational restoration. Following a Critical School Emergency, recovery supports may include immediate aftermath supports (hours to days), short-term recovery (weeks to months), and long-term supports (months to years) depending on the nature of the event.

Recovery Supports and Resources

Recovery supports and resources may include mental health supports, counselling services, and other community-based resources, as appropriate to the needs of children, students, and staff members.

Restoration and Reopening of School Buildings

School authorities are recommended to include processes and procedures for assessing the safety and integrity of the school building, as needed, following a Critical School Emergency. This may include consideration of building conditions, essential services and infrastructure, and recommendations provided by emergency responders or other relevant authorities.

Continuity of Operations

Continuity of operations involves contingency planning for instructional delivery, staffing, and essential services to minimize disruption to in-person learning, where possible. Effective continuity planning helps ensure that critical services remain available when an emergency disrupts normal operations.

Recovery provides an important opportunity for reflection and improvement. Reviewing what worked well and what can be strengthened helps schools and school authorities refine plans, update practices, and reduce future risks. This emphasis on learning and adaptation contributes to long-term resilience.

By approaching recovery as a deliberate and supported process, school authorities and schools can help restore a sense of stability, maintain trust with parents and communities, and support successful transitions back to learning.

Review and Continuous Improvement

The standards require, at minimum, an annual review of the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and the School Critical Emergency Plan. Reviews may incorporate lessons learned from critical school emergencies, drills, exercises, and feedback from staff members and community partners.

School authorities and schools may consider completing annual reviews of the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and School Critical Emergency Plans near the end of the school year to enable any potential updates to be implemented and communicated to staff members, children, students, and parents for the following school year.

Annual Communication

As stated in the standards, a school authority and each school under its operation is required to clearly communicate the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and the School Critical Emergency Plan to staff members, children, students, and parents, annually.

Communication activities may include the following:

- staff members’ meetings
- student presentations
- school handbooks
- websites

- newsletters
- orientation activities
- other locally appropriate methods

Clear communication will help ensure that all members of the school community are aware of relevant emergency procedures and understand their roles and responsibilities during a Critical School Emergency.

Conclusion

Critical school emergencies are dynamic and may require professional judgment, flexibility, and coordination with emergency services, local authorities, health services, parents, guardians, and community partners. Effective Critical School Emergency planning includes prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

The standards establish minimum provincial requirements for school authorities and for each school or early childhood services program operating under a school authority. These guidelines support implementation of the Standards by explaining key concepts, identifying practical considerations, and supporting consistent planning across Alberta. Together, the standards and these guidelines support safer, more prepared, and more resilient school communities across Alberta.

Definitions

(a) "child" means a child who is enrolled in an early childhood services program and therefore does not fall within the definition of "student" in the *Education Act;*

(b) "Critical School Emergency" means a sudden and temporary event at a school that disrupts school operations and requires prompt co-ordination of action to protect the safety, health or welfare of children, students, staff members, and visitors to a school building or to limit damage to a school building;

(c) "principal" means a principal as defined in the *Education Act* and in the case of an independent school that does not have a principal also includes:

(i) if the person responsible for the operation of that independent school is an individual, that individual; or

(ii) if the person responsible for the operation of that independent school is not an individual, the chair of the board of the society under the *Societies Act*, the non-profit company under Part 9 of the *Companies Act* or the non-profit corporation incorporated by or under an Act of the Legislature that is responsible for the operation of the independent school.

(d) "school authority" means any Alberta public or separate school board, Francophone regional authority, operator of a charter school, a person responsible for the operation of an independent school, or independent ECS operator as defined in the Early Childhood Services Regulation (AR 126/2022);

(e) "School Authority Critical Emergency Framework" means a compilation of the policies and procedures for a school authority that address Critical School Emergency prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery;

(f) "school building" means a school building as defined in the *Education Act* and also includes any building from which an independent ECS operator provides an early childhood services program;

(g) "School Critical Emergency Plan" means procedures developed by the principal or independent ECS operator for each school operating under a school authority for deployment during a Critical School Emergency, that align with the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework, and that reflect local context and consideration.

Helpful Resources

Fire

Fire Codes and Standards

- Provides information related to fire safety plans and fire drill frequency.

Emergency

Government Emergency Plans

- Provides additional information and resources for emergency management, including the Alberta Emergency Plan, 2026.

Mental Health

Child and youth mental health | Alberta.ca

- Provides contact information for child and youth mental health resources.

Mental health & addiction helplines | Recovery Alberta

- Provides contact information for mental health and addiction helplines and support resources.

Occupational Health and Safety

Occupational Health and Safety Resource Portal – Health and Safety Topics

- Provides information and resources related to emergency response, fire and explosion, first aid, hazards, and more.

Occupational Health and Safety Starter Kit

- To help employers develop a health and safety program or strengthen their existing program.

School Critical Emergency Standards Checklist

This checklist is intended to assist school authorities in meeting all requirements under the School Critical Emergency Standards Ministerial Order (#029/2026). This checklist is for guidance purposes only.

School Authority Critical Emergency Framework

☐ **Established by January 4, 2027**

Framework includes, at minimum:

a. Prevention and Mitigation strategies to reduce the likelihood and/or impact of a Critical School Emergency including:

i. ☐ Ongoing staff member safety training

ii. School building access requirements for:

- ☐ Children
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Staff members
- ☐ Visitors

iii. Maintenance of critical emergency supplies, documents, and equipment, including:

- ☐ Up-to-date floor plans to guide first-responders
- ☐ School Critical Emergency Plan documents
- ☐ First aid supplies in accessible locations

b. Preparedness and Response strategies for a Critical School Emergency, including:

i. Establishing a school critical emergency planning team:

- ☐ At the school authority level
- ☐ For each school operated by the school authority

ii. ☐ Process for assessing threats and hazards specific to the local context

iii. ☐ Practice drills and exercises

iv. Ongoing training and education, including familiarization of roles and responsibilities described in the School Critical Emergency Plan for:

- ☐ Staff members
- ☐ Children
- ☐ Students

v. Standard response protocols, including:

- ☐ Evacuation

- ☐ Shelter-in-place
- ☐ Lockdown
- ☐ Hold and secure
- ☐ All clear

vi. ☐ Communication protocols with health and emergency services

c. Recovery procedures following a Critical School Emergency for:

i. Communicating with parents, guardians, and community members to provide information about:
   - ☐ The critical school emergency
   - ☐ The reunification of students and children with their families

ii. ☐ Supporting the transition from response to recovery

iii. ☐ Connecting children, students and staff members with necessary and relevant recovery supports and resources as applicable

iv. ☐ Restoring and reopening school buildings in a secure manner

v. ☐ Ensuring continuity of operations and minimizing interruptions to in-person learning.

☐ Annual Review Complete

Has been clearly communicated annually to:

- ☐ Staff members
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Parents

☐ Confirmation of compliance provided to Alberta Education and Childcare

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School Critical Emergency Plan

- ☐ **Developed for each school under its authority by April 5, 2027**
- ☐ Each Plan adheres to the School Authority Critical Emergency Framework and reflects local context
- ☐ **Annual review complete**

Has been clearly communicated annually to the following in the school community:

- ☐ Staff members
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Parents

- ☐ **Confirmation of compliance provided to Alberta Education and Childcare**