



## A Parents Guide to Emergency Response

The Wappingers Central School District takes emergency preparedness very seriously. We have a comprehensive district-wide safety plan that assists our staff and public safety partners to respond swiftly should an emergency occur. We provide ongoing crisis management training to school administrators and other key staff members throughout the district.

Building-level emergency response plans are in place at each school. A building-based Safety Committee oversees the plan for each school; and committee members have assigned roles and responsibilities should an emergency occur. These committees meet regularly to review procedures and conduct annual training and drills so that students and staff are aware of the most effective and safe emergency responses.

### **Safety is Our Priority**

The Wappingers Central School District is committed to making school safe for students and staff. We work closely with local and state agencies, including police, fire, emergency medical services, and public health officials to ensure that we are well prepared and children are protected. Please know that should an emergency occur, we will do what is necessary to protect children first and then to provide you with information as timely and as accurately as we can.

Communication with parents during an emergency is an important priority for the school district. Please be patient and understand if we are unable to respond to you as quickly as you would like. Our first priority is the safety of your child and of the other children and staff in the school.

### **By Definition...**

An emergency involves unexpected events and rapidly changing conditions. We train to deal with different kinds of problems, whether caused by natural forces or by people. However, it is impossible to say in advance exactly how we will respond in any particular situation.

In general, you should know that we will do what is necessary to protect children first and then to provide you with timely communications. If a situation is serious enough to require you to leave your home or workplace, we will either ask you to pick your child up at their school or we will direct you to a safe place where we can brief you on the latest developments and to reunify you with your child.

### **How to Prepare for a School Emergency**

- Keep your child's emergency information up to date, including alternate phone numbers for us to reach you and the family/friends you have authorized as your back up. Notify the school promptly if this information changes.
- Talk with your children about the importance of following instructions in the event of an emergency.
- Tell your children NOT to use cell phones unless permitted. Unauthorized cell phone use could put people at risk during an emergency and may distract students from listening to important safety instructions.
- Have a plan for an emergency, and make sure your children are familiar with the plan.

## Commonly Used Terminology for Emergency Response

### Shelter in Place

When a “shelter in place” is called, students and staff are required to remain indoors, perhaps for an extended period of time because it is safer inside the building than it is outside. Depending on the threat or hazard, students and staff may be required to move to rooms or areas without windows. As an example, a “shelter in place” may be called in the event of a severe weather emergency.

### Hold in Place

A “hold in place” is called to limit movement of students and staff while dealing with short term emergencies. This is intended to keep students and staff out of the affected area until the situation can be rectified. In general students and staff will remain in their current classes until the hold in place has been lifted. As an example, a “hold in place” may be called in the event there is an altercation in a hallway, a maintenance issue in the building, or medical emergency.

### Evacuation

An “evacuation” is called to evacuate students and staff from the building. Each school has procedures for an evacuation; typically we drill evacuations as a fire drill. If the need arises where students are to be transported to an off-site location, parents will be directed as to where they can pick up their children. A formal reunification process will be utilized to ensure students are released to an authorized parent or emergency contact.

### Lockout

A “lockout” is called when there is an actual or perceived threat to student safety outside of the school. Students and staff follow the normal school schedule during a lockout, except that no one is to be allowed outdoors, and no unknown persons are allowed to enter the school. A lockout may be called when the school receives a report of criminal activity occurring nearby, or when there are reports of a dangerous animal outside of the school.

### Lockdown

A “lockdown” is initiated when a school administrator, faculty or staff member has become aware of an actual or imminent incident that poses an immediate threat in or around the school. The primary objective of a lockdown is to quickly ensure that school staff, students, and visitors are secured in rooms away from the immediate danger. Individuals will be kept within locked rooms until the incident is brought to a close by emergency responders or law enforcement personnel.

### Reunification

“Reunification” is a formal process that is initiated after a major incident has occurred. The goal of this process is to reunite students with their parents or legal guardians in a systematic way. This process may take a long period of time, but helps staff and safety personnel account for all persons during this process.

## What to Do During a School Emergency

- Do not go to the school or scene of an emergency unless officials ask you to, even though a child may ask you to come. Although this may be your first instinct as a parent, your presence may interfere with the emergency response.
- Check the district website at [www.wappingersschools.org](http://www.wappingersschools.org).
- Tune into local radio.
- Do not listen to rumors. If your child does contact you, remember that he/she may only know pieces of the larger picture.
- Remain as calm as you can if your child contacts you. They are looking for reassurance.