

# Emergency Preparedness

The Van Vleck ISD works in partnership with local law enforcement, public safety and county emergency management to prepare for emergency conditions in our schools. Our district has developed and implemented a comprehensive plan for responding to a variety of natural disasters and hazardous situations including hurricanes, tornados, fire, bomb threat, and hazardous materials incidents. Staff and students practice appropriate responses including evacuation and shelter-in-place.

Our system for managing school emergency situations provides students, staff and parents with a plan and a sense of security. Student safety is our focus and guides our decisions. Staff members have been assigned specific tasks they are responsible for during an emergency situation. Exhibiting leadership during a school evacuation or providing first aid are as important as communicating information to parents and organizing student relocation centers. Our facilities are equipped with emergency supplies, radios and equipment that may be necessary to shelter students for two or three days.

## **Emergency Operations Center**

In the event of a districtwide emergency, school administrators have designated an Emergency Operations Center to provide support for students and staff at each school. Local law enforcement and emergency management officials will communicate directly with the district to coordinate response plans and maximize resources, ensuring that assistance is available where it is most needed. District communications and release of information to the media will also be directed from the Operations Center.

## **Emergency Messages**

You will also receive up-to-the minute announcements on our web site regarding student and school status and unscheduled school closures. In the event of an emergency school closure, evacuation information and parent advisories will be posted on our web site.

## **Homeland Security Advisory**

This advisory system provides information regarding the risk of terrorist attacks on a national and local level. The system is a means for government officials and citizens to communicate the nature and degree of terrorist threats. This advisory system characterizes appropriate levels of vigilance, preparedness and readiness in a series of graduated threat conditions. Public announcements of threat advisories help deter terrorist activity, notify law enforcement, alert state and local government officials of threats, and inform the public about government preparations.

## **Keep School Safe**

Report unsafe or threatening activity by contacting your campus administrators.

## **Lockdown and Modified Lockdown**

From time to time, local law enforcement agencies alert our schools to potential risks that require the school to implement a precautionary safety protocol known as a lockdown.

In a lockdown, exterior and interior doors are locked. Students are told to stay away from windows and keep low. Curtains or blinds are closed. Lights are off. Only quiet talking is allowed. Students who are outside at recess or in a PE class come back into the building. Signs are posted on doors instructing anyone who tries to get inside the building to leave the school premises immediately. Staff has been trained to take the situation very seriously, with an assumption that an intruder could actually be in the building.

The modified lockdown takes similar precautions but allows more movement within the building. Students may continue to work at their desks with lights on. They may go to the restroom. No one, however, may enter or leave the building—staff, students or parents.

## **Pandemic Flu**

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza A virus emerges for which there is little or no immunity in the human population, begins to cause serious illness and then spreads easily person-to-person worldwide. Part of preparedness is maintaining overall good health and using basic prevention measures such as covering your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze and washing your hands often. In the event of a pandemic flu event the District will comply with instructions issued by the Matagorda County Health Department.

## **School Closures**

Unscheduled school closures due to inclement weather, natural disaster, Homeland Security Advisory, or school emergencies may occasionally occur. Updated information regarding school status, student evacuation and parent pickup points is available on the Web.

## **Shelter-In-Place Procedures**

Shelter-in-Place is a short-term solution to a short-term problem. Staff and students may be directed to respond to hazardous materials incidents, chemical spills or terrorist actions in this manner.

## **Limited Bus Transportation**

School closure information and emergency bus transportation information is on the District Web site. During inclement weather we'd like to remind you to listen to the radio between 6 and 8 a.m. if you believe there are hazardous traveling conditions. Radio and television stations will be announcing schedule changes. If Van Vleck ISD is not mentioned, normal operations will prevail. Please do not call the school offices or the District office for information.

In the event of an early dismissal due to inclement weather, television and radio stations will be notified prior to dismissal time. School closure information will be listed on the Web site during limited conditions. If you will not be home, please instruct your child as to where he/she should go in the event of an early dismissal due to emergency conditions. If buses cannot navigate the roads, students will be returned to their schools.

## ***Q & A What is emergency preparedness?***

Van Vleck ISD has developed an emergency response plan to ensure your child's safety while in school. This plan outlines specific responses that schools will take in the event of an emergency situation such as an evacuation or a lock-down. Staff members have assigned roles and duties that are detailed in the plan.

## ***How will my children know what to do in the event of an emergency?***

If an emergency occurs during school hours, classroom teachers will provide students with appropriate instructions. Additionally, school officials may provide students with instructions or information about the emergency through the school public address system. Students often practice for emergency situations such as fire, tornado or intruder and may be very familiar with school emergency responses.

## ***Who can pick up my children from school during an emergency?***

Children will be released to individuals who are authorized on the student's registration form or have prior written parent authorization. Schools will also require photo identification when the child is released at the parent-child reunion site.

Parents and guardians are responsible for the accuracy of the information on their child's registration form. If parents have not completed a registration form, they need to do so. If their information has changed, parents need to update the information.

***What is a parent-child reunion site?***

During an emergency situation, schools will set up a parent-child reunion site where students will be released from school at their parent's request. Many schools have "Student Pickup" banners that will indicate the location of the reunion site on the school campus. At the reunion site, students will be released to their parents or others authorized to pick them up upon presentation of proper identification.

It is likely that during an emergency, students may not be released at the school office. If school or public safety officials require that a school building be evacuated, students and staff members may be transported to a neighboring school. Parents will be informed of the reunion location through the local media. This information will also be posted on the district website. Driving directions to other school locations can be accessed from the Web site.

***Where is my child's reunion site located?***

During emergency situations, circumstances could arise that might force changes to previously designated locations. Parents will be informed of parent-child reunion locations upon arrival at their child's school and will be posted on the District Web site.

***What if my child is riding a school bus at the time of an emergency?***

School bus drivers are in constant communication with our Transportation Department. In the event that an emergency occurs while students are in transport, drivers will be notified to respond appropriately. Buses will be rerouted or may delay arrival or departure to avoid traveling toward the emergency situation such as a school lockdown.

***What about my child's medication?***

If your child requires daily medications that are necessary for chronic or severe medical conditions such as seizures, severe asthma or allergies, parents should make sure that the school has a three day dosage of additional medication. Talk with your child's school nurse for more information.

***Is my child allowed to use a cell phone at school?***

During certain emergency situations such as unscheduled school closures due to inclement weather situations, students may use their phones to communicate with parents. In specific emergency situations, such as a bomb threat or during a lockdown, use of a cell phone may endanger students, staff and emergency personnel and will not be allowed. Please refer to your school's student handbook for school policies regarding the use of cell phones.

**Communications Tips-** Be patient – we will communicate with you as quickly as possible.

- Check the Web site.
- Please don't call the school; it jams the phone lines.
- Be patient – your child's safety is our first priority!

**How Families Can Help** Take care not to become part of the problem by rushing to the school. More traffic just makes it difficult for emergency response teams.

Keep student's registration form up-to-date with correct phone numbers and names of people authorized to pick up your children.