Guidance Document for the 2024 Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) Template

Introduction

An Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) is a vital document for preparing districts (schools) to effectively respond to emergencies, ensuring the safety of students, staff, and visitors. It outlines procedures for various emergency situations, such as natural disasters, active shooter incidents, fires, medical emergencies, and more. This guidance document is designed to help you develop and complete your school's or organization's EOP.

Key Components of an Emergency Operations Plan

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1. Introduction and Purpose

1.1 Purpose of the Plan

- Define the objective of the EOP: to protect students, staff, and visitors during emergencies, minimize disruption, and ensure a swift and coordinated response.

1.2 Scope

- Describe the scope of the plan, including the types of emergencies it covers (e.g., natural disasters, medical emergencies, violence, etc.).

1.3 Assumptions

- Include any assumptions about available resources, local support, and coordination with emergency services.

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2. Emergency Response Framework — Preparedness

2.1 Emergency Response Team

- Identify key individuals who will be responsible for emergency operations, including:
  - **Incident Commander**: Oversees the overall response.
  - **Emergency Response Coordinator**: Manages communication and logistical coordination.
  - **Safety Officer**: Ensures health and safety during response activities.
  - **Public Information Officer**: Communicates with the public, media, and families.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities

- Define the roles and responsibilities for each team member during an emergency.

2.3 Communication Protocols

- Establish communication strategies and protocols, including:
    - Internal communication (to staff, students, and families).
    - External communication (with local emergency services, law enforcement, etc.).
    - Communication equipment (radio, phone systems, public address system, etc.).

2.4 Memorandum of Understanding

- Establish an understanding/agreement with businesses to provide services, if possible, to school districts in the event of an incident that disrupts routine contract services or requires additional services.

2.5 Comprehensive School Safety Assessment

- School districts shall conduct a comprehensive school safety assessment every three (3) years to assess the safety, security, accessibility, and emergency preparedness of district buildings and grounds in collaboration with local law enforcement, fire, and emergency management officials.

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3. Emergency Procedures and Protocols — Response and Recovery

3.1 Evacuation Procedures

- Detail evacuation routes, assembly areas, and procedures to ensure safe evacuation of all individuals in the event of a fire, bomb threat, or other emergencies.
    - Include maps of evacuation routes and exits.
    - Specify procedures for students with disabilities.

3.2 Shelter-in-Place Procedures

- Define what constitutes a shelter-in-place situation (e.g., tornado, chemical spill, active assailant).
    - Specify the locations of safe rooms or areas for sheltering.
    - Outline actions for staff to take to secure the building.

3.3 Lockdown Procedures

- Develop detailed procedures for a lockdown scenario, such as in response to an active shooter or external threat.

- Steps to secure doors and windows, communication with law enforcement, and accounting for all individuals.

3.4 Medical Emergencies

- Identify procedures for handling medical emergencies, including:
  - First-aid protocols.
  - Location of first aid kits and emergency medical supplies.
  - Procedures for summoning emergency medical services (EMS).

3.5 Special Situations

- Address responses to other potential emergencies, such as:
  - Hazardous material spills.
  - Severe weather events (e.g., earthquakes, floods, hurricanes).
  - Civil disturbances or violent incidents.

3.6 Reunification/Reverse Evacuation

- Timely reunification of students with their families while maintaining order and accountability after an incident

3.7 Psychological and Emotional Recovery

- Community Crisis Response Team

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4. Resources and Logistics

4.1 Resource Inventory

- Maintain an inventory of emergency supplies and resources, including:
  - First aid kits, emergency food and water, flashlights, batteries, and blankets.
  - Communication tools (e.g., two-way radios, cell phones, etc.).
  - Fire extinguishers, emergency lighting, and signage.

4.2 Facility Assessment

- Conduct a risk assessment of your physical facilities, identifying areas of vulnerability (e.g., weak structural points, inadequate evacuation routes, etc.).
- Ensure the facilities are properly equipped with fire alarms, sprinkler systems, and emergency exits.

4.3 Partnerships and External Support

- Identify partnerships with local law enforcement, fire departments, and healthcare providers to support emergency operations.
- Establish procedures for requesting external resources (e.g., ambulances, search-and-rescue teams, etc.).

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5. Training and Drills

5.1 Staff Training

- Outline the training requirements for all staff members, including:
    - Basic emergency response training (e.g., first aid, CPR, evacuation).
    - Specific role-based training (e.g., for Incident Commanders, Safety Officers).

5.2 Student and Parent Education

- Plan regular drills and provide educational materials to students and parents regarding emergency procedures.
- Ensure students are aware of evacuation routes, lockdown procedures, and where to go in case of emergencies.

5.3 Drills and Exercises

- Schedule regular drills to practice different types of emergencies, including:
    - Fire drills.
    - Evacuation drills.
    - Active shooter and lockdown drills.
- Conduct tabletop exercises with the Emergency Response Team to review procedures and improve coordination.

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6. Continuity of Operations (COOP)

6.1 Business Continuity

- Develop procedures to ensure the continuation of essential school operations following an emergency. This includes:
    - Maintaining communication with staff, students, and parents.
    - Ensuring academic continuity (e.g., remote learning options, rescheduling classes).

6.2 Post-Emergency Recovery

- Outline the recovery process after an emergency, including:

- o Psychological support for students and staff (e.g., counseling services).
- o Damage assessment and repair of facilities.
- o Ongoing communication with families and the community.

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7. Plan Review and Improvement

7.1 Plan Review

- The EOP should be reviewed and updated annually or after any significant changes to school operations, facilities, or personnel.

7.2 After-Action Review (AAR)

- Following any real emergency or drill, conduct an after-action review (AAR) to assess the effectiveness of the response.
  - o Identify strengths and areas for improvement.
  - o Update the plan based on lessons learned.

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8. Appendices

- **Appendix A**: Contact Information for Emergency Response Team and Local Agencies (fire department, law enforcement, hospitals, etc.)
- **Appendix B**: Site Maps (showing evacuation routes, shelter-in-place locations, and first-aid stations).
- **Appendix C**: Sample Communication Templates (e.g., phone tree, social media posts, letter to parents).
- **Appendix D**: Resource Inventory List (detailing emergency supplies and equipment).
- **Appendix E**: Training Records and Drill Logs.

Conclusion

A well-developed Emergency Operations Plan is essential to ensuring the safety and security of students, staff, and visitors. By following these guidelines and regularly reviewing and updating the plan, schools and organizations can be better prepared to handle any emergency situation with confidence and coordination.

For assistance with developing or revising your EOP, please contact the DESE Safe Schools Unit.