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Best Practices for the Severe Weather Safety for Pre-K through Grade 12 Children at School

A Best Practice Statement of the American Meteorological Society
(Adopted by the AMS Council 28 September 2022)

Motivation

The 2011 census report¹ estimated that there were in 5 million children in nursery school, 4 million children in Grade 12 during the census period. Pre-K through Grade 12 represents the most vulnerable population segment in the U.S. education system. During weather emergencies that occurs at schools, they are totally dependent on their teachers, teacher aids and school administrators to shelter them from harm's way. While some guidance is available on a region by region or school by school basis, general guidance for best practices on a national level is limited. In addition, there is limited information about weather emergency planning for Pre-K through Grade 12 children at school. In order to determine the safest/best location to shelter in the event of severe weather, administrators are encouraged to contact appropriate technical specialists. These may include structural engineers, the architect of the project, and possible your local EM and Fire Department.

Audience

The best practices are intended to be for the benefit of the public; thus, the audience includes emergency action plan developers, school administrators and educational staff members at pre-K through Grade 12 facilities in both public and private sector.

Best Practice characteristics

This Best Practice provides every school system and every school with tools to develop a concise document that comprehensively addresses the safety of all students (pre-K through Grade 12) before, during, and after events occur. This document may include references to existing FEMA documents on weather emergency safety as well as education of pre-K through Grade 12

¹ Jessica Davis and Kurt Bauman, 2013, School Enrollment in the United States: 2011 Population Characteristics, U.S. Census Bureau, P20-571 Accessed April 10, 2018
<https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-571.pdf>

children on weather emergencies and their role in response to them. It provides a reviewed set of documents and websites with annotations as the grade level for which they are appropriate

Specific Best Practices:

The reviewed and recommended list of individual documents and websites the administrators, teachers and parents could use in preparing a Severe Weather Emergency Plan refer to attached list

Title	Author	Date	Location
How to Prepare Kids for Emergencies	Save the Children	no date	https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/disaster-relief-in-america/preparedness
Disaster and Emergency Preparedness: Activity Guide for K to 6th Grade Teachers	International Finance Corporation	2010	https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17678
Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Guidance for Schools	International Finance Corporation	2010	https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/17669
Be a Hero Youth Emergency Plan	FEMA	no date	https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=798540
Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans	FEMA U.S. Department of Education	2013	https://rems.ed.gov/docs/School_Guide_508C.pdf
Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools	U.S. Department of Education		https://rems.ed.gov/?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1
Role of Districts in Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans	U.S. Department of Education	2019	https://rems.ed.gov/docs/District_Guide_508C.pdf?utm_content=&utm_medium=email&utm_name=&utm_source=govdelivery&utm_term ≡
The Pillowcase Project: Learn. Practice. Share.	American Red Cross	2018	https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/emergency-preparedness-for-kids/disaster-preparedness-for-teachers.html
Sample Childcare Emergency Action Plan	FEMA	2011	https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is36/handouts%20-sample%20https://ams.confex.com/ams/pdfpapers/85062.pdf%20plans/eap_sample.pdf

Mitigation Case Studies: Protecting School Children from Tornadoes	FEMA	2002	https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-08/protecting_school_children_tornadoes_ks_si.pdf
When the Weather Turns Severe: A Guide to Developing A Severe Weather Emergency Plan For Schools	Barbara Watson, NOAA	2018	https://www.weather.gov/media/aly/School%20Weather%20Safety%20Plan.pdf
Lightning Safety for Schools: An Update	Lushine, Roeder & Vavrek	2005	https://ams.confex.com/ams/pdfpapers/85062.pdf
Sample School Emergency Operations Plan" from FEMA. Used in conjunction with E/L 361 and G 364.	FEMA	2011	https://training.fema.gov/programs/emischool/el361toolkit/assets/sampleplan.pdf
Severe Weather Preparedness Guide for Schools	NOAA, National Weather Service, Green Bay, WI, Weather Forecast Office	no date	https://www.weather.gov/grb/schools
Tornado Preparedness Tips for School Administrators	Roger Edwards	no date	https://www.spc.noaa.gov/faq/tornado/school.html
<u>Web Sites</u>			
Multihazard Emergency Planning for Schools Site Index	FEMA		https://training.fema.gov/programs/emischool/el361toolkit/siteindex.htm
Preschool Safe Environments: Preparing for Emergencies	Department of Defense Virtual Lab School at The Ohio State University		https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/safe-environments/lesson-8

In order to determine the safest/best location to shelter in the event of severe weather, administrators are encouraged to contact appropriate technical specialists and a representative faculty group. These may include structural engineers, the architect of the project, and possibly your local Emergency Management office and Fire Department.

Conclusion

The above best practice has been established to assist public and private educational settings in developing safety plans for their students. Any questions concerning these best practices should be addressed to the Board of Best Practices at:

amsbbpchair@gmail.com

[This statement is considered in force until September 2027 unless superseded by a new statement issued by the AMS Council before this date.]