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Best Practices for 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 and 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 occur 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, if possible, the local emergency management (EM) services and fire department.

Audience

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 schools.

Best Practice Characteristics

This Best Practice Statement 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. This document may include references to existing FEMA documents on weather emergency safety as well as the education of Pre-K through Grade 12 children on weather emergencies and their role in response to them. It provides a reviewed set of documents and websites with annotations regarding the grade level for which they are appropriate.

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/content/dam/Census/library/publications/2013/demo/p20-571.pdf>

Specific Best Practices:

The reviewed and recommended list of individual documents and websites administrators, teachers, and parents could use in preparing a Severe Weather Emergency Plan is as follows:

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://inec.org/sites/default/files/resources/IFC_Disaster_Emergency_Prepare_Schools_Guide_ENG.pdf
Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Guidance for Schools	International Finance Corporation	2010	https://www.preventionweb.net/files/13989_ifcdisasteremergencyhandbook63010.pdf
Be a Hero! Youth Emergency Plan	FEMA	no date	https://www.hsd1.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/
The 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/teaching-kids-about-emergency-preparedness/pillowcase-project.html
Sample Childcare Emergency Action Plan	FEMA	2011	https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is36/handouts%20-sample%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_ssi.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>Websites</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

Conclusion

This Best Practice Statement has been established to assist public and private educational settings in developing safety plans for their students. Any questions concerning this statement 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.]