Monterey County Office of Education

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Critical questions on emergency preparedness for teachers

"We can never prepare enough to protect what we cherish."

As teachers, you are on the front line of any emergency, working to ensure the safety of children. This material is designed for and dedicated to all teachers — with tremendous appreciation for all that you do for children.

1. What emergency response systems exist in the state and in Monterey County?
2. What is the role of the classroom teacher in the event of a terrorist attack?
3. Who takes care of the families of emergency response workers during a large- scale emergency?
4. What tools are available to teachers for emergency planning?
5. With what emergency procedures should teachers be familiar?
6. What are biological and chemical weapons?
7. What are additional terrorist threats?
8. What classroom resources are available on the subjects of war and terrorism?
9. What are resources to help teachers meet the emotional needs of children?
10. Where can teachers obtain additional emergency planning information?

1. What emergency response systems exist in the state and in Monterey County?

Be assured that California is an **emergency-ready state**. Years of dealing with earthquakes, fires and other major emergencies have finely honed the skills of our safety workers.

Since 1996, all state and local government agencies in California have implemented the Standardized Emergency Management System or **SEMS**. **SEMS** mandates a clear and consistent organizational and command structure, which allows multiple public agencies to cooperate effectively during emergencies.

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In 1997, the California Legislature passed Senate Bill 187, which mandates **safe school planning** at every public school site. **Every public school is required to have a safe school plan in place.** The law encourages all schools to work with local law enforcement and other agencies, parents, community leaders, students, teachers and administrators to develop comprehensive safe school plans.

Resources:

Monterey County has an Office of Emergency Services that operates 24/7.

Information on safe schools including *Safe Schools – A Planning Guide for Action* is provided by the California Department of Education
http://www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/safety/

2. **What is the role of the classroom teacher in the event of a terrorist attack?**

   By law, teachers are emergency response workers during an emergency and cannot leave their schools unless authorized by a supervisor. (California Government Code Section 3100-3109)

   Teachers work with principals and other site staff to implement emergency response procedures. They have the responsibility of protecting themselves and ensuring the safety of the students. The role and responsibility are identical in instances of a fire, flood, earthquake, or other emergencies.

3. **Who takes care of the families of emergency response workers during a large-scale emergency?**

   It is imperative for all public employees, including teachers, to have emergency plans for their families that take into account their public duties and possible absence during an emergency situation or disaster.

   Print or download an eight-page disaster-planning booklet for families.
   www.redcross.org/services/disaster/keepsafe/terrorism.pdf

   The U.S. Department of Defense Homeland Security offers "how to be prepared" information on their user-friendly site.
   www.ready.gov

4. **What tools are available to teachers for emergency planning?**

Check with your principal for your school's most recent **Comprehensive Safe School Emergency Plan** (mandated by the state), which details emergency responses and procedures.

A safety supplies list for classrooms and schools.
www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/supply.html#intro

A booklet that provides people with special needs or disabilities or their caregivers with emergency planning information and checklists.
www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/disability.html

5. **With what emergency procedures should teachers be familiar?**

- Shelter-in-place
- Lockdown
- Drop – cover – hold Shield – distance – time Evacuate
- Reverse evacuate Facemask or barrier Basic decontamination Signal for help

Shelter-in-place
Protects from hazardous outside environment
- Go inside the building
- Shut and lock all outside doors and windows
- Turn off all ventilation systems including air conditioner/heater
- Go into shelter-in-place room and shut the door
- Tape plastic over windows and use duct tape to seal around doors and windows
- Tape over all openings including vents and electrical outlets
- Shelter-in-place is ended as soon as the outdoor air is safe to breathe

Lockdown
Ensures safety of students/staff from intruders or incident in the community
- Secure all entrances and exits to the building
- Account for each student/staff member
- Ensure that no one enters or leaves the building unless authorized
- In an interior lockdown situation, students are kept in designated locations away from danger
- Lockdown ends when situation is resolved and danger no longer exists

Drop – cover – hold
Protects from explosion, earthquake, fallen aircraft

- Drop to the floor
- Take cover under sturdy table or desk
- Hold onto furniture
- Hold position until it is safe to move

Shielding – distance – time
Protects from fallout from radiological dispersion device or nuclear blast

- Shielding – position a thick shield between you and radioactive fallout
- Distance – create distance from the blast to minimize exposure
- Time – minimize exposure time to radioactive fallout

Evacuate
Protects from hazards within building such as fire, explosion, hazardous materials

- Leave the building in an orderly manner but as quickly as possible
- Assemble a safe distance from the building
- Account for each student/staff member
- Do not re-enter the building until it is safe

Reverse evacuate
Protects from outdoor hazard such as hazardous materials, terrorism, gunfire

- Enter the building in an orderly manner but as quickly as possible
- Assemble in a safe place within the building
- Account for each student/staff member
- Do not leave the building until it is safe

Facemask or barrier
Protects from air contamination typical of any disaster including dust, smoke, chemical residue or other toxins

- Improvise with available materials and create a barrier to protect eyes, nose, mouth and cuts in the skin
- Use fabric that fits snugly over nose and mouth, including dense-weave cotton material – achieve the best fit possible for children
- Include face masks in disaster planning kit – they are available from hardware stores

Basic decontamination
Emergency response to exposure to a biological or chemical agent

- Remove the person's clothing and put in a sealed plastic bag. This serves to remove 80% of contaminants.
- For chemical exposure, wash skin thoroughly with soap and water
- For biological exposure, wash skin with a solution of 9 parts water to 1 part bleach. **Do not use bleach solution on open wounds!**
- Seek immediate medical attention

Signal for help
Notify rescuers of your location if trapped in debris

- Use flashlight or whistle to signal location
- Avoid unnecessary motion to minimize dust disturbance
- Cover nose and mouth with available fabric or material to filter air
- Tap on pipe or wall so rescuers can hear where you are
- Shout only as last resort to avoid inhaling dangerous amounts of dust

6. What are biological and chemical weapons?

Biological Agents
Biological warfare agents are organisms or toxins that cause illnesses. They can be dispersed by spraying in the air, by infecting animals that serve as carriers, or through food and water contamination. Most are difficult to grow and maintain. Examples include anthrax, staphylococcal enterotoxin B (SEB), bubonic/pneumonic plague, cholera, smallpox and bio-engineered agents. People generally become aware of biological attacks via media reports, health workers or if they experience symptoms. Emergency response strategies include seeking quick medical aid, decontamination using a diluted solution of bleach, or shelter-in-place.

Chemical Agents
Chemical warfare agents are poisonous gases, liquids or solids that can be released by bombs, sprayed from aircraft, boats or vehicles. They are difficult to manufacture and deliver in quantity. Chemical agents include lung-damaging agents such as phosgene, cyanide; blister agents such as mustard; nerve agents such as GA (tabun), GB (sarin), GD (soman), GF and VX. Symptoms of chemical exposure include watery eyes, twitching, choking, trouble with breathing or losing coordination. Signs also include sick or dead birds, fish and small animals. Emergency response strategies include seeking quick medical aid, shelter-in-place and/or decontamination if directly exposed to chemical agents.

7. What are additional terrorist threats?

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security has advised citizens to be prepared for **explosions, attacks on clean air, radiological dispersion devices** (dirty bombs) and **nuclear blasts** in addition to biological and chemical weapons.

Explosion
Conventional explosives continue to be the weapon of choice by terrorists. They are easily manufactured and transported. Strict compliance with security procedures and reporting of suspicious vehicles, individuals or objects to authorities can limit threat and exposure.

Attack on Clean Air
Microscopic particles may be released into the air from explosions. Avoid inhaling or absorbing them through open cuts on the skin by **creating a barrier** between yourself and contamination. Protect your nose, mouth, eyes and cuts by filtering the air with dense weave cotton or available materials. Facemasks are available from hardware stores.

Radiological dispersion devices (RDD) or "dirty bomb"
RDDs are a combination of conventional explosives and radioactive material designed to disperse dangerous materials over a general area. Emergency responses include prior evacuation, shelter-in-place and limiting the amount of radiation exposure through **shielding** – a thick shield between you and radioactive materials; **distance** – distance from the blast to minimize exposure; and **time** – minimizing exposure time.

Nuclear Blast
Nuclear explosions result in blinding light, thermal radiation, blast, fires started by the pulse and secondary fires caused by destruction. Nuclear blasts create an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) which resembles a lightning strike but is faster and stronger. EMPs can damage communication systems and computers and harm people with implanted pacemakers within 1,000 miles of a high-altitude nuclear detonation. They also produce radioactive particles or fallout. Terrorist use of nuclear devices is probably limited to a single **suitcase** weapon comparable in force to WWII bombs. Emergency responses include prior evacuation, shelter-in-place and limiting the amount of radiation exposure through **shielding** – positioning a thick shield between you and radioactive materials; **distance** – creating distance from the blast to minimize exposure; and **time** – minimizing exposure time.

8. What classroom resources are available on the subjects of war and terrorism?

Information on the Red Cross *Disaster Master* K-8 curriculum, which helps to teach students how to plan for, survive and recover from the unexpected. **www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/**

Downloadable version of *Facing Fear* (a *Disaster Master* supplement developed after September 11). This curriculum helps children deal with terrorism and other tragic events.
www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/facingfear/

Beyond Tolerance supports the efforts of K-12 teachers in promoting respect for differences and appreciation of diversity.
www.sbceo.org/btolerance/

9. What are resources to help teachers meet the emotional needs of children?

Talking to Children about Terrorism and War, American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
www.aacap.org/publications/factsfam/87.htm

Disaster Preparedness to Meet Children's Needs, American Academy of Pediatrics
www.aap.org/terrorism/topics/PhysiciansSheet.pdf

A Practical Guide for Crisis Response in Our Schools by the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress, discusses post-crisis behaviors that you can expect from children.
www.cde.ca.gov/spbranch/ssp/teachergd.pdf

Parents Called to Active Duty: Helping Children Cope by the National Association of School Psychologists
www.nasponline.org/NEAT/parentscalled.html

10. Where can teachers obtain additional emergency planning resources?

The U.S. Department of Education's website is dedicated to assisting schools with emergency planning.
www.ed.gov/emergencyplan/