

## **SAFETY PROGRAM** ***(Identifying Potential Hazards)***

It is important that schools conduct regular evaluations of facilities for potential dangers to students and staff in the case of a disaster. Administrators, maintenance personnel and local emergency response agencies may cooperate to minimize the potential hindrances to effective crisis intervention. Following is a list of basic concerns applicable to all school buildings. Each individual site should also contribute locally specific criteria.

### **Hazards in the Classroom**

Depending on the type of crisis a school may face, the classroom can contain numerous potential hazards. Taking the time to correct potentially dangerous situations in the classroom prior to a crisis occurring will assist in preventing further injuries in the event of a disaster.

### **Hazards Along Evacuation Routes**

Identifying potential hazards along school evacuation routes is important when developing procedures for a quick and orderly evacuation. A thorough assessment of the hazards likely to be encountered en route from the classroom and other activity rooms to safe areas can be beneficial to designing a safe and effective escape plan.

- ▶ Fire code requirements for safety glass along evacuation routes should be checked.
- ▶ Following a disaster, hallways may be cluttered with debris from ceilings, fallen light fixtures, broken glass, and toppled storage units. Students should be advised to anticipate these hazards.
- ▶ Signs should be posted near elevators prohibiting their use in the event of fire and earthquakes. If the school has students with physical impairments, there should be a plan for transporting them without the use of elevators in the event of an emergency.
- ▶ In the event the school must be evacuated, it is important not to evacuate to an area where gas, sewer and power lines may be located. Evacuation to these areas may result in added confusion for repair crews and/or students, and increase the chance of injuries.
- ▶ It is also important to identify potential hazards in the neighborhood surrounding the school. The area in which the school is located may have businesses, factories and structures that should be taken into consideration when developing a crisis response plan. Although the school cannot control what happens at another location, understanding the potential problems

these places can pose for the school may affect such things as evacuation routes. Take the time now to identify potential factors that can affect the school or the response plan.

- ▶ Many potential hazards are not readily apparent. Help in identifying their location may be obtained from the fire department, city/county public works office, and building inspection department. Through early identification of potential hazards, the crisis response will be able to address possible contingencies which will help minimize panic and injury in the event of a disaster.

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***Note: The reader is encouraged to review policies and/or forms for related information in this administrative area.***

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Cole County R-I School District, Russellville, Missouri