



TEMPLATE



School Emergency Drills & Exercises: Quality Checklist and Evaluation Forms

This resource is a supplement to IFRC & Save the Children (2018) [Public Awareness & Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction: Action-Oriented Key Messages for Households and Schools](#) – Part C: Standard Operating Procedures for Disasters and Emergencies in Schools, and to the Child-Centred Risk Reduction and School Safety [Research-into-Action Brief: School Emergency Drills](#) (GADRRRES, 2018).¹²

School Drills – Cornerstone of School Safety Management

One of the cornerstones of School Safety Management is the regular practice of emergency drills. Scholars, educators, and disaster management practitioners agree that children can be taught procedures and skills to help prevent injuries and deaths. If these procedures are well-understood and practiced school drills can be vital to protecting lives and preventing injuries in the face of a variety of threats. There is also consensus that reflective practice and consistent implementation of drills is necessary for effective school disaster management.

School drills play an important role in both the improvement of disaster risk reduction and response preparedness. In recent years, large-scale annual drills for earthquakes and other hazards have engaged tens of millions of children and adults in many countries in the continuous process of disaster preparedness (See the *Great ShakeOut*). For schools, these drills have improved staff knowledge for disaster prevention, preparedness to respond, and enhanced disaster policies, plans and procedures. They have also increased staff and family engagement in disaster planning in their own homes, encouraged them to seek training and reduced their exposure to physical risks.

¹ Authors: Petal, M. (Save the Children), Cooke, J. (Plan International). The authors are grateful to the GADRRRES School Safety Management Technical Reference Group and colleagues from IFRC, Israid, UNICEF, and REMS (USA) who provided extensive inputs into this document.

² Additional resources can be found in the [School Participatory Management Toolkit](#) (2015).



The goal:

The goal of school drills is to ensure the safety of every student, staff, or visitor, in the event of a disaster or emergency, and where possible to safeguard school property.

The objectives:

To develop skills and competencies of individual students and staff.

To test the measures taken for risk identification, risk reduction, and response preparedness.

To test the decision-making process throughout the emergency, for as long as it may last.

To keep students safe, comfortable, and supervised until they are safely reunified with parents/guardians.

To identify challenges/problems in the SOPs and rectify these.

To continually improve (including the response time).

In spite of our inclinations to fight, flight, or freeze, with sufficient practice and forethought, mindfulness and order should prevail, and panic and chaos can be avoided.

Drills are a learning process:

- Drills begin with advance preparation by staff. Use the drill preparedness checklist form to help you prepare yourselves, your students, and their parents or guardians.
- Good drills are experiential learning moments, with important opportunities for critical thinking.
- Begin with small group student training in classroom groups, remembering procedures, and checking on provisions. When this is mastered, include the whole school.

Repetition and frequency of school drills:

- Response-preparedness improves through regular repetition and variation.
- Every school should conduct at least three fire drills per year, and at least one full simulation drill to practice for the most common and/or most serious hazards you are likely to experience. Drills should always be treated just like the “real thing”.

Variation in school drills:

- The purpose of a drill is to prepare for the unexpected, so try them out at different times of the day and using different scenarios. Try them with and without the head of school present.
- Use sample scenarios to help you with your drill planning. You can build on available examples or make your own, based on the hazards that you face.
- Use injects to add details to a scenario to make simulation drills more realistic. Injects refer to new information and challenges that are introduced during the drill, which require thinking and problem-solving, just as would happen in real life. For example, without informing the others, ask a couple of children to stay behind, pretending to be injured. See if they are identified as missing.
- During a full simulation drill with the school community, be sure to practice safe family reunification. This will help everyone to think through how long students may need to be cared for. You may need shelter, sanitation, water, and food in addition to first aid.

Evaluating School Drills:

- The most important part of any drill is the discussion among all groups of participants, evaluation, and the updated action plan that results from that discussion. Following the drill, students can debrief with teachers in the classroom. The evaluation forms in the next section are designed to support this learning process.

Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for Disasters and Emergencies in Schools

SoPs are a set of written and required safety procedures to be known and followed by all school workers and students, in the event of disasters or emergencies. These can and should be adapted as needed for each school's unique circumstances.

[Public Awareness & Public Education for Disaster Risk Reduction: Action-Oriented Key Messages for Households and Schools](#) – Part C: Standard Operating Procedures for Disasters and Emergencies in Schools, IFRC & Save the Children (2018) provides a template of evidence-based guidance with six foundational SOPs for school safety:

- safe building evacuation
- safe assembly
- evacuation to a safe-haven
- shelter-in-place
- lockdown
- safe family re-unification

These are supplemented by protective actions for specific hazards:

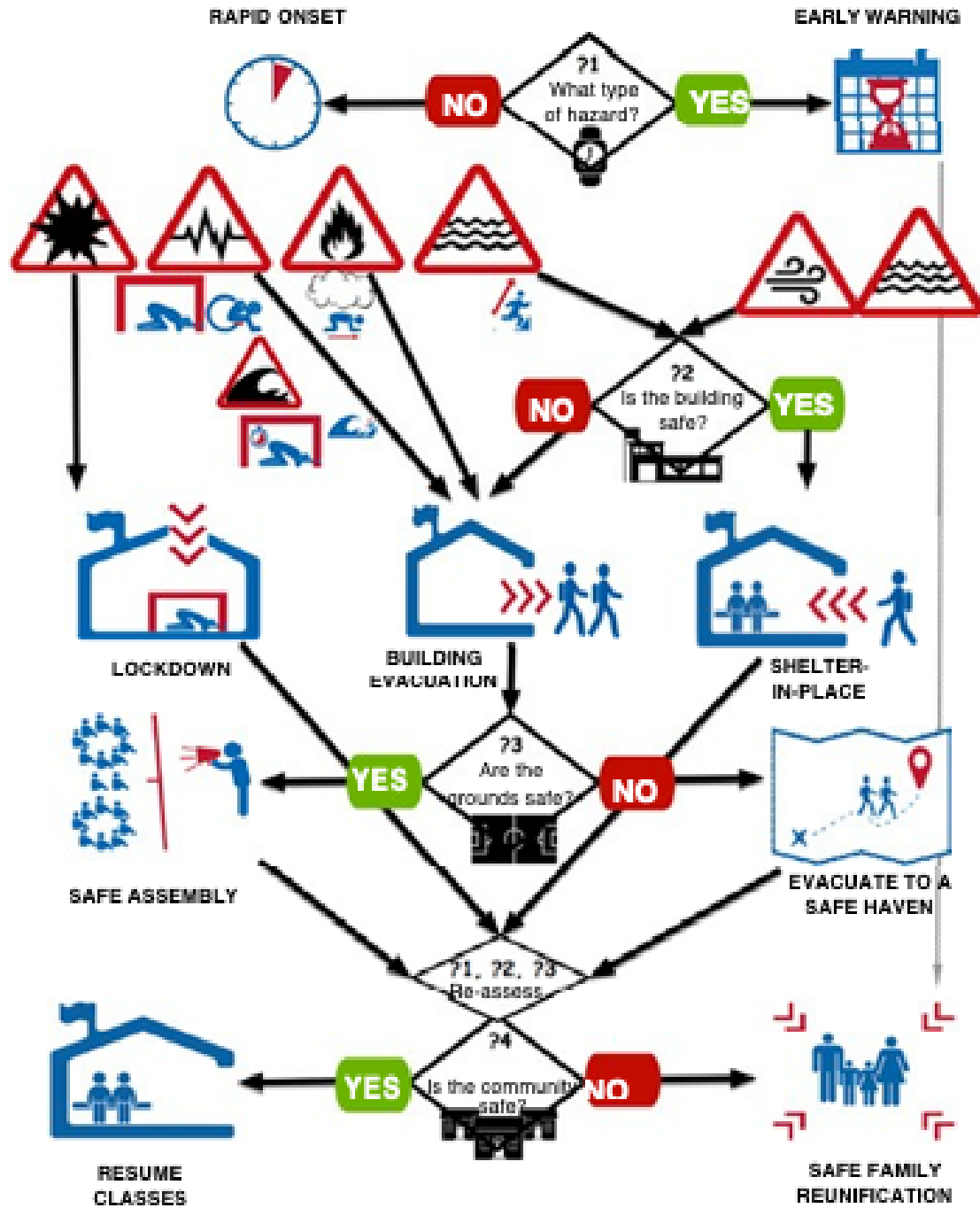
- earthquake shaking
- tsunami warnings
- smoke
- body or clothing on fire
- lightning
- violent intruders and active shooters.

Emergency Decision Tree

The Emergency Decision Tree can be used to guide school safety leaders to select the safest procedures to follow under any set of circumstances using three basic questions, asked consecutively, and asked repeatedly:

- Is the building safe?
- Are the grounds safe?
- Is the community safe?

EMERGENCY DECISION TREE



Common Mistakes in School Drills

Mistakes observed in the field	Best practices
Building evacuations are disorderly and dangerous.	Follow the simple building evacuation rules found in the SOPs: "Don't talk. Don't push. Don't run. Don't go back.
Going back into buildings.	Don't go back.
Walking alongside building.	First walk away from the building to a distance at least half the height of the building away (If the building collapses, that's how far the debris can spread).
Routes to safe assembly areas are unsafe. Exit routes are blocked or locked.	Exit routes should be cleared and free from obstruction. Walk directly to a clear space away from the building. Plan routes to avoid overhead hazards, underfoot hazards etc.
No adult at the rear.	Adult at the rear, does a visual sweep to see that everyone is out.
Drill is a 'tick box' exercise only.	Drills are opportunities for discussion, risk identification, risk reduction, and response preparedness
Distractions and theatrics interfere with skill acquisition (eg. moulage or putting out a real fire).	Make-up and theatrics are not necessary. Real fire suppression practice should be done independently of school drills. Children should not be role playing in lieu of acquiring basic skills
"Drop, cover and hold on" under desks doesn't always work. Children bent into awkward positions in spaces that are too small and will limit egress.	Children may not have individual desks. In many school desks are not designed in a way that children can fit their whole bodies under the desk. In that case the priority is to protect the head and neck.
Alarms cause confusion: multiple codes and alarm sounds can create confusion and chaos and can interfere with successful safety procedures.	The T3 building evacuation sound: For emergencies that require an immediate building evacuation, there is one International Standard for Acoustics-Audible Emergency Evacuation Signal for all structures where people may be present, called the "T3 signal" (REF / AUDIO) This is for use in schools, hotels, residential buildings, public institutions and workplaces (ISO, 1987).
Cell phone use cell phone systems are easily overloaded during disasters. Even the least demanding short text messages can be queued for days before delivery.	Drills are a very important opportunity to explain to students and parents, that during a potential disaster <i>everyone</i> should stay off their phones to allow for emergency calls to professional responders ³ .

³ Two examples may help to explain this: A school with 500 students has up to 3,000 worried parents and grandparents, generating potentially thousands of calls or text messages. If just one student on that campus is injured and needs an ambulance, those calls could kill the child needing physical help. A school may experience moderate earthquake shaking and evacuate to find no ill effects. But 100 miles away a huge disaster may be unfolding. The "did you feel it?" calls in one area can interfere with the emergency response communications in a neighboring area.



Quality Checklist and Evaluation Form⁴

Part 1: All Drills and Simulation Exercises

Level and scope of drill: regular operational drill simulation exercise

Start time _____ End time _____

Time to complete building or area evacuation (if applicable) _____

Goal: To ensure the safety of our students and staff in the event of a disaster or emergency, and where possible to safeguard school property.

Objectives: (select all that apply)

- To develop skills and competencies of individual students and staff.
- To test the measures we have taken for risk identification, risk reduction, and response preparedness.
- To test the decision-making process throughout the emergency, for as long as it may last.
- To keep students safe, comfortable and supervised until they are safely reunified with parents/guardians
- To identify challenges/problems in the SOPs and rectify these.
- To continually improve (including the response time).

Scenario: (briefly describe scope and relevant details:

Who Participated?	ALL (86-100%)	MOST (51-85%)	SOME (35-50%)	FEW (10-25%)	Does not apply
School Administrators					
Teachers					
Other school personnel					
Pre-school students					
Primary school students					
Secondary school students					
Students or staff with					



disabilities					
Parents					
Volunteers and visitors					

Drill Elements Included: *	YES	NO
safe building evacuation		
safe assembly		
evacuation to a safe haven		
shelter-in-place		
safe family reunification		
lockdown (unannounced drills are <i>not</i> recommended)		
other		

* NOTE: It is expected that only those elements relevant to your scenario will be practiced.

Specific Hazard Impact Elements Included:	YES	NO
building fire (safe building evacuation)		
smoke (get down low and 'go go go')		
fire extinguisher ('Pull. Aim. Squeeze. Sweep.' simulation)		
earthquake (drop, cover and hold on) + safe building evacuation + safe assembly_		
earthquake and tsunami (drop, cover, hold and count + evacuate to safe haven)		
flash flood (vertical evacuation)		
tornado (evacuation to shelter)		
armed intruder or physical attack (lockdown)		
other (specify) _____		

* NOTE: It is expected that only those elements relevant to your scenario will be practiced.

Debriefing Discussion Questions:

This section can be used independently with a adult and student groups, and then summarized.

Who participated in the discussion / evaluation below? Check all that apply.

Staff Students Parents Other community members

What worked well, and what are your strengths and capacities?

What problems did you face?



What suggestions do you have to make the school environment safer?

What can be done to improve your response procedures?

Follow-up actions recommended:

What	Priority				By when	By whom
	High	Medium	Low	N/A		
School management meeting to take action, modify risk identification, risk reduction, and/or response plan.						
Update hazard and risk map with new information.						
Update risk mitigation activities plan.						
Undertake facilities safety measures.						
Review / revise evacuation routes.						
Revise response procedures or improve SOP quality.						
Revise roles and responsibilities.						
Review student accounting procedures.						
Identify locations or facilities for family reunification or update family reunification plans.						
Plan teacher training on _____.						
Plan student training on _____.						
Identify educational materials needed.						
Plan meeting with community or parents.						
Communicate with parents.						



Refresh student emergency contact info and emergency release permissions.						
Reach out to local public safety or disaster management authorities.						
Review / revise educational continuity plans						
Procure / refresh needed supplies.						
Other _____						




NOTES:

Part 2: Drill Quality Elements

Basic Procedures

In the tables below, circle one box in each row, only for those SOPs that were practiced.




If not practiced, not observed, or not applicable, skip that row.




Safe building evacuation & safe assembly and/or evacuation to a safe haven			
ACTIONS			
Safe building evacuation skills	Students are talking, shouting, running, or pushing or Some students went back in to get something.	Students are quiet but in no hurry or Some students know building evacuation rules, but many are not following them.	Almost all students know and follow building evacuation rules: Don't Talk. Don't Push. Don't Run. Don't Go Back
Instructions	Teachers or staff provided no instructions.	Teachers or staff provided some instructions, but unclear.	Teachers or staff provided clear instructions for leaving the classroom and students followed instructions, or students knew what to do without being reminded.
Responsibilities	Primary school students given inappropriate responsibilities and exposed to harm.	Not clear who is responsible.	Adult or older child is at head of the group and knows the danger signs to avoid. Adult is last to leave, scanning to note that everyone is out.
Exit routes	Exit routes expose people to dangers	Exit pathways are not very safe, but everyone	Exit pathways are clear and move away from






	<p>overhead or underground.</p> <p>Students did not know where the safe evacuation place was or how to get there.</p> <p>Exit routes were blocked or locked.</p>	<p>is aware of dangers and seeks to avoid them.</p>	<p>buildings and other hazards.</p> <p>Students know where the safe evacuation place is and the correct way to get there safely, following SOPs.</p>
Safe assembly	<p>Students are in the assembly area but are in no order and are being loud and can't hear the teachers.</p>	<p>Students are in the assembly area and are quiet, but individuals can't be found in any predictable location.</p>	<p>Students assemble in safe space identified, quietly and calmly and line in rows or circles, and be accounted for.</p>
Safety of the assembly area	<p>Assembly area is exposed to overhead, underground, or ground level hazards.</p>	<p>Assembly area is free from hazards, but not a self-contained safe space.</p>	<p>Assembly area is safe from all hazards, and not accessible to outsiders.</p>
Student accounting (aka registration / head count)	<p>No register or head count taken.</p>	<p>Head count only, no student list/registration.</p>	<p>Teacher takes student attendance roster with them and takes a full register and handed in to incident commander.</p>
Telephone use limitations	<p>Students or teachers used phones for personal voice or text communications.</p>	<p>Students or teachers used phones for just one text message.</p>	<p>Students and teachers stayed off phones, except for emergency communications authorized by incident commander.</p>



Shelter-in-place			
ACTIONS			
Sanitation facilities	No facilities for makeshift toilet.	No makeshift toilet, but we figured something out.	Makeshift toilet is available, with some privacy provision.
Water and food	No water or food available.	Water is available.	Water and non-salty snack food are available in place.

Lockdown			
ACTIONS			
Sanitation facilities	No facilities for makeshift toilet.	No makeshift toilet, but we figured something out.	Makeshift toilet is available, with some privacy provision.
Window coverings and locks	You can see inside the room, and the door does not lock from the inside.	No one can see inside the room OR The door locks from inside and was blocked.	No one can see inside the room AND The door locks from inside and was blocked.
Actions	Students did get inside the classroom, did not hide or were not quiet.	Students were not very quiet, or still.	Students did not leave the classroom and hid where possible.

Safe Family Reunification			
ACTIONS			
Request and reunification gates	Request and reunification are at front entrance, and are not separated.	Request and reunification gates are separated or there is no comfortable parent/guardian waiting area.	Parent/guardian request and waiting area is separate and nearby.
Reunification procedures	Teachers let students leave without any	Teachers released students to adults with	Teachers 'released' students and signed them






	protocol.	no documentation or prior approval.	out to verified parent/caregiver or approved emergency contacts only.
	Teachers did not document students leaving.	Teachers documented release but without details (when and by whom).	Teachers documented reunification details (when and by whom).
	Teachers did not request any identification.	Teachers requested identification but did not match with approved emergency contacts.	Teachers Requested identification and matched with pre-approved emergency contacts.

Hazard Specific Procedures




In the tables below, circle one box in each row, only for those SOPs that were practiced.

If not practiced, not observed, or not applicable, skip that row.




Fire			
ACTIONS			
Safe exit	Teachers and students did not leave the classroom or Teacher left the students and fled.	Students left the classroom but very slowly or running, and were pushing or shouting or did not listen to the teacher's instructions.	Students left the building quickly (if needed, crawling and practicing 'Get low and go go go!').
	Teachers did not check for any signs of heat or smoke.	Teachers checked for only heat or smoke, not both.	Teachers checked for heat and smoke before leaving the classroom to be sure it was safe to leave.
Evacuation route	Teachers and students did not follow the correct evacuation route.	Teachers, staff, and students followed their normal evacuation route, without realizing the fire was blocking it.	Teachers, staff and students followed the correct evacuation route (especially if fire was obstructing normal route).
Staff skills	Teachers are not sure how to put out a small	Some teachers and staff have the skills to put	Most teachers, staff and older students know how to






	fire.	out a small fire.	put out a small fire, including P.A.S.S. with fire extinguisher.
Student skills	No students in science labs know how to extinguish flames and isolate hazardous materials.	Some students in science labs know how to extinguish flames and isolate hazardous materials.	Most students in science labs know how to extinguish flames and isolate hazardous materials in case of emergency.

Earthquake			
ACTIONS			
During the shaking	Teachers and students did not drop, cover and hold (eg. stayed seated and did not react) or Teacher left students inside left the classroom alone during 'shaking'.	Students did drop, cover and hold but could not fit or students 'squatted' or Students dropped, but did not protect their heads.	Students did drop, cover and hold under correct size desks until 'shaking' stopped, or protected their heads if they could not fit under desks.
Evacuation route and assembly area	Evacuation route and assembly area are both unsafe.	Evacuation route or assembly is not safe from falling and flying objects.	Evacuation route and assembly area were both safe.
Safe assembly	Students outside re-entered the building or Students outside remained in an unsafe place.	Students assembled in safe place, but were not seated or not engaged in helping or in quiet activities.	Students were assembled in safe place, quiet occupied and did not re-enter building until 'all clear'.
Triage and reporting	Teacher did not identify any students who were injured or rapped, or tried to rescue them rather than leading the rest of class to safety.	Teacher students trapped but did not alert anyone or took too long to do so.	Teacher led students to safe assembly area, took attendance, and reported any missing or trapped.
Facilities	No facilities for makeshift toilet outside the building.	No makeshift toilet, but we figured something out.	Makeshift toilet outside the building available, with some privacy provision.

Inclusion:

Inclusion			
ACTIONS			
Youngest children included	Youngest students did not participate.	Youngest students tried to participate but were not encouraged to do so, or teachers did not know how to include them.	Everyone participated. In some cases, people with disabilities were consulted and 'talked through' procedures.
Disability inclusion	Students or adults with disabilities did not participate.	Students and adults with disabilities tried to participate but needs were not well met.	Students and adults with disabilities participated safely and/or their individual needs were accommodated.
Gender considerations	Gender inequities were not considered.	Gender differences and inequities were recognized, but not well-addressed.	Gender considerations were accounted, and overall equities observed.

Using the Evaluation:

After Action Feedback and Consultation			
ACTIONS			
Feedback/debrief	No feedback given.	Some feedback given but not in sufficient detail or feedback only given to some stakeholders (eg. only teachers, or only older students).	Feedback provided to all involved, including good and bad practices, how to change these and the 'time taken for everyone to evacuate and be registered' given.
Consultation / debriefing	Students not consulted or included in the evaluation or revision of the plan.	Students were consulted but their feedback was not actioned.	Students were consulted after drill to receive their feedback on needed improvements and plans



			revised accordingly.
Adjustments to plan	No improvements or were made to the plan for 'next time.	Some adjustments were made to the plan, but not sufficient to ensure greater safety .	SOPs were all correctly followed and/or adjustments were made to improve significantly improve safety next time.



Part 3: Simulation Exercises Only

Key Functions & Roles Practiced

Note: It is expected that only those roles relevant to your scenario will be practiced.

Roles	√ Yes X No	Comments
Incident Command		
Communications		
Logistics Chief (supplies, volunteers)		
Shelter		
Sanitation		
Nutrition		
Security		
Transportation		
Operations Chief (safety functions)		
Fire Suppression		
Light search and rescue		
Safe Assembly		
Safe Family Reunification		
First Aid (incl. triage)		
Psychosocial Support		

QUALITY DECISION-MAKING: Were procedures selected the safest? (check against the 'Emergency Decision Tree')

COMMUNICATIONS:

Means of communication tested:

	megaphone		cell phones		email/internet
	runners		satellite phone		intercom
	amateur radio		emergency radio		other



Communications with whom?

students	education authorities	public safety / first responders
staff	families	disaster management authorities
other _____		

Quality / effectiveness of communications:

SECURITY: Are entrances/exits controlled?

Part 4: Additional Planning Questions

Educational Continuity Planning:

PLANS FOR REOPENING: Are there plans for safe school reopening? School clean-up? alternative learning sites? alternative calendar? alternative modes of instruction?

STAFFING: Is staff rotation planned?



STAFF SKILLS CHECK:

	ALL (86-100%)	MOST (51-85%)	SOME (35-50%)	FEW (10-25%)	NONE (<10%)	NOT SURE
How to put out a small fire						
First aid training						
Post-disaster division of labor (eg. ICS)						
Other (specify) _____						

TEAM ROLES & TRAINING:

Note: Staff should be prepared to fulfill needed functions, flexibly, depending on needs and skills.

Roles	Who	Last training	Next training
Incident Command			
Communications			
Logistics Chief (supplies, volunteers)			
Shelter			
Sanitation			
Nutrition			
Security			
Transportation			
Operations Chief (safety functions)			
Fire Suppression			
Light search and rescue			
Safe Assembly			
Safe Family Reunification			
First Aid (incl. triage for life safety)			
Psychosocial Support			

SUPPLIES & PROVISIONS:

School has sufficient supplies to be self-sufficient for 72 hours. [] Yes [] No

School has sufficient additional supplies for longer projected needs. [] Yes [] No

Supplies	Short-term 3-7 days			Longer-term	
	A	B	C	E	D
	√ Yes X No	Number Needed	Number Available undamaged & unexpired	Additional Needed	Procure (B-C) or (B-C) + E
Fire suppression equipment					
Personal protective equipment (PPE) for fire / earthquake response teams (flashlight, helmets, gloves)					
Identification equipment for response teams (eg. vests or armbands)					
Role reminders for response teams					
Signage for assembly area groups and response stations					
Megaphone					
Flashlights					
Batteries					
Generator and fuel					
Shelter supplies (shade)					
Shelter supplies (bedding)					
Flood/debris clean-up supplies					
Cleaning and disinfecting supplies (general & haz mat)					
Personal protective equipment (PPE) for airborne diseases					
Hygiene supplies (toilets, handwashing, menstrual)					
Drinking water (uncontaminated)					
Water for sanitation					
Food supplies					
In-classroom 'toilet' (eg bucket, plastic bags)					
Outdoor toilets/privacy screens /					



shovel					
First aid supplies					
Stretcher					
Battery operated radio and batteries					
Notepad, pens, marking pens					
Clipboard with classroom door with class roster and procedures.					
Door signs for each room Green = Completely evacuated Red = Casualties or danger					
Portable go-bag ready in each classroom					
Student comfort bags (from home) has been refreshed at beginning of school year.					
Other					

gadrrres.net
gadrrres@gmail.com
cc.preventionweb.net/scss
facebook.com/GAD3RES/
twitter.com/gad3res
[GADRRRES YouTube Channel](#)

Citation:

GADRRRES (2023). Best Practice: School Emergency Drills and Exercises: Quality Checklist and Evaluation Forms, GADRRRES.