

Parsippany-Troy Hills Township Schools

Emergency Procedures

The safety and security of our students and staff are top priorities for Parsippany-Troy Hills Township Schools. The following procedures are in place and have been practiced in the event of an emergency at your child's school.

School administrators work closely with police, fire, emergency services, and public health to ensure our School Emergency procedures reflect appropriate practices to ensure all schools are prepared for any possible emergency. We work in close partnership with emergency responders if a critical incident should occur in one of our schools.

Our comprehensive emergency crisis procedures address a multitude of potential incidents. We want to be well prepared. For security reasons, specific details are not made available to the public; however, parents and students have a vital role and it is important that you know what to do in an emergency. Please review information below to make sure you and your child understand the emergency procedures.

What is an Emergency?

An emergency is any unexpected incident that could possibly put your child's safety at risk. It could be anything from a disruption in utilities to a threat and could affect one child, one school, or the entire school district. School officials, and sometimes emergency responders, will evaluate the seriousness of each situation and determine the best response and act quickly, safely, and appropriately.

What Will Parsippany-Troy Hills Schools do in the Event of an Emergency?

Parent notification will depend on the particular emergency and surrounding events and circumstances. For example, there are times when the school is conducting emergency drills or training, or for in the event of a real emergency, the Superintendent, in conjunction with the emergency responders will determine when it is appropriate to notify parents.

How Will Parents be Notified if an Incident Occurs?

Our first priority is to ensure all students are safe, accounted for, and under adult supervision. As soon as it is possible to do so, the Superintendent in conjunction with the emergency first responders will communicate information to parents and the community, this may take some time. The school district and police will use the following to communicate to the parents and general public.

1. School Messenger (phone notification to staff and student homes)
2. District Website www.pthsd.k12.nj.us
3. Parsippany Police Alerts and Press Releases

What Should Parents do in the Event of an Emergency?

The most helpful parental responses to a school emergency are to remain calm and wait for accurate information to be sent from the number listed on your child's emergency contact. We understand it is a natural instinct for parents to want to rush to their child's school. However, if droves of parents were to converge on the school during such an event, they would most likely interfere with the emergency responders on the scene and inhibit other emergency personnel, and equipment from entering the area. Your cooperation in an emergency is essential to the safe and swift resolution of the incident.

Please do not call the school. It is essential to keep phone lines open so school officials can make outgoing emergency calls. **If students are ill or injured, the parents of those students will be notified first.**

Again, please do not go to the school. As we have learned from past school emergencies, one of our greatest challenges is how to manage an onslaught of parents and concerned citizens rushing to the scene to "help." By doing so, parents can inadvertently create traffic jams that may block emergency responders from getting to the scene or leaving if necessary to transport injured staff or students to emergency medical facilities.

- Remain calm, follow procedures, and cooperate with school and public safety officials.
- Remain close to the phone listed as your emergency contact number.
- Obtain current information about the incident from the district website at www.pthsd.k12.nj.us.
- Understand that emergency pickup procedures are different than routine pickup procedures. In the event you are notified to pick up your child at school, or at another designated site, bring a photo identification card. If you must send someone else to pick up your child, be sure it is someone who is listed on school records as an authorized individual and they are in possession of a photo ID. Your child will not be released to anyone who is unauthorized or who cannot provide appropriate identification.

What is a Lockdown?

A lockdown may be used because of an event inside the building, or because something is happening outside and police have determined it is best to make sure the school is protected. The purpose of a lockdown is to restrict the movement of staff and students, and to fully secure the building. During a lockdown all interior and exterior doors are locked. No one is permitted to enter or exit the building until school officials, often working in conjunction with police, have determined it is safe to do so. All staff, students, and visitors are accounted for. The length of the period of lockdown is based on the situation at hand, and could be a few minutes or a few hours.

Shelter-in-Place

What we do in an emergency depends on the situation and the specifics of the incident. We will make every attempt to ensure that instruction continues, even when it becomes necessary to lock down the school. Depending on the severity of the threat or emergency, additional measures may be taken, including sheltering-in-place, evacuating students from the building to a different location, or closing the school early.

If emergency responders are called to the scene, we will work with them in a unified effort to determine which plan should be implemented. School emergency plans are initiated depending on the events unfolding at the time of the incident. While every school has pre-established plans of action and evacuation sites, these plans must remain flexible as conditions change. **Parents will be informed as soon as we have done everything we can to ensure the safety of students and when it becomes possible to provide accurate and helpful information.**

How Can You Help in an Emergency?

Parents have an invaluable role in preparing their children for emergencies. Listed below are some of the ways you can help them understand that if an emergency occurs at school, teachers and school officials are trained to handle the situation. Reassure them you will be contacted by the school and you will be reunited with them as soon as it is safe to do so.

- Be sure emergency contact information is current and correct. Contact the school secretary immediately whenever your work, home, or cell number changes.
- Keep the school nurse informed of any medical conditions or physical limitations your child may have or medications your child may be taking. Provide the necessary medical supplies and medication for daily use and an additional supply to carry your child through an emergency. If there are questions about the appropriate amount of medication or supplies, please consult your child's physician.
- Identify who is authorized to pick up your child if you are not able to respond. Make sure their contact information is current and correct. Please understand your child will only be released to parents and persons identified on the emergency contact list. Discuss this information with your child.
- Make sure your child knows their parent or guardian's name, address, and phone numbers. If there is only one parent or guardian, your child should have contact information for a second responsible adult.
- Talk with your child about the importance of remaining calm and following instructions in the event of an emergency. If an emergency occurs while they are at school, their teacher will provide them with appropriate instructions and information.
- Let your child know they could be moved to another location until you can pick them up. Explain the term "evacuation" so they are not afraid of being evacuated from their school.

- **Explain that cell phones should not be used during an emergency unless directed to do so by a teacher.** Emergency responders will depend on cell phones for communication. If students and parents are trying to contact each other, cell phone circuits may become overloaded, interfering with the ability of emergency personnel to communicate vital information.
- Whenever you are on school grounds, remain alert to activity in and around the school. Report any suspicious activity to school administration so they can investigate.
- Establish a family preparedness plan including a communications plan. This will enable you to communicate with all family members during an emergency.
- In case of an emergency in which your child cannot go to their home, make sure there is another place he or she can go and be safe while waiting for a family member to pick them up. For example during weather related emergencies, or early dismissals.

In the event the pick-up location is different from your school

If students are moved off-site when school officials determine students and staff should not re-enter the building until it is rendered safe. Several off-site locations are determined in advance, but are not shared with parents until an incident unfolds. Police and school officials choose the best site at the time of the incident depending on the circumstances of the emergency. Parents will be notified of the site as soon as it is tactically appropriate to do so. Our main priorities in an off-site evacuation are student safety and accountability. We want to make sure students are released to authorized individuals and a sign-out procedure will be initiated.

In the event of an off-site school evacuation, parents will be provided information as to where the site is located via SchoolMessenger or Emergency contact information provided by you. Parents or authorized adults will be required to show photo identification in order to pick up a child. The process may take some time because we want to make sure the pick-up is made with authorized individuals.