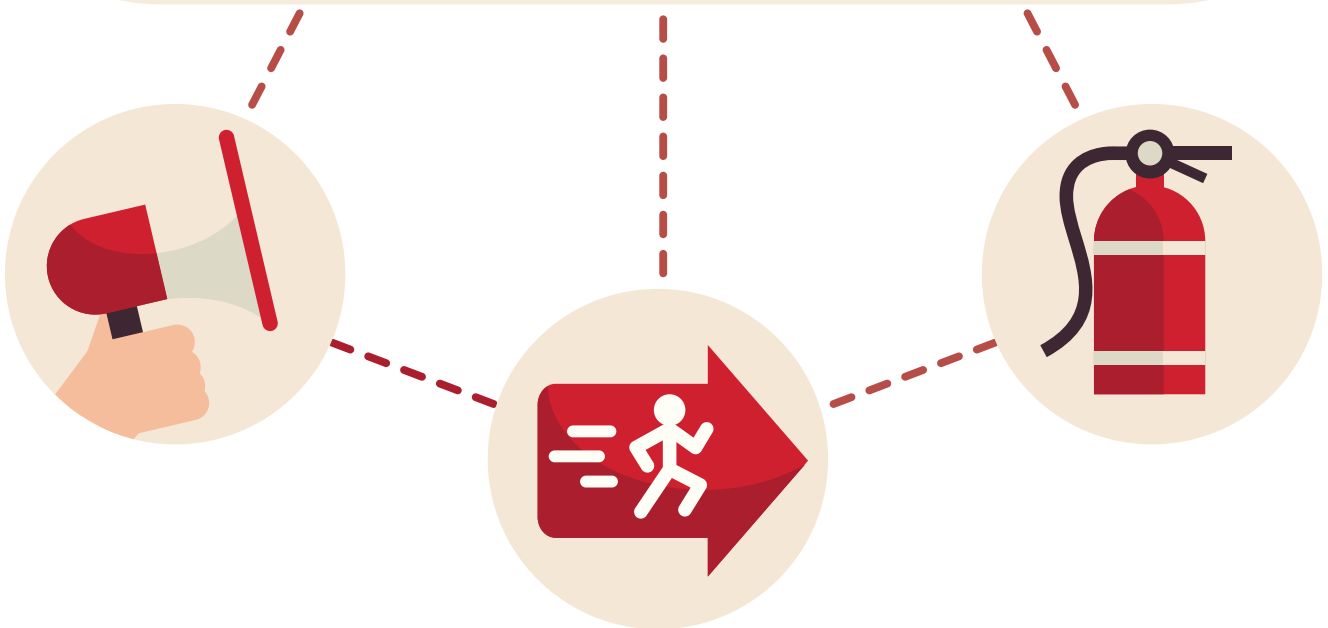


QUICK GUIDE FOR CRITICAL INCIDENTS



July 2026

Dyann R. Mack, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

PURPOSE

BACKGROUND

The Board of Education of Harford County, the Superintendent of Schools, administrators, teachers, students, and their parents/guardians demand that Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) provide a safe environment. Each school has been provided a Critical Incident Plan to provide direction for dealing with various situations.

PURPOSE

We are committed to the pursuit of excellence and to providing quality service to our staff, students, and the citizens of our community. This plan will provide a guide in the event of a critical situation.

This plan has been developed to provide easy-to-follow guidelines that will assist administrators and school staff in the event of a critical situation. A sequential format has been devised to walk administrators through the essential steps.

Each school and office building presents conditions that are unique to their specific circumstances. The building administrators must review these procedures and adapt them as appropriate to their school.

Dyann R. Mack, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Date



CRITICAL RESPONSE PROCEDURES

All principals/building managers are directed to ensure that all persons under their supervision are prepared to respond to critical incidents.

Each principal/building manager shall establish a Critical Response Team (CRT).

The CRT's objective shall be to provide controlled coordination of the principal's/building manager's response to the emergency. Minimum core CRT membership shall include: principal, assistant principal(s), school resource officer (if applicable), non-teaching staff (e.g. counselors), school nurse, designated teachers, office support staff, lead custodian, and cafeteria manager.

PLAIN LANGUAGE ANNOUNCEMENTS

All emergency messages from the HCPS system, to include text messages, will incorporate "plain language."

Examples:

- "Lockdown, lockdown"
- "We are in a modified lockdown. All outside activities are cancelled until further notice. This will not affect normal in-school activities."
- "...warning Shelter in place, shelter in place."
- "Medical emergency, shelter in place, shelter in place."
- "Teachers, at this time we will be evacuating to the stadium..."
- When the incident is resolved, announce, "All clear, the situation has been resolved. It is safe to resume normal activities."

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EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Plan for Students, Staff, and Visitors with Disabilities

- *Emergency Planning Guidelines for students, staff, and visitors with disabilities are essential to the quick, safe, and efficient evacuation of an entire school or office building during an emergency. This can only be accomplished through careful planning, preparation, practice, and support from emergency responders.*
- *School Critical Site Plans must include changes in building accessibility resulting from renovation projects and plans adjusted as needed. In considering the placement of individuals with disabilities in a building, administrators should seek opportunities to schedule classes for students with mobility impairments on the level of egress, whenever possible.*
- *The Emergency Planning Guidelines for Local School Systems and Schools were updated in October 2017 to include expanded language relative to the development of a safety plan for Section 7-435 of the Education Article. Annotated Code of Maryland requires that if a student with an individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan requires specific accommodations in an emergency, the IEP or 504 plan shall include those accommodations and address the student's needs as necessary.*
- *The Chief of the Department of Safety and Security is available to assist principals and office heads in the development of emergency evacuation procedures for individuals with disabilities. Organization of a school-based Critical Incident Team must be identified. The team will develop the emergency evacuation procedures for individuals with disabilities. This team must include at least one administrator/office head.*
- *The local fire marshal's office can inspect facilities to determine the most appropriate locations for areas of rescue assistance.*
 - *Secondary areas of rescue assistance must be identified in the event the emergency renders the first area unavailable.*
 - *Signs identifying areas of rescue assistance must be posted within the building. Additional signs visible from the outside of the building can be posted to enable emergency responders to quickly locate areas of rescue assistance. Requests for the required signage should be made to the Department of Safety and Security through the computerized work order system.*
 - *Posted floor plans should be customized to identify emergency exit routes to include routes to the nearest areas of rescue assistance.*

EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES, cont.

Identification of Individuals Requiring Assistance to Evacuate

- *All students, service providers, and employees who require assistance to evacuate the building during an emergency should be identified and documented under the appropriate section of the Site-Based Emergency Plan. This information will be made available to local emergency responders.*
- *The assistance needed should be documented, not the condition, in the appropriate section of the Site-Based Emergency Plan. This information will be made available to local emergency responders.*
- *The names of people designated to assist each person identified must be listed.*
- *All aspects of assisting those with special needs must be practiced periodically during emergency evacuation drills. During these drills, it might not be advisable to evacuate all persons from the building, depending on their physical condition. In certain cases, the potential risk of injury to the person might outweigh the benefits of conducting the drill. These health or safety concerns should be discussed with local fire department representatives.*
- *Each evacuation drill or event must be evaluated to determine its effectiveness, and necessary changes can be made to the established procedures in consultation with the Department of Safety and Security.*

DEFINITIONS

ACTIVE ASSAILANT CRITICAL RESPONSE (ACRT) TRAINING DRILLS

Prepares staff to respond to protect students and themselves in the event of an armed intruder or active shooter emergency; designed to maintain preparedness.

COMMAND POST

The school's central communications location for the principal/designee and other authorities. Communication devices should be accessible at the command post. The "Go Bag" is vital to the operations at the command post.

DROP, COVER, AND HOLD

Students and staff take cover under a desk (DROP), away from windows, cover eyes (COVER), make efforts to protect vital organs, and (HOLD) in place. Avoid areas with glass whenever possible.



EVACUATION

Students and staff use established school-based procedures to safely leave the building, and attendance is taken. Make modifications based on the totality of the situation.

LOCKDOWN

Students/staff are instructed to report to the nearest classroom and close and lock all doors and windows. Students/staff should move away from doors and windows, turn off lights, drop to the floor, and remain quiet. No person is to enter or exit the locked room unless directed by law enforcement.

MODIFIED LOCKDOWN

Students/staff continue normal instruction with modifications. Physical education classes are to remain indoors. No person is to enter or exit the building unless directed by law enforcement or administration.

REFUGE AREA

Applies to people in a wheelchair or with other disabilities that affect mobility. If school has to be evacuated, plan to horizontally relocate as a "refuge area." These spaces may be located as stand-alone or barrier compartments on the floor, or they may consist of oversized landings in stairwells. People remain in one of the designated spaces until fire department personnel can respond and assist in evacuating. An adult "buddy" and a two-way radio to communicate with rescue personnel and the command post shall be assigned to this area.

REVERSE EVACUATION

Students and staff engaging in outdoor activities are to move as quickly as possible back into secure buildings.

REUNIFICATION

The process of reconnecting students and staff with their families in the aftermath of a major critical incident.

SEVERE WEATHER

Difference between a weather watch and a warning:

- Watch is issued when a weather event is possible.
- Warning is sounded when a weather event has been spotted or indicated on radar.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE

Students and staff report to assigned locations. Ideally, the locations are away from windows and in the core of the building. All exterior window blinds should be drawn or closed. This is to be used in response to a hurricane or tornado event. Do not use a basement; instead, go to the center of an interior room on the lowest level. Preferably to an interior hallway, away from corners, windows, doors, and outside walls. Put as many walls as possible between you and the outside. Gymnasiums and cafeterias are not safe places to house students.

ELECTRICAL DISRUPTION

EVALUATE THE SITUATION



Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

WATER SYSTEM DISRUPTION

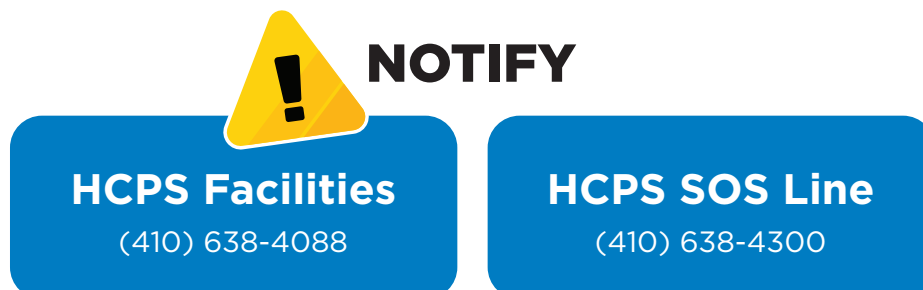
EXTERNAL BREAK

- Evaluate the situation



INTERNAL BREAK

- Shut off main water valve
- Do NOT shut off the sprinkler system (red valve)
- Evaluate the situation



Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

Continued on next page.

WATER SYSTEM DISRUPTION, cont.

WATER MAIN BREAK

- Evaluate the situation
- Evacuate flooded areas of the building, if required



NOTIFY

Chief Custodian

HCPS Facilities

(410) 638-4088

HCPS SOS Line

(410) 638-4300

9-1-1/SRO

WELL SYSTEMS ONLY

- Turn off all treatment systems for drinking water



NOTIFY

HCPS Facilities

(410) 638-4088

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

FIRE/SMOKE

EVACUATE BUILDING WITH FIRE ALARM

- Designate a person to meet and direct first responders
- Identify the location of the fire/smoke
- Identify additional hazards in/around building (chemicals, gas line, tanks, etc.)



Important Factors to Remember During Fire/Smoke Evacuation

- *Use building-specific procedures to account for all students, staff, and visitors*
- *Do not re-enter building until authorized by emergency responder(s)*
- *Do not use elevators*

GAS

INDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Response if a gas release is detected and is hazardous, toxic, or unknown

Announce:

"An unknown smell is detected; the building will be evacuated with the fire alarm sound. Staff close windows and exterior doors upon exiting."

Evacuate Building with Fire Alarm

Direct custodians and cafeteria staff to shut off all gas, fuel lines, fans, blowers, and all ventilation.



NOTIFY

9-1-1/SRO

HCPS Facilities
(410) 638-4088

HCPS SOS Line
(410) 638-4300

Important Factors to Remember During Indoor Gas Event

- *Use building-specific procedures to account for all students, staff, and visitors*
- *Do not re-enter the building until authorized by emergency responder(s)*
- *Isolate/Quarantine any known person(s) or area(s) believed to be contaminated*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

GAS

OUTDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Response if a gas release is detected and is hazardous, toxic, or unknown

Announce:

"An unknown smell is detected; everyone will REVERSE evacuate into the building."

Reverse Evacuate INTO the Building

Direct custodians and cafeteria staff to shut off all fans, blowers, and all ventilation.

Direct all staff to ensure all exterior windows and doors are closed.



NOTIFY

9-1-1/SRO

HCPS Facilities
(410) 638-4088

HCPS SOS Line
(410) 638-4300

Important Factors to Remember During Outdoor Gas Event

- *Use building-specific procedures to account for all students, staff, and visitors*
- *Do not exit the building until authorized by emergency responder(s)*
- *Isolate/Quarantine any known person(s) or area(s) believed to be contaminated*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

INDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Response if a chemical release is detected and is hazardous, toxic, or unknown

Announce:

"An unknown smell is detected; the building will be evacuated with the fire alarm sound. Staff close windows and exterior doors upon exiting."

Evacuate Building with Fire Alarm

Direct custodians and cafeteria staff to shut off all gas, fuel lines, fans, blowers, and all ventilation.



NOTIFY

9-1-1/SRO

HCPS Facilities
(410) 638-4088

HCPS SOS Line
(410) 638-4300

Important Factors to Remember During Hazardous Material Evacuation

- Use building-specific procedures to account for all students, staff, and visitors
- Do not re-enter the building until authorized by emergency responder(s)
- Isolate/Quarantine any known person(s) or area(s) believed to be contaminated

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL

OUTDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Response if a chemical release is detected and is hazardous, toxic, or unknown

Announce:

"An unknown smell is detected; everyone will REVERSE evacuate into the building."

Reverse Evacuate INTO the Building

Direct custodians and cafeteria staff to shut off all fans, blowers, and all ventilation.



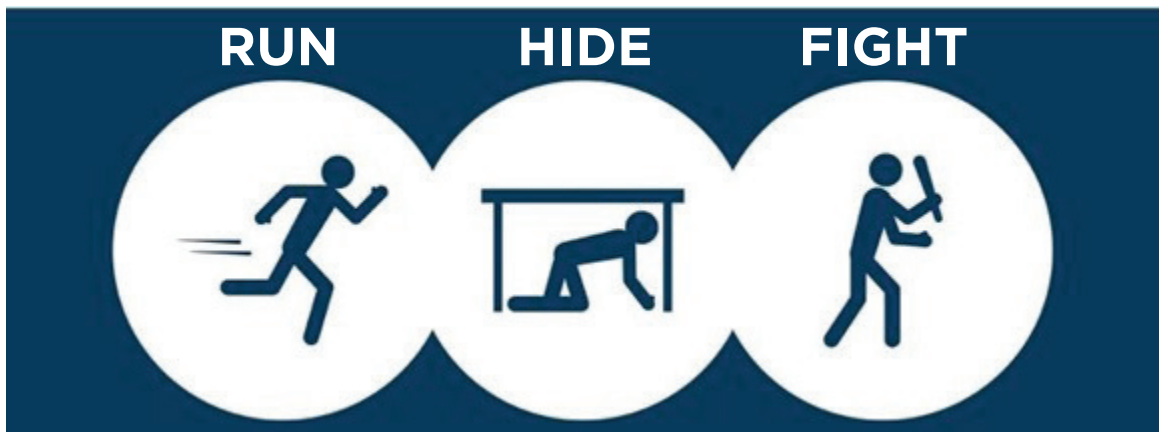
Important Factors to Remember During Hazardous Material

Reverse Evacuation

- Use building-specific procedures to account for all students, staff, and visitors
- Do not exit the building until authorized by emergency responder(s)
- Isolate/Quarantine any known person(s) or area(s) believed to be contaminated

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

ACTIVE ASSAILANT CRITICAL RESPONSE



RUN	HIDE	FIGHT
Escape, if possible:	If Escape is Not Possible:	As a last resort:
Leave belongings	Lock/Barricade doors	Attack the assailant
Do not aid wounded	Avoid windows	Use improvised weapons
Keep hands visible	Hide out of view	Throw things
	Remain quiet	Yell loudly
	Silence cell phones	Fight for your life
	When safe, dial 9-1-1	

When Police Arrive:

- Police will assume control of the situation

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

BOMB THREAT

PERSON RECEIVING BOMB THREAT

- *Keep the person talking*
- *Alert someone to notify administrator ASAP*
- *Use the telephone checklist (see next page)*

ADMINISTRATOR: Evaluate Bomb Threat

VAGUE THREAT No Date/Time Specified	SPECIFIC THREAT Threat detailed in nature about specifics of bomb regardless if a time is specified.
Conduct building search and monitor for additional information.	Evacuate immediately.



Important Factors to Remember During a Bomb Threat

- *Use building specific procedures to account for all students, staff, and visitors*
- *Do not enter the building until authorized by Emergency Responder(s)*
- *When incident is resolved, resume normal activities*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

BOMB THREAT

TELEPHONE CHECKLIST

EXACT WORDING OF THE THREAT: _____

Ask Questions	Responses
When will it explode?	
Where is the bomb right now?	
What does it look like?	
What kind of bomb is it?	
What will cause it to explode?	
Did you place the bomb?	
What is your address?	
What is your name?	

Length of call: _____

Sex: ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Unsure Age: ☐ Adult ☐ Teen ☐ Child ☐ Unsure

Caller's Voice (Check all that apply)

☐ Calm ☐ Nasal ☐ Deep ☐ Slow ☐ Ragged ☐ Deep Breathing ☐ Raspy
☐ Angry ☐ Loud ☐ Rapid ☐ Accent ☐ Excited ☐ Clearing Throat ☐ Lisp
☐ Soft ☐ Stutter ☐ Laughter ☐ Normal ☐ Slurred ☐ Cracking Voice
☐ Crying ☐ Disguised ☐ Distinct ☐ Familiar Voice

Threat Language

☐ Well-spoken ☐ Incoherent ☐ Recorded ☐ Irrational ☐ Vulgar
☐ Prepared Message

Background Sounds

☐ Clear ☐ Traffic ☐ Static ☐ House Noises ☐ Booth ☐ Factory Machinery
☐ Voices ☐ Music ☐ Long Distance ☐ Office Machinery ☐ Animal Noises
☐ PA System ☐ Local ☐ Motor ☐ Children

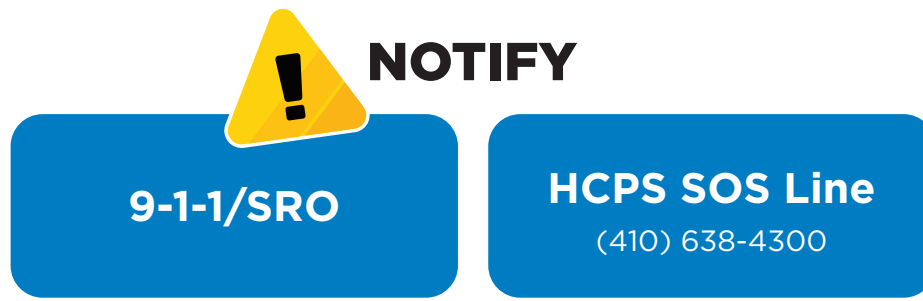
REMARKS: _____

Phone number call received: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Person Receiving Call: _____

CIVIL DISTURBANCE

EVALUATE THE SITUATION



DO NOT let anyone enter the area where the incident occurred.

- Verify and isolate incident location
- Administrator should respond to location (internal or external group), and use walkie to maintain contact with school office

IF demonstrators become violent: lockdown building*

**If alarm sounds during lockdown, do not evacuate unless fire and smoke are visible.*

If students are the source of the disturbance

- direct students to disband and report to a designated location as identified by the administrator

If disturbance is **NOT** a student and he/she fails to adhere to administrative directive:

- maintain safe distance
- wait for police to arrive
- monitor actions if cameras are available and bookmark footage
- identify witnesses

Important Factors to Remember During a Civil Disturbance

- *If demonstration is peaceful, time is on your side*
- *Do not escalate the situation*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

NON-RESPONSIVE PERSON MEDICAL EMERGENCY

DETERMINE IF OBVIOUS SIGNS OF TRAUMA ARE PRESENT

- IF obvious signs of trauma are present, refer to the ACTIVE ASSAILANT protocol
- IF there are no obvious signs of trauma, follow the steps below:

LOCKDOWN BUILDING WITH ANNOUNCEMENT*:

"Lockdown, instruction continues as normal, NO movement in the hallways."

**If alarm sounds during lockdown, do not evacuate unless fire and smoke are visible.*



DO NOT let anyone enter the area where the incident occurred.

- Notify nurse of the nature of the emergency
- Use cameras to attempt to identify cause of non-responsive person
- Bookmark footage and monitor cameras
- Identify and isolate witnesses, if applicable

When police arrive

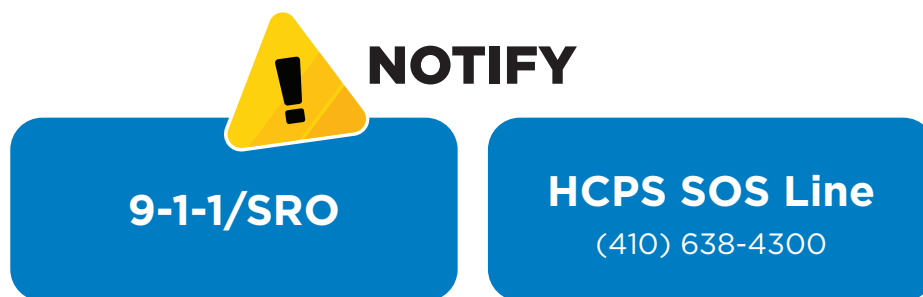
- Admin will work with Police to determine who will assume control of the situation
- Coordinate with police when to notify:
 - designated emergency contact of the complainant/victim
 - feeder schools
 - schools of siblings and other family members such as cousins
 - staff members

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

SEXUAL ASSAULT

EVALUATE THE SITUATION

(IF applicable: lockdown building)



DO NOT let anyone enter the area where the incident occurred.

- *Notify nurse of the nature of the emergency*
- *Designate a person to meet and direct first responders*
- *Identify and isolate witnesses*
- *Use cameras to attempt to locate the assailant(s)*
- *If available, monitor via camera and bookmark footage*
- *Relocate complainant/victim to health suite or a safe space*

Important Factors to Remember for the Complainant/Victim

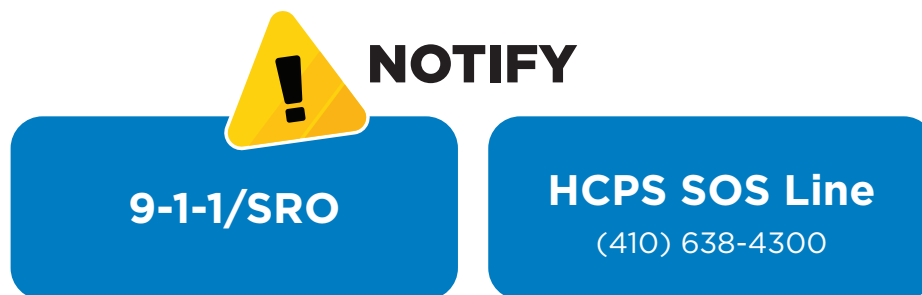
- *Do not allow to eat, drink, or use the bathroom*
- *Do not allow to change clothing or wash body*
- *Ensure counselor is available*
- *Designate a staff member to accompany complainant/victim to medical facility*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

TRESPASSING

EVALUATE THE SITUATION

(IF applicable: lockdown building)



Safely intervene, as appropriate, to stabilize situation.
Secure remainder of building/property.

If trespasser fails to adhere to administrative directive:

- *Maintain a safe distance*
- *Wait for police to arrive*
- *Monitor actions if cameras are available and bookmark the footage*
- *Identify witnesses*

Follow guidelines for issuing banning letter if appropriate.

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

CYBER SECURITY/ PHISHING EVENT

RECORD DATE, TIME,
AND NATURE OF INCIDENT

(malicious email, breach, etc.)



NOTIFY

All Staff

**HCPS
User Support Team**
(410) 588-5242

Email:
ReportSpam@hcps.org

If you notice any suspicious activity on your computer, shutdown the device immediately and contact your local Technical Support Specialist (TSS) and/or Endpoint Technician.

EARTHQUAKE

INDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Lockdown building with Weather Shelter in Place announcement.

(Shelter under furniture/Drop/Cover/Hold)



Monitor Public Emergency Alert Messages.

Contact 9-1-1 IF injuries occur.

Once shaking stops:

Evacuate the building with normal school-based procedures.

- *Ensure population is away from building, streetlights, and utility wires.*

Important Factors to Remember During Weather Shelter in Place

- *Stay under furniture OR drop and cover head if no cover is available*
- *Stay clear of glass, windows, and outside doors*
- *Do not use elevators*
- *Stay inside until shaking stops*

If trapped:

- *Do not move about or kick*
- *Cover mouth*
- *Tap on an exposed pipe or wall to alert rescuers*
- *Only as a LAST resort, shout*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

EARTHQUAKE

OUTDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Lockdown stadium/field area with Weather Shelter in Place announcement.
(Drop/Cover/Hold announcement)



Monitor Public Emergency Alert Messages.

Contact 9-1-1 IF injuries occur.

Once shaking stops:

Evacuate stadium with normal school-based procedures.

- *Ensure population is away from building, streetlights, and utility wires.*

Important Factors to Remember During Outdoor Weather Shelter in Place

- *Cover head if no cover is available*
- *Stay clear of lights and utility wires*
- *Stay covered until shaking stops*

If trapped:

- *Do not move about or kick*
- *Cover mouth*
- *Tap on an exposed pipe or wall to alert rescuers*
- *Only as a LAST resort, shout*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

FLOOD

EVALUATE THE SITUATION

Evacuate flooded area and immediately move to higher ground.



Monitor Public Emergency Alert Messages.

Contact 9-1-1 IF injuries occur.

Important Factors to Remember During a Flood

- *Do not walk through moving water*
- *Do not touch electrical equipment*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

TORNADO/ HIGH WIND

INDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Lockdown building with Weather Shelter in Place announcement.

(Shelter away from windows)



NOTIFY

9-1-1/SRO

HCPS Facilities

(410) 638-4088

HCPS SOS Line

(410) 638-4300

Monitor Public Emergency Alert Messages.

Contact 9-1-1 IF injuries occur.

Important Factors to Remember During Weather Shelter in Place

- *Stay away from windows and glass*
- *Ensure all windows and doors are closed*
- *Students assume Drop/Cover/Hold position*
- *Move to pre-designated safe areas*
- *If parents/visitors arrive at the school site, invite them into the building for their safety*

If trapped:

- *Do not move about or kick*
- *Cover mouth*
- *Tap on an exposed pipe or wall to alert rescuers*
- *Only as a LAST resort, shout*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

TORNADO/ HIGH WIND

OUTDOOR POPULATION RESPONSE

Conduct Reverse Evacuation **and**
Lockdown building with Weather Shelter in Place announcement.
(*Shelter away from windows*)



Monitor Public Emergency Alert Messages.
Contact 9-1-1 IF injuries occur.

Important Factors to Remember During Weather Shelter in Place

- *Stay away from windows and glass*
- *Ensure all windows and doors are closed*
- *Students assume Drop/Cover/Hold position*
- *Move to pre-designated safe areas*

If trapped:

- *Do not move about or kick*
- *Cover mouth*
- *Tap on an exposed pipe or wall to alert rescuers*
- *Only as a LAST resort, shout*

Refer to site school-based critical incident plan if applicable.

**PLEASE COMPLETE
THE ELECTRONIC
CRITICAL INCIDENT
FORM WITHIN
48 HOURS OF
USING THIS
RESOURCE
TO RESPOND.**

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

911	9-1-1
Aberdeen Police Department	410-272-2121
Animal Control	410-638-3505
Bel Air Police Department	410-638-4500
HCPS Manager of Communications	410-588-5203
Facilities Management	410-638-4088
Fire Department <i>(non-emergency)</i>	410-638-3400
Harford County Sheriff's Office • Northern Region • Southern Region	• 410-692-7880 • 410-612-1717
Havre de Grace Police Department	410-939-2121
Maryland Poison Control	1-800-222-1222
Maryland State Police	410-879-2101
Maryland State Roads	410-838-7788
HCPS Coordinator of Safety and Security	443-807-0694
HCPS SOS Line	410-638-4300
HCPS Transportation Department	410-638-4092