# Why run drills?

## School safety drill kit

When incidents occur on school grounds, anything can happen. Regular drills prepare everyone involved, informing them of the steps to take to stay safe, no matter the situation. To protect schools and students, adopt these best practices and strategies to build a customized plan for recognizing threats, reacting appropriately, and remaining secure.

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# Laying the ground work

Successful safety drills can't happen without thorough planning and practice. There are several steps that need to occur before your team is ready to run a drill with students. First and foremost, a command must be established. Decide who will be in charge of planning and executing the drill, as well as assigning someone to manage any issues that may arise, such as checking in on staff or helping confused students figure out where they should go. It's also important to be in communication with local authorities, such as police and fire departments, especially when using technology that connects all needed stakeholders during an emergency. This way, they'll know that there isn't an actual emergency occurring that they would need to respond to, but they are prepared. The plan for the drill itself will vary based on each school and its needs. As you think about your school, its layout, the needs and activities of your student body, and other factors, ask yourself the following questions:

- During an emergency, which areas are safe, and which are particularly vulnerable?

- Depending on the event, would it be safer to remove people from the building or have them stay in place?

- What will indicate if the drill was a success? Is it students following directions? Evacuating the building quickly and calmly? Decide what matters the most to you, and be sure to emphasize the importance of it to your students and staff.

- How much time do you have to react to an actual incident? Will there be enough time for students and staff to get into place? What can you do to improve your response time?

A good way to enforce these roles and provide practice in a noninvasive setting is to hold a practice tabletop drill for with your staff. These can be conducted with less resources and during nonschool hours, which make them a great resource. Tabletop drills are a good first step to take so teams know exactly what to do when they lead students during full-scale drills. It will also help your team identify issues that could arise, such as figuring out the best path for evacuating students with disabilities or special needs. You can learn how to run these types of drills, as well as access other important school safety information, on the Rave Mobile Safety Blog.

When you're ready to run school-wide drills, practice at different times of day. This way, students will know what to do regardless if an incident occurs while they're in the classroom, in the hallways traveling to their next class, in the library, or in the cafeteria eating lunch.

Be sure to alert your staff ahead of time about when the drill will occur. This will ensure that they don't mistake it for a real emergency. It also gives them time to adjust their lesson plans so the drill doesn't disrupt anything important, such as exams or presentations.

Finally, pay attention to what goes right — and what goes wrong — during a drill. Even if the drill was a success, you should still give it another run-through on a later date to ensure that your triumph is consistent. Pinpointing mistakes can also be valuable to you. Errors illustrate where your team needs more practice, or highlights where there may be misinformation or miscommunication among your staff. The best time to address these pain points is immediately after a drill. After all, correcting these problems will be tricky to do during an actual emergency. Your future self will thank you for identifying these weak points and working to fix them soon after they are brought to your attention.

# Communication

Staying in contact with your team before, during and after a safety drill is vital for school administrators. Whether a drill or true emergency, staff members need to know what the incident is and where it is located. They also need to stay informed with continual, real-time updates. While using a school's public address (PA) system can be helpful in some instances (such as informing students and staff in lockdown that the drill has ended and they are free to resume their day), it doesn't provide the same segmented and specialized communication that is necessary during the entire drill. For example, if there was an intruder, you wouldn't want them to hear the announcement over the PA system.

With one push of the Rave Panic Button, all needed stakeholders are notified in an emergency, from school staff to 9-1-1. Implementing this solution helps to streamline emergency response and ensure the right information gets to the right people.

# Plan Ahead

Each state will have its own laws, regulations and requirements for school safety drills. When it comes to deciding which drills to run, consult and adhere to your region's requirements. Regardless of your state's unique procedures and demands, it's a good idea to plot out exactly what will happen during drills, and who will be in charge of each task. Fill out the following drill template  to help you determine how you will run drills, who will be in charge, and what you would like accomplish with each exercise. Be sure to include specific information, such as contact information for local authorities who need to be notified, so that you can use this sheet as a reference guide as the drill actually occurs.

Drill Leader: _____  Date: _____

Team Members:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Local Authorities to Alert:

_____   _____

_____   _____

_____   _____

Goal of Drill:

_____

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Steps for Drill Execution:

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Notes:

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# Take your school's safety to the next level

It's time to rethink what safety can do — driving efficiencies, bolstering performance and helping you deliver a secure and supportive school environment for children to learn. By bringing together the technologies and solutions you need to detect, analyze, communicate and respond, Motorola Solutions is committed to helping you create a safe place to work, learn, and grow.

**Explore more** about how our Panic Button can help.

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