

Partial and Full School Lockdowns

1. Partial Lockdown (Shelter-in-Place)

One of the instructions you may be given in an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released into the atmosphere is to “shelter-in-place.” This partial lockdown is a precaution aimed to keep you safe while remaining indoors.

Shelter-in-place means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire school. If you are told to shelter-in-place, follow the instructions below.

Why You Might Need to Shelter-in-Place

Chemical, biological or radiological contaminants may be released accidentally or intentionally into the environment. Should this occur, information will be provided by local authorities on television and radio stations on how to protect students and staff. Because the information will most likely be provided on television and radio, it is important to keep a TV or radio on, even during the workday. The important thing is for you to follow instructions of local authorities and know what to do if they advise you to shelter-in-place.

How to Shelter-in-Place at School

- Close the school. Activate the school's emergency plan. Follow reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty and staff indoors.
- If there are visitors in the building, provide for their safety by asking them to stay – not leave. When authorities provide directions to shelter-in-place, they want everyone to take those steps immediately, where they are, and not drive or walk outdoors.
- Provide for answering telephone inquiries from concerned parents by having at least one telephone with the school's listed telephone number available in the room selected to provide shelter for the school secretary, or person designated, to answer these calls. This room should also be sealed. There should be a way to communicate among all rooms where people are sheltering-in-place in the school.
- Ideally, provide for a way to make announcements over the school-wide public address system from the room where the top school official takes shelter.
- If children have mobile phones, allow them to use them to call a parent or guardian to let them know that they have been asked to remain in school until further notice, and that they are safe.

- If the school has voicemail or an automated attendant, change the recording to indicate that the school is closed, and that students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.
- Provide directions to close and lock all windows, exterior doors and any other openings to the outside.
- If you are told there is danger of explosion, direct that window blinds or curtains be closed.
- Have employees familiar with your building's mechanical system turn off all fans, heating and air conditioning systems. Some systems automatically provide for exchange of inside air with outside air – these systems, in particular, need to be turned off, sealed or disabled.
- Select interior rooms, above the ground floor (where possible), with the fewest windows or vents. The rooms should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit in. Avoid overcrowding by selecting several rooms if necessary. Classrooms may be used if there are no windows or if the windows are sealed and cannot be opened. Large storage cupboards, utility rooms, meeting rooms and even a gymnasium without exterior windows will work well.
- It is ideal to have a hard-wired telephone in the rooms you select. Call emergency contacts and have the phone available if you need to report a life-threatening condition. Bear in mind that the mobile telephone network may be overwhelmed during an emergency.
- Bring everyone into the room. Shut the door.
- Use anything to hand to seal up all the cracks around doors and any vents into the room – you aim to minimise possible ingress of pollutants.
- Write down the names of everyone in the room, and call your schools' designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you.
- Listen for an official announcement from school officials via the public address system, and stay where you are until you are told all is safe or you are told to evacuate. Local officials may call for evacuation in specific areas at greatest risk in your community.

Local officials on the scene are the best source of information for your particular situation. Following their instructions during and after emergencies regarding sheltering, food, water and clean-up methods is your safest choice. Remember that instructions to shelter-in-place are usually provided for durations of a few hours, not days or weeks. There is little danger that the room in which you are taking shelter will run out of oxygen and you will suffocate.

2. Full Lockdown

You might need to go into full lockdown mode in response to an intruder or if advised of a serious security threat. In this unlikely event most of the above applies, except points around reducing airflow.

In addition, for a Full Lockdown:

- Classroom doors should be locked
- Any windows in doors should be covered (so an intruder cannot see in)
- Lights should be turned off (so the room appears to be unused)
- Mobile telephones should be turned off (or at the very least turned onto silent) as they can give away your position
- Everyone should be as quiet as possible, preferably silent
- You might consider hiding in storage cupboards, behind desks and under tables

Shelter-in-place ('Partial Lockdown') **e.g. Response to a chemical plume**

- Close windows and doors, pull down and close blinds
- Turn off heating, ventilation and air conditioning
- Ideally pre-select rooms with access to a phone
- Access to toilets is a plus
- Large storage cupboards / utility rooms / meeting rooms OK
- Classrooms are OK if windows are sealed
- A gym without exterior windows works well

Full Lockdown **e.g. Response to an intruder**

As left plus:

- Doors to classrooms are closed and locked
- Students are moved to the safest part of the room, away from windows and doors, to the interior walls
- Everyone drops to the floor or out of the line of vision from the door
- Any windows in doors are covered (to prevent an intruder from seeing into the room)
- Classroom lights are turned off
- Mobile phones are turned off

Full/Partial Lockdown Procedures

- Should be tested annually
- Are the opposite of evacuation drills (e.g. fire drills) when everyone vacates the building
- Evacuation, shelter and lockdown procedures all outline the initial actions that should be taken to safeguard pupils and staff, both from internal and external hazards.
- Ensure staff and pupils are clear on the difference and know the different signals



Communication between parents and the school about lockdowns

School lockdown procedures, especially arrangements for communicating with parents, should be routinely shared with parents either by newsletter or via the school website.

In the event of an actual lockdown, whether partial or full, any incident or development should be communicated to parents as soon as is practicable.

Parents should be given enough information about what will happen so that they:

- **Are reassured** that the school understands their concern for their child's welfare, and that it is doing everything possible to ensure his/her safety
- **Do not need to contact the school.** Calling the school could tie up telephone lines that are needed for contacting emergency providers
- **Do not come to the school.** They could interfere with emergency provider's access to the school and may even put themselves and others in danger
- **Wait for the school to contact them** about when it is safe to get their children, and where this will be from

As an example, parents will be told:

'...the school is in a full/partial lockdown situation. During this period the switchboard and entrances will be un-manned, external doors locked and nobody allowed in or out...'

Adapted from

<http://www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/beprepared/schools/emergencies/pages/whenandhowtoshelter-in-placeforschools.aspx>