

*State of Idaho*  
**DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE**

**BRAD LITTLE**  
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State Fire Marshal

**DATE:** July 8, 2020

**MEMO TO:** All School Safety Stakeholders

**FROM:** Knute C. Sandahl, State Fire Marshal

**SUBJECT:** Modification of School Evacuation Drills during COVID-19 Health  
Emergency

It is vital that evacuations drills are conducted to ensure students and faculty remain safe if an emergency were to occur. The current health emergency Idaho is experiencing has resulted in considerable discussion of the requirements for evacuation drills in educational facilities provided in the adopted fire code.

Therefore, the attached document was produced with input from several Idaho experts and others with safety in mind. As the adopting authority of the 2015 edition of the International Fire Code for the State of Idaho, I endorse this modification as a temporary means of carrying out the provisions of the evacuation requirements identified in the fire code. These modifications are reasonable under the circumstances. Once this health emergency stabilizes, requirements for evacuation drills will be re-instated.

Respectfully,



Knute C. Sandahl, State Fire Marshal



## Covid-19 and the Monthly Evacuation/Fire Drill

The need to evacuate a school may be required for a number of reasons. Should an incident require evacuation physical distancing **will not** be a consideration. However, drills and practice are another matter. Continuation of the monthly evacuation/fire drill is critical to a school's effective response capability. Schools are expected to meet the statutory evacuation/fire drill requirements. (one (1) per calendar month and the first within the first ten (10) days of school) However, adaptations to the exercise process may be necessary to help address the current pandemic situation and the need for physical distancing. The following adaptations are authorized **only for the 2020-21 School Year** and are not intended as authorization for ongoing operational change beyond that period.

School Districts and Communities in health **Condition GREEN** Continue with full school drills under their normal protocol.

School Districts and Communities in health **Condition YELLOW** or **Condition RED**: Implement the following adapted process if **ANY** students remain in a school building.

### ***Adapted Evacuation/fire drill procedure.***

The evacuation/fire drill tests three distinct elements; system functionality, student and staff movement and accountability for all persons in a school. Segmenting both the school population and the process will allow for both physical distancing and effective practice.

**System Functionality:** The school fire system should be tested monthly by activating a pull station and allowing the system to sound for 3-5 minutes while verifying the operation of enunciators and strobe lights through-out the building. This should take place without students in the building. Students should not be de-sensitized to the fire alarm by instruction to stay in the building during an equipment test or for any other reason. Activation of a school fire alarm should always result in an evacuation, under the Idaho Standard Command Responses for Schools (ISCRS) or other established school evacuation protocol. This test should be documented including time and date. It will be incumbent on school officials to assure this process takes place monthly.

**Student & Staff Movement:** Student organization and movement from the classroom to the assembly point may be performed on a classroom by classroom basis. This will allow opportunity to assure more consistent physical distancing in the drill process. Teachers should document this process and report to building administration. It will be incumbent on school officials to assure that all classrooms preform this process monthly.

**Accountability:** The process of accounting for all persons in the school, communication and reporting procedures can be reviewed and/or exercised by a school staff when students are not in attendance. This can be accomplished during

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Joint Guidance  
Idaho State Fire Marshal  
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teacher meetings, on work days or during collaboration meetings as determined by the building administrator. It will be incumbent on school officials to assure this process takes place monthly.

**Note:** The monthly evacuation/fire drill will be considered to have been performed only when all three elements are completed and properly documented.

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