

SCHOOL CRISIS PREVENTION & RESPONSE

Policy

It is the policy of the Canaan School District to maintain a safe, orderly, civil and positive learning environment, and to be prepared, in so far as possible, to prevent and respond to unexpected crises quickly and appropriately. While the very unexpected nature of a crisis may make preparation difficult, the Board believes that staff and students should be ready to respond quickly and appropriately to emergency situations.

Definition

Examples of crises include criminal acts, disease epidemic, physical injury or death, presence of intruders on school premises, hazardous materials spills, weather related emergencies, natural disasters or bomb threats.

Administrative Responsibilities

To help prevent the occurrence of some individually caused crises, the Superintendent shall research and share information about educational programs and practices designed to create and sustain a safe learning environment.

The Superintendent is directed to create a school crisis prevention and response plan and administrative procedures that identify how the students, staff should respond to emergency situations, and the role that local emergency service providers will play in crisis preparedness and crisis management. This will include appropriate and effective training; establishment of crisis response teams, both within each building and throughout the supervisory union/district; consultation and cooperation with community agencies, such as police, fire, emergency medical, youth and health authorities; and publication of emergency procedures for such situations as can be imagined.

Generally, the Principal or his/her designee will organize and oversee the planning and operation of the crisis response team and will serve as the incident response team leader, according to the crisis response procedures. The plan will be reviewed annually and routinely practiced during regular drills.

Following a major incident, the crisis response team shall debrief and review the effectiveness of the crisis response and present a report and any recommendations for the future to the superintendent.

Staff Responsibilities

The staff shall follow all guidelines outlined in the crisis response procedures and staff handbook when practicing routine drills and when responding to actually emergency situations.

Student Responsibilities

Students shall follow all guidelines outlined in the crisis response procedures and student handbook when practicing routine drills and when responding to actually emergency situations.

Students suspected of involvement in causing school crises will be held accountable and shall be dealt with in accordance with the school's discipline policy and state/federal law. An incident may also be referred to law enforcement for possible criminal charges or for the school to pursue civil litigation.

Any lost time learning time resulting from response to a school crisis or emergency shall be made up.

Date Warned: 12 August 2002
Date Adopted: 26 August 2002
Legal Reference(s): 16 V.S.A. §1161a(a)(4) (Discipline)
13 V.S.A. § 1604 (Possession of explosive devices)
13 V.S.A. §1612 (Placing a hoax device)
13 V.S.A. §1753 (False alarms and reports)
School Crisis Response Procedures Guide
Cross Reference: Risk Management (E4)
Student Conduct and Discipline (F1)
Search and Seizure (F3)
Weapons (F21)

Administrative Guidelines

PROCEDURES FOR BOMB THREATS

Anticipating a Bomb Threat

1. **Line of authority.** The Principal of the Canaan Schools is designated as the person in charge of administering this policy. If the Principal so decides, he/she may designate a named administrator to serve in his/her stead or absence. Wherever "Principal" appears in this policy, it refers either to the Principal or the designated administrator.

2. **Coordination of school and public safety agencies.** The Principal shall establish and maintain ongoing communication and coordination among school staff and public safety authorities for purposes of planning for, training for, and responding to any bomb threat. For this purpose, the Principal shall establish a bomb threat response team to consist of the Principal, the Superintendent, and persons representing teachers, custodians, office staff, transportation providers, and parents. The Principal shall request participation on this team by persons representing local law enforcement and fire/rescue agencies. The Principal shall convene this group to:
 - A. review this policy and any associated protocols prior to the first student attendance day each school year;
 - B. coordinate and oversee response efforts whenever a bomb threat has been made;
 - C. review implementation of this policy after any bomb threat is resolved.

3. **Training**
 - A. Telephone answerers. The Principal shall see that all staff whose regular duties include answering incoming telephone calls are trained in the protocol to be used when confronted by a telephone bomb threat.
 - B. All staff. The Principal shall see that all staff are trained regarding their duties in the event of a bomb threat, including proper evacuation procedures, assuring the safety of students and staff, noting the absence of any students, conducting quick but complete visual scans of their workplace, and attendant reporting responsibilities.
 - C. Any staff participating in a search. The Principal shall see that any staff volunteering to participate in a search for explosive devices are first trained by appropriate public safety personnel regarding the voluntary nature of their participation, the potential danger, and the proper sequence and technique involved.
 - D. Students. The Principal shall see that all students are instructed about proper conduct during a bomb threat, the potential criminal and civil penalties as well as school discipline associated with making a bomb threat, and the disruption and costs to the educational process stemming from a bomb threat.

4. **Drills.** The Principal shall conduct no fewer than one (1) bomb threat drills for the bomb threat response team and staff during the course of the school year, to consist of a review of the procedures to be followed in the event of a bomb threat.

5. **Pre-arranged signal.** The Principal shall establish a signal for announcing a bomb threat and inform staff what it is.

6. **Precautions:**

- A. Telephone service options. The Principal shall see that at least main office telephone service includes caller ID or other call-tracing capacity and that each phone station is supplied with a Crisis Response Guide.
- B. Locked areas. School personnel with access to lockable work spaces shall lock them when not in use.
- C. Trash. The Principal shall direct school personnel not to permit the accumulation of trash, boxes, and other articles inside or next to the school building.
- D. Parking. The Principal shall, to the extent possible, ensure that parking spaces are not located close to the school building. There shall be stringent enforcement of parking restrictions relative to fire lanes, loading docks and handicapped parking spaces.
- E. Labeling building areas. The Principal shall ensure that different areas of the building are assigned specific labels, to be posted in plain sight and to be communicated to school and public safety authorities.
- F. Evacuation gathering places. The Principal shall designate specific locations to which all students and staff shall go away from heavily traveled roadways if an evacuation of the school is ordered.

- 7. **Substitutes.** The Principal shall see that substitute personnel are aware of this policy and the obligations of staff during a bomb threat.

Reacting to a Bomb Threat

1. **Upon receiving threat.** All personnel who answer telephone calls from outside sources shall be provided a Crisis Response Guide, to be placed within easy reach of their telephone, on which is printed information to ask for and information to listen for in the event a caller makes a bomb threat. Whoever receives the call shall attempt to transfer it to the Principal, or failing that, ask the caller as many of the questions on the Guide as he/she can, carefully noting all wording and other information.

2. **Notification**

- A. To the Principal. A person receiving a bomb threat by telephone or other means or who finds a suspicious device on school property shall inform the Principal immediately.
- B. By the Principal. Upon learning of the bomb threat, the Principal shall alert local public safety agencies, utility companies and the Superintendent.

3. **Assessment.** Upon learning of the bomb threat, the Principal, in consultation with public safety officials and the Superintendent if time permits, shall:

- A. Evaluate the credibility of the threat;
- B. Decide whether to direct a search of the building; and
- C. If so, decide whether the search should be conducted while the building is occupied or after it has been evacuated.

In so doing, the Principal shall resolve all doubts in favor of finding the threat credible, a search necessary, and prior evacuation necessary.

4. **Activating the team.** After deciding which course of action to follow, the Principal shall activate the bomb threat response team.

5. **Evacuation**

- A. To what extent. The Principal, in consultation with the bomb threat response team, shall decide on the extent to which the building will be evacuated. The decision shall be either:
 - i. To assemble all building occupants in one location, such as the gymnasium;
 - ii. To evacuate just a portion of the building;
 - iii. To evacuate the entire building to a particular site or sites no less than 300' from the building; or
 - iv. To dismiss students and/or staff for the balance of the day.
- B. Signaling. If the Principal decides the building should be evacuated, he/she shall inform the staff immediately.
- C. Adjusting evacuation route. The Principal shall direct personnel to adjust their usual evacuation route to avoid any suspected location of an explosive device.
- D. Staff obligations. In the event of an evacuation, staff shall:
 - i. Visually scan their workplace and any other common areas they have been assigned for any thing or person out of the ordinary. If there is such an object, staff should not touch it but should report its presence to the Principal.
 - ii. Make sure upon leaving that windows and doors are open.
 - iii. Make sure any students in their charge are guided to safety, making arrangements that students with disabilities are followed, and remain with students in their charge; and
 - iv. Take an attendance book with them, taking attendance once the evacuation is accomplished and noting the absence of any students normally in their charge and report their names to the Principal.
- E. Student conduct. All students shall assist staff by obeying all directions and maintaining an orderly and quiet demeanor.
- F. Utilities
 - i. Fuel. The Principal shall direct appropriate personnel to turn off gas and other fuel lines at intake.
 - ii. Electricity. The Principal shall decide whether electric power to the building should be turned off.
 - iii. Telephones. The Principal shall decide whether to leave service intact, to shut down service, or to decide during the threat.
- G. Transportation and traffic. The Principal shall make sure a safe and efficient traffic pattern is in place to enable students to depart without impeding access and parking for public safety vehicles.

6. **Search**

- A. To what extent. The Principal, in consultation with the bomb threat response team, shall decide on the extent to which the building will be searched. The decision shall be either:
 - i. Not to conduct a search;
 - ii. To search specific portions of the building; or
 - iii. To search the entire building and grounds.
- B. Nature of search. The Principal, in consultation with the bomb threat response team, shall decide whether a search will be conducted overtly, covertly, or by means of a special team.
- C. Method. A search shall be conducted in accordance with techniques and training provided by public safety personnel. Toward that end, the Principal shall arrange with public safety officials for the periodic training of search personnel.

D. Participants

- i. **STAFF.** Each staff member shall, upon request, conduct a visual scan of his/her workplace, noting any thing or person out of the ordinary, and shall report any findings to the Principal.
 - ii. **STUDENTS.** Under no circumstances will a student be permitted to participate in a search.
 - iii. **VOLUNTEERS.** No school personnel may be required, beyond what is provided in this policy, to participate in a search for an explosive device. Any school personnel volunteering to participate in a search for an explosive device shall first be trained with respect to the dangers involved, precautions to observe, and the techniques to follow.
- E. **Object found.** If any suspicious object is actually discovered, no school personnel should touch it. Instead, the individual discovering the object should report it immediately to the Principal, who shall immediately report it to the public safety official in charge.
- F. **Explosion.** If there is an explosion, the Principal shall yield to the authority and protocols of public safety authorities.

After a Bomb Threat

1. **Investigation.** The Principal, and all other school personnel, shall cooperate with law enforcement personnel involved in investigating a bomb threat. School personnel shall not conduct any investigation independently but rather in conjunction with law enforcement.
2. **Discipline.** Any student involved in the making of a bomb threat, in addition to any penalty imposed by law, shall be subject to disciplinary action by the school, up to and including expulsion subject to the school's student discipline policy.
3. **Civil liability.** The Canaan School District reserves the right to bring suit against anyone responsible for a bomb threat and to seek restitution and other damages permitted by law.
4. **Lost time.** Any school time lost as a result of a bomb threat shall be made up on days and at times determined by the School Board.
5. **Counseling.** The Principal, in consultation with appropriate guidance and other personnel, shall assess the effect of the bomb threat on students as a whole and on any individual students who come to his/her attention, to determine if and what type of counseling would be appropriate.
6. **Evaluation.** Within one week following the conclusion of the school's response to a bomb threat, the Principal shall convene the bomb threat response team to evaluate how well the school responded, how consistent its response was with policy, how consistent its response was with its implementation procedures, and whether any changes to the provisions of this policy or implementation procedures are recommended as a result.

Communicating with the Public

1. **About the policy.** All school handbooks, those for faculty, staff, parents and students, shall contain the following provision:

The Canaan School District has adopted a comprehensive policy on what to do in the event of a bomb threat. You may obtain a copy of the complete policy by requesting one from the Principal's office.

While we intend to respect the legitimate privacy interests of all persons, it is lawful for school authorities within constitutional boundaries to conduct reasonable examination of personal property on school grounds, including but not limited to lockers, desks, backpacks, book bags, and automobiles. In the event of a bomb threat, we may have to search such items in order to assure the safety and protection of people and property.

We also want all members of the school community to know that any academic time lost as a result of a bomb threat will be rescheduled, either on a weekend, vacation day or following what would otherwise be the end of the school year.

In addition, under state law, the making of a bomb threat is a very serious criminal offense, punishable for even a first offense by as much as 2 years in prison and a \$5,000 fine. The making of such a threat may also lead to civil liability.

2. **About a bomb threat.**

- A. Parents. In the event of a bomb threat, the Principal shall make sure that notice is provided all parents of students within 24 hours. If school is dismissed as a result of a bomb threat, the Principal shall implement general school procedures for notification of parents.
- B. Media. Any school personnel approached about a bomb threat by a representative of the media shall refer that representative to the Superintendent, Principal or their designee. That official shall provide the representative with a formal statement regarding the status of the threat. If approached during the threat, the official shall ask the representative to wait for a time when circumstances legitimately permit the official to take a few moments to speak with him/her. Any statement given shall be calm and informative without divulging personally identifiable information about students and shall emphasize the efforts made or under way to protect the safety of students and staff.
- C. Community generally. Depending upon the circumstances the District may want to communicate with the general community either in writing or by convening a meeting.