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September 5, 2023

Dear Prairie Spirit families:

Re: Emergency school plans

Student and staff safety and security are a priority in Prairie Spirit School Division. To respond effectively to any school crisis, Prairie Spirit schools have emergency response and preparedness procedures to mitigate the risk of harm to our students and staff during an emergency. We ask that you review these plans and talk about them with your children. This will support our work in ensuring our school are safe, caring, and healthy learning spaces for your children.

Our emergency response procedures are practiced in each school throughout the school year to help prepare students and staff for possible emergencies. Not only do we practice our drills, but we also engage in discussions with students about the importance of practice and to provide students with opportunities to ask questions or share worries and concerns. By preparing and practicing, we can alleviate fears and quickly and effectively respond to an emergency.

In an emergency, the school administration may respond with an evacuation, hold and secure, or lockdown, depending on the nature of the situation.

- An **evacuation** requires all students and staff to leave the building in a safe and timely manner to avoid an environmental risk such as fire or a water main break.
 - Depending on the situation, students and staff may remain at a predetermined muster point until the school is declared safe to re-enter or staff may move students to a predetermined off-campus location (e.g., another school, town hall, church, etc.).
 - Each school has an identified alternate evacuation location outlined in its Emergency Response Preparedness Plan.
- A **hold and secure** is initiated when there is a serious emergency or threat occurring **outside** the school. This may include a physical threat or an environmental emergency (e.g., severe weather event, chemical spill, etc.).
 - During a hold and secure, all students and staff are moved inside the school building and all exterior doors are locked.
 - Access to the building is restricted to emergency supports and those persons deemed essential.

- Students and staff continue with normal activities inside the building.
- An “all clear” will be made by administration in consultation with the RCMP or local police service.
- A **lockdown** is initiated when a threat is **inside**, or in the direct vicinity, of the school building. The risk is deemed significant and immediate, and staff and students must respond very quickly.
 - All classrooms and learning spaces are secured.
 - Only law enforcement is permitted access to the building until the lockdown is lifted.
 - The decision to lift a lockdown is made by the RCMP or local police service.

As caregivers, your instinct in an emergency will be to safeguard your children. Please trust that we have implemented protocols to keep your child(ren) safe. Going to the school during a hold and secure or lockdown may jeopardize your safety and/or the safety of others.

Information will be provided through the school division’s communication channels as soon as it is possible and safe to do so. Information will be provided in consultation with our police and emergency partners.

During an emergency, phone systems need to remain available for the handling of the emergency. Please do not call the school and do not call your child’s cell phone. Cell phones are collected and turned off during an emergency as a safety measure.

Students may need extra support after a lockdown or a hold and secure situation. Prairie Spirit School Division has a strong student services team available to provide counselling and other supports as needed.

We encourage you to have conversations with your child(ren) regarding safety. If you have questions regarding school emergency planning, please contact the school administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'PMB', with a horizontal line underneath.

Peggy Mattila-Bains
Learning Superintendent, Caring, Healthy and Safe Schools