

An NSPRA Weather-Related Crisis Communication Resource

Safety Planning and Communication Basics

Safety points to consider in a storm:

Storms are unpredictable at times. You may not have warning! Be ready with a plan and always keep an eye on the weather. Some key points to consider include:

- Safety of all students and staff is the utmost priority.
- Know what safe cover is (not hallways or gyms) and where safe cover can be found in your school.
- Have safety procedures practiced and ready. There is NO EXCUSE for not having practiced proper plans.
- Communicate very quickly on Facebook, Twitter, phone messaging systems, websites (PTA if your website is down), e-mails, text messages (use a variety of media). Know what you will do if you do not have power or phone lines.
- Keep kids in safe places even if it is dismissal time. Tell parents in advance this is how it will be (parents can come in and be safe; not drive children out into a storm). Have a traffic plan. Have a place where you go if you get lost. The decision to delay the release of students as a safety measure must be thought through before hand.
- Know what you will do after a storm.
- Informed parents are your greatest ally in such situations, both in communicating and in volunteering during emergencies.

Communication Basics:

- Have a full menu of communication tools available to you.
- Every second counts; ask yourself – what would a parent want to know and when? The better error is to over-communicate.
- Communicate often if the situation keeps changing. Be calm, prepared and factual. Lead with “all students are safe...”
- BE “heroic” in your efforts to keep all children safe. Your district must be seen as the hero, not the victim or the villain.

- Have detailed plans written out; have phone numbers ready in several places, keep your cell phone(s) charged.
- Say to the media, “Here is what I can tell you, here is what we know at this time ...” and have messages ready. Tell the media you need their help to keep children safe by getting these messages to parents.

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