

# communicating in a CRISIS

How we prevent,  
prepare for,  
respond to and  
recover from an  
emergency

Iredell-Statesville Schools



In a perfect world, bad things wouldn't happen. Unfortunately, our world isn't perfect, and bad things do happen. In Iredell-Statesville Schools, our administrators, faculty, and staff dedicate many hours to prepare for these instances.

The best way to deal with a crisis is to avoid one completely. Iredell-Statesville Schools has a number of measures in place to prevent crisis situations from occurring, however, many emergencies are simply unavoidable. As parents, we want you to take comfort in knowing I-SS is prepared to effectively handle these situations.

By taking a proactive approach to crisis management, we can assure parents that the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff is a top priority. Our district follows a four-step crisis management model based on the recommendation of the U.S. Department of Education, as well as the National Incident Management System (NIMS), a division of the Federal Emergency Management System (FEMA) of the Department of Homeland Security.

Iredell-Statesville Schools recognizes the unpredictability of an emergency situation. We know these situations can impact a few or all of our students and staff members. We have a plan. We'll be ready.



# Parents

## HOW CAN PARENTS PREVENT EMERGENCY SITUATIONS?

- Talk to your child about school safety and good citizenship
- Report suspicious activities or other causes for concern to your school
- Volunteer in your school – offer to serve on the HSOC committee

## HOW CAN PARENTS PREPARE?

- Keep your contact information updated with your school, including emergency contact phone numbers and email addresses
- Visit your school and become involved in parent organizations at your school
- Bookmark the district website and your child's school website and become familiar with the parent sections
- Read district and school publications sent home with your child

## WHAT SHOULD PARENTS DO DURING AN EMERGENCY?

- Keep your phone nearby.
- Visit the district website – [www.iss.k12.nc.us](http://www.iss.k12.nc.us)
- Check your email (if you have given this as a contact source)
- Tune to your TV or radio station for alerts
- Do NOT come to the school or evacuation location unless instructed by school or emergency officials to do so
- Do NOT call the school or district offices. We understand your fears and concerns, but it is essential the telephone system is available for ongoing emergency communication

# 1. PREVENT

Our goal is to identify potential emergencies and stop them before they occur. Iredell-Statesville Schools implements a number of prevention strategies:

## SCHOOL BOARD POLICY

Numerous policies addressing school safety, including a student/parent handbook and code of conduct

- Inclement weather guidelines and procedures
- Funds designated especially for providing increased and enhanced safety and security measures in schools

## SAFETY INSPECTIONS

- Rigorous inspections of schools by local and state agencies
- Daily bus inspections by school bus drivers
- Monthly school bus maintenance inspections performed by mechanics

## SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICERS (SRO)

SROs are uniformed police officers and sheriff's deputies who patrol our schools on a regular basis. Each middle school and high school in I-SS has a full-time SRO on staff to participate in the development of school safety plans, address safety concerns, and regularly monitor the school.

## DRILLS

From fire drills to lock-down drills, our schools regularly practice a number of emergency drills. Data from these drills is reviewed by each school's health, safe, orderly, caring (HSOC) committee to identify strengths and expose weaknesses that need to be addressed.

## VIGILANCE

In addition to maintaining an awareness of local and national events that could affect the safety of our staff and students, I-SS take a number of precautionary measures to ensure staff and student safety:

- Visitors have limited access to school buildings; all visitors must check in at the school office and receive proper visitor identification
- Surveillance cameras in a number of schools
- All school buses are equipped with digital video recorders
- Bus drivers carry 'emergency only' cell phones

## 2. PREPARE

The best way to deal with a crisis when it occurs is to be prepared.

In I-SS we have crisis plans in place to help us handle a variety of emergencies- from a natural disaster to safety and security breaches in schools.

Created by the school's HSOC committee, each school has a safety plan in place. Covering an array of topics, each plan is school-specific and is updated on a regular basis. The plan includes protocols for:

- Transportation issues/accidents
- Hazardous materials
- Crime & violence
- Natural disasters, and others
- Nuclear emergencies (McGuire Nuclear Station)
- Public health concerns
- Severe weather
- Medical emergencies
- Fires

### 3. RESPOND



We understand one of the key priorities in handling any emergency situation is ensuring the lines of communication remain open. We want to respond as effectively and efficiently as possible, so each school has an emergency response plan that is regularly reviewed with staff.

The deputy superintendent of operations, communications director, school principal, and other emergency management officials (including the school SRO, law enforcement officials, and others) determine how the district responds to an emergency. As in any situation, all district decisions are driven by the best interests of our students and employees.

To ensure an accurate and consistent flow of information, the communication process is managed by the district's communication director. Information is relayed to parents and community members through a variety of methods including:

- Connect-ED messages
- Website updates
- Letters
- Media broadcasts

## 4. RECOVER



We want to ensure that we are able to quickly recover from a crisis situation. Recovery strategies are dependent upon each emergency situation, but might include:

- Additional onsite counseling and support for students and staff
- Increased security and support staff at affected locations
- Set-up of relocation centers for displaced schools (with recovery services such as counseling and security provided, if necessary)
- Referrals to community agencies for additional support
- Debriefing sessions with staff, emergency officials, media, and parents to evaluate management of the crisis
- Amendments to current safety plans and prevention measures, if needed
- Continued communication to parents, staff, and community members about recovery efforts

Igniting A  
for *Passion*  
Learning

For more information, visit [www.iss.k12.nc.us](http://www.iss.k12.nc.us) › about us › emergency information.