



Threat to School Safety: Shelter in Place

#400.33

Adopted:	July 2012
Last Reviewed/Revised:	September 23, 2025
Responsibility:	Superintendent of Education
Next Scheduled Review:	September 2029

PURPOSE:

The Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board ("the Board") recognizes the importance of emergency planning and its responsibility to provide immediate care and assistance to students and staff during emergency situations, to mitigate the impact of the emergency, control the situation and resume normal operations as soon as possible. The purpose of this administrative procedure is to establish consistency across the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board regarding school response when a Shelter in Place is initiated.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE:

The Board is committed to enacting a measured response to emergencies with the foremost commitment to preserving the life and the safety of all staff, students and volunteers, as well as protecting property, and restoring operations as quickly as possible. This administrative procedure applies to all Board staff and sets out their obligation to support the implementation of Shelter in Place procedures.

REFERENCES:

- Education Act
- Ontario Regulation 298
- Board Policy 400.04 – Emergency Preparedness and Response
- Board Emergency Response Manual
- School Emergency Response Manual
- Ontario Ministry of Education: "Guidelines for Developing and Maintaining Lockdown Procedures for Elementary and Secondary Schools in Ontario" – June 25, 2009

FORMS:

- N/A

APPENDICES:

- N/A

DEFINITIONS:

Shelter in Place: is a safety procedure implemented in schools during certain emergency situations when it is safer for students and staff to remain indoors rather than evacuating the building. This procedure is typically initiated in response to an external threat such as:

- environmental hazards
- extreme weather conditions



- local threats that do not immediately involve intruders or acts of violence
- chemical spill or gas leak in the neighbourhood

These incidents require prudent action but do not require the implementation of Hold and Secure or Lockdown Procedures.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

1.0 Responsibilities

All school staff shall follow this administrative procedure adhering to the specific direction for principals/vice-principals, teachers and support staff.

- 1.1 **Principal** - is responsible for the overall safety of staff and students and for ensuring that all staff and students are aware of the procedures involved in a Shelter in Place response. The principal/supervisor will ensure one Shelter in Place drill is conducted each year.
- 1.2 **Staff** - are responsible for the safety and well-being of students and will understand and efficiently implement all parts of the Shelter in Place procedures.
- 1.3 **Students** - have a responsibility to be familiar with the Shelter in Place procedures and to respond quickly to the staff during a crisis situation.
- 1.4 **Police** - are responsible for supporting the safety of students and staff in schools.
- 1.5 **Parents/Guardians** - are responsible for reinforcing with their children their responsibility to follow directions during a crisis at school.

2.0 Mandatory Requirements

- 2.1 All publicly funded school boards in Ontario must establish a Policy to ensure the development and implementation of comprehensive individual school emergency response plans. This includes the mandate that school plans have procedures for Shelter in Place.
- 2.2 A minimum of one Shelter in Place drill should be performed each school year.

3.0 Initiating a Shelter in Place

- 3.1 A Shelter in Place response is initiated in heightened risk situations (i.e., external environmental threat).
- 3.2 In most instances, the school will be contacted by the Police and/or other agencies, such as fire services, having jurisdiction over the incident. They are responsible for managing the crisis and will determine if a Shelter in Place response is required.
- 3.3 In the event the school receives information of a serious nature from other sources, the principal should call the Police to determine whether the school falls within the parameters of the Shelter in Place response.
- 3.4 The principal will call 911 when necessary. Typically, this will not be necessary, as the Shelter in Place response is most often initiated by Police/Emergency Services.
- 3.5 Ensure both a telephone line and a cell phone line connection are kept open for incoming communication from Police/Emergency Services and/or Board personnel.
- 3.6 The principal will contact the Superintendent and Communications Services.
- 3.7 The principal will gather and use the Emergency Measures Supply Kit.

4.0 Communication During a Shelter in Place

- 4.1 The use of proper terminology regarding school emergency procedures is very important. All schools have been outfitted with an Emergency Broadcast System that is used to inform the school when a Shelter in Place is initiated.
- 4.2 All school emergency plans will clearly explain when and why the term Shelter in Place will be used.



- 4.3 The announcement to initiate the procedure will be made in plain, clear language. Secret codes or passwords to announce a lockdown will not be used. The following is the terminology preprogrammed into the Emergency Broadcast System and is used in every school in the district:
"Attention all occupants, this facility is in a Shelter in Place situation, all staff begin Shelter in Place protocols now"
- 4.4 Communication must be done in a way to inform all occupants, including staff, students, contractors, visitors (tenants, permit holders, daycare centres, etc.) that a Shelter in Place response has been initiated.
- 4.5 The all-clear message to end the Shelter in Place is performed through the PA by school administration.
- 4.6 The principal will contact the Superintendent and Communication Services.

5.0 Securing Persons

- 5.1 All students/staff outside of school buildings and in portables should proceed indoors promptly.
- 5.2 Normal operations may continue inside the school, however all outdoor activities are cancelled.
- 5.3 Shelter in Place signs are posted on exterior doors.
- 5.4 Window and window coverings are closed.
- 5.5 Exterior doors should be secured and monitored by staff to monitor entry of people and to prohibit anyone from leaving.
- 5.6 Custodians ensure that air exchange systems (fans, exhausts, and air conditioners, etc.) are turned off when applicable.
- 5.7 In specific extreme cases, staff and students may need to be moved to the interior of the building away from perimeter walls, doors and windows.
- 5.8 Attendance should be taken in each room (including all classrooms, cafeterias, gyms, hallways, libraries, offices, etc.) noting those who are absent or unaccounted for.
- 5.9 Non-teaching staff should report to a previously designated location (Main office, Library, etc.)
- 5.10 Adults should remain calm and reassure students that the situation is under control. Students should be aware that Shelter in Place response may be in effect for an extensive period of time.
- 5.11 Cell phones and electronic devices should be turned off.
- 5.12 No calls for information should be made to the office. Updates will be provided.
- 5.13 Contact the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's Student Transportation Services to advise if Shelter in Place response may pose delays or other complications.
- 5.14 Prepare a message for the school answering system indicating that a Shelter in Place response is in effect at the school.

6.0 School Bus Considerations

- 6.1 Notify the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's Student Transportation Services that a Shelter in Place response has been initiated at your school. Student Transportation Services will provide direction.
- 6.2 If buses are arriving with students at the school:
 - 6.2.1 Designate the safest access to the building (i.e., entry furthest from the danger, as the drop off point).
 - 6.2.2 Have staff escort students from the bus to the school/portables.
- 6.3 If buses are redirected to an alternate drop-off site:
 - 6.3.1 Use bus lists to record the names of students who have been relocated.
 - 6.3.2 Notify parents/caregivers to collect students at the alternate site.
- 6.4 If students can be safely dismissed from the school:
 - 6.4.1 Have staff escort students to buses using the exit furthest from danger.
 - 6.4.2 Use bus lists to record the names of students who are placed on buses.
 - 6.4.3 Have staff remain on site until all students have departed by bus or have been collected by parents.



- 6.5 If students cannot be safely dismissed from the school:
 - 6.5.1 Retain students pending instructions from Police and Emergency Services, Superintendent, Manager of Communications and Community Relations, and Student Transportation Services.
- 6.6 School Buses in Transit
 - 6.6.1 If a school bus approaches a designated drop-off site where Emergency Services are restricting access, or Student Transportation Services Dispatcher has advised of an emergency situation, the driver will follow established Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's Student Transportation protocols.

7.0 Lifting The Shelter in Place Response

- 7.1 When the Principal receives information from Police or other Emergency Services that the Shelter in Place response may be lifted (i.e. the danger has passed), the principal will:
 - 7.1.1 Make a PA announcement stating, *"The Shelter in Place has been lifted."*
 - 7.1.2 Communicate specific instructions as required e.g. revised bus schedules, dismissal procedures, etc.
 - 7.1.3 If the Principal has invoked the Shelter in Place response independent of Police or other Emergency Services, confirm with the local Police that the Shelter in Place response may be lifted.

8.0 Follow-Up

- 8.1 In consultation with the Brant Haldimand Norfolk Catholic District School Board's Manager of Communications and Community Relations the principal will:
 - Update the school answering system message.
 - Prepare a scripted response to be given to callers.
 - Amend the auto-attendant message if needed.
 - Prepare a letter for the school community to communicate the details of the incident and response.
- 8.2 Debrief the incident and response with staff.
- 8.3 Debrief the incident and response with students as needed.

9.0 Communication with Parents/Guardians/Community

9.1 General

- 9.1.1 School Principals will communicate general information regarding school emergency measures.
- 9.1.2 Schools will provide regular emergency procedure reminders for parents including the emergency off-site location for staff and students should the need arise to relocate students in an emergency.
- 9.1.3 Parents are encouraged to ensure their contact information at the school is up to date so they can easily be reached by staff in the event of an emergency.

9.2 During a Shelter in Place

- 9.2.1 Depending upon the circumstances, it is not always possible to provide instant public notification of a Lockdown, Hold & Secure or Shelter in Place situation at a school. While all efforts will be made to provide timely information regarding any ongoing emergency to parents/guardians (including using social media), the primary concern of the school board in such instances is to ensure the safety and security of students, staff and property.
- 9.2.2 Parents and guardians must not contact their children in the school via cell phone.



- 9.2.3 Communication Services will facilitate all communication during lockdowns, hold and secure, and Shelter in Place situations, in consultation with Police Services.
- 9.2.4 Communication Services will provide all communication and information sharing.
- 9.2.5 Regular updates will be provided if a secure school situation is prolonged.
- 9.2.6 The Board and/or school will send home communication regarding the incident at the earliest possible opportunity.
- 9.2.7 Police Services may determine that a parent, guardian or caregiver staging area needs to be established where parents, guardians or caregivers can go to learn the most up-to-date information about the situation at the school.