

# **DISTRICT-WIDE SCHOOL SAFETY PLAN**

Mechanicville City School District

2020-2021 School Year

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## **Introduction**

Emergencies and violent incidents in school districts are critical issues that must be addressed in an expeditious and effective manner. Districts are required to develop a district-wide school safety plan (district plan) designed to prevent or minimize the effects of serious violent incidents and emergencies and to facilitate the coordination of the district with local and county resources in the event of such incidents or emergencies. The district plan is responsive to the needs of all schools within the district and is consistent with the more detailed emergency response plans required at the school building level. Districts stand at risk from a wide variety of acts of violence, natural, and manmade disasters. To address these threats, the State of New York has enacted the Safe Schools against Violence in Education (SAVE) law. Project SAVE is a comprehensive planning effort that addresses prevention, response, and recovery with respect to a variety of emergencies in each school district and its schools.

The Mechanicville City School District supports the SAVE Legislation and intends to facilitate the planning process. The Superintendent of Schools encourages and advocates on-going district-wide cooperation and support of Project SAVE.

## **Section I: General Considerations and Planning Guidelines**

### Purpose

The Mechanicville City School District's district plan was developed pursuant to Commissioner's Regulation 155.17. At the direction of the Mechanicville City School District Board of Education, the Superintendent of the Mechanicville City School District appointed a district-wide school safety team and charged it with the development and maintenance of the district plan.

### Identification of Chief Emergency Officer

The Mechanicville City School District designates the Business Manager, Jodi A. Birch, whose duties shall include, but not be limited to:

- Coordination of the communication between school staff, law enforcement, and other first responders;
- Lead the efforts of the district-wide school safety team in the completion and yearly update by September 1st, of the district plan and the coordination of the district plan with the building-level emergency response plan (building plan);
- Ensure staff understanding of the district-wide school safety plan;
- Ensure the completion of the building plans for each school building and yearly update by September 1st;
- Assist in the selection of security related technology and development of policies for the use of such technology;
- Coordinate appropriate safety, security, and emergency training for district and school staff, including annual required training in the emergency response plan by September 15th; and
- Ensure the conduct of required evacuation and lock-down drills in all district buildings as required by Education Law section 807.

Identification of School Teams

The Mechanicville City School District has created a district-wide school safety team appointed by the board of education consisting of, but not limited to, representatives of the school board, teacher, administrator, and parent organizations, school safety personnel and other school personnel, including bus drivers and monitors. The members of the team by title are as follows:

- Superintendent
- Business Manager
- Elementary School Principal
- Elementary School Teacher
- Elementary School Teacher
- Junior/Senior High School Principal
- Junior High School Teacher
- Junior High School Teacher
- Assistant Superintendent, STEAM and Innovation
- High School Teacher
- School Board Member (Chair)
- School Board Member
- Safety Resource Officer
- BOCES Safety Specialist
- PTA/PTO Representative
- PTA/PTO Representative
- Transportation Supervisor/Bus Driver
- Facilities Director

Concept of Operations

The district plan is directly linked to the individual building plans for each school building. Protocols reflected in the district plan guide the development and implementation of the individual building plans.

In the event of an emergency or violent incident, the initial response to all emergencies at an individual building is by the building-level emergency response team. Upon the activation of the building-level emergency response team, the Superintendent of Schools or their designee is notified and, where appropriate, local emergency officials are notified. Efforts may be supplemented by County and State resources through existing protocols.

Plan review and public comment

This plan shall be reviewed and maintained by the Mechanicville City School District district-wide school safety team and reviewed on an annual basis on or before September 1st of each year. This plan is posted to the district’s webpage. There is no need to have a copy in the Business Office.

Pursuant to Commissioner’s Regulation 155.17 (e) (3), this plan was made available for public comment 30 days prior to its adoption. The district plan is adopted by the Board of Education after one public

hearing that provides for the participation of school personnel, parents, students and any other interested parties.

While linked to the district plan, the building plan shall be confidential and shall not be subject to disclosure under Article 6 of the Public Officers Law or any other provision of law, in accordance with Education Law Section 2801-a. The building plan shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed except to authorized department or school staff and law enforcement officers.

The district plan and any amendments are submitted to the New York State Education Department within 30 days of adoption by posting this public plan on the district’s website. The building plan is supplied to law enforcement agencies in Saratoga County and the NYS State Police within 30 days of adoption.

## **Section II: General Emergency Response Planning**

The district plan provides the framework for the building plan. The purpose of a uniform plan is to ensure district-wide continuity for emergency responses. These general emergency responses are used to assist school employees, students, parents and emergency responders learn one system that can be used in the Mechanicville City School District.

Identification of sites of potential emergency, including:

- The district-wide school safety team in conjunction with local officials has identified areas outside of school property that may impact a district facility during an emergency. Factors that were considered included population, presence of hazardous materials, and potential for emergency based on national trends and proximity to district property.
- A list of areas has been identified as having the potential to impact within the district. This list has been created for reference and awareness. The list is not all-inclusive for every emergency. However, these areas have been identified as having the most probable impact on district facilities or district boundaries should they have or create an emergency. A list of potential community-based hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building plan.
- The district- wide school safety team has recognized that there are many factors that could cause an emergency within our school building. There are also factors that need to be considered when responding to an emergency. A list of potential internal and external hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building plans.

The district has developed multi-hazard response guides. These guidelines are located in the building plan and are in Incident Command System (ICS) format. Plans for taking the following actions in response to an emergency where appropriate include, but are not limited to:

- Initial Actions
- Command Post Location (primary and secondary)
- **Shelter in Place:** Used to shelter students/staff inside the school
- Severe Weather
- Bomb Threat
- HazMat Incident
- **Hold-In Place:** Limits student/staff movement while dealing with short term emergencies

- **Evacuation:** Used to evacuate students/staff from the school
- Before, during and after school hours, including security during evacuation and evacuation routes
- Evacuation/Relocation Sites (internal and external)
- **Lockout:** Used to secure school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an imminent concern outside of the school
- **Lockdown:** Used to secure school buildings and grounds during incidents that pose an immediate threat of violence in or around the school.
- School Cancellation
- Early Dismissal

Emergencies include, but are not limited to:

Air Pollution	Earthquake	Heating System Failure	Natural Gas Leak
Anthrax/Biological	Elec. System Failure	Hostage Situation	Radiological
Aviation Crash	Energy Supply Loss	Intruder Situation	Roof Leak/Failure
Bldg. Structural Failure	Epidemic	Loss of Building	School Bus Accident
Bomb Threat	Explosion	Loss of Buses	Severe Weather
Civil Disturbance	Fire Alarm Evacuation	Mass Casualty	Threats of Violence
Crimes Against People	Flood	Medical Emergency	Water Emergency

The district has identified various district resources that may be available for use during an emergency, including the identification of personnel, equipment and shelters.

Using ICS the district has identified the school officials authorized to make decisions during an emergency. Through ICS, the procedures to coordinate the use of school district resources and manpower during emergencies, including the identification of the officials authorized to make decisions and of the staff members assigned to provide assistance during emergencies are clearly defined. ICS also identifies the staff members and their backups assigned to provide assistance during emergencies.

The district has policies and procedures for annual multi-hazard school safety training for staff and students, including the strategies for implementing training related to multi-hazards. By October 1 of each school year, the superintendent provides written information to all students and staff about emergency procedures. All staff receive annual training by September 15th on the building plan which includes components on violence prevention and mental health. New employees hired after the start of the school year receive this training within 30 days of hire or as part of the district’s existing new hire training program, whichever is sooner. The district certifies that this training is completed by October 1<sup>st</sup> every year in the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Basic Education Data System (BEDS).

The following procedures, which have been established to provide this training on an annual basis, include but are not limited to: early dismissal/go home drill, shelter-in place, hold-in-place, evacuation/fire drills, lockout, lockdown, table top exercises and Incident Command System training.

The district conducts drills and other training exercises to test components of the emergency response plan, including the use of tabletop exercises, in coordination with local, county, and state emergency

responders and preparedness officials. A debriefing concludes each test to determine if changes to the plan are necessary.

### Fire and Emergency Drills

The school district, at least once every school year, and where possible in cooperation with local county emergency preparedness plan officials, conducts one test of its emergency response procedures under its building plan, including sheltering, lock-down, or early dismissal, at a time not to occur more than 15 minutes earlier than the normal dismissal time.

The Education Law §§ 807(1-a), 807 (b): Fire and Emergency Drills July 2016 amendments expanded fire drill requirements to also include emergency drills to prepare students to be able to respond appropriately in the event of a sudden emergency. The statute now requires twelve drills be conducted each school year, four of which must be lock-down drills. The remaining eight are required to be evacuation drills. There is still a requirement that eight of the required twelve drills must be completed in the first half of the school year (September 1 to December 31st).

The statute explicitly requires schools to conduct lock-down drills, which are essential, because they prepare students and staff to respond to the highest level of threat with the most urgent action and the least margin for error. The goal is to have schools conduct drills where they immediately clear hallways, lock doors and take positions out of sight to practice their ability to put the building into a protective posture as quickly as possible. These emergency measures allow time for responding law enforcement to arrive on scene and neutralize the threat. If possible, law enforcement should be involved in the drills to help prepare students and staff for their interactions and release from lock-down by uniformed officers. However, law enforcement involvement is not required by the new legislative mandate. Other protective actions such as lock-out or shelter in place are emergency actions that are usually preceded by some degree of warning time and do not require the immediate response necessary for a lock-down. While the school should be well versed in their lock-out and shelter in place protocols, lock-down is the only type of protective action that is specifically required by the statute.

### **Section III: Responding to Threats and Acts of Violence**

The school refers to its Crisis Intervention Plan via the post-incident response team and the Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides located in the building plan. These are reviewed by the district-wide school safety team to ensure content and consistency throughout the district. These policies and procedures are for responding to implied or direct threats of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel including bus drivers and monitors, and visitors to the school, including threats by students against themselves, which includes suicide. The following types of procedures are addressed in the plan:

- Informing the Superintendent or designee of implied or direct threats.
- Determining the level of threat with the Superintendent and building-level emergency response team members.
- Contacting appropriate law enforcement agency, if necessary.
- Monitoring the situation, adjusting the district's responses as appropriate to include possible implementation of the building-level emergency response team.

- Communication with parent/guardian. When a student implies or specifically threatens self-inflicted violence including suicide, the principal of the school in which the student attends directly contacts the respective parents/guardians.

The Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides in the building plan provide guidance on the district's policies and procedures for responding to direct acts of violence (i.e., Crimes Against Persons, Hostage Taking, Intruder and Kidnapping) by students, teachers, other school personnel including bus drivers and monitors, and visitors to the school, including consideration of zero-tolerance policies for school violence. The following types of procedures are addressed in the plan:

- Inform the Superintendent/designee
- Determine the level of threat with the superintendent/designee and the building-level emergency response team.
- If the situation warrants, isolate the immediate area.
- Monitor the situation; adjust the level of response as appropriate; if necessary, initiate lockdown, evacuation, sheltering and/or early dismissal procedures as needed, if needed.
- Contact appropriate law enforcement agency.

NOTE: The Mechanicville City School District's "Code of Conduct" describes policies and procedures for responding to acts of violence by students, teachers, other school personnel and visitors to the school.

Response protocols are identified in the building plan in the ICS format along with definitions of ICS roles and responsibilities. The Multi-Hazard Emergency Response Guides address specific procedures for responding to bomb threat, intruders, hostage takings and kidnapping.

The following protocols for appropriate responses to emergencies are provided as examples of responses to bomb threats, hostage takings, intrusions and kidnappings:

- Identification of decision-makers.
- Plans to safeguard students and staff.
- Procedures to provide transportation, if necessary.
- Procedures to notify parents.
- Procedures to notify media.
- Debriefing procedures.

The district has established policies and procedures to contact parents, guardians or persons in parental relation to the students in the event of a violent incident or an early dismissal. In the Mechanicville City School District, the following communication methods are used:

- A mass notification feature in its phone system, which automatically sends one message out to all staff and persons in parental relations, which would inform them of the event.
- A mass notification feature in its email system that would send one message out to all staff and persons in parental relations.

#### **Section IV: Communication with Others**



The Mechanicville City School District is fortunate to have substantial ties to the community of Mechanicville and Saratoga County. If there were an emergency within our facility, we would call 911 for emergency assistance. If involvement is needed from other local government agencies, the Superintendent or designee would act as the contact person. Additional procedures for communications can be found in the building plan including local emergency contacts and phone numbers, and the NYS/BOCES Communication Flow Chart. These contacts provide guidance for obtaining assistance during emergencies from emergency services organizations and local government.

Arrangements for obtaining advice and assistance from emergency organizations and local government officials, including the county or city officials responsible for implementation of Article 2-B of the Executive Law, are noted in the NYS/BOCES Communication Flow Chart.

If there is a disaster within the district that has the potential to impact other educational agencies within the district boundaries, the Chief Emergency Officer activates the above-referenced phone and/or e-mail mass notification system.

Along with the above-noted notification procedures, the district also maintains the following information about each educational agency in the confidential building plan:

- School population
- Number of staff
- Transportation needs
- Business and home telephone numbers of key officials of each such educational agency

#### **Section V: Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

The district has developed policies and procedures related to school building security, including the use of a school resource officer, and security devices and procedures (i.e., secure entrance wherein visitors are observed and then buzzed in, and then they must sign in and obtain a badge).

The Mechanicville City School District has implemented procedures for the dissemination of informative materials regarding the early detection of potentially violent behaviors, including, but not limited to: the identification of family, community and environmental factors to teachers, administrators, school personnel including bus drivers and monitors, persons in parental relation to students of the district, students and other persons deemed appropriate to receive such information.

Appropriate prevention and intervention strategies, such as:

- Collaborative arrangements with State and local law enforcement officials, designed to ensure that school safety officers and other security personnel are adequately trained, including being trained to de-escalate potentially violent situations, and are effectively and fairly recruited;
- Nonviolent conflict resolution training programs;
- Peer mediation programs and youth courts; and
- Extended day and other school safety programs;

The district has created and supported strategies for improving communication among students and between students and staff and reporting of potentially violent incidents, such as the establishment of youth-run programs, peer mediation, conflict resolution, creating a forum or designating a mentor for students concerned with bullying or violence and establishing anonymous reporting mechanisms for school violence.

The Elementary School has established the following program:

- No Place for Hate (Anti-Defamation League)
- Positivity Project

The Junior/Senior High School has established the following initiatives to help students make better choices in conflict resolution and to alleviate bullying:

- No Place for Hate (Anti-Defamation League)
- Positivity Project
- Mediation
- Restorative Justice
- Rachel's Challenge
- An informal format for conflict resolution that involves social workers, guidance counselors, teachers and administrators
- Anonymous reporting of school violence and bullying by students to social workers, guidance counselors, teachers, and the principal

The Mechanicville City School District has created descriptions of duties of hall monitors and any other school safety personnel, the training required of all personnel acting in a school and the hiring and screening process for all personnel acting in a school security capacity.

The Mechanicville City School District does employ hall monitors and a school resource officer. In accordance with Project SAVE, after July 1, 2001, all new full and part-time employees are finger-printed and have background checks completed.

## **Section VI: Recovery**

Recovery addresses the help needed for all involved to heal and to restore the school community to “normal” operations. The District Plan supports the school building plan by deploying district resources that support the school’s building-level emergency response team and the post-incident response team.

Recovery plans include mental health/emotional recovery, academic, physical and business recovery, and can continue long after the actual emergency.

### District Support for the Mechanicville City School District

The building plan provides resources for supporting the building-level emergency response team and post-incident response team. The district’s ICS identifies back-ups to relieve team members. This provides team

members the opportunity to rotate personnel, to fill in if assigned personnel are unavailable and to debrief in a supportive environment.

The district realizes that some emergencies may overwhelm an individual school's ability to manage an extreme crisis. If/when the school is faced with an emergency such as threats of violence or actual violent incidents, the district-wide school safety team assists as follows:

- Acting as a sounding board regarding the implied or direct threats and/or violent acts.
- Assisting in determining the level of threat and appropriate response.
- Monitoring the situation and adjusting the district's response as appropriate.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, faculty/staff, and media communication.
- Assisting with coordinating building and grounds security in conjunction with local and State Police.
- Assisting with offering a backup post-incident response team (i.e., another school district's team and/or an outside group) as needed, if needed.
- Offering debriefing sessions as needed working in conjunction with local Mechanicville City, Saratoga County, and/or State emergency responders.

#### Disaster Mental Health Services

If/when a building-level emergency response team or post-incident response team is faced with an emergency that may overwhelm the school's ability to manage an extreme crisis, the district-wide school safety team assists as follows:

- Activating the district-wide post-incident response team.
- Offering district support and looking for continued feedback from those directly impacted during the incident, with projected plans to assist if needed during heightened stressful times such as a re-occurrence of a similar event and anniversaries of the original event.
- Assisting with parent/guardian, student, and faculty/staff debriefing and/or post-incident crisis intervention. The debriefing is also used in part to evaluate the district's plan for possible revisions. If needed, assisting in contacting additional outside mental health resources such as the National Organization for Victim Assistance (1-800-try-nova; [www.try-nova.org](http://www.try-nova.org)).
- Assisting the schools with written statements going out to faculty/staff, parents/guardians, press releases and media requests through the district's Superintendent's office.

The district supports the recovery phase and reevaluates current multi-hazard and violence prevention practices and school safety activities.

**APPENDIX A**  
**District Buildings, Contacts and Phone Numbers**

The address for the three main buildings (Junior/Senior High School, the Elementary School, and the Bus Garage) is 25 Kniskern Avenue, Mechanicville, NY 12118.

<b>Building</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Contact Number</b>
District Office – Junior/Senior High School	Superintendent	Bruce Potter	518-664-5727 Ext. 2100
Elementary School	Principal	Chris Turcio	518-664-7336 Ext. 2116
Junior/Senior High School	Principal	Michael Mitchell	518-664-9888 Ext. 2418
Bus Garage	Transportation Supervisor	Michael Pratt	518-664-9881

**APPENDIX B**  
**Potential Hazardous Sites**

COMMUNITY BASED LIST: A list of areas has been identified as having the potential to impact within the district. This list was created for reference and awareness. It is not all-inclusive for every emergency. However, these areas have been identified as having the most probable impact on district facilities or district boundaries should they have or create an emergency. A list of potential community-based hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building plan.

SCHOOL BASED LIST: The district team has recognized that there are many factors that could cause an emergency within our school building. There are also factors that need to be considered when responding to an emergency. A list of potential internal and external hazards or emergency situations has been noted in the building plan.