

Ministry of Education

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Ministère de l'Éducation

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Date: August 3, 2021

Memorandum To: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities
Private Schools
First Nation Education Partners

From: Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister
Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division

Jon Pegg
Ontario Fire Marshal

Subject: Fire Drills in Schools 2021-22

Ontario continues to reopen the province and gradually lift public health measures implemented in response to COVID-19. As there is still a risk of COVID-19 transmission, it is important to continue to follow public health guidance. For the 2021-2022 school year, it is essential to plan for procedures to conduct fire drills aligned with public health guidance. As such, the flexible and balanced approach will continue to be required when conducting fire drills in schools, including private schools.

We recognize that the overcrowding generally associated with total evacuation fire drills in schools may lead to an increased risk for COVID-19 transmission. As outlined in [Ontario Fire Marshal Directive 2020-001](#) (revised August 3, 2021), *Total Evacuation Fire Drills in Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, flexibility in total evacuation fire drills is temporarily being made available so that all occupants of the school do not need to evacuate simultaneously to ensure COVID-19 physical distancing requirements are maintained. This approach will be deemed to comply with *Fire Code* requirements for schools, including private schools, by local fire departments.

To support school safety, the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Fire Marshal collaborated to create the attached guidance document for Keeping Students Safe in School, during fire drills. The guidance document reflects the content of the *Fire Marshal Directive*, including providing sample modifications for a total evacuation fire drill. School administrators and local fire services are encouraged to work together to consider implementation of additional safe practices to further minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread in school settings.

For First Nation/federally-operated schools, we encourage you to use these as guidance documents to support fire safety in your schools and when planning and updating your policies and procedures. Please also continue to consult with your local fire authorities.

Should you have any questions about the guidance document, please contact Dianne Persaud, Manager, Safe Schools Unit at Dianne.Persaud@ontario.ca or your local fire authorities.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister

Original signed by

Jon Pegg
Ontario Fire Marshal

Attachment

- C. Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
Julia Danos, Executive Lead, Education Reopening Secretariat
Andrew Davis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education Labour and Finance Division
Secretary, Conseil ontarien des directions de l'éducation de langue française (CODELF)
Secrétaire, le Conseil ontarien des directions de l'éducation de langue française (CODELF)