



IOWA FIRE MARSHALS ASSOCIATION

3219 Hudson Road. University of Northern Iowa

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In the wake of more school shootings, Iowa Fire Marshals Association offers suggestions for fire drills...

The recent school shootings in America remind all of us that the threat of danger is real, but the Iowa Fire Marshals Association urges schools districts to stay diligent in their preparations against the ravages of fire. Fire codes, fire protection systems, and increased preparedness drills have significantly reduced the risk of fire in educational facilities, but the threat of violence can jeopardize the progress made in reducing fire risk. In an effort to minimize potential impacts from new threats, the Iowa Fire Marshals Association suggests the following:

1. **Be purposeful when conducting school fire drills.** Iowa's Fire Code requires these drills monthly. Drills should be pre-announced (never a surprise) and procedures should be reviewed with faculty and students prior to conducting drills. Students will perform (in a real emergency) similar to how they prepare, faculty and staff should make sure drills are done purposefully, in a calm and collected manner; then when the real emergency (fire or other emergency) occurs, students will be less chaotic.
2. **Don't trade one problem for other problems.** Some solutions that have been offered to reduce the impact of violent events in schools have blatantly disregarded long required fire and emergency egress codes. Locking doors to prohibit entry and free egress is a problem; the building and fire codes address the requirements for free and clear egress. Solutions for active threat can include impeding access to classrooms, but should not "lock" the students inside the classroom.
3. **Take advantage of fire code allowances.** The International Fire Code (adopted widely throughout Iowa) allows for the removal of manual fire alarm boxes "pull stations" when the building is fully sprinklered, there is a central location (Principal's office) where the fire alarm system can be activated, and the fire alarm system activates on receipt of a waterflow alarm. Removing manual pull stations from the exits in these buildings helps to reduce the potential for violent perpetrators to use the fire protection systems to carry out their evil plots.
4. **Collaborate with local officials.** Schools and school districts should meet with their local fire, police, emergency management, and other safety related entities to ensure emergency preparedness and response plans are fully vetted with buy-in from all the stakeholders. Preparation is the key to success in any unfortunate event.
- 5.

When doing any of the aforementioned recommendations be sure to check with your local Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ), typically the Fire Chief, Fire Marshal, and/or Building Official in your town.

The Iowa Fire Marshals Association is a group of fire code officials from throughout the State of Iowa committed to promoting and enforcing the fire and life safety goals of the fire service. The organization supports efforts in fire and life safety education, enforcement, engineering, and investigation.

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