

Crisis Response – Frequently Asked Questions

The following frequently asked questions (FAQ's) and responses are provided to our faculty, student, and parent community to communicate what SCS would do in the event of a crisis situation. We feel the information is useful and addresses most of the questions asked by those in our school community. If you have a question not specifically or completely answered in this document, please feel free to contact any of the school administrators directly.

Has SCS developed a crisis response plan?

Yes. In addition to taking steps to ensure your child's safety while in school, SCS has developed a crisis response plan should an emergency or crisis occur. This plan: 1) designates a crisis management team and responsibilities, 2) documents procedures that faculty and staff are to follow in a crisis or emergency, and 3) serves as a training resource for all faculty and staff.

How will parents be informed when an emergency or crisis occurs?

SCS will use several methods to inform parents of any crisis situation. School personnel as well as parent volunteers will initially use a phone chain to contact each student's parents or guardian. In addition general emergency messages, early school closings and late school openings will be posted on the school's web page. If required, local media will also be notified to broadcast emergency messages.

What is a lock-down?

An emergency may prevent the safe evacuation of a school building and require steps to isolate students and faculty from danger by instituting a school lock-down. In an interior lock-down situation, all students are kept in classrooms or other designated locations that are away from the danger. Faculty members are responsible for accounting for students and ensuring that no one leaves the safe area. School personnel will also secure building entrances, ensuring that no unauthorized individuals leave or enter the building. Exterior lock-down procedures may also be used to ensure the safety of students when an incident occurs in the community. Parents are permitted access to the building and to their children if it is safe for them to do so.

In the event of an emergency situation, will SCS go into lock-down?

The specific actions taken by SCS in any emergency situation will depend on the specifics of the situation. Any action taken would depend on several factors, including the level of threat and the advice of local, state, and federal agencies. The safety of students and staff members will be the primary concern in any decision.

Can my child be picked-up from school during an emergency?

Parents are allowed to pick up their children unless public safety officials have declared a shelter-in-place response, or there is some other reason why access to the facility is restricted. During any emergency, school personnel will maintain as safe and normal environment for children within the school as is possible. School is not automatically canceled in emergency situations.

Children will not be released to individuals who are not authorized or who do not have written parent authorization. Friends and neighbors may pick-up a child with written permission from a parent. SCS will also ask for identification when the child is released to the one(s) mentioned in the permission note.

Are students allowed to have cell phones at school?

Secondary school students are allowed to have cell phones at school. Students are not, however, allowed to have them turned on during the school day. In the event of an emergency, students will be allowed to use their phones to communicate with parents when specified by the principal. It is important to recognize that in an emergency situation, however, cell phone circuits may become overloaded, interfering with public safety's ability to communicate. Student's use of cell phones during an emergency will be appropriately limited.

Can I contact my child during and emergency?

Parents are asked not to call the school in emergency situations so phone lines can remain accessible for handling the specific situation. Parents will be kept informed via phone chains, the SCS website, and local media.

Will children be allowed to view events via live television or radio reports?

In the event of a local, statewide, or nationwide crisis, teachers will be informed as to the appropriate actions to take. Receiving live media coverage in the classroom about a crisis will be left up to the teacher's discretion. Appropriate measures will be taken depending on the age of the students.

What if my child is riding a school bus at the time of a crisis?

School bus drivers will be in contact with school administrators in the event that a crisis occurs while students are in transport on a school bus. Bus drivers will be informed to use common sense and not travel toward the crisis location. If required, parents will be informed of an alternate student pick-up site via phone chains, the school web site, and local media.

How are field trips handled?

The impact of any critical situation on field trips will depend on the specifics of the situation. If the situation warrants, all field trips will be canceled. There may be circumstances that could require the cancellation of field trips to certain areas. All school bus drivers are equipped with cell phones. If a field trip is under way and must be recalled, buses would be directed to return to the school or a designated safe site. Parents are reminded that SCS retains the right to cancel any field trip for safety reasons and is not responsible for any financial obligations parents may have.

What happens if SCS needs to be evacuated?

If public safety officials require that SCS be evacuated, students and staff members will be safely transported by an SCS school bus to a designated safe site. Parents will be

notified of the site via phone chains, the school web site, and local media. At the safe site, students will be released to their parents upon presentation of proper identification.

What happens if students need to stay in the school building?

If an accident or attack that created contaminated air occurred in the nearby area, everyone would be brought indoors. Building personnel would close all windows and doors and shut down the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning system (HVAC). This would create a neutral pressure in the building, meaning the contaminated air would not be drawn into the building.

Shelter-in-place is a short-term measure (measured in minutes or hours, not days) designed to use a facility and its indoor atmosphere to temporarily separate people from a hazardous outdoor environment. The alternative would be to evacuate into a hazardous situation, thereby causing harm to all involved. No stockpiling of water and food is needed for shelter-in-place. Any event of a magnitude that required such stockpiling would require that we all take our direction from the federal emergency management officials.

Parents may be concerned that, during a shelter-in-place activity, they couldn't pick up their children. If the air outside the school is safe for parents to breathe, it is safe for their children to breathe. SCS personnel will use the best possible method for ensuring the safety of students and staff members in this type of crisis. It is not SCS's intention to keep children from their parents. SCS personnel are merely endeavoring to keep children safe for parents until the parents can pick them up.

Is SCS stockpiling food and water?

SCS has reasonable food and water resources available for a short-term event. In the event of a large-scale catastrophic event, SCS would rely on federal and state authorities for assistance. There has been no request by state, local, or federal crisis experts that we stockpile food or water.

The SCS shelter-in-place plan is to be used only in the event of a chemical, biohazard, or radiological event. In any one of these situations, which are usually localized, persons typically need to remain indoors only a few hours before the hazard literally blows away. After the danger has passed, children and staff members will be free to go to their homes.

There may be other events that would cause people to be housed for longer periods of time in public buildings such as schools (a bomb attack, for instance, which has destroyed homes). In such an event, other community agencies, including the Red Cross, would be responsible for providing food and water. This response would be a *shelter*, not a *shelter-in-place*. In all critical events of this magnitude, SCS becomes part of a larger emergency response team.

Why isn't SCS storing three days of water and food for each child as is being recommended for homes?

Most of the envisioned emergency situations would be localized short-term events and would not call for long-term supplies. It is unreasonable to expect our facilities to stockpile three days worth of food and water inside SCS for each person. Likewise, shopping malls and other businesses are not expected to perform this type of long-term shelter.

What about my child's medication?

If your child takes medication regularly, you, the parent, should make sure that the school has an appropriate amount of additional medication on hand. Talk with the school administrative office for more information.