

October 2019

Families trust schools to keep their children safe during the day. The reality is, however, that schools may be touched either directly or indirectly by a crisis of some kind at any time. Natural disasters such as fires, floods and earthquakes can strike a community with little or no warning. School shootings, threatened or actual, are extremely rare but are horrific and chilling when they occur.

Children and youth rely on and find great comfort in the adults who protect them. Teachers and staff must know how to help their students through a crisis and return them home safely. Knowing what to do when faced with a crisis can mean the difference between calm and chaos, between courage and fear, between life and death. There are thousands of fires in schools every year, yet there is minimal damage to life and property because staff and students are prepared. This preparedness needs to be extended to all risks schools face.

That is why our administrators spent a full day training in how to use the district's Emergency Operation Plan and create an emergency response team to ensure everything possible is being done to save lives, prevent injuries, and protect property. The teams are patterned after FEMA's Incident Command System. **Follow the link for the full story: [Preparing for Emergencies](#)**

The Emergency Operation Plan is intended to give schools in the Klamath County School District a guide for prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. When a crisis occurs, teachers, administrators and other staff can rely on their training and quick reference guides from the EOP.

In addition to emergency response training, the district has implemented several practices to ensure safe and welcome schools. They include:

- Locked entrances to school buildings during the school day and school events with a buzz-in system for access.
- Evacuation routes available in all classrooms.
- Threat assessment protocols, district harassment procedures, counseling response teams, and academic and behavioral intervention teams.
- Continued assessment of dress code and backpack policies.

In addressing the issue of school safety, we must first remember that schools are reflective of the communities they serve. As such, we can work together to ensure maximum school safety and preventative emergency procedures.

Sincerely,

Glen Szymoniak

