

Fire & Life Safety

Provincial Public Education Position Paper

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Issue: Should the fire alarm system be used to signal an earthquake drill in schools, or should a different signal be used?

Position:

The fire alarm system should **not** be used as a signal for earthquake drills in schools. A different signal, such as a public address system or a simple announcement given at a specific time should be used when practising earthquake drills.

Rationale:

A fire drill, signalled by the fire alarm system, requires students to perform different actions than an earthquake drill. A fire drill requires students to exit the building, where as an earthquake drill requires students to stay in the building, drop, cover and hold on under a desk or table. Utilizing a different system to signal an earthquake drill eliminates any confusion as to what action students are required to take.

As fire can be the secondary cause of damage in post earthquake events, evacuation may be required following an earthquake in the event of fire. It is essential that students respond appropriately to a given emergency situation, and the implementation of an alternate system for signalling an earthquake drill supports this.

A verbal "Earthquake Drill" announced over a school's public address system can signal an earthquake drill for an entire school. If teachers wish to practice an earthquake drill in their classroom only, they can simply announce "Earthquake Drill" without disrupting the rest of the school.

Purpose of Public Education Position Papers:

In order to provide for the consistent delivery of fire and life safety education in the Province of British Columbia, the BC Public Fire & Life Safety Education Advisory Committee through the Public Education Strategic Plan has identified the need for the development of Public Education Position Papers. While it is not mandatory for individual agencies who deliver fire and life safety educational programs to follow these position papers, it is hoped that these positions will be supported throughout British Columbia, in order to achieve consistency in the delivery of fire and life safety education.

Fire & Life Safety Public Education Position Papers are published by the Office of the Fire Commissioner in conjunction with the BC Public Fire & Life Safety Education Advisory Committee.

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