

Fire & Life Safety

Provincial Public Education Position Paper

Date: 95 10 04

No. 03

Issue: Should school fire drills be announced or surprise?

Position:

School fire drills should be announced to teachers and at some point to students. Fire drills should be considered instructional drills to prepare staff and students for an actual emergency.

Rationale:

All fire drills should be considered instructional drills. This best prepares staff and students for an actual fire emergency. Staff should be informed of the drill well in advance, so they can familiarize themselves with appropriate evacuation procedures. Students should be informed of the fire drill at some point, depending upon the circumstances of the drill and the ages of the students.

Announced fire drills provide teachers with an opportunity to teach students appropriate evacuation responses in the event of fire. This is especially important at the beginning of a school year when students are unfamiliar with classroom and building exits.

The educational benefit of a fire drill increases when the drill is announced, by providing teachers with an opportunity to integrate related fire safety activities into their instructional plans.

Announced fire drills can simulate real emergencies, if the drill is creative and realistic. Drills can be planned to occur during assemblies, lunch periods and class changes, to teach safe exit procedures under all conditions.

Announced, cooperative fire drills, between the school and local fire service, provide the school with immediate feedback from the fire service on their evacuation procedures.

Announced fire drills allow for "all-weather" drills, as staff are able to ensure that students have appropriate outer wear with them when the drill occurs. In addition, teachers are able to make provision for the care of students who may require assistance in proceeding to the exits.

For information regarding school fire drill procedures, please refer to OFC Guideline No. 91-2, "Fire Drills for Schools".

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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