

Evacuation Drills: Consideration for Individuals with Special Needs

OBJECTIVES:

- Accountability, making sure these things are not overlooked for students with physical limitations
- Gain knowledge of facts on fires, tornados, earthquakes, and shelter in place
- Learn practices for evacuation emergencies
- Acquire knowledge of equipment to assist in evacuating students with special needs
- Practice evacuation drills

ACTION PLAN: Collaborate on evacuation drills for students with special needs:

- Give local fire dept student schedule; providing map of school building
- Assigning multiple people to assist throughout school day (by time frame)
- Establishing if equipment is needed to assist with evacuation drills (if so, keeping this with students at all times) (i.e. extrication blanket or sheet) (add figure pictures orange blanket and sheet).
- Training these people on proper evacuation methods
- Provide copy of “Student Evacuation Plan” to those assisting, homeroom teacher, and keep a copy with the student (in walker, wheelchair pouch or book bag)
- Consult local fire department critique the drill (i.e. recommended time frame to evacuate, exit routes (at least two) at each point in students schedule. Practicing all routes to make sure exit in timely manner.
- Practice these drills to ensure ability to exit safely and efficiently (within recommended time frame) (i.e. Are you going against traffic flow? Need to utilize stairs? Barriers or obstacles to evacuation based on a student’s physical limitation?)
- If you are uncertain if a certain route will work effectively, communicate with school principal to have a fire drill held at that difficult time.
- Establish a team leader per student (Accountability: therapists telling teacher where they are taking student and therapist signing in and out for their own safety. Signing in is not only important for the safety of therapists, but for visitors and volunteers as well)

Conclusion:

Encourage collaboration of the health care professionals and emergency responders and schools/workplace/care facilities to establish detailed guidelines and in turn implement and practice these drills. Emergencies can happen any time, to ensure the safety of ourselves, colleagues, and students, we must plan ahead and prepared!

-importance of doing surprise drills instead of schedule/announced drills