

Issue Date: March 15, 2024

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents and Independent School Heads
FROM: Heather Bouchey, Interim Secretary of Education
Jennifer Morrison, Commissioner of Public Safety
SUBJECT: All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan Guide and Template
DATE: March 15, 2024

Background and Purpose

In 2023, Act 29 amended Title 16 VSA, Section 1480 to require that all public Supervisory Unions/Supervisory Districts (SU/SD) and Independent Schools adopt and maintain an all-hazards emergency operations plan for each school site that it maintains. Further, the statute requires that all such Emergency Operations Plans must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, in collaboration with local emergency first responders and local emergency management officials.

In addition, Title 16 requires the Vermont School Safety Center (VSSC) to maintain a template All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). While the use of the template is not required, the amended statute provides that each All-Hazards EOP must be “at least as comprehensive as the template maintained by the Vermont School Safety Center.”

The Agency of Education, in partnership with the Vermont School Safety Center, recognizes that this critical planning work requires significant effort from SU/SD and Independent School staff and leadership. In addition to the template required by Title 16, the following resources have been compiled to assist with the planning, drafting, and execution of the required All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan.

Recommended Training

Prior to engaging in any planning work related to Emergency Operations, it is recommended that any staff involved in the development and/or execution of an All-Hazards EOP complete the following introductory training. This training will provide fundamental information about basic concepts, structure, and language used in national emergency management organizations:

IS-700: [National Incident Management System, An Introduction](#)

ICS-100: [Introduction to the Incident Command System](#)



Contact: Operations Division, taylor.goodwin@vermont.gov

Emergency Preparedness Training through NIMS (Emergency Management Institute - National Incident Management System (NIMS) (fema.gov)).

Once the team has become familiar with the basic structure and common language used in emergency management and planning, it is strongly recommended that all team members involved in the development and implementation of the All-Hazards EOP, and any potential members of the designated SU/SD or Independent School Crisis Team, should complete training through the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center:

[Developing Emergency Operations Plans \(EOPS\) K-12 101](#)

This 45-minute virtual training will provide in-depth information about how to develop your school or district's All-Hazards EOP. The All-Hazards EOP Guide, discussed below, is based largely on the concepts and strategies recommended by REMS and frequently refers to the training and corresponding guide. This training will prepare team members involved in the development of the All-Hazards EOP for common questions, challenges, and considerations encountered during the planning process.

How to Use the All-Hazards EOP Guide

The All-Hazards Emergency Operations Planning Guide was created to aid in the development of a school or district's written All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan. The Guide follows the same content, best practices, and recommendations as provided by REMS. SU/SD or Independent School representatives involved in EOP development may choose to use the guide as a technical resource during REMS training or other plan development exercises or may choose to refer to the guide only after completing the required trainings.

While the Template provides the basic structure of an All-Hazards EOP, the Guide provides additional detail and considerations needed to develop a comprehensive plan. Where appropriate, the Guide provides recommendations and sample language that schools and districts can (and should) consider when developing their EOP.

Threat and Hazard Specific Annexes

The Guide offers considerations and many examples of threat and hazard-specific considerations. As the SU/SD or Independent School conducts a thorough hazard and vulnerability impact assessment, they will need to identify specific threats or vulnerabilities and identify a plan for each. The importance of the inclusion of threat-specific annexes cannot be understated. Each SU/SD and Independent School should take care to develop threat specific procedures that are clear, comprehensive, and achievable based on the specific needs and abilities of their school or district. In many

cases, the threat annexes may represent the bulk of the All-Hazards EOP and should provide case-specific procedures for high-priority threats or hazards identified during the planning process. When implemented, these annexes should be clear, accessible, and easily executed by any member of the school or district during an emergency event.

How to Use the Template

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 1480, as introduced by Act 29 of 2023, requires that all public SU/SDs and approved and recognized Independent Schools adopt and maintain an All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan for each school site that is at least as comprehensive as the template maintained by the Vermont School Safety Center. The All-Hazards EOP template has been developed to act as a baseline for the minimum required components of an All-Hazards EOP. Schools and districts may choose to use a format other than the Template, however they must ensure that the final EOP includes, at minimum, all sections and components included in the Template.

The Template is formatted so that basic information (such as certain decision makers, positions, or entities) can be easily identified and updated. The Template follows the same order of content as the Guide and is designed to mirror the language and distinct sections of the Guide. When used together, the Guide should act as a roadmap to the Template. The final product should be a clear and complete All-Hazards EOP that is updated at least annually and reflects the current and specific needs of a school or district.

Implementation and Maintenance of the Completed EOP

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 1480 requires that, once established, the All-Hazards Emergency Operations Plan must be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, in collaboration with local emergency first responders and local emergency management officials. All SU/SDs and Independent Schools are strongly encouraged to establish procedures to ensure a complete and thorough annual review, and strong partnerships with their local partners. In addition, schools and districts may request additional training or supports, such as tabletop practice exercises, through the VSSC.

Timeline for Planning and Implementation

Act 29 directs all SU/SDs and Independent Schools to develop and implement an All-Hazards EOP. Please plan to allow for, at minimum, 8 hours to effectively update an existing EOP, collaborate with necessary local partners, and provide training to appropriate team members. For those schools or districts that do not currently employ an EOP, please plan for an additional 8-24 hours to complete a comprehensive threat analysis, develop specific response plans (i.e. annexes) and assign role-specific assignments in alignment with your All-Hazards EOP.

The current deadline for the All-Hazards EOP in Act 29 is July 1, 2024. In recognition of the time and effort required to develop a comprehensive and effective plan, the Agency of Education has requested an extension of this timeline to July 1, 2025, pending review and approval during the current legislative session. Until and unless this extension is approved, all SU/SDs and Independent Schools should move forward with this work under the assumption that completed EOPs must be completed by July 1, 2024.

Contact Information

For questions regarding the requirements of Act 29, please contact Taylor Goodwin, Agency of Education at taylor.goodwin@vermont.gov.

For technical questions on All-Hazards EOP recommendations by the Vermont School Safety Center, please contact Vermont's School Safety Programs Manager, Sunni Eriksen at sunni.eriksen@vermont.gov, School Safety Liaison Officer Rob Evans at revans@cosecure.com, or visit the Vermont School Safety Center's website at: schoolsafety.vermont.gov.