*Getting to know your local first responders before an emergency happens is best practice. Use the following checklist to help plan your interaction with them.*

**Actions to Take Before an Emergency:**

First responders offer many public services and outreach programs, all designed to help forge good relations with members of the community. Contact your local fire, Emergency Medical Services, and law enforcement agencies to learn about these programs and how they can benefit your school. Take these actions:

* Check the local and regional emergency management plans. These plans identify hazards, including climate hazards, that may impact the area.
* Have you reviewed these plans to gain insight into the priorities and actions you can expect public officials and agencies to take if a wide-scale catastrophe occurs?
* Have you used this information to augment the list you developed of work and community-specific hazards that are facing your school?
* Have you contacted first responder organizations in your area and asked to join their training exercises with local businesses, institutions, and other schools? Such collaboration will help your school develop a positive relationship with the first responders in your neighbourhood.

Contact the fire department and schedule meetings to discuss community outreach programs. Which ones have you arranged to be run at your campus?

* Fire safety checks.
  + Review your fire response plan.
  + Observe an evacuation or shelter-in-place exercise.
  + Training programs for students and personnel on the use of fire extinguishers.
  + Evacuation procedures including assembly areas.
  + Conduct pre-fire planning.

Law enforcement agencies often provide many security services. Check the ones you have taken advantage of in the past 12 months. These may include:

* A security survey covering locks, lighting, and access routes to your campus.
* Information on the level of crime in the area.
* Best places to park.
* Guidance on areas to avoid, especially at night.
* Recommendations for student and guest safety in and around your campus.
* How to deal with disgruntled/dismissed personnel.
* What to do if you suspect employee theft.
* The best way to report suspicious activities.

Emergency Medical Service groups provide various services. Your organization may consider scheduling the following:

* First aid and CPR training.
* Programs dealing with medical emergencies at the workplace.

Hospitals and medical centres offer onsite lectures and training. Indicate the topics that could be covered in a setting such as ‘lunch and learn seminars’ over the next year. The topics may include:

* Health screening programs.
* No cost/low-cost public awareness seminars on health issues.
* Information on how to avoid stress in the workplace.

Your local health department, the Red Cross and various non-profit organizations provide ongoing education on community health issues. Indicate which actions you are planning to take in the next twelve months:

* Hold a seminar before flu season on coping with epidemics and pandemics.
* Contact your local Red Cross branch about disaster preparedness and emergency training that might be available.
* If you have students or personnel who use service animals, hold an orientation on how to care for service animals and pets during a prolonged crisis.
* If floods are a concern, ask your local Emergency Management Office to provide a speaker on their plans for coping with flood events.
* Keep in touch with your local Red Cross branch. They may offer presentations which may be suitable for educational meetings that review safety procedures on campus.
* Start a program that encourages community volunteerism.

**Action to Take During an Emergency:**

Be prepared to quickly and clearly brief first responders on the nature of the emergency. During an emergency, are you prepared to answer the following questions?

* What is the nature of the emergency, when did it happen, and where did it occur?
* In the event of a fire, tell responders if anyone is still in the building, their location, and if they need assistance.
* Be prepared to state if utilities such as gas and electricity have been shut off.
* In your Emergency Action Plan, include a floor plan showing the layout of the school buildings including the basement, entrances and exits, and make it available to arriving responders. If you have school keys, turn them over as well.
* If hazardous or flammable materials are stored onsite, notify fire officials. If so, where are they kept? If Materials Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are available, present them.
* Are there any priority objects or materials onsite (e.g., precious metals, historic relics, religious objects, etc.)? If so, notify the fire department of their location.
* During a medical emergency, provide arriving EMS personnel with as much detail as possible on the person’s condition.
* If a criminal activity has occurred (e.g., violence in the workplace), provide police with detailed descriptions of the people involved, their location, and the nature of the event.

If you have people with disabilities or special needs at the assembly area, in a shelter, or elsewhere on campus, provide first responders with as much information as possible on their location and condition.

If forced to evacuate your work area and move to either a shelter or an offsite assembly area, are you able to answer questions relating to the number of people on site that qualify as:

* Older adults.
* People with service animals.
* People with mobility limitations.
* People with cognitive disabilities.
* Hearing impaired.
* Visually impaired.
* People with severe allergies or chemical sensitivities.
* People who may not speak the dominant language.

**After an Emergency:**

Wait for the site to be declared safe to re-enter. Remember that first responders are not always responsible for restoring services on your campus.

Are you prepared to dispatch a damage assessment team and bring the emergency to an end? To accomplish this, you need to be prepared to implement the following measures:

* An assessment team equipped to make determinations on the degree of damage to equipment and other infrastructure on campus or adjoining school property.
* Personnel representing or in contact with the building owner if the facility is leased or rented.
* Personnel familiar with the process on your campus for re-starting various utilities including electric and gas services.

Review this checklist before and after emergency exercises and events to determine your level of preparedness to work with local first responders.