



Ohio Department of Commerce

Division of State Fire Marshal

Code Enforcement
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Bob Taft
Governor

Doug White
Director

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Dear School/Fire Official:

As State Fire Marshal, I am writing to remind you of your duty under state law to conduct and document school fire and tornado drills and to advise you of some recent changes to the Ohio Revised Code (R.C.) sections governing such drills.

Effective September 28, 2006, R.C. 3737.73(A) provides (in part):

No principal or person in charge of a public or private school or educational institution having an average daily attendance of twenty or more pupils, and no person in charge of any children's home or orphanage housing twenty or more minor persons, shall willfully neglect to instruct and train such children by means of drills or rapid dismissals, so that such children in a sudden emergency may leave the building in the shortest possible time without confusion. The principal or person in charge of a school or educational institution shall conduct drills or rapid dismissals at least nine times during the school year, which shall be at the times and frequency prescribed in rules adopted by the fire marshal.

In particular, the new provisions of the R.C. now require that fire drills be conducted at all schools with an average daily attendance of twenty (20) or more pupils at least nine times during a school year. The times and frequency of such drills are to be established by the fire marshal in the Ohio Fire Code. The existing Ohio Fire Code, which is currently under review, requires that fire drills be conducted monthly while the school is in operation. The first fire drill of each school year shall be conducted within 10 days of the beginning of classes. The only exception to these requirements is that no fire drill has to occur during the same month that a school safety drill (as required under R.C. 3737.73 (D)) is conducted as long as a total of nine drills or rapid dismissals are conducted in the school year. Please contact your local law enforcement agency for more information about required school safety drills.

The recent changes to Ohio law also now require that any school with an average daily attendance of twenty (20) or more pupils shall conduct tornado drills at least once a month during the tornado season (April 1 through July 31 of each calendar year).

The Ohio Fire Code requires that all schools create and maintain a record of each fire and tornado drill conducted during a school year. Fire drill records must include the identity of the person conducting the drill, the time and date of drill, notification method used, staff members on duty and participating, weather conditions, number of occupants evacuated, the total time for evacuation, problems encountered and special conditions simulated. Tornado drill records must include the time and date of the drill, number of students moved to the tornado shelter and weather conditions.

The person responsible for conducting fire drills shall file a copy of the fire drill records with the State Fire Marshal. When required by the local fire code official, such fire drill records shall also be submitted to the local fire department. Tornado drill records must be kept at the school where the drill occurred and such records must be readily available for inspection by the State Fire Marshal and the local fire code official. Good record keeping can provide the proof that drills have been conducted according to law.

Fire Drill Instruction and Tornado Drill Record forms specifying the applicable Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Fire Code provisions are attached to this letter to assist you. These forms can also be obtained from the Code Enforcement Bureau of the State Fire Marshal's Office by calling toll-free 1-888-276-0303, or online at:

<http://www.com.state.oh.us/sfm/app/FireDrillInstructionCard.pdf>.

<http://www.com.state.oh.us/sfm/app/TornadoDrillRecord.pdf>

As you develop your school safety plans, please note that the Ohio Fire Code requires that:

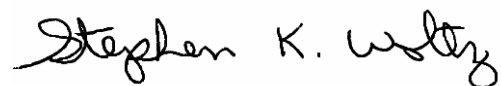
- Exits or exit discharges shall be continuously maintained free from obstructions or impediments to full instant use in the case of fire or other emergency, and
- Security devices affecting means of egress shall be subject to approval of the fire code official. Except as specifically permitted by the fire code, egress doors shall be readily openable from the egress side without the use of a key or special knowledge or effort.
- Generally, any alteration or modification to a means of egress, including installing a lock on an exit door, may require a permit or other approval from the building code and fire code official.

As always, the Revised Code holds the school principal responsible for ensuring the laws regarding drills are followed. The penalty for failure to conduct the required fire and tornado drills is now \$1,000.

I encourage local fire and school officials to meet regularly to discuss fire safety matters and school fire and tornado drill requirements. We all play a part in helping keep our children safe. With your help, we can continue to maintain the excellent safety record of schools across the state.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen K. Woltz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'S' and 'W'.

Stephen K. Woltz
State Fire Marshal