



## NJDOE News

Due to recent school concerns about both the conflict with Iraq and the National Terror Alert System, the DOE this morning released a memorandum to all local school officials.

The memorandum is a list of suggestions for the local officials to use in addition to their own emergency response plans. Above all else, the DOE is encouraging schools to keep the lines of communication open and to work with their local law enforcement and emergency management officials.

The DOE is also encouraging officials to continue normal routines within the school. Rest assured, parents should have confidence that their school districts have emergency plans in place if need be.

**TO: New Jersey School District  
Superintendents**

**Charter School Administrators**

**Private/Parochial School Administrators**

**Pre-School/Child Care Providers**

**FROM: Dwight R. Pfennig, Ed.D.  
Deputy Commissioner**

**SUBJECT: Emergency Preparedness**

**For Release: March 19, 2003**

In light of the rapidly evolving events in the Middle East and the "rumors" that accompany planned actions due to those events and the associated national "codes" (yellow, orange, red), the New Jersey Department of Education is suggesting the following items be used as a "checklist" for action in the immediate future:

1. Establish open lines of contact with local and county emergency management coordinators.
2. Establish open lines of communication for parents/guardians that allow access to individuals who can answer questions effectively and provide useful information.
3. Review district/school emergency plans with all students, personnel, parents, law enforcement officials and emergency management coordinators.
4. Secure all emergency phone lists utilized by the organization and have them available on a 24/7 basis.
5. Establish an "offsite" data file backup location for all electronically stored data. This may be essential in monitoring location(s) of individuals during an emergency situation.
6. Establish alternative methods of maintaining open communications with constituents.

Decisions regarding the closing of facilities, relocation of facility inhabitants, or facility "lock downs" (long term or short term), should be made in concert with local/county emergency management coordinators and in concert with governmental and local law enforcement officials regarding the emergency. There remains a possibility that alerts may be heightened or lessened based upon events, or the particular area in which a site is located.

**The following Q&A list may assist you in dealing with common issues related to emergency preparedness.**

**Question:** Who orders a code RED alert?

**Answer:** The code RED alert designation is issued by the federal government for a given area based on specific information. The actions taken with reference to the code RED alert are based on state of emergency directives by the Governor, and distributed by the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management.

**Questions:** How does the Department of Education respond to a code RED?

**Answer #1:** The Department of Education maintains close communication with the Office of Emergency Management, to ensure that accurate information is provided through the Department of Education to school districts.

**Answer #2:** The Department of Education immediately implements key communication with senior staff, regional and county school officials who, in turn, provide information to local districts and charter schools.

**Question:** Who orders a school "lock down"?

**Answer:** The Department of Education does not order school/facility "lock downs." School/facility "lock downs" are local decisions made in concert with local emergency management officials.

**Questions:** Who determines the degree to which schools are prepared for emergencies in their communities (i.e. food, water, supplies)?

**Answer:** The Department of Education does not mandate the degree to which schools/facilities are prepared for emergencies in their communities. Emergency preparedness is a local decision made in concert with local emergency management officials. The Department of Education does work with local emergency preparedness officials to establish guidelines for school districts in developing emergency plans.

**Question:** Where can I find some practical advice on how to prepare for homeland security emergencies?

**Answer #1:** The New Jersey Office of Emergency Management provides information on a number of topics appropriate for emergency situations on its website <http://www.state.nj.us/njoem>.

**Answer #2:** The United States Department of Homeland Security provides advice on making emergency kits, making emergency plans, and being informed on its website <http://ready.gov>.