

K-12 Emergency Operation Plans vs. Emergency Guidebooks

By Jeffrey H Solomon
12/18/2023

Most states require a public school or school district to maintain an emergency operation plan or comprehensive school site safety plan and update it yearly. The Education System of the States, an education policy team, has a complete website listing all fifty states' k-12 emergency operation plan requirements.

Click here: <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/k-12-school-safety-2022-02>

However, a school emergency operation plan (EOP) and a school emergency guidebook (wall flipcharts) are essential documents designed to keep students, staff, and visitors safe during a crisis or critical incident. Despite this, there are notable differences between the two.

A school emergency operation plan, sometimes called a comprehensive school site safety plan (CSSSP), is a detailed document outlining the policies, procedures, and protocols to be followed in the event of various emergencies, such as natural disasters, fires, floods, or acts of violence. It is typically a confidential document accessible only to authorized staff members and emergency responders. However, some states have a legal requirement to allow portions of the plan to be viewed by community members upon request, i.e., California. The emergency operation plan is tailored to the specific needs and risks of the school and includes information on roles and responsibilities, communication protocols, evacuation procedures, and response and recovery measures. Recently, changes in many of the state's laws have included a mandate for a behavioral intervention team, personal evacuation plans for students with disabilities, and a plan for local authorities to utilize your facility as a Red Cross emergency shelter.

An emergency operation plan should be distributed to all employees yearly, providing physical copies made available on a shared drive, etc. Additionally, documented training should be provided to all employees with a test to evaluate their comprehension of the material. Documentation of each employee's completion should be maintained in the employee's training file.

The mistake most schools/districts make is that they try to use an EOP to run a critical incident. These documents can be upwards of 200 pages, and they are not meant to be used during an actual emergency event as they are not typically organized in a way that can be accessed quickly, are too cumbersome, and most of the time will not withstand the elements if used outside.

On the other hand, a school emergency guidebook is a condensed, user-friendly resource made available to staff, parents, and visitors. It provides an overview of the school's emergency protocols (the EOP), including evacuation routes, shelter-in-place procedures, and contact information for emergency services. It is a condensed version of your EOP and is oriented in a checklist manner for ease of use. It typically should include being in compliance with the National Incident Management System (ICS). Unlike the emergency operation plan, the guidebook is not intended to be a comprehensive resource for school staff but rather a quick reference for the broader school community.

**For more information on emergency operation plans and guidebooks,
please contact Jeff Solomon at jsolomon@consortiumtraining.com.**

K-12 Emergency Operation Plans vs. Emergency Guidebooks

By Jeffrey H Solomon
12/18/2023

The emergency guidebook should be in every room of your school where there are people. It should be printed on paper that will withstand the weather and have a plastic cover to be able to post on the wall. We have found it helpful to add your emergency guidebook on an app-based solution and create a visitor/parent version so everybody in your community knows what to do in an emergency.

Again, all employees must be trained on both the guidebooks and the emergency operation plans used.

The specific protocols and procedures outlined in a school emergency operation plan and a school emergency guidebook can vary, but in general, the differences between the two may include the following:

Emergency Operation Plan:

1. Comprehensive and detailed plan for responding to various emergencies, including natural disasters, medical emergencies, violent incidents, and other potential threats.
2. Includes specific roles and responsibilities for staff members, emergency response teams, and other key individuals.
3. Outlines communication procedures, emergency notification systems, and coordination with external emergency responders, such as law enforcement and medical personnel.
4. Includes detailed protocols for evacuation, sheltering in place, lockdown procedures, and other emergency response actions.
5. Addresses strategies for recovery and continuity of operations following an emergency.

Emergency Guidebook:

1. Provides basic guidelines and general procedures for responding to different emergencies.
2. May not include communication protocols or detailed evacuation and lockdown procedures.
3. Typically focuses on providing quick reference information and essential guidance for staff and students during an emergency.
4. May include checklists, emergency contact information, and other resources for quick reference during an emergency.
5. Often used as a supplemental resource to the emergency operation plan, providing more general information for staff and students.

In summary, the emergency operation plan is a comprehensive and detailed document that outlines specific protocols and procedures for responding to emergencies, while the emergency guidebook provides general guidance and quick reference information for staff and students during an emergency. Both documents are important components of a school's emergency preparedness and response efforts.

**For more information on emergency operation plans and guidebooks,
please contact Jeff Solomon at jsolomon@consortiumtraining.com.**