

Ministry of Education

9th Floor
315 Front Street West
Toronto ON M7A 0B8

Ministère de l'Éducation

9^e étage
315, rue Front Ouest
Toronto (Ontario) M7A 0B8



Date: September 8, 2020

Memorandum To: Directors of Education
Secretary/Treasurers of School Authorities
Private Schools
First Nation Education Partners

From: Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister
Indigenous Education and Well-Being Division

Jon Pegg
Ontario Fire Marshal

Subject: Fire Drills in Schools 2020-21

As schools reopen, the safety of students and the staff working in the education system remains a top priority. Therefore, it is critical that when planning for the 2020-2021 school year, procedures for conducting fire drills should be aligned with public health advice. As such, a flexible and balanced approach will be required when undertaking fire drills in schools, including private schools.

We recognize that the overcrowding generally associated with total evacuation fire drills in schools may lead to an increased risk for COVID-19 transmission. The Ontario Fire Marshal is issuing a binding directive, *Fire Marshal Directive 2020-001, Total Evacuation Fire Drills in Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, to assistants to the Fire Marshal. This directive provides flexibility during fire drills so that all occupants of the school do not need to evacuate simultaneously, to ensure COVID-19 physical distancing requirements are maintained. This approach will be deemed to comply with *Fire Code* requirements for schools by local fire departments.

To support school safety, the Ministry of Education and the Office of the Fire Marshal collaborated to create the attached guidance document for Keeping Students Safe in School, during fire drills. The guidance document reflects the content of the *Fire Marshal Directive*, including providing sample modifications for a total evacuation fire drill. School administrators and local fire services are encouraged to work together to consider implementation of additional safe practices to further minimize the risk of COVID-19 spread in school settings.

For First Nation/federally-operated schools, we encourage you to use these as guidance documents to support fire safety in your schools and when planning and updating your policies and procedures. Please also continue to consult with your local fire authorities.

Should you have any questions about the guidance document, please contact Dianne Persaud, Manager, Safe and Healthy Schools Branch at Dianne.Persaud@ontario.ca or your local fire authorities.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Denise Dwyer
Assistant Deputy Minister

Original signed by

Jon Pegg
Ontario Fire Marshal

Attachment

- C. Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
Executive Director, Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes (ADFO)
Executive Director, Catholic Principals' Council of Ontario (CPCO)
Executive Director, Ontario Principals' Council (OPC)
Jeff Butler, Assistant Deputy Minister, Student Support and Field Services
Andrew Davis, Assistant Deputy Minister, Education Labour and Finance Division