

Using Annexes to Strengthen School Emergency Operations Plans

Introduction to Annexes

K-12 school emergency operations plans (EOPs) outline the roles, responsibilities, and actions of school community members before, during, and after an emergency. The foundation of an EOP is the basic plan section, which summarizes the school's overarching approach to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. [Comprehensive EOPs](#), however, should also contain annexes that detail the response steps a school will take when a specific emergency occurs. Effective EOP annexes build off of and support the foundational approach of the basic plan and can be categorized as either functional annexes or threat- and hazard-specific annexes.

Generally, annexes consist of three components: 1) the goal, or desired outcome; 2) objectives, which are explicit actions that must be completed to achieve the goal; and 3) courses of action, which are detailed descriptions of how each objective will be achieved. Once an annex has been finalized, it should be regularly reviewed, [exercised](#), and updated to ensure that it sufficiently prepares the school community for an emergency and that all [gaps are properly identified](#) and addressed for its specific functional need, threat, or hazard.

Examples of Annexes

Functional, threat-specific, and hazard-specific annexes address different aspects of emergency preparedness and response but are closely related. Functional annexes address essential operational functions and provide a plan of action to respond to multiple threats or hazards. Threat- and hazard-specific annexes describe the courses of action unique to particular threats and hazards and are identified by a school's multidisciplinary planning team during an [assessment process](#). Schools should be aware that some hazards have unique planning requirements directed by federal, state, and local regulations or mandates.

Some examples of annexes include:

 **Accounting for All Persons Annex:** This functional annex should contain courses of action to account for the whereabouts of all students, teachers, staff, and visitors on school grounds during and after an emergency. It should cover what steps will be taken if someone cannot be located and how attendance will be reported.

 **Bomb Threat Annex:** This threat-specific annex should document the response and reporting protocol if a [bomb threat](#) is received, including who should be notified of the threat and any immediate building security actions that should be taken based on the risk level. This annex may also want to account for special considerations related to other [anonymous threats of violence](#).

 **Cyberattack Annex:** This threat-specific annex should document [response actions](#) to be taken immediately after a cyberattack has occurred, including plans for alternative communication methods if voice and data communications are down. It could also contain specific

actions related to common K-12 cyber threats such as ransomware, phishing, and data breaches.

 **Family Reunification Annex:** This functional annex should detail how students can be safely reunited with their families after an emergency occurs, including how families will be informed about the [reunification process](#), how to ensure that an adult is authorized to take custody of a student, and how to ensure students do not leave on their own.

 **Hazardous Materials Annex:** This threat-specific annex should include information on responding to in-school or community incidents that involve [chemicals or hazardous materials](#), such as explosives, flammable or combustible substances, or poisonous or radioactive materials. It should document how a shelter-in-place or evacuation determination will be made based on the type, location, and severity of the incident as well as relevant decontamination actions.





Overdose Annex: This threat-specific annex should capture immediate response actions if a person experiences an [overdose](#) on school property. It should document if and where opioid overdose reversal medication (OORM) is stored at the school and how it will be determined if a suspected overdose situation requires administration of an OORM.



Recovery Annex: This functional annex should contain [courses of action](#) related to academic, physical, fiscal, and psychological recovery after an emergency, including who will provide trained mental health counselors and plans for alternative educational programming if physical school buildings are unusable. This annex may also want to account for [bereavement](#), [anniversaries](#), and [memorials](#) following a school or community tragedy.



Sextortion Annex: This threat-specific annex should document how to respond to and support a student who may have experienced [sextortion](#). It could also consider what immediate protective measures will be

taken for the affected student and how to communicate and coordinate with the student's family and local law enforcement.



Weather and Natural Disaster Annexes: These hazard-specific annexes should address likely inclement weather and natural disasters for a school's geographic location, such as [tornadoes](#), [floods](#), and [hurricanes](#). Each type of [hazard](#) should have its own annex that accounts for its unique response needs. Annexes should include information on evacuation or shelter-in-place locations, who will provide immediate medical care if someone is injured, and how to maintain communication with the school community with or without power.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list of annexes or considerations for each annex. Additional information on recommended functional and threat- and hazard-specific annexes for school EOPs can be found in the [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#).

The Importance of Partner Input in Annex Development

Community and school partner input is critical in the development of EOP annexes to ensure that school functions, threats, and hazards are properly addressed and that annexes adhere to relevant state and local regulations. Schools and districts should build relationships with local, state, and federal organizations to better understand external circumstances that could lead to an emergency that affects the K-12 community. These partners can also contribute to overall EOP development and participate in trainings and exercises to evaluate if the courses of action outlined in an annex are effective.

For example, a school located in an area prone to wildfires should include a wildfire annex in its EOP. School officials can engage with members of the local fire department when building the annex to better understand the local community's preparation for and response to wildfire incidents and to incorporate those approaches into their own plan.

Learn more and find additional [emergency planning](#) resources on [SchoolSafety.gov](#).

Sources: [After A School Emergency](#) | [Bereavement, Memorials, and Anniversaries: Developing a Recovery Annex for K-12 Schools](#) | [Bomb Threat Guidance](#) | [Developing and Maintaining Emergency Operations Plans](#) | [Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#) | [Hazardous Materials Incidents: Guidance for State, Local, Tribal, Territorial, and Private Sector Partners](#) | [Planning Considerations for Cyber Incidents: Guidance for Emergency Managers](#) | [Reunification with Children After a Disaster or Emergency](#) | [Sextortion: Protecting Youth Through the School Emergency Operations Plan](#) | [Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment and Stakeholder Preparedness Review Guide](#)

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