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MK Hessow

# Maryland Public School Critical Life-Threatening Incident After-Action Summary

On March 3, 2022 there was an incident involving a school within Frederick County Public Schools (FCPS) that met the criteria to be considered a *Critical Life-Threatening Incident* pursuant to Md. Ed. Art. § 7-1510 (g) and COMAR 14.40.05.

## **Notification** [COMAR 14.40.05.04A]

On March 3, 2022, the FCPS School Security Coordinator (SSC) notified the Maryland Center for School Safety of the incident.

## **After-Action Meeting** [COMAR 14.40.05.04B]

On March 14, 2022, an after-action meeting was held involving school representatives, law enforcement, and a representative from MCSS.

## **After-Action Report** [COMAR 14.40.05.04C]

On March 19, 2022, FCPS submitted an after-action report to MCSS.

## **Lessons Learned**

Based upon the after-action review led by the FCPS, the following lessons learned were identified:

1. When responding to potential hazards, effective communication, coordination and collaboration among school, school system central office, law enforcement, fire, and emergency services staff is essential in keeping schools and students safe.
2. FCPS determined having a representative of the school system's office of Security and Emergency Management Department (SEMD) in the Unified Command Post<sup>1</sup> is critical to effective incident response.

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<sup>1</sup> A *Unified Command Post* serves as the field location where agencies with different authorities and responsibilities work together during response to an incident.

## School Safety Recommendations

1. School systems should conduct annual multi-agency discussion- and operational-based exercises<sup>2</sup> that test schools' response to hazards and threats. Additionally, school systems should develop a mechanism to track identified corrective actions to completion.<sup>3</sup>
2. Schools need strong communication signals both inside and outside school buildings. Communication signal strength can be decreased due to the size and location of the school, distance to the nearest cellular or radio tower, natural obstructions, construction materials, and overloaded systems. Bidirectional amplifier (BDA) systems and antennas boost signals into and out of facilities providing coverage for two-way radio, cellular voice and data, as well as Wi-Fi and paging.

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<sup>2</sup> Discussion-based exercises include seminars, workshops, tabletop exercises (TTXs), and games and are used to familiarize players with plans, policies, procedures, and agreements. Operational-based exercises include drills, functional, and full-scale exercises used to validate plans, policies, procedures, and agreements. FEMA, Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program (2020), <https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/Homeland-Security-Exercise-and-Evaluation-Program-Doctrine-2020-Revision-2-2-25.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Areas for improvement identified following exercises and real-world incidents are turned into concrete, measurable *corrective actions* used to strengthen capabilities.