

GORHAM SCHOOL

DEPARTMENT

Comprehensive

**Emergency Management Plan**

Last update September 2015

75 South Street  
Gorham, Maine 04038

**PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE**

# PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE

## Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan

1. References:
  - a. Sec 1, 20-A MRSA §1001, sub-§16 as amended by PL 2001, c. 588, §10
  - b. School Administrative District
  - c. Gorham School Department Comprehensive School Emergency Management Plan
2. In compliance with the above references, the Gorham School Department School Committee reviewed and approved Gorham School Department's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan on January 27, 2009. The effective period of this plan is September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2016.

The Gorham School Department Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan was developed in cooperation with local public safety officials and administrators and representatives from each school in the district.

The Gorham School Department Building Administrator is the sole approving official for the reproduction and distribution of this plan. Duplication, sharing, and/or distribution of this plan beyond those mentioned herein is not authorized.

**Confidentiality** – The Gorham School Department Emergency Management Plan is intended for official use only by Gorham School Department faculty & staff, the Gorham School Department, and local, county and state public safety officials.

**Notice** - This Parent Information Guide is an abbreviated version of the district and building plans. The names and contact information of persons listed in this plan and the key locations of people, assembly points, equipment, supplies, and facility-operating devices are considered confidential. Use of this plan for any purpose beyond its intended use is not authorized and could compromise the health and welfare of Gorham School Department students, faculty and staff. Please report inappropriate use of this plan or any of its components as soon as possible to the Building Administrator or to any member of the School Emergency Team. Thank you for placing the safety of the Gorham School Department community first.

## I. Introduction

- A. Purpose
- B. Goal
- C. Scope
- D. Phases of Preparedness
- E. Definitions
- F. Special Thanks

*Knowing how to respond quickly and efficiently in a crisis is critical to ensuring the safety of our schools and students. The midst of a crisis is not the time to start figuring out who ought to do what. At that moment, everyone involved – from top to bottom – should know the drill and know each other.*  
--Margaret Spellings

**Purpose** – The Gorham School Department, and each of the district schools, have developed an Emergency Management Plan to provide a framework of policies, procedures, guidelines, and organizational structure that enables Gorham School Department, each school, and our community partners to effectively mitigate against, prepare for, respond to, and recover from all emergencies and disasters involving Gorham School Department .

This plan purposely does not address more specific responses demanded by the almost limitless variety of possible crises. Instead it provides a general framework for response, which in turn will guide more specific steps that a given situation demands, to be determined at the time of its occurrence by the School Emergency Team and emergency responders

**Goal** – The goal of this plan is to ensure the safety of all members of the Gorham School Department community and to preserve the well being of the School and continuity of education through a rapid, coordinated, effective response to (and recovery from) emergencies and disasters.

**Scope & Use** – **This plan is intended to inform parents and community leaders of the district’s planned actions in response to emergencies as a way of preparing families and local officials before an emergency occurs.**

**Phases of Preparedness** - The base plan’s format follows the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) four phases of emergency management:

**Mitigation** addresses what Gorham School Department can do to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property.

**Preparedness** focuses on the process of planning for likely or worst-case scenarios.

**Response** is devoted to the steps Gorham School Department will take during an emergency.

**Recovery** deals with how Gorham School Department will restore the learning and teaching environment after an emergency.

## **Definitions**

**Emergency** – Any unplanned event that can cause deaths or significant injuries to students, staff, or visitors; or that can shut down the school, disrupt daily activities, cause physical or environmental damage, or threaten the school’s financial standing or public image.

### **Crisis – Common Elements**

- Occurs with suddenness
- Causes time compression
- Demands quick response
- Interferes with organizational performance
- Creates uncertainty and stress
- Threatens the reputation, assets and bottom line of an organization
- Escalates in intensity
- Causes outsiders to scrutinize the organization
- Can permanently alter an organization

### **Special Thanks To:**

The Gorham School Department Public Safety Committee for developing this plan.

### **In Appreciation**

Gorham School Department Superintendent’s Office  
Gorham School Department School Committee  
Gorham High School  
Gorham Middle School  
Village Elementary School  
Narragansett Elementary School  
Great Falls Elementary School  
Gorham Police Department  
Gorham Fire Department

## **II. Mitigation & Prevention**

**General** – Mitigation and prevention require taking inventory of the dangers in and around Gorham School Department and identifying what to do to prevent and reduce injury and property damage. According to FEMA, the goal of mitigation is to decrease the need for response as opposed to simply increasing response capability.

**Definition** – Mitigation is any sustained action taken to reduce or eliminate long-term risk to life and property from a hazard event. Mitigation encourages long-term reduction of hazard vulnerability (FEMA, 2002) or “Actions taken to reduce the likelihood of an emergency or actions taken to lessen the impact of an emergency situation”. Mitigation and prevention also includes facility, behavior, and policy modifications.

### **Action Steps**

- The building administrator of each school will convene a hazard assessment team, on an annual basis, to identify potential risks/ hazards on and around the campus.
- The building administrator will review the annual assessment, and assign mitigating tasks (safety plan) to the appropriate personnel.
- Prior to the end of September, the building administrator will provide a report to the facilities manager and superintendent on progress made toward mitigating potential risks/hazards.

## **III. Preparedness**

### Emergency Planning

*Good planning will facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs. Being well prepared involves an investment of time and resources – but the potential to reduce injury and save lives is well worth the effort.*

– U.S. Department of Education

#### **Action steps for successful planning.**

Before planning begins for future updates to this plan, the Gorham School Department will divide and pre-coordinate responsibilities between the district and the Town of Gorham Public Safety agencies. Essential information has been collected, shared, and a plan developed that involves the right people. This includes, but is not limited to:

- A commitment to emergency preparedness.
- Involvement of key personnel.
- A determination of what emergencies the plan will address.
- Defined roles and responsibilities.
- Identified methods for communicating with the staff, students, families, and the media.
- Obtaining any necessary equipment and supplies.
- Developed accountability and student release procedures.
- Schools will practice emergency procedures throughout the year.

#### **Incident Command System**

The Gorham School Department and local emergency responders are ready to respond to school district emergencies in the most effective and coordinated way possible using the Incident Command System. The Building Administrator or his/her designee is the Incident Commander for school emergencies until public safety officials assume that role. The Incident Commander role officially passes to the fire chief during fire/HAZMAT incidents and to the law enforcement commander following a criminal act. During emergencies where a single Incident Commander is not appropriate, the Building Administrator and public safety officials form what is called a “Unified Command,” where the Building Administrator and public safety officials share in the decision making process.

### **School Emergency Team**

The School Emergency Team is made up of individuals within the school staff and was created to assist the building administrator in planning for and responding to school emergencies. There may be instances when time-sensitive decisions have to be made quickly by the building administrator, thus bypassing involvement of the School Emergency Team. A few positions of particular interest to parents are described:

### **Parent Reunion Organizer and Liaison**

The Parent Reunion Organizer and Liaison is responsible for the parent reunion and release at the school site or the relocation site following an emergency. This person provides specific directions to parents as they arrive in the area. This person establishes a pre-identified location where parents can wait to be reunited with their children and obtain information about the event. The liaison coordinates activities at the Parent Reunion Site. The liaison also coordinates with the building administrator to determine what information can be released to parents.

### **Teachers**

Teachers with students in class provide supervision of students in their care and remain with students during emergencies until directed otherwise. They will direct students according to response procedures; render basic first aid when needed; manage student communication via cell phones per school policy; report missing/injured or extra students to the Building Administrator or designee Leader.

### **School Nurse**

The nurse maintains first aid kits in common areas of the school. She trains and maintains an inventory of students and staff with CPR and first aid training, and coordinates their effort during an emergency. The nurse serves as triage officer during emergencies until EMS arrives.

### **Emergency Supplies & Equipment**

Emergency supplies and equipment are pre-positioned throughout the school for easy access when needed. These include:

- **Classroom Crisis Kit** that include a student class roster (with special assistance students identified), a copy of the Student Emergency Information Sheet for each child for K-5, and a Med Alert Lists for all students.
- **School Office Kit** that includes Student Emergency Information Sheet for each in the school, Med-Alert list, and staff emergency information.
- **School Nurse Kit** that includes a first-aid kit

### **Training & Exercises**

Staff and students will be familiar with emergency procedures, as deemed appropriate for their age level, annually.

Staff orientation and practice includes:

#### **Orientation Seminar**

The Orientation Seminar is a low-stress meeting to introduce everyone to the emergency plan. This will be conducted when the plan is developed and when new faculty or staff are hired.

## Functional Exercise

The functional exercise is a more stressed drill, and may focus on a specific portion(s) of a scenario (such as a fire drill). Staff may communicate with each other by phone or radio based on the scenario. Each exercise will be evaluated to note any issues that should be addressed.

Student orientation and practice includes:

Teachers will orient students as developmentally appropriate on the following components of the plan within the first month of the new academic year:

- Fire
- Evacuation
- Lockdown
- Shelter-in-Place
- Severe Weather
- Individual preparedness and response responsibilities

## Other Considerations

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1. School office staff will:

- pre-program emergency phone numbers on the school's phone system and,
- create phone, pager, and email address lists of, and for the School Emergency Team

2. Special needs students and staff:

- Teachers will assign staff to assist students with special needs during an emergency.
- Staff (that have no students assigned) will assist other faculty or staff needing assistance during an emergency.
- Gorham School Department Transportation Director will make arrangements for bus transportation of special needs students in advance of an emergency.

3. Off Campus Students (Vocational, Special Education, Field Trips.)

- Gorham School Department Transportation Director will make arrangements for bus transportation students in advance of an emergency.

4. Visitor/substitute teacher orientation on the Gorham School Department Emergency Management Plan:

- All visitors and substitute teachers are required to wear identification badges, available at the school office
- The Assistant to the Superintendent is responsible for orienting substitute teachers, teacher assistants, and long-term visitors of school and classroom emergency procedures.

5. School use as a community shelter:

- The Building Administrator will approve the use of the school as a community or American Red Cross shelter and will coordinate its use when activated as such.
- Gorham Community Shelters currently are Gorham Middle School and the Municipal Center.
- Once activated, the Gorham emergency personnel will coordinate with outside medical agencies for their provision of medical oversight of shelter clients with chronic conditions.
- The Gorham School Department *Food Service Director* will coordinate with the Shelter Manager for an orientation on food service supplies, equipment, and operations.

## □ IV. Response

Crises are unexpected, often unpredictable and take many forms. No school and community can be fully prepared for everything that may happen. The Gorham School Department has plans to address a variety of emergencies that may include:

- Fire
- Evacuation
- Lockdown
- Shelter-in-Place
- Severe Weather

## **Fire**

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All schools in Gorham are equipped with one or more of the following: fire/smoke detectors, alarm systems, fire suppression systems, and fire extinguishers as required by Town and State codes. These are inspected and tested in accordance with code. Students in K-5 will practice fire drills 10 times per year. Students in grades 6 – 12 will practice fire drills at least 5 times per year.

In the event of an actual fire or unsafe situation, evacuation to an alternative location may be necessary. (see Evacuation) Parents and guardians will then be notified of the event, and alternative site. This will include posting information on the district and/or school website if appropriate. Notification will be made using the most efficient process, which includes direct calling, announcements on GGETV Channel 3, automated calling with a recorded message, or a geographical reverse emergency 911 system called “City-Watch”. A team of staff will operate a student/parent reunification point at the relocation site. Students not picked up by parents/guardians will be bused to regular bus stops.

## **Evacuation**

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*Evacuation is used when conditions outside are safer than inside.* Once the Building Administrator directs an evacuation, all students and staff move from the school to the pre-determined outdoor area. After students and staff are accounted for and the threat has cleared, students and staff return to their classrooms.

If an incident is expected to be prolonged, or if conditions are not suitable for remaining at the outdoor area, students may be evacuated to an alternative location. Buses will transport students and staff to one of three pre-coordinated relocation sites along a prescribed evacuation route. After arriving at the relocation site, students and staff are sheltered and accounted for a second time. Parents and guardians will then be notified of the event, and alternative site. This may include posting information on the district and/or school website if appropriate. Notification will be made using the most efficient process, which includes direct calling, automated calling with a recorded message utilizing Blackboard Connect, or announcements on GGETV Channel 3, or a geographical reverse emergency 911 system called “City-Watch”. A team of staff will operate a student/parent reunification point at the relocation site. Students not picked up by parents/guardians will be bused to regular bus stops.



## Lockdown

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Lockdowns are used when an emergency occurs outside of the school and an evacuation would be dangerous or when there is an emergency inside and movement within the school will put students in jeopardy.

Procedures are in place to lock and secure the building immediately, and law enforcement personnel will be alerted. Students will NOT be allowed to use cell phones. Students will be assembled in the safest area of their room. Once the room is locked, teachers will take attendance. Any missing or additional students will be reported to the appropriate personnel.

During a lockdown, only public safety officials will be allowed to enter the building. Parents should not attempt to reach the school by phone. Parents are urged to stay away from the school during such situations, as it is potentially dangerous and law enforcement personnel may block all roads to the school.

Parents and guardians will then be notified of the event once law enforcement deems it safe to do so. This notification will be made using the most efficient process, which includes direct calling, automated calling with a recorded message, announcements on GGETV Channel 3; or a geographical reverse emergency 911 system called “City-Watch”. This will include posting information on the district and/or school website if appropriate. A team of staff will operate a student/parent reunification point. Students not picked up by parents/guardians will be bused to regular bus stops.

## Shelter in Place

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“Shelter-in-place” will be used for external situations that pose a risk such as an airborne threat. In general, the classroom will serve as “Shelter-in-Place.” It is used when there is not time to evacuate or when it may be harmful to leave the building. Students and staff are held in the building. All students and staff that are outdoors or in common areas such as the library, gym, or cafeteria must enter a classroom or office to shelter-in-place.

Following the “Shelter-In-Place” activation, members of the School Emergency Team will prepare communications for parents explaining what occurred and how it was resolved. This may include posting information on the district and/or school website, if appropriate and/or posting information on GGETV Channel 3.

## **Severe Weather Procedures**

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Severe Weather Procedures will be used when a severe weather situation requires students to remain inside, or return to the building. All schools monitor a Weather and Hazard Alert Radio that provides advance warning of an event from the National Weather Service. Students will be directed to take the closest, safest route to the designated safe areas. Occupants of portable classrooms will move to the main building. Students and staff will remain in safe area until further instructions are provided.

Following the event, members of the School Emergency Team will prepare communications for parents explaining what occurred and how it was handled. This may include posting information on the district and/or school website as well as GGETV Channel 3, if appropriate.

## **Student Accounting and Release Procedures**

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Student Reunification is the process of connecting students and parents together following an emergency. Such a process will not begin until all students are accounted for, and it is safe to begin releasing students. Accurate records must be maintained of all student releases, so parents must expect some delay. Student safety will remain our first priority.

Each building will develop specific procedures and locations pertinent to Student Reunification Plans. Each building will use the same Student Emergency Information and Release Form and follow a protocol appropriate for the age level of students involved.

### **Student Emergency Information and Release Form**

- Teachers will arrange to have parents fill out the Student Emergency Information and Release Form during the first week of school, and as part of the registration process prior to the arrival of all new students throughout the year.
- These forms will be updated at least twice per year. Forms are available at each school.
- The form includes the following information:
  - Contact information on parents/guardians, and other adults who can be contacted if the parent or guardian is not available.
  - Authorization for students to leave campus with any of the adults listed on the card, if necessary. Gorham School Department recommends adding one or more parents of children already attending Gorham School Department.
  - Pertinent medical information such as allergies, medications, and doctor contact information.

Parents arriving at school to pick up their child after an emergency can expect the following:

1. A Parent Reunion Site will be established and identified.
2. Information to parents about the event and actions taken will be given as appropriate.
3. Procedures for signing children out will be posted.
4. Parents will check in, identify themselves, and be given their child's Student Emergency Information and Release Form. Parents will sign, date and time the form, and then will be directed to the location for student pick up, taking the Student Emergency Information and Release Form with them.

5. Upon arriving at the pick up location, parents will give the Student Emergency and Release Information Form to the designated staff.
6. In situations where there is uncertainty or confusion about releasing students, or when deemed necessary due to the situation, those parents will be directed to an alternate Family Information Point for further information.

## Communications

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Timely and accurate communications during an emergency is critical. This includes communication with: school faculty, staff and students; parents of students; fire and law enforcement and other local emergency services. Each school has multiple means of communication during emergencies. In an emergency, answering telephones will not be a priority until it is safe to do so. Parents are asked not to call the school, and instead wait for information to be communicated from the school or emergency services. Notification will be made using the most efficient process, which includes direct calling, automated calling with a recorded message utilizing Blackboard Connect, announcements on GGETV Channel 3, or a geographical reverse emergency 911 system called “City-Watch”. This will include posting information on the district and/or school website and/or GGETV Channel 3, if appropriate.

## V. Recovery

**Goal** – The goal of recovery is to return to learning and restore the infrastructure of the school as quickly as possible. The Gorham School Department will focus on students and the physical plant, and will take as much time as needed for recovery. One of the major goals of recovery is to provide a caring and supportive school environment.

The school counselors and social workers lead the efforts in this area. When a crisis affects one school, staff members from other buildings are available to assist if necessary.

### Action Steps

- The building administrator will assemble the School Emergency Team and plan post-incident recovery efforts.
- Schools will return to the “business of learning” as quickly as possible while considering the emotional recovery of students and staff.
- The school will keep students, families, and the media informed, including suggestions and recommendations for dealing with trauma.

## **What to Expect After Trauma**

The reactions of students to trauma will vary depending upon the developmental differences of students and the nature of the incident.

Possible reactions of students include:

1. Feelings of anxiety, worries, and fears about safety of self and others
2. Worries about re-occurrence or consequences such as war, as well as worries about school violence
3. Changes in behavior:
  - a) Decreased attention and/or concentration
  - b) Increase in hyperactivity
  - c) Changes in academic performance
  - d) Irritability with friends, teachers, events
  - e) Anger outbursts and/or aggression
  - f) Withdrawal
  - g) Absenteeism
4. Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, chest pains)
5. Discomfort with feelings, particularly those associated with revenge
6. Increased likelihood to discuss the gruesome details
7. Repeated discussions of event
8. Increased sensitivity to sounds (e.g., sirens, planes, thunder, backfires, loud noises)
9. Negative impact on issues of trust and perceptions of others, particularly of those that are "different"
10. Repetitive thoughts and comments about death and dying

### **In addition, at home parents may see:**

1. Changes in sleep or appetite
2. Withdrawal
3. Lack of interest in usual activities (e.g., after-school activities, time with friends)
4. Increased negative behaviors (e.g., defiance) or emotions (e.g., sadness, fears, anger, worries)
5. Hate or anger statements
6. Denial of impact

Avoid exposing your child to reminders of the trauma. This includes limiting your child's exposure to the news and other television programs about the tragedy. If you do choose to have your child see this information on the television, keep it brief, watch it with your child, and talk to your child after to clarify miscommunication. Protecting the children from re-exposure includes limiting exposure to adult conversations about the events - even when you think they are not listening, they often are.

Maintain the family routines, particularly around sleeping and eating and extracurricular activities (e.g., sports, church, and dance). Make sure your child is receiving a balanced diet and enough rest. Extra time with friends who are supportive and meaningful to him/her may be needed. Avoid unnecessary separations from important caregivers.

Provide soothing activities, such as reading books, listening to music, taking a walk, riding bikes, etc. Some middle school students benefit from writing their thoughts and feelings in a journal. Address acting-out behavior involving aggression or self-destructive activities quickly and firmly with limit setting. If this behavior is severe or persists, seek professional help. Increase patience

with your child and with yourself. Give your family time to cope. Find ways to emphasize to the children that you love them.

Parents who have questions, concerns, or see evidence that their child is having difficulty dealing with the trauma are encouraged to contact the school counselor or social worker.