



#222-22

**Commonwealth of Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
Superintendent's Memo #222-22**

DATE: September 23, 2022
TO: Division Superintendents
FROM: Jillian Balow, Superintendent of Public Instruction
SUBJECT: **Frequency of Fire Drills and Lock-Down Drills**

Due to the questions received by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) regarding state requirements for the number and timing of fire drills, lock-down drills, and annual training that schools are required to conduct each school year, VDOE is providing the following information for clarification purposes.

Fire Drills

[22.1-137](#). Fire Drills.

In every public school, there shall be a fire drill at least twice during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that pupils may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school session.

The Board of Education's *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (Standards of Accreditation-SOA) 8VAC20-131-260. School facilities and safety* requires that:

B. Each school shall maintain records of regular safety, health, and fire inspections that have been conducted and certified by the local health and fire departments. The frequency of

such inspections shall be determined by the local school board in consultation with the local health and fire departments. In addition, the school administration shall:

2. Conduct a fire drill at least twice during the first 20 days and conduct at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the term....

The *Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code* (SFPC) (Sections 403.5.1, 404.2.1, 404.2.2, 405.1, and 405.2) requires that a school conduct:

- A fire drill within the first 10 days of school, and
- At least one fire drill per month.

To comply with the *Code of Virginia*, the SOA, and the SFPC, every public school should conduct:

- One fire drill in the first 10 school days,
- A second fire drill at anytime within the first 20 school days, and
- One fire drill every month thereafter for the remainder of the school term.

Lock-Down Drills

[§ 22.1-137.2](#). Lock-down drills.

- A. In every public school there shall be a lock-down drill at least once during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that students and teachers may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least one additional lock-down drill after the first 60 days of the school session. Every public school shall provide the parents of enrolled students with at least 24 hours' notice before the school conducts any lock-down drill, provided, however, that nothing in this section shall be construed to require such notice to include the exact date and time of the lock-down drill.
- B. Pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students shall be exempt from mandatory participation in lock-down drills during the first 60 days of the school session. Local school boards shall develop policies to implement such exemption. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this subsection, each pre-kindergarten and kindergarten student shall participate in each lock-down drill after the first 60 days of each school session.

Section 8VAC20-131-260 of the *Standards of Accreditation* requires that every public school administration shall conduct a lock-down drill at least twice during the first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school term.

The Board of Education's *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (Standards of Accreditation-SOA) 8VAC20-131-260.B* is currently being revised to reflect the updated requirements on the frequency of lock-down drills. However, until that change is finalized, the current regulatory language is still in effect.

For clarification, please note to comply with both the *Code of Virginia and the Standards of Accreditation*, every public school will need to conduct:

- At least two lock-down drills during the first 20 days of school (Pre-K and Kindergarten are exempt during the first 60 days), and
- At least two additional lock-down drills after the first 60 days of the school session (Pre-K and Kindergarten are required to participate).

Every public school shall provide the parents of enrolled students with at least 24 hours' notice before the school conducts any lock-down drill, provided, however, that nothing in this section shall be construed to require such notice to include the exact date and time of the lock-down drill.

For more information

If you need additional information, please contact Vijay Ramnarain, Director of Support Services, at (804) 225-2037 or Vijay.Ramnarain@doe.virginia.gov, Hunter Barnes at Hunter.Barnes@doe.virginia.gov, or Ann Belanger at Ann.Belanger@doe.virginia.gov or at (804) 225-2035.

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