

Personal Security Basics

DoDEA school security concepts provide a foundation for personal security practices. At school, staff and students learn about the importance of implementing a school risk reduction plan. Students and their families can incorporate these measures into a personal home safety plan. Principals can share security tips with parents by directing them to the Personal Security Guide available on the DoDEA web site at www.dodea.edu/offices/safety/index.cfm?sid=0. Although written for DoD personnel in the National Capital Area, these tips can be adapted for use throughout the world. The following paragraphs describe some key principles.

Develop Security Awareness

Although many people think of personal security in terms of adding door locks or security devices, developing an awareness of your surroundings is the first step to reducing your risk of becoming a victim of crime. Research has shown that criminals look for vulnerability. For instance, on the street, they tend to avoid individuals who look ahead and seem alert. In neighborhoods, burglars avoid houses with security system warnings, evidence of a dog, and homes that are well lit at night. In other words, they want to avoid difficulty as they carry out a crime and they will choose victims who seem less aware.

Report the Unusual

Awareness includes noticing details in the neighborhood that differ from normal activity. This could enable you to detect and report suspicious activity. Children are often the first to notice when something is different about their surroundings. Possible indicators include suspicious adults watching children, or strangers who appear to monitor arrivals and departures from home.

Teach Your Family How to Respond

A good rule of thumb is that children should not open the door to an unexpected adult, even if the visitor appears to have a legitimate purpose. However, instead of merely telling children not to open the door to strangers, teach them an alternative course of action and practice it with them. Alternatives to opening the door include calling parents or a trusted adult neighbor. If a stranger persists in knocking at the door or ringing the door bell, contact law enforcement immediately.



Maintain a Low Profile

Calling attention to yourself by emphasizing your affiliation with the U.S. or DoD makes you a possible target for terrorists and criminals. Avoid leaving packaging from expensive items like video games or televisions on the curb for trash pick up. Crush cardboard boxes and put them in trash cans or put them out just before trash collection. Be conscious of your clothing choices and stay sensitive to local customs and standards of behavior.



Control Your Living Space

Lock your doors. Time and distance give you an opportunity to react in the event of a home invasion. Do not open doors to strangers or give them easy access. Lock your car, office, and residence and secure the keys. Avoid crowds and volatile situations where you could be susceptible to pick-pockets.

Be Unpredictable

Varying routines helps your family avoid terrorism and crime. Criminals, like terrorists, conduct surveillance before attacking a target. Unpredictability makes it tough to plan and practice an attack. (Continued on page 4.)

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Secure Personal Information

Hostile action against people often requires details about their jobs, finances, vehicles, schedules, and security measures. Protect your personal information including addresses, cell phones, e-mail, social security number, military IDs, and passwords for on-line banking and computer access.

By practicing smart security measures, parents can teach children a life-long lesson about protecting themselves against crime and terrorism. Students who learn security awareness at school, and practice it at home, will be better prepared to protect themselves in the future. ■

Planning Ahead for Inclement Weather

In January, many areas in northern Europe experienced unusually strong storms that affected the communities around them. Transportation services from England to Germany were shut down because of hurricane-force winds and rain. Businesses, government agencies, and even zoos were shut down as safety measures. These recent storms illustrate the importance of school plans for unexpected incidents including inclement weather and natural disasters.



DoDEA Regulation 1005.1: *Administrators' Manual* states, "In case of inclement weather, the installation commander or his/her designee will coordinate school closure with the school principal . . ." For this type of situation, schools should have established methods for effectively communicating with parents and possibly dismissing students early. For example, administrators and staff should be familiar with school procedures for signing-out students when an installation decides to close the school. Also, parents of younger students need to be aware that they may be responsible for picking up their child if a school dismisses students early. If they cannot, they must arrange transportation for the student with another pre-approved adult. It is a good idea to have alternate dismissal plans in case more parents than usual are picking up their students – and possibly other students as well – directly from school.

DoDEA schools can ensure they are prepared to respond to inclement weather by implementing the protective actions listed in the *Safe Schools Handbook*. The "Take Cover" technique protects students and staff from sudden natural disasters (i.e., tornado, typhoon, hurricane, etc.). Providing school is in session, there are actions administrators can take to ensure the safety of students and staff: secure windows and doors in case of sudden violent winds, torrential storms, or flying debris; relocate any students in exposed classrooms to safer locations (i.e., enclosed hallway or inner classroom).

Developing reliable methods for communicating with staff, students, and parents is critical to a smooth response to inclement weather and school closures. Parents need to know how to find out if the school is closing because of inclement weather. Schools might consider reminding parents that DoDEA school closures are made in conjunction with the installation commander and might differ from those of the surrounding school districts. In addition to any emergency announcements from the school's installation, posting critical announcements on the school's Web site and/or sending e-mail and text messages to parents are effective ways of notifying the community of changes in the school schedule. Additionally, procedures for disseminating information can be included in each school's student handbook.

DoDEA Regulation 1005.1: *Administrators' Manual* is available from the DoDEA Web site at www.dodea.edu/foia/iod/pdf/1005_1.pdf. Procedures for protective actions such as Take Cover can be found in the *DoDEA Crisis Management Guide* described on page 1 of this newsletter, as well as the *Safe Schools Handbook*. ■