

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

EARTHQUAKE PLAN

2.304

An earthquake safety program involves more than preparing a response plan. It is an ongoing activity that includes identifying the hazards in the school; conducting earthquake drills; and involving teachers, parents and students in developing a plan for providing students with care and shelter until they can be reunited with their parents. An effective program also includes training and exercises, as well as classroom discussions and activities to help students understand the importance of taking quake-safe actions.¹

The need for an individual school earthquake safety program and an effective earthquake response plan is based on the following assumptions:

- A major earthquake can occur without warning and could occur during school hours.
- This event would cause widespread damage resulting from ground shaking and other hazards triggered by the earthquake (e.g. fires and the release of toxic materials).
- Transportation routes, telephone communications, and other utility services would be disrupted.
- Medical, fire and rescue personnel would be severely overtaxed and would not be able to respond to every school within the affected area for several hours.

Individual school communities should prepare to be self-sufficient — capable of relying on their own resources to protect and care for the school population until outside help is available.

Because earthquakes occur less frequently than other disasters, the extra time it takes to plan for this event is often weighed against the "odds" that it will not occur in this decade, or that it will not happen while school is in session. Although many hazards such as fires, floods, hurricanes and tornadoes. Therefore, the extra time spent on earthquake planning is also time well spent in enhancing general emergency plans.

¹ See Tenn. Code Ann. § 68-102-137; SBE Rule 0520-1-3-.03(17); Guidebook for Developing a School Earthquake Safety Program, Federal Emergency Management Agency (Jan. 1990).

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The following items should be addressed when creating an action plan for earthquakes:

- **Hazard Identification:** focus on how to estimate the potential impact of a major earthquake on the city, town, school and classrooms and how to identify hazards that can be eliminated or reduced or those that can only be anticipated.
- **Earthquake Drills:** discuss immediate dangers to expect and how to avoid those dangers during an earthquake, the importance of earthquake drills and appropriate protective measures to take.
- **Immediate Response and Care Requirements:** training necessary for principals, teachers and other staff members in first aid, search and rescue, fire control, and other first-hour priority actions without assistance from emergency response personnel,
- **Communication:** address the need to develop alternative plans for communicating when electrical power and telephone services are disrupted.
- **Post-Earthquake Shelter Planning:** consider the aftermath of a major earthquake and the extraordinary responsibilities that the school may have to assume to care for and shelter the student population beyond the normal dismissal hour.