

# District Emergency Communications Plan 2022 - 2023

*This document can be provided or translated in languages other than English, Spanish, Bengali and Urdu. Please contact your child's building administrator.*

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[এই নথিটি বাংলায় অনুবাদ করা হয়েছে। অ্যাক্সেস করতে এখানে ক্লিক করুন.](#)

[اس دستاویز کا بنگلہ میں ترجمہ کیا گیا ہے۔ رسائی کے لیے یہاں کلک کریں۔](#)

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## **What is the Upper Darby School District Emergency Communications Plan?**

The Upper Darby School District (UDSD) Emergency Communications Plan is a document that provides guidelines on what emergency/serious incident and school closing(s) information will be shared, with whom that information will be shared, how that information will be shared and when that information will be shared during all phases of an unexpected occurrence that requires immediate action. Overall, our goal is to ensure safety in our schools ([Act 55 of 2022](#)).

The UDSD Emergency Communications Plan is designed to complement the District's existing *School Emergency Response Plan*, not to replace it in any manner. The *School Emergency Response Plan* is a framework designed to help schools respond to emergency and serious incidents and hazards and consists of four phases of emergency and serious incident management:



The Upper Darby School District disseminates information throughout each of the four (4) phases of the School Emergency Response Plan as follows. Please note that the following indicates how the District responds **with communication** during each of the stages of the emergency response:

1. COMMUNICATION during the ***Prevention-Mitigation*** stage:

The District communicates to stakeholders about the tools in place to positively impact school climate, culture and safety, protocols and programs that aim to prevent, mitigate and diminish hazards that can cause risks and subsequently an emergency or serious incident. These include building safety equipment, system additions and upgrades,

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Trauma-Informed Care, Restorative Practices, 21 Day Planner, Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), Youth Court, school counselors and social workers, and other programs, resources and services that support the improvement of school climate and culture by decreasing unsafe behavior and increasing prosocial interaction. The District also provides an annual update on school safety procedures during a public forum, meets with each home and school association, provides information on the [Safe2Say Something](#) anonymous tip line, and holds safety meetings with local emergency responders and other community schools. The Director of Communications has also worked with other district administrators to develop and prepare emergency and serious incident communications templates in order to improve timely communication. These templates are adjusted as needed per incident to include relevant information.

2. COMMUNICATION during the **Preparedness** stage:

The District takes a proactive approach in sharing with parents/guardians and stakeholders the *School Emergency Response Plan* and the *UDSD Emergency Communications Plan*. The Superintendent, Director of Public Safety, Director of Elementary Education, Director of Secondary Education, Director of Pupil Services, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Principals communicate what the District's school safety protocols are, the meaning of safety terms and school emergency response protocols. The Superintendent and Director of Public Safety review this information with the Board and the public every year. Principals share the *School Emergency Response Plan* with staff and students and lead practice lock-out, lock-in lockdown and evacuation drills.

3. COMMUNICATION during the **Response** stage:

The District informs stakeholders in the event of an incident and provides status updates.

4. COMMUNICATION during the **Recovery** stage:

The District communicates about the resolution of the incident and provides information on post-incident procedures and supports as needed.

## **Why is the Emergency Communications Plan needed?**

The UDSD Emergency Communications Plan has been developed to ensure parents, school district staff, Township residents, school district stakeholders and the media are provided with timely and accurate information during an emergency and serious incident. The Plan is also designed to inform stakeholders of district protocols for changes to the school schedule due to an emergency school closure, late start to school opening and/or early dismissal.

It is the goal of Upper Darby School District that the District be the official source of information for all things related to the Upper Darby School District. The reality for school district is that the emergence of social media has provided a platform, at times, for dissemination of inaccurate information, incomplete information and emergency and serious incident-related rumors from unofficial sources. Unlike anonymous and/or unofficial sources, the District is obligated to investigate a matter as thoroughly as possible, provide due process to all involved, ensure notification of parent(s)/guardian(s), work with law enforcement and emergency/serious incident response personnel, and ensure student privacy rights are not violated (especially when minors are involved). One of the goals listed in the District Comprehensive Plan is to continue to improve communication with our stakeholders. This includes ensuring accuracy and increasing the timeliness of our communications as much as possible and providing follow-up information and support when necessary. The District also has a partnership with local law enforcement and has entered into a state required Memo of Understanding (MOUs) with all appropriate agencies.

Upper Darby School District officials who are charged with communications during an emergency or serious incident aim to disseminate accurate information as quickly as possible. Their objectives include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintaining a safe and welcoming school environment at all times for students, staff, parents and the school community at large
- Building trust with staff, students, parents and the community
- Providing timely, reliable and regular information to parents, staff, students

- Providing other professionals the opportunity to fully complete all necessary investigations



**How does the school district communicate emergency/serious incidents and/or changes to the school schedule related to inclement weather or other events?**

The Upper Darby School District will continue to strategically optimize and leverage email, social media and mobile alerting technology to accelerate emergency notification to school staff, parents/guardians and school community stakeholders. Select communications tools are used to:

- notify parents/guardians of a emergency/serious incident or school schedule change
- provide updates
- to provide information about any procedures related to the School Emergency Response Plan

In the case of an emergency, the following communications tools are activated:

Communications Tool	HOW TO JOIN
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>PARENTLINK</u></b></p> <p>Emergency/serious incident and school schedule change messages are sent to parents and community registrants ParentLink is a robocall and email system that is used to send out mass emails and voice messages (as needed) to all parents/guardians using contact information from the Home Access Center (HAC).</p>	<p>Parent contact information for ParentLink messages is accessed from the Home Access Center. Parents/Guardians are responsible for keeping contact information (email and phone number) up-to-date in the Home Access Center. Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to learn how to update your contact information in HAC. Click <a href="#">HERE</a> to update your contact information in HAC.</p> <p>Community Members can register to receive ParentLinks <a href="#">HERE</a>.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>SOCIAL MEDIA</u></b></p>	<p>Parents are encouraged to <b>Like</b>, <b>Follow</b> and <b>Subscribe</b> to of the District’s official social media platforms and to turn on any</p>

<p>Emergency/serious incident and school schedule change messages are shared across the District's official (Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter social media.</p>	<p>notifications when possible.</p> <p><b>Instagram</b> - <a href="#">@udsdofficial</a></p> <p><b>Facebook</b> - @UpperDarbySchoolDistrictOfficial  <a href="https://www.facebook.com/Upper-Darby-School-District">https://www.facebook.com/Upper-Darby-School-District</a></p> <p><b>Twitter</b> - <a href="#">@upperdarbysd</a></p>
<p><b><u>CRISISGO APP</u></b></p> <p>Emergency/serious incident and school schedule change messages are shared through the District's official CrisisGo app.</p>	<p> <b>CRISISGO IS THE FASTEST WAY TO RECEIVE EMERGENCY ALERTS AND MESSAGING</b> </p> <p>The CrisisGo mobile app allows UDSD parents to connect with safety message groups from our school district and individual school buildings. UDSD parents can download the CrisisGo app on their mobile device and create a FREE account. Parents will then need to subscribe to the school(s) of their choice and the Upper Darby School District group via the ID number.</p> <p><a href="#">CLICK TO SUBSCRIBE TODAY</a></p>

It is important to note that the Upper Darby School District works closely with the Upper Darby Township, Millbourne Borough, and Glenolden Borough by way of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which is an agreement between the Upper Darby Township and the Upper Darby School District. The District collaborates with the Police and/or Fire Department leadership to ensure that the information that is shared in District communications does not interfere with or compromise an ongoing investigation. It is also important to note that communication protocols are different when the emergency/serious incident involves a crime having been committed. As per the MOU, the responding police department or fire department will lead all communication. The Upper Darby School District will be included and involved when necessary.

**What happens when an emergency or serious incident occurs?**

When school district personnel determine there to be a critical incident that might impact the safety of the students, staff and visitors, an alert notification is sent through our CrisisGo mobile application. Prior to this alert, the District will alert police and/or the fire department or both. It is important to note that any district staff member can activate a Lockdown emergency alert through the CrisisGo app.

The alert can be designated as a Lock-Out, Lock-In, Lockdown or Evacuation. As indicated in the table below, the type of emergency response alert will determine the level of district response. Learn more about the emergency preparedness and safety terminology used in District emergency communications in the [Lock-Out, Lock-In, Lockdown, Evacuation FAQs for Families](#) document.

<b>Emergency Response Alert</b>	<b>District Communications Response</b>
Lock-Out	A communication is sent through CrisisGo, ParentLink and across district social media to the families within the school originating the alert and any other schools directly impacted by the incident.
Lock-In	A communication is sent through CrisisGo, ParentLink and across district social media to the families within the school originating the alert and any other schools directly impacted by the incident.
Lockdown	A communication is sent through CrisisGo, ParentLink and across district social media to all district families.
Evacuation	<p>A communication is sent through CrisisGo, ParentLink and across district social media to the families within the school originating the alert and any other schools directly impacted by the incident.</p> <p><u>NOTE:</u> These alerts do not include fire drill evacuations. Fire drills are practice evacuations for students and school staff.</p>

When an alert is activated in the CrisisGo app, the following ensues:

1. School staff and district officials receive the alert through the app.
2. The School Emergency Response Plan is immediately activated for all students, staff and any visitors. Local emergency response personnel are contacted as appropriate. Students, staff and visitors are required to comply with the emergency response protocol throughout the incident. School staff and district officials are able to engage in two-way communication through the app.



3. The Superintendent's Command Center is activated as the centralized command location for the handling of and communication regarding an emergency/serious incident. The Superintendent and/or backup will be in communication with emergency responders and begin to establish an incident command post.
4. The District's Emergency Response Team connects with the School-Level Emergency Response Team for an overview of the incident and to provide support to the school administration in managing the emergency/serious incident. See below for more about the District's Emergency Response Team and the chain of command during emergency/serious incidents.
5. The Director of Communications activates the internal and external communications protocol and sends out a communication via the CrisisGo app, ParentLink email, and the District's official social media to provide an overview of the incident. Depending on the seriousness of the incident, the communication will be reviewed with local police and/or fire for accuracy of information and as to not interrupt an investigation.
6. Communication between the District's Emergency Response Team and the School-Level Emergency Response Team and any emergency response personnel is maintained throughout the incident.
7. Updates are communicated to district stakeholders and the Board of School Directors throughout the incident as often as possible and/or when new information becomes available.
8. The close-out of the emergency response is communicated to district stakeholders when the incident has ended.
9. An incident follow-up communication is sent to district stakeholders in the case of a lockdown. The Principal communicates with the respective school community following a lock-out, lock-in, lockdown or evacuation incident.
10. The District Emergency Response Team conducts a debriefing on the incident and may include local police and/or fire if necessary.

## **What is the District's Emergency Response Team and what is its Chain of Command?**

The District's Emergency Response Team is comprised of members from each school district department, each offering expertise in a certain area as related to providing support to schools during an emergency/serious incident.

Each member of the District Emergency Response Team is responsible for collaborating with the Superintendent of Schools regarding any services and supports that may be activated during an emergency or serious incident.

Each member of the District's Emergency Response Team is responsible for collaborating with the Superintendent of Schools, the Director of Communications, and the Director of Public Safety to communicate updates as accurately and as quickly as possible. The District also has an internal document listing backups for each position.

Members of the Team are as follows:

- Superintendent of Schools
- Director of Communications
- Director of Public Safety
- Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
- Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Equity
- Director of Elementary Education
- Director of Secondary Education
- Chief Financial Officer (Transportation, Facilities, Operations)
- Director of Curriculum and Instruction
- Director of Federal Programs, Grants, Food Service, Counseling and Social Work
- Manager of Data and Information (Student Attendance)
- Director of Pupil Services
- Director of Technology
- Secretary to the Superintendent of Schools

The Superintendent has established a chain of command for the Upper Darby School District Administration Emergency and Serious Incident Communications Team to serve as a hierarchy of authority that dictates levels of communication responsibilities throughout an emergency or serious incident. The graphic below is a representation of the Upper Darby School District Administration Emergency and Serious Incident Communications Team chain of command.

	<b>District Incident Commander</b>	<b>District Communications Leader</b>
<b>Primary</b>	Dr. Daniel McGarry, Superintendent	Aaronda Q. Beauford, Director of Communications
<b>1st Back Up</b>	Edward Marshaleck, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services	Christine Kelley, Director of Curriculum
<b>2nd Back Up</b>	Craig Rogers, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Wendy Elgart, Director of Federal Programs and Grants
<b>3rd Back Up</b>	Dr. John Council, Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Equity	Tim Lambert, Manager of Data and Information

The District Incident Commander is responsible for overseeing all matters related to the emergency or serious incident.

The District Communications Leader is responsible for ensuring that communication flows to district stakeholders during an emergency or serious incident.

The District Commander and District Communications Leader work collaboratively throughout an emergency or serious incident to ensure communication to district stakeholders is accurate, timely and disseminated regularly.

Both the District Incident Commander and District Communications Leader roles each designate primary and two back up personnel to carry out the specific responsibilities. The Superintendent is designated as the Primary District Commander. In the event the Superintendent is not on site or unavailable, the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services serves in that capacity, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) serves as the 2nd back up, and the Assistant Superintendent of Personnel and Equity serves as the 3rd back up. The Director of Communications is designated as the Primary District Communications Leader. In the event the Director of Communications is not on site or unavailable, the Director of Curriculum serves in that capacity with the Director of

Federal Programs and Grants serving as the 2nd back up and the Manager of Data and Information serving as the 3rd back up.

Updates will come from the Superintendent to the Director of Communications. The Superintendent and Director of Communications will be kept informed throughout the incident.

Again, each member of the District Emergency Communications Team is responsible for collaborating with the District Incident Commander (Superintendent of Schools or designee) and the District Communications Leader (Director of Communications or designee) in communicating to district stakeholders any services and supports that may be activated during an emergency/serious incident.

## **CHANGE OF SCHOOL SCHEDULE**

### **What happens when the school schedule must be changed?**

While the decision to delay school opening, dismiss students early or close schools is based on several factors, the most important factor is student safety. Some of the other factors the District takes into account when making a decision regarding the school schedule include a threat against a school, road conditions, student transportation, temperature, weather predictions, and school campus conditions (i.e. parking lots, sidewalks, bus loops, etc.). The District aims to make information available to families about the change in the school day schedule as soon as possible through the communication tools outlined above.

### **School Closures**

- If a decision to close schools is to be made the day before the inclement weather event or for another reason, we will do our best to make a decision by 6:15 p.m. the day prior. If a decision to close schools is made on the morning of the inclement weather event, it will be made by 5:30 a.m. There may be circumstances that require us to close school after 5:30 a.m., and we will communicate the reason for such a decision.

### **School Opening 2-Hour Delay**

- If a decision to schedule a 2-hour delay is made before the inclement weather event, it will be made by 6:15 p.m. If a decision to close schools is made on the morning of the inclement weather event, it will be made by 5:30 a.m.
- A decision as to whether or not to close schools following a 2-hour delay will be made no later than 9:00 a.m.
- A decision to close schools early following an inclement weather event that begins after 9:00 a.m. will be made and communicated as soon as possible.
- A decision as to whether or not to cancel after-school activities will be made no later than 1:00 p.m. on the day of the inclement weather event.

### **School Emergency Early Dismissal**

- If a decision to dismiss schools early is made before the inclement weather event, it will be made by 6:15 p.m. If a decision to dismiss schools early is made on the morning of the inclement weather event, it will be made by 9:00 a.m.
- A decision to dismiss schools early following an inclement weather event beginning after 9:00 a.m. will be made and communicated as soon as possible.
- A decision as to whether or not to cancel after-school activities will be made no later than 1:00 p.m. on the day of the inclement weather event.

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