

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1279

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning school safety drills.

Sponsors: House Committee on Education (originally sponsored by Representative Pettigrew).

House Committee on Education

Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education

Background:

Schools and school districts are required by statute to develop comprehensive safe school plans. Specified components of the plans include:

- emergency mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery;
- provisions for assisting and communicating with students and staff; and
- guidelines for requesting law enforcement and emergency response agencies to meet with school districts and participate in safety-related drills.

Schools are directed to conduct no less than one safety-related drill each month that school is in session. Schools must complete at least:

- one drill using the school mapping information system;
- three drills for lockdowns;
- one drill for shelter-in-place;
- three drills for fire evacuation in accordance with the state fire code; and
- one other safety-related drill to be determined by the school.

In addition, schools are encouraged to consider drills for earthquakes, tsunamis, or other high-risk local events.

A 2012 report from the Washington Emergency Management Council's Seismic Safety Committee included recommendations to make schools more resilient structurally, socially, and educationally. One of the recommendations was to enact legislation that requires all school districts to conduct at least one earthquake safety drill per school year and schools in mapped tsunami hazard zones to conduct a pedestrian evacuation drill annually. The recommendation specified that the law should explicitly require drop, cover, and hold as the state's approved earthquake safety technique.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary:

Due to geographic location, schools have unique safety challenges. It is the responsibility of school principals and administrators to assess the threats and hazards most likely to impact their school, and to practice the three basic functional drills: shelter-in-place, lockdown, and evacuation, as these drills relate to those threats and hazards. Some threats or hazards may require the use of more than one basic functional drill.

Schools must conduct at least one safety-related drill per month, including summer months when school is in session with students. These drills must teach students three basic functional drill responses:

- "shelter-in-place," used to limit the exposure of students and staff to hazardous materials, such as chemical, biological, or radiological contaminants released into the environment by isolating the inside environment from the outside;
- "lockdown," used to isolate students and staff from threats of violence, such as suspicious trespassers or armed intruders, that may occur in a school or in the vicinity of a school; and
- "evacuation," used to move students and staff away from threats, such as fires, oil train spills, or tsunamis.

The required drills must incorporate:

- use of the school mapping information system in at least one of the safety-related drills; and
- a pedestrian evacuation drill for schools in mapped tsunami hazard zones.

The required drills may incorporate an earthquake drill using the state approved earthquake safety technique "drop, cover, and hold."

Schools must maintain documentation of the drills, including type of drill, in the school office.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	98	0	
Senate	49	0	(Senate amended)
House	97	0	(House concurred)

Effective: July 23, 2017