

## **Emergency Preparedness and You - *From Child Care Licensing***

**You can't predict when a disaster might strike, but you can prepare!** This slogan from the American Medical Association really says it all. There are so many parts to think about—thinking and planning before an emergency will help it all work out more smoothly with an emergency does happen. An emergency is a stressful situation in itself. Think about all the energy and stress you might save yourself, your staff and the families in your care with some planning.

A snowstorm in New Hampshire is not unusual. A snowstorm in October is extraordinary even for us. There was a survey to providers about how they handled the storm.

### ***Planning ahead might save some of the extra efforts.***

“...it was a very large inconvenience for our families (who need care), teachers (who expect to be paid) and mgmt who took time to call every hour to see if we could open... We even took time to call hotels and restaurants for use of conference rooms as a way for teachers to care for children offsite. No one agreed...”

### ***What a time to find out about an administrative error.***

"Unfortunately we had 2 different documents with 2 different policies (for payment)."

### ***One of the biggest impacts reported was difficulty communicating with families.***

Having no connection with the families as the Internet, phone lines and cells phones were not working. I wasn't able to get messages out to the families."

"I was unable to call families as we did not have phone service. I was afraid that several families would show up for childcare. As it worked out, only 2 families came and most didn't even realize that we were closed."

“With power, internet, phones, etc. out it was difficult to get messages out to families.”

Programs can be a source of support and comfort for families—here's an example of community outreach!

“We were only center in town open. All our children were w/o power at home, so we were their heat and water and warm food! Glad I could provide.”

The Emergency Response Plan required by the Child Care Program Licensing Rules is one way the Department can help you be prepared. The rule was not developed to give programs *one more thing to do*. It was included in our rule revision so that programs start to plan and will know what to do if disaster strikes.

### ***Some points on the rule***

He-C 4002.19(q) Programs shall develop an emergency response plan which shall:

(1) Be based on the incident command system and coordinated with the emergency response agencies in the community in which the agency is located;

>>For more information about the ICS (incident command system) go to: [www.training.fema.gov](http://www.training.fema.gov). It is recommended you complete IS100SCa an Introduction to the Incident Command System for Schools. Training for Emergency Preparedness through FEMA and the ICS will count towards your professional development requirements. It is also critically important that your plan has input from your local Emergency Response organizations. Far too many Child Care programs are not included in local plans.

(2) Contain guidelines for personnel responsible for critical tasks, including, but not limited to the role of center incident commander, child care, medical treatment, and child-parent reunification; and

>>All staff should be aware of what the plan says and what to do in an emergency. Get parents informed or involved. Ideally, staff should be involved in the development of your plan so they are invested in the plan.

(3) Include **Response Actions** for natural, human-caused or technological incidences including, but not limited to:

a. Evacuation, both within building and off-site;

>>This is activated when it is necessary for staff and children to exit the school building when the fire alarm activates or an incident in the building poses an unsafe environment.

b. Secure Campus (Lockout); (Note : this term was changed after the rule was written; because we didn't want it confused with Lockdown)

>>This action is used when the program has been threatened from the outside. Examples of threats; wild animal, non-custodial parent, threat made to the program, a child or the staff, an armed robbery near the program, etc.

c. Drop and cover;

>>This action is used to immediately protect children and staff from an explosion, gunfire, earthquakes, and tornado/severe wind with no warning.

d. Lockdown;

>>This action is used to clear the hallways and common areas of all students and staff and secure them in classrooms or other designated Areas of Refuge.

e. Reverse evacuation; and

>>This action is used to bring all children and staff into the building when it is necessary to enter the school quickly in order to avoid a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation outside the school.

f. Shelter-in-place.

>>This action is used to shelter children and staff within the building in case of a Hazardous Material incident.

With these six **Response Actions** in place and practiced, the utilization of the Incident Command System for your emergency organization and coordination with your Emergency Responders a program should be able to respond to any emergency situation.

The Child Care Licensing Unit will begin to ask for your Emergency Response Plans for review in 2012. If you are not sure where to begin, there are many resources. The Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Safety and the Resource and Referral Network are working together to ensure that programs have the support they need to plan for disaster. Keep an eye out for Emergency Preparedness guides, pilot programs for planning and more. For ongoing information, go to <http://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dcyf/cdb/early-childhood-resources.htm>.