



GUIDANCE TO SCHOOLS FOR UNPLANNED FIRE ALARMS



In 2018, the Indiana Legislature directed the State Fire Marshal to provide written guidance to school administrators, teachers, and students regarding options available during an unplanned fire alarm. Recently, we've seen fire alarms used to lure students and teachers out into the open during active shooter incidents instead of being used to save lives as they are intended. In collaboration with the Indiana Department of Education, I am sending this message out to all schools throughout Indiana to provide guidance as to what is an appropriate response during an unplanned fire alarm in a school building.

James L. Greeson
State Fire Marshal

OPTIONS

1. Evacuate the building when you hear the alarm. This will always be an option for students, teachers, and administrators when a fire alarm is activated.
2. If your school building has a fire alarm panel that allows for "Positive Fire Alarm Sequence," school administrators may develop a plan to investigate an alarm activation before the audible and visual alarms are activated requiring evacuation. This option allows up to three (3) minutes for trained staff to investigate a fire alarm trigger before the alarm sounds throughout the building and evacuation begins.
3. If your school building does not utilize the Positive Fire Alarm Sequence panel, administrators, teachers, and students may barricade or block a door for a period not to exceed three (3) minutes in the event of an unplanned fire alarm activation in order for a designated school official to investigate the alarm. The school must initiate evacuation and safety procedures after the three (3) minute period expires. However, the period may be extended in the event that an active shooter has been verified to be on the school's property.

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Remove pull stations from hallways and near exits in compliance with the fire code.
2. Keep classroom doors closed and locked during school hours.
3. Consider installing a fire sprinkler system if your building does not currently have one. This may eliminate the requirement for fire-rated classroom doors and provides more flexibility for door hardware without taking the door out of compliance with the fire or building codes.
4. For additional background and information, please visit www.in.gov/dhs/unplannedfirealarms.htm.