



Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder to put teeth into 'Code Red' and other school drills after MLive investigation

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Fire drills, lockdown drills and tornado drills like this one in an eastern Michigan high school would have strict new requirements under a law to be signed today. *(MLive.com file photo)*

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Michigan schools must do a better job conducting “code red” and other safety drills under a new law **prompted by an MLive.com investigation.**

Schools also must implement a cardiac emergency response plan, particularly in the wake of high-profile emergencies involving prep athletes and others.

Gov. Rick Snyder this afternoon was to sign the legislation sponsored by **state Rep. Joseph Graves, R-Argentine Township.**

The law requires schools to submit to emergency officials proof of fire, severe weather and “lockdown” drills. It also tightens regulations on how and when the drills are to be done, and increases oversight.

“There is a much greater effort to track it. They are required to report to us, and we will make sure that it gets to the local first responder for follow-up,” said Ted Quisenberry, manager of Oakland County’s Homeland Security Division. Quisenberry headed one of a number of school-safety groups working under the Michigan State Police.

The group included members representing state and local police agencies, county sheriffs, the Department of Education, educators, firefighters, the state fire marshal, and county emergency management coordinators .

The committee was part of a larger ongoing task force ordered by Gov. Rick Snyder after the Dec. 14 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

In the wake of the shootings that killed 20 students and six adults, MLive reporters examined thousands of safety-drill records from more than 400 schools across Michigan.

The investigation found school that ignored mandatory drills. Others did as many as six in a day late in the

year, skirting the law's intent.

The news organization also found evidence of questionable record keeping. Schools in Grand Rapids, Midland and elsewhere reported doing drills on Saturdays or Sundays. A Flint high school recorded doing one during spring break. Royal Oak Middle School submitted a drill record for a date that had not yet occurred, also a Saturday.

Few were worse than the Swan Valley School District in Saginaw, including records that appeared forged. Officials there recorded three drills on weekends. One elementary listed nearly identical dates and starting times for fire drills - including evacuation times that matched to the second - for similar drills a year later.

The legislation passed 34-0 in the Senate, and 81-27 in the House.

Michigan law previously required K-12 schools to complete six fire drills, two lockdown drills and two tornado drills a year. There was little oversight, and no penalty for non-compliance.

The new law changes the mix of mandatory drills, and addresses a host of shortfalls identified by MLive:

- Schools would have to finalize and file their drill schedules by Sept. 15 and notify authorities.
- Notice of each drill's completion must be posted within 30 days on the school's website for public review.
- Greater scrutiny would be required of county emergency management coordinators to ensure the drills are done as scheduled.
- Emergency drills - such as lockdowns against armed intruders - would increase from two three a year.
- In exchange, the six mandatory fire drills would be reduced to five. Two must be done before Dec. 1 and another in January. The final two could be done anytime.
- Schools would be forbidden from holding more than one drill a day.
- One of the tornado drills would have to be done in March, before the severe weather season.
- At least one drill would have to be done during lunch, or when students are not in a controlled class setting. This further specifies a practice that already is required but widely ignored.

Beyond safety drills, K-12 schools would also have address use and maintenance of portable defibrillators, if any; activation of an emergency response team; and a defibrillator and CPR training plan in schools with grades 9 to 12.

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