# Superintendent’s Memo #191-19

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**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA   
Department of Education**

DATE: August 2, 2019

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: James F. Lane, Ed.D., Superintendent of Public Instruction

## SUBJECT: Frequency of Fire Drills, Tornado Drills, Lock-Down Drills, Bus Drills, and Annual Training

In light of questions received by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) about the requirements for the number of fire drills, tornado drills, lock-down drills, school bus emergency drills, and annual training that must be held during the school year, VDOE is providing the following information for clarification purposes.

**Fire Drills**

* *§ 22.1-137. Fire Drills.*

*In every public school there shall be a fire drill at least twice during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that pupils may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school session.*

* Section 8VAC20-131-260 of the Board of Education’s *Regulations Establishing Standards for Accrediting Public Schools in Virginia (Standards of Accreditation)* requires that “every public school conduct a fire drill at least twice during first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional fire drills during the remainder of the school term; ...”

The *Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code* (*SFPC*) (Sections 403.5.1, 404.2.1, 404.2.2, 405.1, and 405.2) requires that a school conduct:

* A fire drill within the first 10 days of school and
* At least one fire drill per month.

**NOTE: A school conducting one fire drill in the first 10 school days, a second fire drill at anytime within the first 20 school days, and one fire drill every month thereafter will meet all requirements.**

**Tornado Drills**

* *§ 22.1-137.1. Tornado drills.*

*In every public school there shall be at least one tornado drill every school year, in order that students may be thoroughly practiced in such drills.*

**Lock-Down Drills**

* *§ 22.1-137.2. Lock-down drills.*

*In every public school there shall be a lock-down drill at least twice during the first 20 school days of each school session, in order that students may be thoroughly practiced in such drills. Every public school shall hold at least two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school session. Lock-down plans and drills shall be in compliance with the Statewide Fire Prevention Code* (§ [27-94](http://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/27-94/) et seq.).

* Section 8VAC20-131-260 of the *Standards of Accreditation* requires that every public school administration shall conduct a lock down drill at least twice during the first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school term.

**NOTE: In order to comply with the *Code of Virginia* and the *Standards of Accreditation*, every public school will need to conduct a lock-down drill at least twice during the first 20 days of school and conduct at least two additional lock-down drills during the remainder of the school term.**

**Bus Drills**

* *§ 22.1-184. School bus emergency drills.*

*At every public school having public school buses there shall be held, at least once during the first ninety calendar days of each school session and oftener if necessary, a drill in leaving school buses under emergency circumstances.*

* Section 8VAC20-70-110 of the Board of Education’s *Regulations on Pupil Transportation Safety* Instruction requires the following:

1. At the Pre-K-1 grade levels, initial safety training shall occur during the first week of school with additional training on a periodic basis during the year.

2. Emergency exit drills shall be practiced by all pupil riders at least twice a year, the first occurring during the first 30 instructional days and the second in the second semester and shall include the school bus driver. Summer session evacuation drills should be performed as needed.

**NOTE: A school division meeting the requirements of 8VAC20-70-110 will also meet the requirements of *Code of Virginia Section 22.1-184.***

**Requirements for Annual Training on Emergency Situations**

House Bill HB1732 and Senate Bill SB1215 which became effective July 1, 2019, amended the *Code of Virginia* to require school divisions to develop training on safety procedures that shall be delivered to each student and employee at least once during the school year.

* *§ 22.1-137.3. School safety procedures; emergency situations; annual training.*

*In addition to complying with the requirements for drills set forth in § 22.1-137, § 22.1-137.1, and § 22.1-137.2 each school board shall develop training on safety procedures in the event of an emergency situation on school property. Such training shall be delivered to each student and employee in each school at least once each school year.*

If you need any additional information, please contact Vijay Ramnarain, Director, Office of Support Services at (804) 225-2037.

JFL/aam