

Role of Headmaster in Disaster Management

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In any primary or secondary school 'The Headmaster' being the Head of the organization play a very important role in formulation and execution of any task or project including crisis management. Any disaster in a school must be taken seriously as the safety and security of a large number of children and staff on campus during the school hours is the ultimate responsibility of the school management of which the H.M. is the most important link.

Considering the cost and consequences of any disaster, no H.M. can afford to ignore or evade a sound disaster management plan. Thus it is extremely necessary for every school to have a proper and well defined school specific disaster management system in place. The formulation of such plan and its implementation calls for minute care and detailed planning and hence the H.M. should take special interest and should possess sound managerial skills for the effectiveness of the project.

The Essentials of a disaster management plan are :-

- * Clarity of aim and objectives
- * Realistic / workable plan
- * Flexible
- * Makes co-ordination simple and practical
- * Responsibilities are well defined
- * Result oriented
- * Effective communication / information

School Disaster Management Plan.

- * Every school should set up a Disaster Management cell (DMC).
- * The D.M.C. will have a two tier structure.
 - (i) Policy / Decision makers :- Consisting of five members
H.M. , Asst. H.M. , Supervisor, management representative and parent representative
 - (ii) Executors :- Consisting of H.M. , Asst. H.M. , Supervisors and appropriate number (5 to 10%) of teaching staff, Clerical staff, Attendants (peons) and students (class representatives)
- * The D.M.C. should ideally meet once in 3 months.
- * The main responsibility of D.M.C. is to formulate and implement a school specific D.M. plan.
- * The three stages of a D.M. plan are as under :-
 - (A) Preventions and Precautions
 - (B) Action plan / Execution
 - (C) Follow up / Review

[A] Preventions and Precautions : (School Preparedness Plan)

In preparedness planning the following points are to be considered.

1. Determine major risk areas of School Building, class rooms and neighbourhood (Hazard assessment)
2. Draw a map of the school premises, where in the entry and exist points are numbered according to their priority.
3. Examine and prepare the possible responses in the event of a disaster.
4. Estimate the resources required.
5. Form School Disaster team and introduce them properly so that their instructions are followed in crises.
6. Train identified staff with latest technology and information.
7. Prepare formal document that set out the sequence of activities and role and responsibilities of each team member. (Emergency Procedure).
8. Develop and maintain list of needed emergency supplies and tools necessary to respond and implement the plan (First aid facility and safety measures).
9. Identify the strategic placement of resources to be used in the responses.
10. Prepare procedure for lock down, evacuation, and shelter in place.
11. Conduct mock drills of the above procedure from time to time.
12. Maintain close liaison with Fire Department , Law enforcement agencies, local emergency department and Health officials.
13. Establish proper communication network and back up communication plan in case of failure of the main system.
14. Conduct class wise workshops for improving response capabilities of staff and students by providing information, education and consciousness to deal with a crisis.
15. Review and update the plan regularly.
16. Display phone numbers and address of local fire brigade, police station, and hospitals.

[B] Execution / Action plan :

In case of an emergency / crisis event the H.M. is expected to work as a Commander in Chief.

1. He / She should take complete charge of the situation.
2. Make accurate assessment of the situation.
3. Decide and priorities the plan of action.
4. Approach with speed but be clam and controlled.
5. Inform and direct the cell members to take their respective positions.
6. Put the pre planned strategy in action.
7. Control the rumours and boost the morale by making announcements on the public address system.
8. Keep the alternate back up plan ready.
9. Alert the external agencies like Fire, Police, Hospitals and Municipal Health Department etc.

[C] Follow up / Review :

1. After the crisis the D.M.C. members who are trained to handle the post crisis trauma should take their positions.
2. Through the communication network the message should be sent that the crisis is over and the situation is under control.
3. The relief operation should be put into action.
4. Report of the entire event should be prepared and documented.
5. Copies of the report should be sent to all the stakeholders like Management, P.T.A., Education Department etc.
6. Organise a review meeting with the D.M.C. to find out the strength and weaknesses of the prevention action taken plan so as to make it more realistic, effective and practical in future.

