



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 2021, the Indiana Legislature modified how schools should respond to unplanned fire alarms. 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.

Effective July 1, 2021, **schools should no longer barricade or block a door during an unplanned fire alarm activation. Schools are required to develop a plan to address unplanned fire alarm activations** which includes evacuation of the building when the alarm is heard and compliance with fire and building safety regulations.

If a school is equipped with a positive sequence fire alarm system, the school may develop a plan to investigate an unplanned fire alarm activation before activating the audible and visible alarms requiring evacuation. Such a plan must include a designated school official with proper training to acknowledge an alarm has been activated and initiate an investigation within 15 seconds. These schools can secure-in-place for up to 3 minutes in order for the designated school official to investigate the unplanned fire alarm activation. Following the 3-minute period, the school must evacuate, unless an active shooter is verified to be on the school's property.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JMT", is positioned above the name of the signatory.

Joel Thacker
Indiana State Fire Marshal

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Schools should work with their local public safety agencies to determine what actions should be considered and taken during an unplanned fire alarm activation.
2. Remove pull stations from hallways and near exits in compliance with the fire code.
3. Keep classroom doors closed and locked during school hours.
4. 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 future modifications to school buildings.
5. For additional background and information, please visit [in.gov/dhs/unplannedfirealarms.htm](https://www.in.gov/dhs/unplannedfirealarms.htm).