

## Fire Alarm Delayed Evacuation Response Guidance

Recent legislation ([Public Chapter 563](#)) has passed that requires each LEA, public charter school, private school, and church-related school to develop and implement a procedure for determining the cause of a fire alarm activation, including the potential for an active shooter event. Smoke generated from ammunition fired within a school building could activate a fire alarm, causing students, teachers, substitute teachers and staff to move or congregate into areas that are unsafe and that place them in danger during an active shooter situation. This document is intended to provide guidance to schools and districts when planning for the new fire alarm requirements. The procedures should be included in the evacuation functional procedures of the [district](#) and [school emergency operations plans](#).

1. Procedures to determine the cause of a fire alarm activation must be developed in consultation with the local fire department and local law enforcement officials.
  - a. These procedures must also comply with applicable fire and building codes.
  - b. Schools may consider involving emergency management agencies, along with the assigned Fire Marshal during the planning process.
2. The procedure must include response measures for students and school staff, which includes substitute teachers and other part-time staff and school volunteers, after a determination is made regarding whether the emergency involves a fire, an active shooter, or other incident.
  - a. Schools shall annually train all school staff, including substitute teachers and other part-time staff and school volunteers, on the safety procedure developed for responding to a fire alarm activation.
3. Each Local Education Agency (LEA) and public charter school (as applicable) must coordinate with its district-wide and building-level school safety team to incorporate the procedure in both the district and building level emergency operations plan.
4. Schools and emergency response officials may consider:
  - a. An appropriate amount of time for designated building staff to investigate the source of a fire alarm signal prior to evacuation.
  - b. Designating within the procedure, the appropriate personnel (and backup personnel) responsible for investigating the cause of the alarm and how the cause of the alarm will be investigated.
    - i. The designated person must be trained to look for indicators of fire or other hazardous conditions, and must immediately, upon an alarm, check the local areas adjacent to where the delayed evacuation is designated.

- ii. The designated person must have direct knowledge of primary and alternate routes of egress from the area.
    - iii. The designated person must have the absolute authority to immediately call for the evacuation of all persons within the area, should indicators of fire be noted.
  - c. The communications devices at the school, how they work and how they will be utilized. The means of notifying occupants of the event of a lockdown, shall be distinct from the fire alarm signal.
  - d. The layout of the school including Identification of each door or other access point that will be secured in a lockdown, and if there are multiple buildings on the campus property.
  - e. Prior training the school may have completed such as fire evacuation, [ALERTT](#), [ALICE](#), or other emergency trainings.
5. Schools utilizing fire alarms with pre-recorded evacuation announcements should ensure the announcement instructions coordinate with the school's procedures.

As a reminder, in order to be in compliance with [T.C.A. § 68-102-137](#), fire drills shall be held at least one (1) time every thirty (30) school days, with two (2) fire drills occurring during the first thirty (30) full days of the school year. Fire drills shall include complete evacuation of all persons from the building.

Additionally, four (4) fire safety educational announcements will be conducted throughout the year. A record of all fire drills, including the time and date, shall be kept, and shall be made available upon request to the state fire marshal or the state fire marshal's deputies or assistants, for inspection and review.

Safety drills not requiring full evacuation shall be conducted at least three (3) times during each school year. A record of all safety drills, including the time and date, shall be kept in the respective school offices, and shall be made available upon request to the state fire marshal or the state fire marshal's deputies or assistants for inspection and review.