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Dr. Charlene Williams
Director of the Department of Education

TO: Chair Frederick & Members of the Senate Education Committee

DATE: Oct 8, 2025

FROM: Zoe Larmer, Government Relations Director

RE: Questions posed during informational on school safety

Chair Frederick and Members of the Senate Education Committee,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to share more information. In response to your request for written information, please find below our responses regarding school safety.

We are more than happy to continue providing information to you on our work and look forward to our continued partnership on behalf of all Oregon students. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you need further clarification.

With gratitude,
Zoe Larmer

Question: On the school floor plans mentioned, would those floor plans somehow be made public?

The school floor plans mentioned came from a recommendation from the School Safety Task Force, with the additional recommendation that they be shared with emergency response personnel.

These school floor plans were never developed and were removed from the statute in the 2021 Legislative Session through [SB 225](#). Our understanding was that this piece was removed at least in part due to security concerns.

Question: Does ODE help school districts develop a “flight team” plan in the event of an emergency?

Both the School Safety and Prevention System (SSPS) and School Safety and Emergency Management (SSEM) programs provide assistance to districts and schools on the full spectrum of school safety. School Safety and Prevention Specialists (SSPS) provide regional, district, and school support in the development and facilitation of flight teams that can respond when a school experiences a traumatic



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event or crisis. SSEM personnel have assisted districts across the state to incorporate these teams into emergency planning for districts.

Question: How do school safety plans work with the Governor's Executive Order on cell phone bans from bell to bell? Are there any concerns with implementation there?

The Governor's Executive Order 25-09 on personal electronic devices (PEDs) in schools does not directly affect emergency response in schools; however, to address concerns related to safety, ODE has included this topic in [*ODE's Fostering Student Learning, Well-Being, and Belonging: Guidance for Personal Electronic Device Policies in accordance with Executive Order 25-09*](#) on page 14.

Many parents and caregivers consider cell phones a lifeline during emergencies, allowing quick communication between students and families. This is a real and valid fear that should be addressed by those involved in new cell phone policy and rule development. While PEDs could be used in maintaining communication during crises, their use must be managed carefully to balance the benefits and risks involved. Some of those risks include:

- Overwhelming cellular networks with excessive communication, which can hinder effective response efforts by public safety personnel.
- Spreading incorrect information, misinformation, or unverified details, which can cause confusion and additional fear, potentially worsening the situation.
- Bringing unwanted attention during a drill or actual emergency because of a device's alerts, alarms, notification sounds, vibrations, etc.

Schools and districts are encouraged to have effective communication plans in place that will keep families informed of incidents and mitigate anxiety when direct communication with a student is not immediately available. Students and staff should follow district response protocols.

Question: Some of our schools in Oregon are not seismically safe. In some instances, drop, cover and hold may not be the best response. Is there consideration for that in school safety plans?

The statute that addresses emergency plans and drills (ORS 336.071) already permits schools to drill emergency procedures in addition to "Drop, Cover and Hold On" for earthquakes. ODE guidance, developed in coordination with the Oregon Department of Emergency Management and the Oregon State Fire Marshal, and advised by other experts, addresses considerations for school earthquake planning that includes alternative protective measures—particularly evacuation under certain



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circumstances. [Emergency Plans and Drills Guidance: Incident-Specific Plans](#) details the recommendations and considerations.