

Governor Signs SB 233, Omnibus School Safety Act

Mandates Creation of Statewide School Safety Plans

Department of Safety and Homeland Security working with schools and districts on comprehensive safety plans, making Delaware first state in country with statewide protocol

(Wilmington, DE) – Taking a major step forward in a multi-year effort to improve school safety, Governor Markell today signed into law [Senate Bill 233](#), the **Omnibus School Safety Act**, which creates a formal statewide framework for comprehensive school safety plans. The Governor signed the bill among students, educators, school resource officers, police chiefs and other public safety personnel gathered at McKean High School, Red Clay School District in suburban Wilmington/Pike Creek/Hockessin area.

The Act requires the Delaware Department of Safety and Homeland Security to work with schools, districts and first responders to develop comprehensive, up-to-date safety plans. It also lays out the responsibilities of the department, schools and districts in meeting the goal of bringing comprehensive school safety plans to each public school (including charters) in the state.

The Governor prioritized comprehensive school safety plans during his [State of the State Address in 2011](#) and last year, [announced the first step](#) in creation of the plans. Since last year, all schools with State Police Resource Officers have completed school safety plans. Approximately 25 plans have been completed to date.

“We want our kids to go as far as their potential will take them but, we can’t control everything. For students to learn to the best of their abilities, they need, first and foremost,

to be safe,” said **Governor Jack Markell**. “Our goal is to bring comprehensive school safety plans to every public school and district in our state. This law is an important part of an ambitious, multi-year effort to make our schools and the students in our schools safer.”

“The time spent in school represents a sacred trust that we must honor by making certain our schools are safe each and every day,” said **Lewis Schiliro, Delaware Secretary of Safety and Homeland Security**. “Today, we begin the process of bringing all 219 public schools operating in our state under one common safety protocol, making Delaware the first state in the country to do so.”

“Developing a consistent approach to handling emergencies in our schools will help our first responders in dealing with a crisis situation,” said **Senator David Sokola (D-Newark), who sponsored the measure**. “It also should help give students, parents, teachers and administrators more peace of mind by knowing that people won’t be scrambling to deal with an unexpected crisis situation.”

“What this bill does is direct the right people to issues,” said **Representative Dennis E. Williams (D-Talleyville)**, lead sponsor in the House. “This takes advantage of the expertise of Capitol Police in building security and allows school administrators to focus on their tasks.”

☒ “No one thinks a disaster or tragedy can or will happen to them,” said **School Resource Officer for Milford schools, Milford Private First Class Officer Joe Melvin**. “While the probability is not high, the possibility that something can happen warrants our preparation.”

Rafael Velez, a tenth grader at McKean said, “Some people decide to do terrible things in schools. We have to be more careful every year.”

Statewide School Safety Plans

Under the Act, the [Department of Safety and Homeland Security](#) will lead the effort to bring comprehensive school safety plans statewide. The Department's responsibilities include:

- Working with school officials and first responders to help schools develop their safety plans;
- Assisting schools and districts in conducting training exercises;
- Reviewing and approving plans; and
- Adopting regulations as needed to implement this program.

Much of the "ground level" work, such as preparing plans and conducting exercises with schools, will be done by [Capitol Police](#), an entity that is already responsible for securing state buildings and facilities.

SB 233 further requires schools and districts:

- To designate a "school safety team," who will assist in developing and submitting to DSHS an approved school safety plan; and
- To work with DSHS and first responders to conduct one critical incident exercise per year, and one "tabletop exercise" (*i.e.*, an informal discussion involving simulated emergency scenarios) every 2 years.

Ultimately, the goal of the Omnibus School Safety Act is for each school and district to have a safety plan with four key elements:

1. **Comprehensive** – Not just a checklist, but a thorough plan.
2. **Coordinated** with first responders.
3. **Site-specific** – That is, tailored to the particular

layout of each facility, and in some instances, to its geographical location. For example, if a school is in a floodplain, that school's plan will include contingencies dealing with floods.

4. **NIMS-compliant** – “NIMS” is the **National Incident Management System**, a framework for emergency response developed by the federal government. It stresses coordination and collaboration with first responders.

The state budget this fiscal year commits \$400,000 to create school safety plans for approximately 50 schools.

To view the bill signing, click here:
<http://youtu.be/aFN8qEcRjvU>