

Governor Signs Bill to Accelerate, Enhance School Safety Efforts

Includes additional activities for schools to prepare for emergencies

Dover, DE – Building on his 2013 pledge that all Delaware schools would have a “state-of-the-art school safety plan” by the end of 2014, Governor Markell today signed legislation that requires schools to have a comprehensive and up-to-date plan by this month. 

House Bill 340 amends the Omnibus School Safety Act that Markell signed in 2012, which initially said schools and districts must, by September 2017, be in compliance with the Act’s provisions regarding preparation for potential emergency situations, ranging from armed intruders to natural disasters.

In his 2013 State of the State address, Markell said the initial five-year timetable in the Act was “a laudable goal, but we can do better.” Since then, the Department of Safety and Homeland Security (DSHS) has worked with districts to speed up their work and, currently, 78 percent of schools are ahead of schedule and have compliant plans.

“We have no more important obligation as a state than to ensure a safe environment in the places where our students learn,” said Markell, who signed the bill at Caesar Rodney School District’s W. Reily Brown Elementary School, where he was joined by state legislators along with school and district officials.

“This bill marks another important step in our never-ending process to ensure schools are as prepared as possible to protect their students and staff in any contingency. It has

been impressive and gratifying to see the hard work by administrators and faculty throughout our state to make the two year timeframe possible and update all of their safety plans to the maximum extent.”

Plans must be thorough, coordinated with first responders, tailored to the layout and location of each facility, and compliant with the National Incident Management System, a framework for emergency response developed by the federal government that stresses collaboration with first responders.

“As a father with two boys who went to public school, there’s nothing more important than making sure they get a high-quality education in a safe and secure environment,” said the bill’s prime sponsor, Rep. Darryl Scott, D-Dover. “This bill accelerates our efforts to ensure each and every school across the state has a school safety plan in place and that our teachers, administrators and emergency responders review and practice those plans regularly.”

In addition to completing the process of accelerating the development of school safety plans, HB 340 provides for school districts to conduct table top exercises annually and at least two lockdown/intruder drills per school year. They must submit verification of the exercises to DSHS.

“The Delaware public and charter school community have fully committed to providing their students with the most comprehensive and complete safety plans in the country,” said Safety and Homeland Security Secretary Lewis D. Schiliro. “The progress we’ve made is indeed a tribute to the dedication and perseverance of our teachers, administrators, school personnel and our public safety partners. As a parent and grandparent, we should all be thankful for what they have accomplished.”

Tabletop exercises allow school officials to work through their plans to identify any possible gaps and make adjustments, and intruder drills allow school faculty, staff,

and administrators, as well as students, to become more familiar with procedures and expectations so the response becomes second nature.

“We are pleased W. Reily Brown Elementary School was selected as the site for the signing of HB340,” said Caesar Rodney School District Superintendent Dr. Kevin Fitzgerald. “We are fortunate that Governor Markell, the state legislature and the Department of Safety and Homeland Security have made the safety of our students their number one priority in Delaware. We look forward to continuing our relationship with Homeland Security, local law enforcement agencies and fire companies to ensure all of our schools have up-to-date school safety plans and conduct exercises to validate our plans.”

[Photos from the event](#)