

DATE:	June 30, 2022
SUBJECT:	Required School Safety Action Steps This Summer
CATEGORY:	School Safety
NEXT STEPS:	Begin actions related to safety audits, including exterior door safety audits

Overview

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Texas School Safety Center (TxSSC) are committed to supporting local educational agencies (LEAs) in their efforts to improve the safety and security of school facilities for staff, students, and visitors. On June 1 and 2, Governor Abbott charged [TxSSC](#) and [TEA](#) with a set of directives to support the safety and security of public schools.

Under Governor Abbott’s leadership, TEA and TxSSC are planning a set of actions that will collectively improve the level of safety at all Texas public schools. This correspondence is being issued to LEAs to provide guidance related to actions LEAs must take prior to the start of the new school year that will make their campuses more secure. This correspondence is also intended to share information about the supports available now and those that are coming in the weeks and months ahead.

All Texas LEAs must take the following actions prior to the start of the new school year:

- Conduct a Summer Targeted Partial Safety Audit (see below)
- Conduct an Exterior Door Safety Audit (see below)
- Convene the LEA’s Safety and Security Committee to review:
 - the multi-hazard emergency operations plan (EOP)
 - and, as a component of the EOP, the LEA’s active threat plan
- Ensure all campus staff (including substitutes) are trained on their specific LEA and campus safety procedures
- Schedule all mandatory drills for the school year
- Ensure all threat assessment team members are trained
- Review and, if necessary, update access control procedures
 - For the new school year, access control procedures must include exterior door sweeps (ensuring doors are closed and locked) at every instructional facility at least once each week while instruction is being conducted.

Under authority of Texas Education Code (TEC), Section 37.207, LEAs are required to respond to a survey issued by TxSSC to certify each of the above items have been completed by

September 1, 2022. To ensure clarity of expectations, LEAs can review [this document](#) to see each of the survey questions they will be asked. The survey will be open no later than September 1, 2022, and **responses will be due no later than September 9, 2022.**

Moving forward, we want to ensure LEAs are aware of a few other actions planned:

TEA will be issuing a proposed rule based on authority in TEC, Sections 7.061 and 37.115, that will require all LEAs in Texas to ensure all instructional facilities meet certain facilities standards and that certain related procedures are followed on an ongoing basis. The rule is intended to apply to all district and charter school instructional facilities, whether leased or owned and regardless of construction date, and will similarly reinforce the requirements noted above.

With any new requirements that may be imposed, our goal is to provide support to assist LEAs in meeting these requirements. A few items of note:

- TEA will open a data collection allowing LEAs to submit information on any facility components that are not in compliance with these to-be-proposed facility standards, along with estimated costs to remedy the compliance. **This information will be compiled and submitted to the Texas Legislature for purposes of requesting funds for LEAs.**
- As described in [this correspondence](#), some funds are available immediately for needed facility improvements under the recently extended SB500 school safety grants.
- As noted [here](#), additional funds have just been approved by Governor Abbott and legislative leadership for silent panic alert systems for schools. We are currently working on the details of this grant and will provide more information as soon as it is available.
- Given the need for school systems to update their access control procedures to include weekly exterior door sweeps, TEA also plans to share tools and best practice examples gleaned from Texas LEAs on how to manage weekly exterior door sweeps in the most efficient manner possible.
- Additionally, on Monday, June 6, 2022, TxSSC issued [this correspondence](#) that included a host of resources designed to help LEAs ensure compliance with all these required summer safety actions.

Beyond these actions focused on preparing for the beginning of the new school year, under Governor Abbott's leadership, TEA, TxSSC, and other state agency partners are working on additional actions to provide more support to improve school safety. This includes efforts to expand technical assistance for emergency operations plan development, conducting threat assessment protocols, expanding availability of school-based law enforcement, improving the efficacy of drills and incident preparedness exercises, and supporting LEA efforts in implementing multi-tiered system of supports. Expect more information on these topics as the supports become available.

Summer Safety Audit Guidance & Tools

As part of immediate actions to improve campus safety around the state, all LEAs are expected to conduct a targeted safety audit before the start of the school year. To guide this process, TEA and TxSSC are providing the [Summer Targeted Partial Safety Audit Tool](#). This tool is a limited scope version of the TxSSC School Safety and Security Audit tool, including about 50 questions to be considered for each LEA instructional facility, with roughly half of the questions related to campus procedures and the other half related to campus physical plant. The tool also includes an optional companion guide to help guide reflections and considerations as LEAs audit the effectiveness of their approach to school safety.

As part of the targeted summer partial safety audit, LEAs must inspect every exterior door of each of their instructional facilities. The purpose of this inspection is to verify that every exterior door of instructional facilities closes and locks as intended to ensure appropriate levels of campus security. With this audit performed, LEAs can begin taking steps immediately to remedy any issues found. To assist in conducting this audit, TEA is providing a template [Exterior Door Safety Audit Tracker](#) tool. This tool has been designed to establish a short checklist for each door, to verify it is functioning as intended for minimum security, or determine if it is in need of maintenance.

To help LEAs better understand how both of these tools can be used, TEA is hosting a Summer 2022 Safety Audits Webinar on Tuesday, July 12 at 12:00 noon. [Register for the Summer Safety Audit Tracker webinar here](#).

It should be noted that the information collected from the Exterior Door Safety Audit, the Summer Targeted Partial Safety Audit, and the TxSSC September survey are all part of a school's safety and security audit and not subject to disclosure under Ch. 552, Government Code, pursuant to TEC, Sections 37.108, 37.2071, and other relevant statutory provisions. This disclosure exception continues to apply when this information is shared with TEA and TxSSC. Neither TEA nor TxSSC will publicly disclose any individual LEA information found in these data but will only provide aggregate state-level data summaries. However, per TEC, Section 37.108(c-2), the public disclosure exception may not apply to requests to determine whether information was gathered and whether there was compliance with required processes.

In accordance with TEC, Sections 37.108 and 37.109, the results of these audits shall be reviewed by each school safety and security committee at an upcoming meeting, and can be reviewed in executive session. The Summer Targeted Partial Safety Audit and Exterior Door Safety Audit do not replace the comprehensive safety and security audits required once every three years by TEC, Section 37.108. Each LEA should continue to conduct a full safety audit locally as planned. However, LEAs will be required to certify that the Summer Targeted Partial Safety Audit and Exterior Door Safety Audit have been completed in their September 2022 report to the TxSSC, as outlined in the [TxSSC Letter to Superintendents](#). LEAs must locally

retain all completed copies of their Summer Targeted Partial Safety Audit and Exterior Door Safety Audit in accordance with local record retention policies.

Final Note

Please know that both TEA and the TxSSC stand ready to support LEAs as they work to make school facilities safer and more secure for staff, students, and visitors. We have posted some of these school safety resources at: <https://tea.texas.gov/texas-schools/health-safety-discipline/safe-and-supportive-schools/school-safety-resources>. And if you have any questions, please contact:

TEA: safeschools@tea.texas.gov

TXSSC: txssc@txstate.edu

We understand that the safety of students and staff is always the top priority of Texas public school systems. While the requirements described herein may be new to a few, we know that most schools in Texas are already implementing these actions and more to keep our students and staff safe. We hope that the added support provided by the state, both financial and technical, will help further the efforts you are implementing locally to ensure every one of our campuses is both safe and supportive for our students and staff.

Yours in Service,

Mike Morath
Commissioner, Texas Education Agency

Kathy Martinez-Prather
Director, Texas School Safety Center