



NJDOE News

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DOE Notifies School Districts of Nation's Elevated Terror Status *Asks School Districts to Remain Vigilant in Awareness, Safety Precautions*

The Department of Education (DOE) today sent a letter to school districts and personnel statewide outlining the nation's elevated terror alert status and reminding the New Jersey school community to remain vigilant in its awareness and safety precautions during the holiday season.

In announcing the DOE's message to school districts Monday, Commissioner of Education William L. Librera reiterated comments made by Governor James E. McGreevey on Sunday, when the Federal Department of Homeland Security raised the national alert from Yellow (Elevated) to Orange (High).

"Like Gov. McGreevey said on Sunday, we will not let terror and fear dictate our lives, especially in this holiday season," Commissioner Librera said. "We ask that our school districts remain aware of the heightened alert, and we ask they have all safety precautions in order."

"This is a week for schools to wind down and take time off to enjoy the holiday season, and we encourage all school employees to do just that — but we do live in a world now where we should all remain aware of our surroundings," Commissioner Librera said. "We'd like to wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season."

In the letter from Deputy Commissioner Dwight Pfennig to school districts, the DOE outlined key contacts for personnel, including the New Jersey Office of Counter Terrorism, the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management and the United States Department of Homeland Security.

Generally, the DOE is encouraging school districts to:

- Establish open lines of communication with local and county emergency management coordinators;
- Establish open lines of communication for parents/guardians that allow access to individuals who can answer questions effectively and provide useful information;
- Review district/school emergency plans with all students, personnel, parents/guardians, law enforcement officials and emergency management coordinators;
- Secure all emergency phone lists utilized by the school district and have them available on a 24/7 basis;
- Establish an "offsite" data file backup location; and
- Establish alternative methods of maintaining open communications with constituents.

Additionally, the DOE is reminding school districts that any decisions regarding the closing of facilities or other major decisions should be made in concert with local and county emergency management coordinators, as well as in concert with local and governmental law enforcement officials.

For more information, please contact the Department of Education Public Information Office at (609) 292-1126.