



Important Terminology

- REMS – Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools
- Emergency Operations Plan – provides details on what the agency or facility is to do during the event of a disaster
- REMS TA Center – the REMS Technical Assistance Center offers a variety of information and training
- Critical Infrastructure – there are 16 critical infrastructure sectors that are so valuable to the United States that their destruction or incapacitation would have a debilitating impact on the U.S. physical, economic, and public health security

Introduction

- In Homeland Security, there are many programs that play an important role in everyday life and in the promotion of safety and readiness in the event of an emergency
- The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) is one of these critical programs
- Preparedness in the education system is of the utmost importance
- Since 2003, REMS has been administered by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools
- REMS is a grant program that allows local education agencies to improve and strengthen emergency management plans within schools
- Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) can be developed with the help of REMS
- The REMS program is a great initiative, but there is still a lot of needed steps and changes that should be done for the purpose of bettering the program

Research

- REMS provides great resources, however, there is much improvement that can be made to ensure safety in schools
- The education system is one of the most important sectors of critical infrastructure in the United States
- Currently 32 of the 51 state education departments require their school districts to have an Emergency Operations Plan in place (schoolsafety.gov)
 - It is imperative that every district or individual school develops and implements a comprehensive EOP so that students, faculty, and staff can remain safe and know what to do in a disaster
- Prior to the effects of COVID-19 and the shift of education to virtual or hybrid models of learning, there was a surge of school shootings over the last 10 years
 - Since 2009, there have been at least 177 school shootings over the last 10 years (Cable News Network)
 - School shootings can often be seemingly random and spontaneous, there are warning signs that school staff and students should be aware of to mitigate these types of events
- A pandemic in 2020 was not what anyone expected, but it did happen, and the U.S., especially school systems, were not prepared
 - With some schools resuming in person learning, it has been difficult to guarantee the safety of students
 - To prepare for an outbreak of COVID-19 in a school, faculty, staff, and students need to be educated on how to behave responsibly during a pandemic – this includes social distancing, mask usage, and regular testing
 - REMS and the U.S. Department of Education have released several plans for reopening schools safely amid the pandemic
 - The REMS TA Center has information, products, and services needed to respond, operate, and recover from the pandemic

Discussion

My recommendations for improving readiness and emergency management in schools include:

- Greater dissemination of information and resources that are available through REMS
 - Mandatory EOPs for all school districts and individual schools
 - Improved communication between emergency management professionals and education facilitators
- Most of these are simple, yet effective, steps that can be taken to better the preparedness, prevention protection, mitigation, response, and recovery efforts within schools

References

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jordan Titera for assisting me in my research and for encouraging me to submit my work to the SRU Symposium for Student Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity.