

# The Fundamental Principles of Crisis Leadership

Joffe Emergency Services



October 13, 2023





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ISU Insurance Services of Colorado (ISU) is a 139-year-old independent insurance brokerage firm, partnering with independent schools on their commercial insurance, risk management and employee benefits protection.





# Goals for our time together

**Through this session, we hope to help you:**

- Define what successful crisis leadership is (and isn't)
- See and avoid common pitfalls in crisis leadership
- Understand and seek to implement 10 fundamental crisis leadership principles
- See how the principles apply to real-world crises
- Understand the micro challenges that occur during mega trends



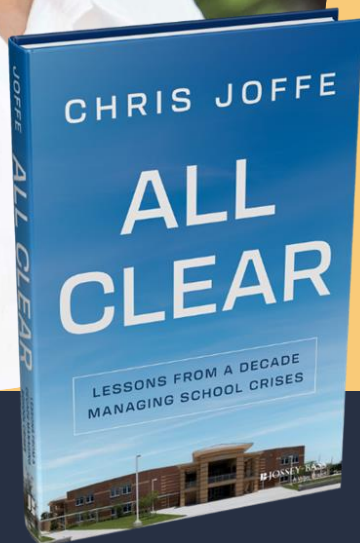


# Chris Joffe

FOUNDER & CEO | JOFFE EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chris Joffe has dedicated his career to making communities safer, which initially took shape in his work in **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)** as a first responder, opening his eyes to the broader need for safety skills. Fueled by this, he began teaching life saving skills to educators, and from there became a safety consultant, helping schools build skills and systems for peace of mind.

Today, he leads **Joffe Emergency Services**, a company wholly dedicated to – and leader in – **school safety programming, event safety, and emergency preparedness**, and over the past decade his team has worked with thousands of schools across the country to provide **training, consultation, and support**.



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## Our Guiding Principles

*Safety - Equity - Excellence*



# Who is Joffe Emergency Services?

**We are safety experts and educators.**

But most importantly, we are partners in protecting schools and communities.

We have been working with schools across the country since 2007.

We founded - and have grounded - our safety work in schools because we believe they are the most important places we can possibly protect.

**Fifteen years later, we've worked with thousands of schools to help protect millions of lives.**



**McLean School**  
Transformative.



**WOODWARD  
ACADEMY**  
ESTABLISHED 1900

THE  
LAB  
SCHOOL

DEMOCRACY PREP  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



**LOWELL  
SCHOOL**

**KIPP:**



breathe in

**Let's take a deep breath**





# LA Area Trauma Center



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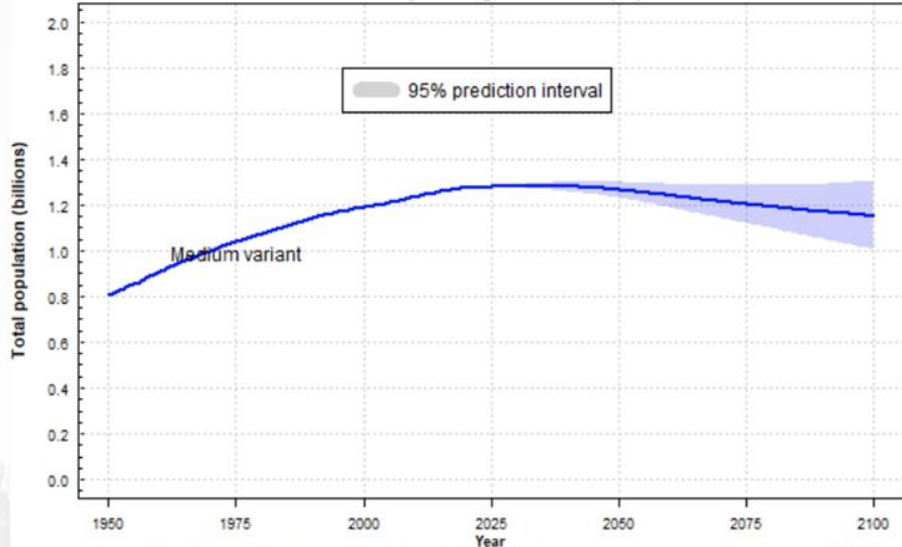


# Mega Trends

## Create Micro Challenges

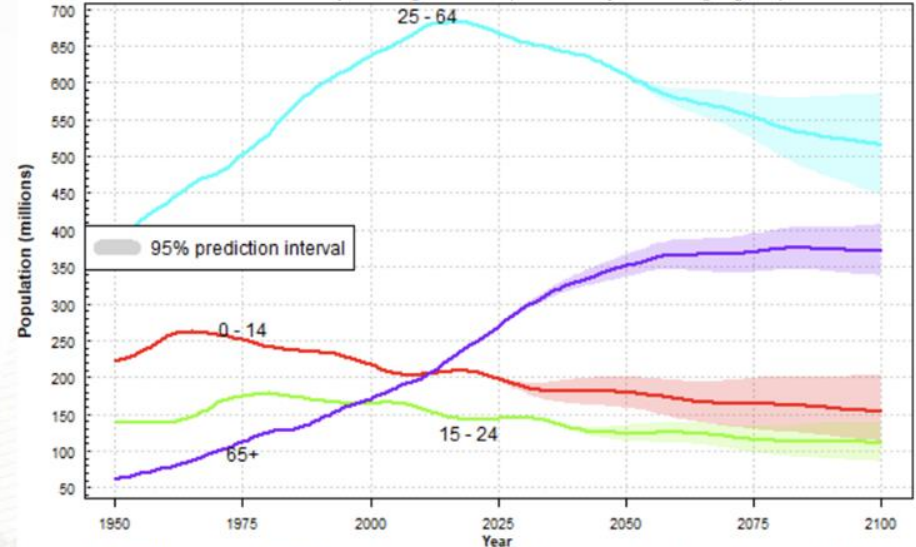
# Population Evolution

More developed regions: Total population



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United Nations, DESA, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2022*. <http://population.un.org/wpp/>

More developed regions: Population by broad age groups



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United Nations, DESA, Population Division. *World Population Prospects 2022*. <http://population.un.org/wpp/>



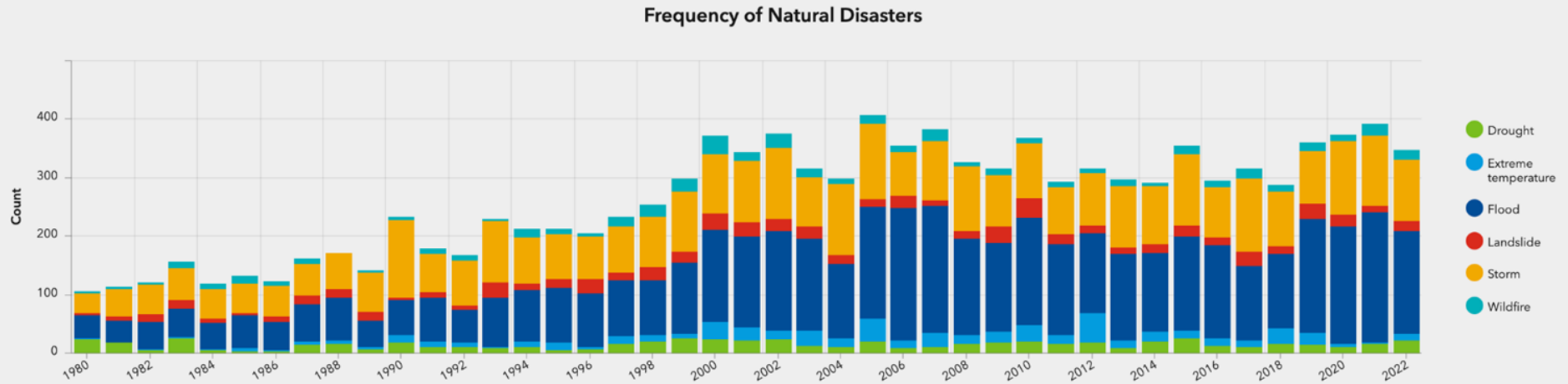
# Roles & Responsibilities

- Our protectors:
  - Fire
  - Police
  - Military
- Our communities:
  - We have a two sided ecosystem (younger people and... more experienced people)
  - Aging = greater use of infrastructure

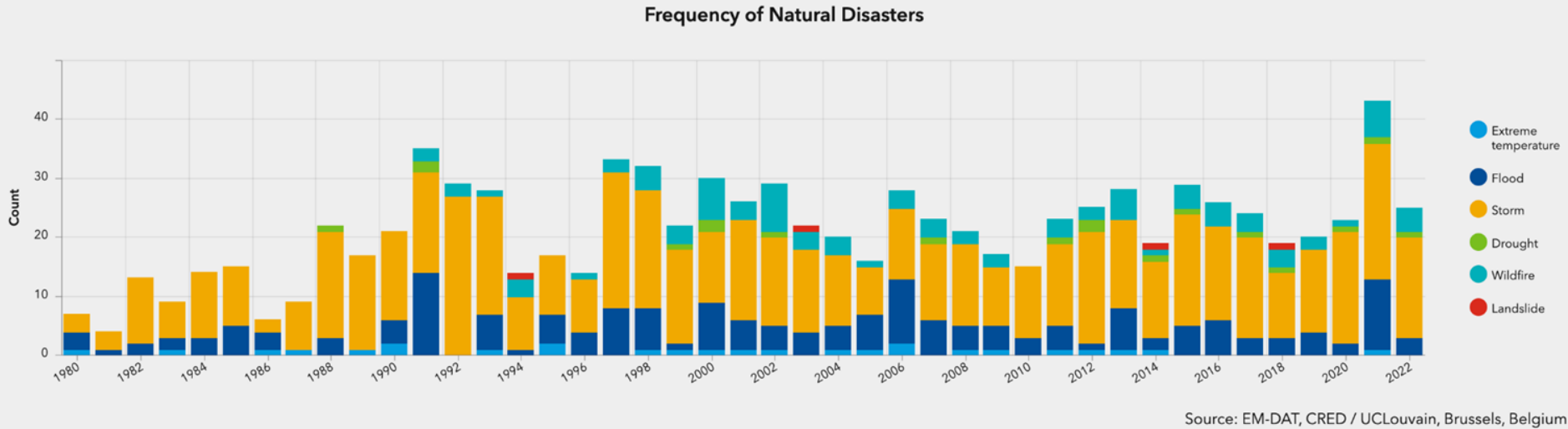




# Worldwide



# But the US?



Source: [IMF](#)

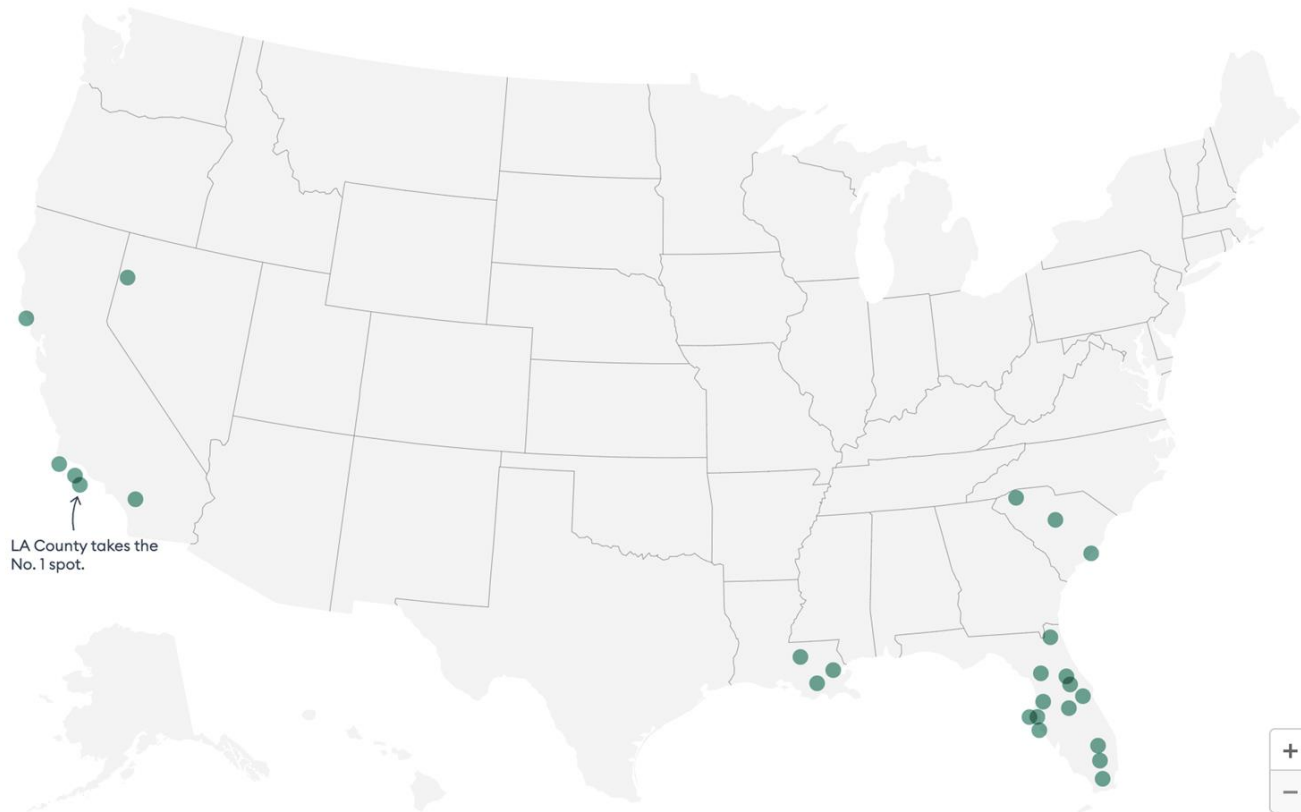


It's not all  
bad...  
For you.



## Top 25 Most Disaster-Prone Counties

County ranking is determined by the number of FEMA disaster declarations between January 2013 and January 2023. To see the overall rank, the total number of disaster declarations, and the most common disaster type, hover over each location.

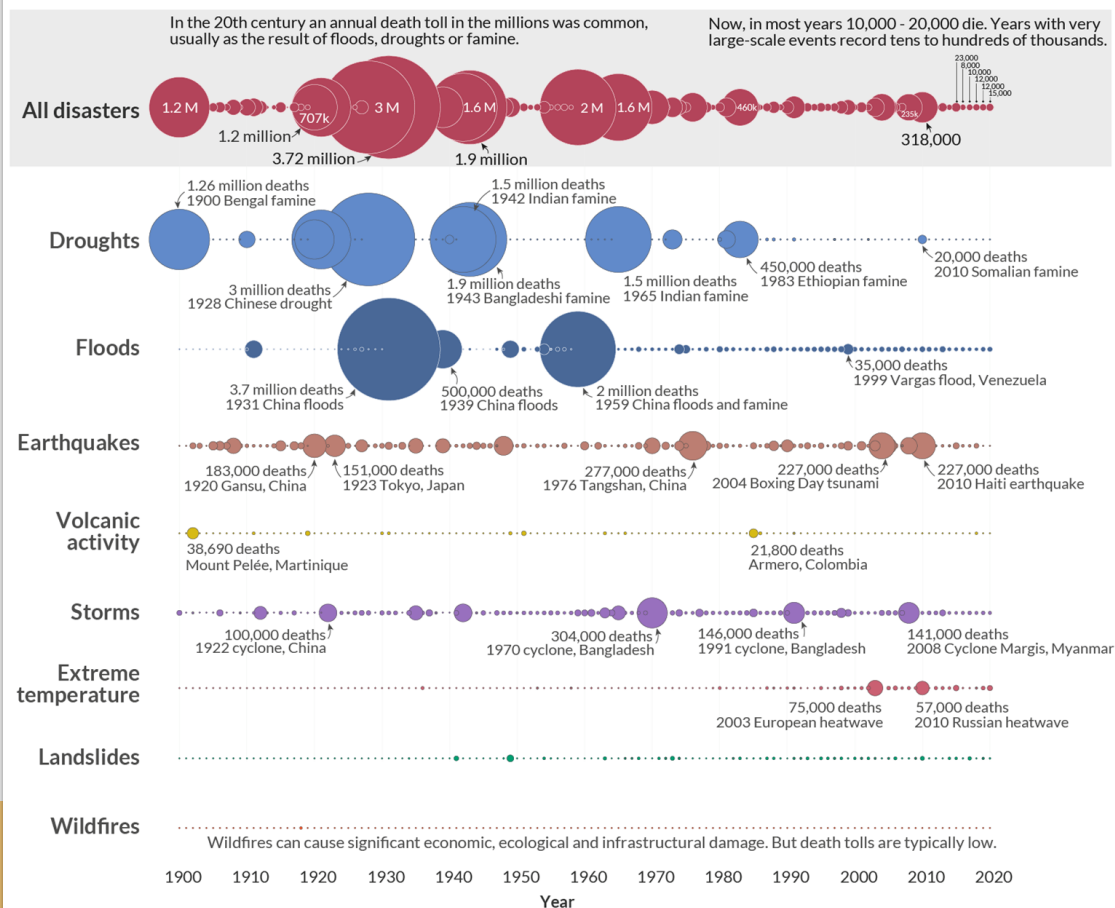


Note: To determine which counties are most at risk for natural disasters, Forbes Advisor uncovered the number of FEMA disaster declarations over the past decade for the 200 most populated counties.

# Global deaths from disasters over more than a century

The size of the bubble represents the estimated annual death toll. The largest years are labeled with this total figure, alongside large-scale events that contributed to the majority – although usually not all – of these deaths.

Our World  
in Data



Data source: EM-DAT, CRED / UCLouvain, Brussels, Belgium – [www.emdat.be](http://www.emdat.be) (D. Guha-Sapir).  
OurWorldinData.org – Research and data to make progress against the world's largest problems.

Licensed under CC-BY by the author Hannah Ritchie.

Source: [Our World in Data](https://ourworldindata.org)



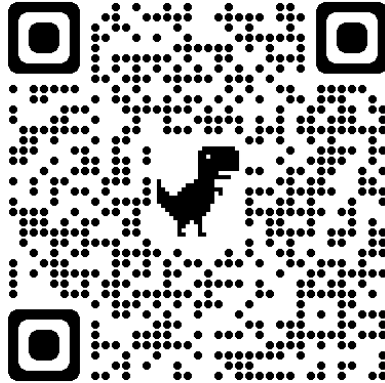
# **Let's get to know everyone...**

**What was your single greatest leadership challenge  
from the early days of the pandemic?**

# Let's get to know everyone...

Okay, let's dig deeper:

<https://www.123test.com/disc-personality-test/>





Perception typically stems from your Behavioral style

**Dominance** ✓

88%



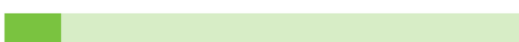
**Influencing** ✓

99%



**Steadiness** ✓

11%



**Compliance** ✓

10%





# Saboteurs become stronger...

**D**

Watch out for the angry, frustrated “judge”.

**I**

Watch out for the “people pleaser” who needs to be liked.

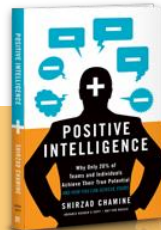
**S**

Watch out for the “controller” who wants everything to be a certain way.

**C**

Watch out for the “hyper-vigilant” who is always on alert and berates you for failure.

Learn more about Saboteurs:  
<https://www.positiveintelligence.com/>



Can also watch Dr. Shirzad Chamine's  
Ted Talk on this topic.



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# Where Many Schools Succeed



## Creating a “crisis mission”

**Purpose:** Get clear and aligned on what our goal is, and have a driving force to maintain an unwavering commitment to it

Examples of crisis missions we saw:

- “Educate everyone on campus.”
- “Maintain connection”
- “Provide for basic needs: Food, health, tech.”

*Ours at Joffe was: “Be Useful. Be Expert. Be Curious.”*





## Building a team

**Purpose:** Have a systematic way of dividing work and tasks to avoid overwhelming one person or group with decision-making

Examples of divisions we saw:

- Operations, Physical & Campus, Education
- Health, Academics, Operations
- People, Program, Place
- Now, Next, Later





## Establishing routines



**Purpose:** Develop a set of routines to help re-norm, build connection, and create a sense of predictability and control despite ongoing uncertainty

Examples of routines we saw:

- Weekly check of external inputs
- Weekly updates to internal audiences (families, faculty, students)
- Weekly counseling or therapy sessions
- Weekly takeout from that one restaurant you love
- Weekly zoom chat with other local schools



# Where Many Schools Struggle



## Aligning with other schools

**Challenge:** Closing school has a ripple effect for other local schools. There was generally an underappreciation of this.

**Lesson:** In the absence of certainty, build unity.

Create communities of practice -- or communities of alignment -- to ensure greater coordination among local schools (like the tools we use for hurricanes/flooding).







## Maintaining consistent communication

**“In the absence of data,  
we make up stories.  
We are a meaning  
making species.”  
—Brené Brown**

**Challenge:** Communication is the single most consistent challenge people discuss in debriefs. We saw anecdotally that schools that communicated to staff less frequently saw more staff burnout and more departures.

**Lesson:** Establish a consistent cadence of communication with each internal stakeholder group, and stick with it.

Don't wait until you feel you have something new to share - consistent updates do much more than just provide information. They build confidence in your school's approach.





## Prioritizing leaders' wellbeing

**Challenge:** Leaders were so busy taking care of everyone else, they didn't have time to take care of their own well-being. The stress and exhaustion took a toll.

**Lesson:** Leaders need a break, too.

Don't be too proud (or too stubborn) to give yourself the same grace and courtesy you give your team. Everyone will be stronger for it.



# Overcoming Analysis Paralysis

“Only human beings can look directly at something, have all the information they need to make an accurate prediction, perhaps even momentarily make the accurate prediction, and then say that it isn’t so.”

*--Gavin DeBecker*





# How do we get there?

1. **Build scaffolding drills that test one part of the equation at a time**, leading toward more robust drills that test multiple parts of the equation...
2. **Set a goal: Then backwards plan!**
  - a. Ex: By Spring, 2025, we will hold a Moulage Drill where we test all of our systems including reunification of students & parents. To do so, we'll need to do each part of this once over the next 18 months.
3. **14 Hours of Community Investment in safety**
  - a. Drills. Training. Debriefs. It all counts, but we've got to get close to that in order to make an impact.



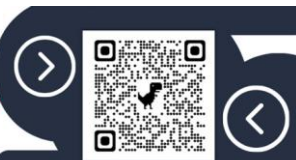


What?	When?	How Much?	Details
Faculty/staff orientation to safety	Intro-week	60–90 minutes	Default responses (what do we do in the event of our top risks)
Faculty/staff CPR/ first aid/AED training	Intro-week *Many schools alternate year over year, which cuts time in half	~7 hours	Include Epi-Pens, StopTheBleed, asthmatics, student action plans
Faculty/staff tabletop	Intro-week	75 minutes	Pick your highest-risk item. and talk through with all teams
Faculty/staff strike team trainings	Before start of school	60 minutes didactic 60 minutes practical	Just those adults who have been assigned to a strike team to serve
Drill	August	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Drill	September	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start





What?	When?	How much?	Details
Drill	October	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Drill	November	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Drill	December	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Faculty/staff training for larger drill (if planned)	January	45 minutes	Retouch training from fall, prepare for reunification drill
Drill	January	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start







What?	When?	How much?	Details
Drill	February	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Drill	March	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Drill	April	60–90 minutes	Conduct reunification drill
Drill	May	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
Drill	June	30 minutes	Include debrief; always clarify that it's a drill at the start
		<b>~14 hours</b> (If you do CPR/first-aid training on alternate years)	





# How do we evaluate risk?

## Recommended Actions

Manage/monitor for progress into increased risk categories

Develop focused teams to mitigate/maintain awareness of risk

Incorporate risk reducing and response measures

Eliminate risk if possible, community-wide focus if not

Severity				Probability					Eliminate risk if possible, community-wide focus if not
As defined by consequences for:				Scale	1	2	3	4	5
People	Property	Environment	Reputation		Unlikely to occur in industry or geography	Has occurred rarely in industry or geography	May occur with no provocation in industry or geography	Reasonable probability it will occur in industry or geography	Likely to occur in industry or geography
No injuries	No damage	No impact	No effect	0					
Slight injury	Slight damage	Slight impact	Slight effect	1					
Minor injury	Minor damage	Minor impact	Limited effect	2					
Major injury	Local damage	Local impact	Considerable impact	3					
Single fatality	Regional/ major damage	Regional impact	Major regional/ national impact	4					
Multiple fatalities	Extensive damage	Massive impact	Major national/ international impact	5					





# Key leadership principles

- **Default to progress**

Use the information we have to do the “next right thing”, even if it feels small and insignificant, it’s progress.

- **Triage**

Let go of the idea that we might be able to find a way that will make everyone happy. Focus on doing the most good for the most people.

- **In the absence of data, we all make up stories**

Be as clear and transparent as possible when explaining decisions. Clarity and transparency are tools to avoid speculation, assumptions and rumors.



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# Key leadership principles

- **When faced with uncertainty, first build unity**

No matter what uncertain obstacles lie ahead, unity clears the path for progress.

- **Successful emergency response boils down to leadership and communication**

One leader. Many participants. But one clear goal.

- **All emergencies are fundamentally the same after the first 5 minutes**

It doesn't matter what the emergency is. 5 minutes in, the response is going to be consistent with the others.





# Concentric Circles of Safety



One final lesson...



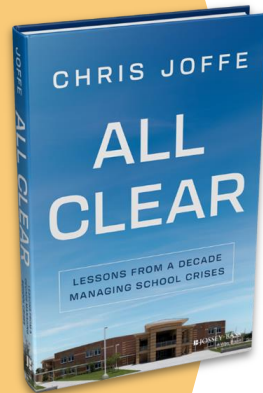


# Q & A

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# Thank you.

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