

# Ohio School Safety Center

Newsletter

Spring 2021

## Safety Considerations for Outdoor Classrooms

With the onset of spring and students attending in-person, schools may be taking advantage of outdoor spaces and fresh air. Although revitalizing, the use of outdoor spaces is not without risk. Take a few minutes to review the hazards and threats in your school's safety plan. How do they apply to your outdoor spaces?

Consider the following when planning the use of outdoor spaces:

**Communication:** How will communication be handled between the main building and the outdoor space in the event of an emergency?

- If using a cell phone, how strong is the reception? Is the cell phone programmed with the office number on speed dial?
- For two-way radios, who in the building will be monitoring the indoor radio? Is the indoor monitor also trained in your emergency response procedures?
- Does the building's public address (PA) system reach the outdoor space?



**Line of Sight, Physical Access, Routes, and Schedule:** Who has the ability to see students using the space? Who can gain access to the space?

- Can the line of sight be obstructed in an easy, cost-effective manner?
- How can physical access be blocked, limited, or protected?
- Do school security cameras reach the outdoor space(s)?
- Is the space used the same each day? Is the same route taken each time? If possible, vary the schedule and route of travel.

**Inclement Weather or Other Threats:** Where would students using the outdoor space go during sudden inclement weather or a lockdown?

- Are weather conditions monitored and reviewed before going outside? If so, who is responsible for monitoring and communicating conditions?
- Would there be sufficient time to return to the building?
- Do you have students with health conditions that are aggravated outdoors?
- Is time spent outdoors regulated to prevent dehydration and sunburn?

**Coordination with First Responders:** Are your first responders aware of the outdoor space use? Local law enforcement may be willing to drive by during hours of use and/or have suggestions on how to protect students in the space. Additional considerations include:

- If flammable materials are used (i.e., tents, teepees, etc.), are fire extinguishers and first aid kits made readily available?
- Are designated fire lanes and vehicle traffic patterns free of obstruction?