

ePACT Use Case: Schools & Earthquakes/Evacuation Needs

“When it comes to emergency management, I want everyone connected. ePACT lets schools communicate and share information across all parents and emergency contacts. It absolutely helps schools be a safer place.”
- Lanny Young, Principal, Larson Elementary

The vast majority of schools in North America currently use paper emergency forms to collect and manage emergency information for students. This information is for use in a crisis, such as a personal illness or injury, safety issue like a lockdown or evacuation for fire or flood, through to a large scale disaster like an earthquake.

In 2012, ePACT was used in two North Vancouver Elementary Schools that completed emergency evacuation drills to help their staff, students, parents and emergency contacts better understand roles, responsibilities and processes. The following outlines how ePACT was used, its benefits and other key findings.

ePACT Use:

- Schools invited families to use ePACT to securely share their emergency information online.
- Families completed their single emergency record, adding medical and key contact details for each student.
- Families invited emergency contacts like their nanny, grandparent or neighbour to support the child in case their parents were not available in a crisis.
- Emergency contacts received an email invite to accept or decline acting in this role. If accepted, they were then connected to the family and school for information sharing and communications.
- Once connected, authorized school administrators could view all information and communicate through ePACT.
- Parents received communication that the school would be doing an earthquake drill and evacuation, and that they or their emergency contacts would need to pick up students during this drill.
- Staff and students performed the Drop, Cover, Hold On earthquake drill, then started the emergency release process.
- Parents and emergency contacts arrived at the school to check in with their ID and collect their child/the student they were supporting.
- Staff used ePACT to validate the parent/emergency contact was authorized to pick up the child.
- Once authorized by an administrator, the children were released to that parent/emergency contact.

Benefits of Use:

In comparison to the paper forms the following were found to be benefits of ePACT:

- **Easy administration** - paper forms used in an average elementary school of 500 students took school administrators over 90 hours across 3 months to collect, while they only acquired approximately 75% of emergency information. With ePACT, this process was reduced to 2 hours over several weeks with adoption rates of at least 80% of families submitting their information. Because families own their account and manage their information online, the time and effort required for schools to collect and manage critical emergency information was significantly minimized.

“ePACT is much more efficient, faster and easier to use than the traditional paper forms. And it delivers more accurate, legible information.”

- Mags Wellwood, Administrative Assistant, Larson Elementary

- **Available anytime, anywhere** – paper forms for emergency management have significant gaps and limitations. Managing forms is labour intensive and often there are only one or two copies available. If a disaster such as a flood or fire impacts these forms, there is often a lack of redundancy to ensure access to this key emergency information. ePACT allows the ability to print multiple hard copy backups, while providing anytime, anywhere access via web or mobile.
- **Better quality information** – a high percentage of paper forms are illegible, not complete, or rapidly fall out of date during the school year as parents forget to update the school with new cell phone numbers, emergency contacts, work information, or medical conditions for their child. ePACT addresses these issues by ensuring legible and complete information is submitted. Families were faster/more likely to keep up to date records because of the convenience of the online system and acknowledgement of ePACT being their single emergency record, connected to the organizations and emergency contacts in their support network.

“ePACT is fantastic. It resolves a lot of issues schools deal with year in and year out, in terms of paperwork being incomplete or not returned, and parents not communicating with their alternates.”

- Jennifer Wilson, Principal, Capilano Elementary

- **Connectivity & Communications** - paper forms are obviously not connected to communication systems, and many organizations still rely on phone calls/phone trees in an emergency. It is proven in disasters that cell and landline calls are the first to be impacted, either being flooded with users, shut down for calls outside of emergency services like 911, or taken out with downed wires or cell sites. ePACT provides immediate, redundant communication capabilities through the internet, while connecting schools to parents and their emergency contacts for greater support and faster family reunification.
- **Greater understanding of roles & responsibilities** - there is often a lack of understanding or clarity around how paper forms are actually used, processes to be followed, and what a parent and emergency contacts role is in a crisis. Paper forms collect information, but often do not provide the added information around responsibilities and procedures. As an online network, not only does ePACT provide broader information, but the invite processes between organizations and parents, and parents and their emergency contacts, ensures everyone is accepting (or declining) their responsibilities for a better understanding of what is required of them in a crisis. The means better prepared communities overall.

“Emergency management – everyone knows it’s there and that it’s important, but people don’t know how to access it. ePACT makes it easy!”

- Bernadette Woit, Schools Emergency Preparedness Consultant

- **Improved privacy & security** - paper forms do not offer privacy and security protection of personal information. Often these forms sit in a binder in an office and unless under lock and key, it is possible for others to access and see confidential details for students. ePACT provides the same levels of security as online banks and addresses all government privacy requirements. As well, families own their ePACT account and control which contacts and organizations can connect and see their information.