



Bat exposure response plan template for schools and childcare settings

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Emergency contacts and important resources

(Fill in before the incident occurs)

Contact	Name	Phone number
Animal Control		
Local health department		
Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR)		
Urban Nuisance Wildlife Control (for assistance with bat exclusion/removal)		
School principal / administrator		
School nurse		
Head custodian		
Utah DHHS	Office of Communicable Diseases	801-538-6191

Utah DHHS—Rabies webpage <i>This contains all additional links you may need and is the primary resource in the state of Utah:</i> https://epi.utah.gov/rabies/	Rabies exposure assessment tool <i>Click the teal bar labeled “Rabies Exposure Assessment Tool” on the DHHS rabies page. Or click here.</i>
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Background

Rabies is a rare but serious viral disease transmitted through bites or scratches from an infected animal. Once symptoms develop, rabies is almost always fatal. If someone is exposed to a rabid animal, they can get [treatment](#) called post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), to prevent them from getting rabies, but PEP only works if they get it before symptoms start.

In Utah, bats are the primary wildlife reservoir for rabies. From 2020-2024, an average of 22 bats tested positive for rabies per year in Utah. Over the same timeframe, 12% of bats tested every year were positive.

You cannot tell if a bat has rabies just by looking at it. Rabid bats may look and act normal or they may show signs of illness. Signs of illness might include being active during the day (which is abnormal for bats) or lying on the ground, unable to fly. A bite or scratch from a bat may not always be visible. The most important thing to do if you find a bat at school, or anywhere else, is not to touch, pet, feed, or try to catch the bat. In addition, people and pets should never sleep in the same room as a bat.

Bat exposures at school can be complicated, often resulting in inconsistent responses, unnecessary PEP administration, delayed reporting, and public concern when standardized procedures are absent. This template was developed using CDC guidance, Utah DHHS recommendations, and published literature on school-based bat exposures to support a rapid, coordinated, and evidence-based response.

Why are schools a special concern?

- Bats enter schools because attics, wall spaces, and mechanical areas mimic their natural cave habitats and offer good thermal retention.
- About 33–60% of rabies PEP globally is administered to children (source: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8189119/>). This is often because children, especially young children or those with communication or developmental needs, may not be able to remember exposure details or reliably report whether contact with a bat occurred.

- Initial curiosity may lead to additional exposures when adults are not present. Children may also be hesitant to report true exposure details for fear of getting themselves or their peers in trouble.
- Children may not recognize that contact with a bat poses a rabies risk, especially if there is no visible scratch or bite mark.
- A complete course of PEP costs approximately \$3,500 per person. In Utah, two school bat exposures in 2017 resulted in costs of approximately \$78,000 combined.
- All bat species in Utah are protected wildlife, and removal should be coordinated with wildlife professionals.

Prevention

Tier 1: Management of the building:

The most effective strategy is to keep bats from entering school buildings in the first place. Schools should take the following steps:

Annual structural inspections

1. Inspect the exterior of all school buildings annually, ideally in early spring before bat roosting season (April–September).
2. Keep gymnasium doors closed during the early evening and early morning. Bats are foraging at these times and may inadvertently fly into the building to catch insects.
3. Check attic vents, chimneys, and HVAC access points.
4. Document any findings and submit a maintenance work order immediately if any issues are identified.

Exclusion and sealing

1. Screen all attic and soffit vents with ¼- to ½-inch hardware cloth or screen.

2. Seal all holes (dime size or larger) in the siding; gaps around gutters, pipes, fascia boards, and molding; and openings at other exterior penetration points. Use netting (1/6- inch mesh), caulk, foam, or concrete patch.
3. Make sure all window screens are in good repair with no tears or gaps.
4. Do NOT seal openings between May and August if bats may be present; young bats unable to fly may be trapped inside, creating a larger infestation. Contact a [licensed urban nuisance wildlife control professional](#) for exclusion during the active roosting season.

Tier 2: Education

Research suggests that rabies education improves student knowledge, reporting behavior, and may reduce exposure.

Key messages

- Bats are important to our ecosystem, but should never be touched, even if they appear to be sleeping or injured.
- Rabies is spread through infected animal saliva (typically via bite or scratch), NOT through the air, food, or casual contact.
- Bat bites and scratches are often very small and hard to see. If a student touches a bat, even if it doesn't hurt, they must tell an adult immediately.
- What to do: Back away from the bat, do not touch it, and tell a teacher or trusted adult right away.
- Rabies treatment is lifesaving. If someone is bitten or scratched by a bat, they should seek medical treatment immediately, and the exposure should be reported to the local health department.

Tier 3: Prevention once exposure has occurred

Immediate, coordinated action is essential when a bat is found on school grounds. Rapid response increases the likelihood that the bat can be captured and tested, reducing both risk and cost from unnecessary PEP.

Exposure scenarios and immediate response

****IN ALL SCENARIOS: Do not kill the bat. Do not handle the bat with your bare hands. Bats are protected wildlife in Utah. ****

For the Rabies Exposure Assessment Tool, click [here](#).

- To access this link, go to <https://epi.utah.gov/rabies/> and click the teal bar labeled “Rabies Exposure Assessment Tool”

Universal steps (Apply to all scenarios)

Regardless of the situation, take these actions immediately:

- Close off the area where any bats are reported to make sure more students or staff are not exposed.
- Ask everyone in the area: "Did you touch the bat, or did it touch you?" Document all names and responses (see Appendix E).
- If anyone had any contact: wash the area thoroughly with soap and water for 15 minutes.
- Pay special attention to young children, who may not reliably report contact or may not feel a small bite or scratch.
- Notify the school nurse, principal, and custodian immediately.
- **Contact the local health department within 1 hour of discovery in all bat-related incidents.**
- **If the bat is not available for testing, OR there are multiple bats/a bat colony and testing is not feasible, coordinate with the local health department for exposure assessment to determine the need for rabies treatment.**



Because bats have very small teeth, their bite marks may be small or invisible.

Scenario 1: Bat colony living in the building

- Do not attempt to remove bats yourself. Contact a licensed bat exclusion professional. Utah DWR maintains a [list of urban wildlife nuisance control professionals](#).
- Seal off any areas where bats have been entering occupied spaces (e.g., closets, attic access points).
- Do not sweep or vacuum dry guano; this can aerosolize harmful fungal spores. Large accumulations require trained professionals with appropriate protective equipment.
- Testing colonies of bats for rabies is not possible. Coordinate with the local health department regarding exposure assessment and area exclusion. Communicate with parents promptly (see parent letter template, page 7).
- If a single bat is subsequently found in a classroom or hallway, proceed immediately to Scenario 2.



Scenario 2: Single bat in the building/classroom

- Immediately and calmly clear the room of all students and staff. Close the door to the room to contain the bat. If the bat is alive, place a towel at the base of the door to prevent the bat from escaping to other areas.
- Call animal control or DWR immediately to safely capture and/or remove the bat.
- Call the local health department. They will guide the next steps for risk assessment, including whether the bat should be submitted for rabies testing.



Scenario 3: Bat on playground or outdoor area

- Immediately move all students and staff away from the area; establish a perimeter of at least 10 feet.
- Assign one adult to watch the bat from a safe distance to track its location.
- If the bat is alive, do not attempt to capture it yourself.
- Call animal control or DWR immediately to safely capture and/or remove the bat.
- Call the local health department. They will guide the next steps for risk assessment, including whether the bat should be submitted for rabies testing.

What to do with the bat

If a single bat is involved in an exposure situation, testing the bat for rabies is the most important step to reduce unnecessary PEP. A negative test result can eliminate the need for PEP for all exposed individuals.

1. **If the bat is deceased:** Wearing thick gloves, place the bat in a sealed plastic bag and then in a second bag. Keep it cool (refrigerate, do not freeze). Label with date, location found, and school name. Wait for animal control or DWR, and the local health department for next steps. Deceased and dried-out bats are not known to transmit rabies, but practicing safe handling is best, especially if you have an open wound.
2. **If the bat is alive:** Do not attempt to handle it. Keep the room sealed, or if outside, track the location of the bat from a safe distance. Wait for animal control or DWR.
3. **If the bat has escaped or flown away:** Notify the local health department immediately. Risk assessment will be based on circumstances (who was in the room or near the bat, for how long, whether anyone was asleep or unattended, etc.).

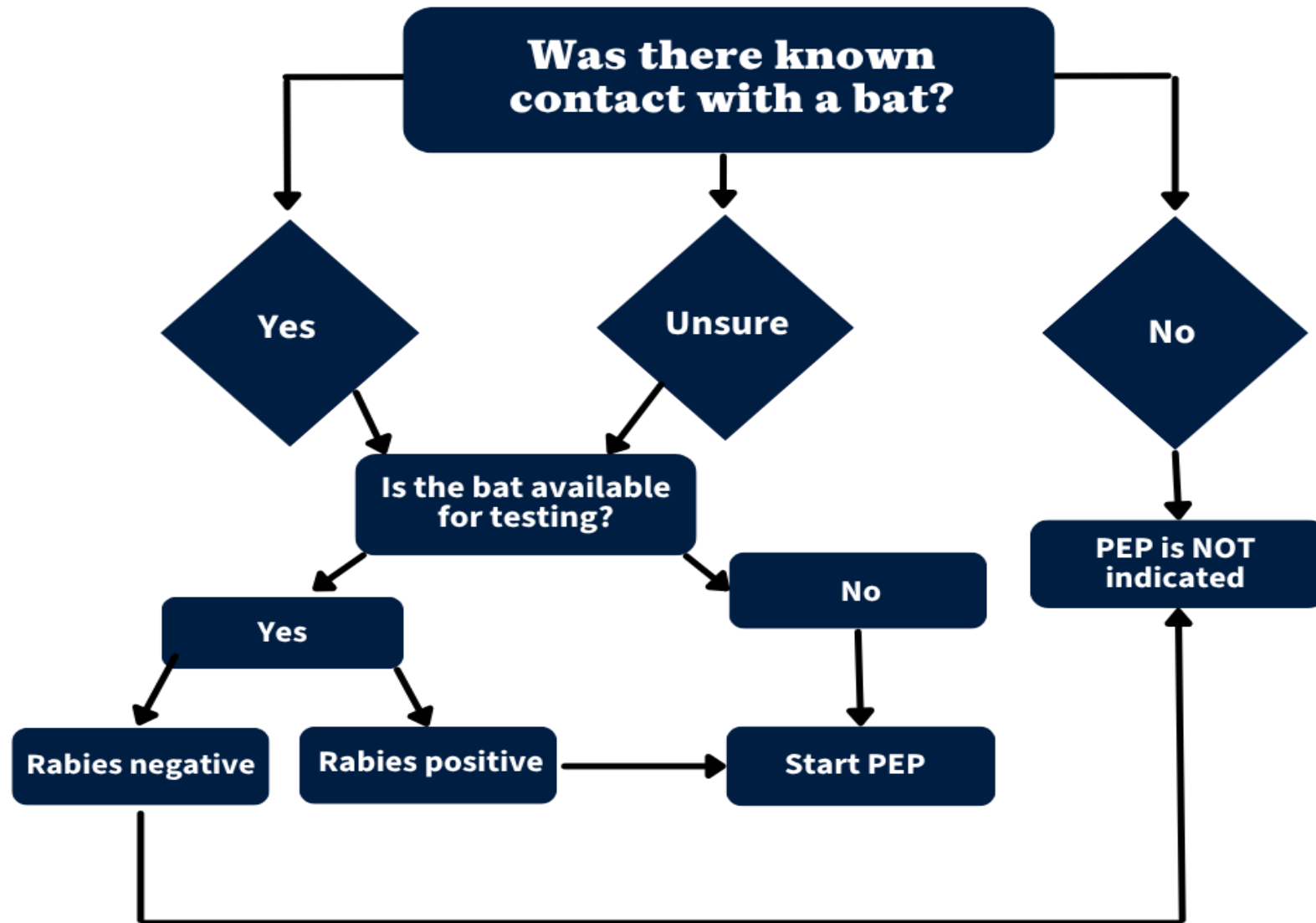
Your local health department, animal control, or DWR will coordinate submitting the bat for testing at the Utah Public Health Laboratory (UPHL). There is no fee for testing a bat involved in a school exposure situation. Results are typically available within 1-2 business days. The health department will notify the school of the results.

Who to call, when to call, what to say, and within what timeframe

Who to call	When to call	What to tell them	Timeframe
Local health department Note: If it is after hours and your local health department does not have a 24 hour line, call the DHHS after-hours line at 1-888-374-8824.	In all scenarios when a bat is involved	School name, bat location, number of individuals potentially exposed, whether children were present, and their ages, bat status (alive/deceased/contained)	Within 1 hour of discovery
Animal control or DWR	When there is a single bat (scenarios 2 and 3)	Location of the bat, whether it is alive or deceased, current containment status, school name, and address	As soon as possible after discovering the bat
Urban wildlife nuisance control professional	When there is a bat colony (scenario 1)	Location of the colony, current containment status, school name, and address	Within 1 hour of discovery
School nurse/ administrator/ custodian	In all scenarios when a bat is involved	Nature of the incident, which rooms or areas are affected, and initial list of potentially exposed individuals	Immediately
Parents/guardians	In all scenarios when a bat is involved (see appendices B and C)	Factual description of the incident, what the school is doing, whether their child is on the exposure list, if PEP is indicated and information about it, and who to contact with questions	Same day, as soon as the exposure assessment is complete

PEP decision flowchart

The flowchart below provides a step-by-step guide for assessing whether post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) is indicated following a potential bat contact. Your local health department will help guide the assessment to determine who needs PEP.



About PEP (post-exposure prophylaxis)

PEP is recommended when:

- A bat bites or scratches someone, or there is mucous membrane or open wound contact with bat saliva or brain/nervous tissue. Bat bites or scratches can be very small and may not be seen or felt, so any possibility of contact is considered an exposure (e.g., bare-skin contact without noticeable marks).
- A bat is found in a room with an unattended child, sleeping person, or person who cannot confirm whether contact occurred.
- The bat is not available for testing, and contact cannot be ruled out

PEP is NOT automatically required for everyone in the building. Risk assessment will be conducted by the local health department on a case-by-case basis.

PEP consists of one dose of human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG) plus 4 doses of rabies vaccine administered over 14 days (Days 0, 3, 7, and 14). Those with immune disorders should also receive a fifth dose on day 28. It is virtually 100% effective when started promptly.

Appendix A: Bat exposure rabies response checklist

Date and time of incident:	Location:	Person completing form:
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Step 1: Immediate safety actions

Done	Action	Notes/details
☐	Move all students/staff away from the bat	Maintain a 10-foot distance minimum
☐	Contain the bat if it is indoors	Close the room door, place a towel at the base
☐	Do NOT touch the bat with bare hands (See step 4 for bat handling)	Use thick gloves or a shovel only
☐	Assign an adult to monitor the bat location, if outside	Watch from a safe distance

Step 2: Notify key personnel

Done	Action	Time called and contact name
☐	Call the local health department	
☐	Call animal control or DWR (if there is a single bat and it is still on school grounds)	
☐	Call an urban wildlife nuisance control professional (if there are multiple bats/a bat colony)	
☐	Notify the school principal/administrator	
☐	Notify the school nurse	
☐	Notify the head custodian	

Step 3: Exposure assessment

Done	Action	Notes/details
☐	Ask all individuals present: “Did you touch a bat?”	Separate questioning from peers
☐	Ask: “Did you feel anything touch or scratch you?” (If unsure of exposure, refer to the flowchart on page 10)	Marks may not be present since bat teeth and claws are very small.
☐	Note any children who were alone/unattended near the bat(s)	Children cannot always reliably report exposure
☐	Record names of ALL potentially exposed individuals	See Appendix E

Step 4: Bat handling and submission

Done	Action	Notes/details
☐	If the bat is deceased: Use thick gloves to double-bag or put the bat in a sealable container; label the bag with the date	Keep cool, do not freeze
☐	If the bat is alive: Keep the room sealed or monitor the location; wait for animal control or DWR	
☐	If the bat escaped, notify the health department immediately	Document last known location/time
☐	If there are multiple bats/a colony: Seal off the area, if possible, and wait for the urban wildlife nuisance control professional	Evacuate students and staff to another area of the building where bats are not present
☐	Coordinate with the local health department for testing, if a bat is available	

Step 5: Communication:

Done	Action	Notes/details
☐	Send parent/guardian notification letter	See Appendix B or C
☐	Complete the incident report form	See Appendix E
☐	If testing is initiated, wait for the bat test results and communicate with families once results come back	See Appendix D
☐	If PEP recommended: assist families with next steps	The local health department will advise

Appendix B: Letter to parents/guardians for a single bat exposure

Dear parents and guardians:

This letter is to inform you that a bat was found in _____ (specific location) at _____ School around _____ (time) on _____ (date).

Procedures to remove the bat and protect students, employees, and visitors are being followed according to school district and public health guidelines for rabies prevention and control.

What we are doing:

- We have notified [local health department name].
- (Case dependent, choose one) The bat [has been/will be] submitted for rabies testing at the Utah Public Health Laboratory. Results are typically available within 1–2 business days. **OR** The bat was not able to be tested. Please see below for next steps.

[Note: Continue with one of the next paragraphs]

OPTION A—Your child was NOT identified as potentially exposed

Based on our assessment, your child was not in direct contact with the bat and does not require medical evaluation at this time.

OPTION B—Your child WAS identified as potentially exposed, and the bat IS BEING SENT for testing

We will notify you as soon as results are available. (In most cases, it is okay to wait for definitive results before starting treatment.) If the bat tests positive, then we recommend calling [local health department name] at [phone number] right away to discuss treatment for your child. If the bat tests negative, no further action is needed.

OPTION C—Your child WAS identified as potentially exposed, and the bat IS UNABLE TO BE SENT for testing.

We recommend calling [local health department name] at [phone number] right away to discuss treatment for your child.

The building was inspected by _____ [name of school district] maintenance personnel and approved for occupancy.

The campus will be monitored for _____ [time period] by trained school district personnel who will inspect the interior and exterior of the facility for any signs of bats. School officials will take the appropriate actions and notify you if any more bats are found.

What you should do:

- Ask your child if they touched the bat or felt anything touch them, and let us know immediately if they report any contact and were not previously identified as being exposed.
- Contact the local health department at [phone number] if you have any concerns.
- Do not panic; most bats are not rabid, and with prompt action, any risk can be effectively managed.

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all students. We will send a follow-up communication once the bat test results are available **(This is case dependent)**. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact [contact name] at [phone number] or [email address]. For information about rabies in Utah, visit rabies.utah.gov.

Sincerely,

[Principal name] | [school name] | [phone]

Appendix C: Letter to parents/guardians for multiple bat exposure or a colony

Dear parents and guardians:

This letter is to inform you that bats were found in _____ (specific location) at _____ School around _____ (time) on _____ (date).

Procedures to remove the bats and protect students, employees, and visitors are being followed according to school district and public health guidelines for rabies prevention and control.

What we are doing

- We have notified [local health department name]
- When a bat colony is discovered, individual bat testing is not always performed or indicated. Our local health department has been consulted regarding appropriate responses for this situation.
- A licensed nuisance wildlife control operator has been/will be contacted to assess the colony, safely and humanely remove the bats, and seal entry points to prevent re-entry. This work will be conducted in accordance with Utah state guidelines and any applicable seasonal restrictions.
- The nuisance control contractor will provide a written assessment and exclusion plan. School district personnel will coordinate with the contractor to make sure all work is completed promptly and that the facility is fully secured.

Potential exposures and rabies treatment (PEP)

Because this involves a colony rather than a single captured bat, rabies post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) recommendations will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the local health department. PEP is not automatically recommended for everyone in the building; it depends on the likelihood of direct contact with a bat.

[Note: Continue with one of the next paragraphs]

OPTION A—Your child was NOT identified as potentially exposed

Based on our assessment, your child was not in direct contact with the bat and does not require medical evaluation at this time.

OPTION B—Your child WAS identified as potentially exposed, and the bat IS BEING SENT for testing

We will notify you as soon as results are available. (In most cases, it is okay to wait for definitive results before starting treatment.) If the bat tests positive, then we recommend calling the [local health department name] at [phone number] right away to discuss treatment for your child. If the bat tests negative, no further action is needed.

OPTION C—Your child WAS identified as potentially exposed, and the bat IS UNABLE TO BE SENT for testing

We recommend calling the [local health department name] at [phone number] right away to discuss treatment for your child.

The building was inspected by _____ [name of school district] maintenance personnel and approved for occupancy.

The campus will be monitored for _____ [time period] by trained school district personnel who will inspect the interior and exterior of the facility for any signs of bats. School officials will take the appropriate actions and notify you if any more bats are found.

What you should do

- Ask your child if they touched a bat or felt anything touch them, and let us know immediately if they report any contact.
- If you have any concerns, contact the local health department at [phone number] today.
- Do not panic; most bats are not rabid, and with prompt action, any risk can be effectively managed.

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all students. We will send follow-up communication as the situation develops. If you have any questions in the meantime, please contact [contact name] at [phone number] or [email address]. For information about rabies in Utah, visit rabies.utah.gov.

Sincerely,

[Principal name] | [school name] | [phone]

Appendix D: Follow-up letter after test results

Dear parents and guardians:

We have received the results of the rabies test on the bat found at [school name] on [date].
The bat tested [POSITIVE/NEGATIVE/INCONCLUSIVE] for rabies.

[Note: Continue with one of the next paragraphs]

IF NEGATIVE:

This means no one exposed to the bat is at risk for rabies from this incident. If you or your child has already started PEP, contact your healthcare provider for guidance.

IF POSITIVE:

Please contact the [local health department] immediately at [phone number] or your primary health care provider. PEP is virtually 100% effective when started promptly. Do not delay.

IF INCONCLUSIVE:

This means that the sample sent in was not acceptable, and the results cannot be identified. In these cases, PEP is still recommended because rabies is fatal if there was exposure. Contact the [local health department] immediately at [phone number] or your primary health care provider.

Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) consists of one dose of human rabies immunoglobulin (HRIG) plus 4 doses of rabies vaccine administered over 14 days (Days 0, 3, 7, and 14). Those with immune disorders should also receive a fifth dose on day 28. It is virtually 100% effective when started promptly.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation. Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions. For information about rabies in Utah, visit rabies.utah.gov.

Sincerely,

[Principal name] | [school name] | [phone]

Appendix E: Rabies exposure incident report

School bat-on-campus report

School district: _____

Campus: _____

Date of report: _____

Time of report _____

Person completing report

Name: _____

Title: _____ Phone number: _____

Person(s) who found bat

Name: _____

Title: _____ Phone number: _____

Name: _____

Title: _____ Phone number: _____

Person reporting bat to office

Name: _____

Title: _____ Phone number: _____

Date and time of bat sighting: _____ a.m./p.m.

Location of bat(s): ☐ Interior of building ☐ Exterior of building

Describe location: _____

Physical condition of bat(s) ☐ Alive ☐ Deceased

If deceased, describe condition ☐ Fresh ☐ Slight odor ☐ Dry/mummified

If alive, flying? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Human contact with a bat? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Uncertain at this time (more investigation required)

If yes, please fill out the table:

Name	Age/grade	Direct contact?	Description of possible exposure	Parent/guardian notified?

Local health department contact name: _____

Date and time local health department was contacted: _____ a.m./p.m.

Animal control, DWR, or wildlife nuisance control professional contact name: _____

Date and time they were contacted: _____ a.m./p.m.

Contacted by

Name: _____

Title: _____ Phone number: _____

Date and time animal control or wildlife officer, or urban nuisance control professional arrived on campus: _____ a.m./p.m.

Principal contacted (Date and time): _____ a.m./p.m.

Campus nurse contacted (Date and time): _____ a.m./p.m.

Head custodian contacted (Date and time): _____ a.m./p.m.

IPM coordinator notified (Date and time): _____ a.m./p.m.

Superintendent contacted (Date and time): _____ a.m./p.m.

My signature indicates that I have verified the information above and reported it as my district's regulations require.

Name (print): _____

Signature: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F: Poster for students—Prevent exposure to bats at school

Access a PDF of this poster at rabies.utah.gov

**Department of Health
& Human Services**

Is there a bat in your school?

Here's what you need to know

1 Don't panic

Bats usually just want to be left alone. You cannot get rabies from just seeing a bat or being in a room with one.

2 Never touch a bat or any other wild animal

If you try to touch a bat, it might bite you in self-defense.

A bat that is on the floor or cannot fly is more likely than other bats to have rabies.



3 Quickly tell a teacher or school official

The safest thing you can do after you find a bat is to tell a teacher.

Don't approach it or touch it. Don't pet it, catch it, comfort it, kick it aside, or try to shoo it away.



Stay away from it and contact an adult.

If you are bitten or come in direct contact with a bat, don't wait. Tell an adult immediately and see a doctor. The treatment after a bite is simple and effective.

Scan for more information about rabies



rabies.utah.gov

Appendix G: Annual bat safety lesson (Grades K–12)

Incorporate bat safety into back-to-school health instruction each fall. Free resources are available to support classroom instruction:

- **Project EduBat** (batslive.fsnaturelive.org) offers grade-leveled lessons (K–12)
- **PBS Wild Kratts: A Bat in the Brownies** works well for primary grades (K–2).
- A classroom poster contest on bat safety is a simple, effective engagement activity.

Educational resources

Project EduBat—Grade level lessons

For free educational materials on bats.

<https://batslive.fsnaturelive.org/edubat/>

PBS Wild Kratts: A Bat in the Brownies

Video resources for K–2 children

<https://thinktv.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/3d3c45c1-f85e-4bf2-be14-45e021866679/3d3c45c1-f85e-4bf2-be14-45e021866679/>