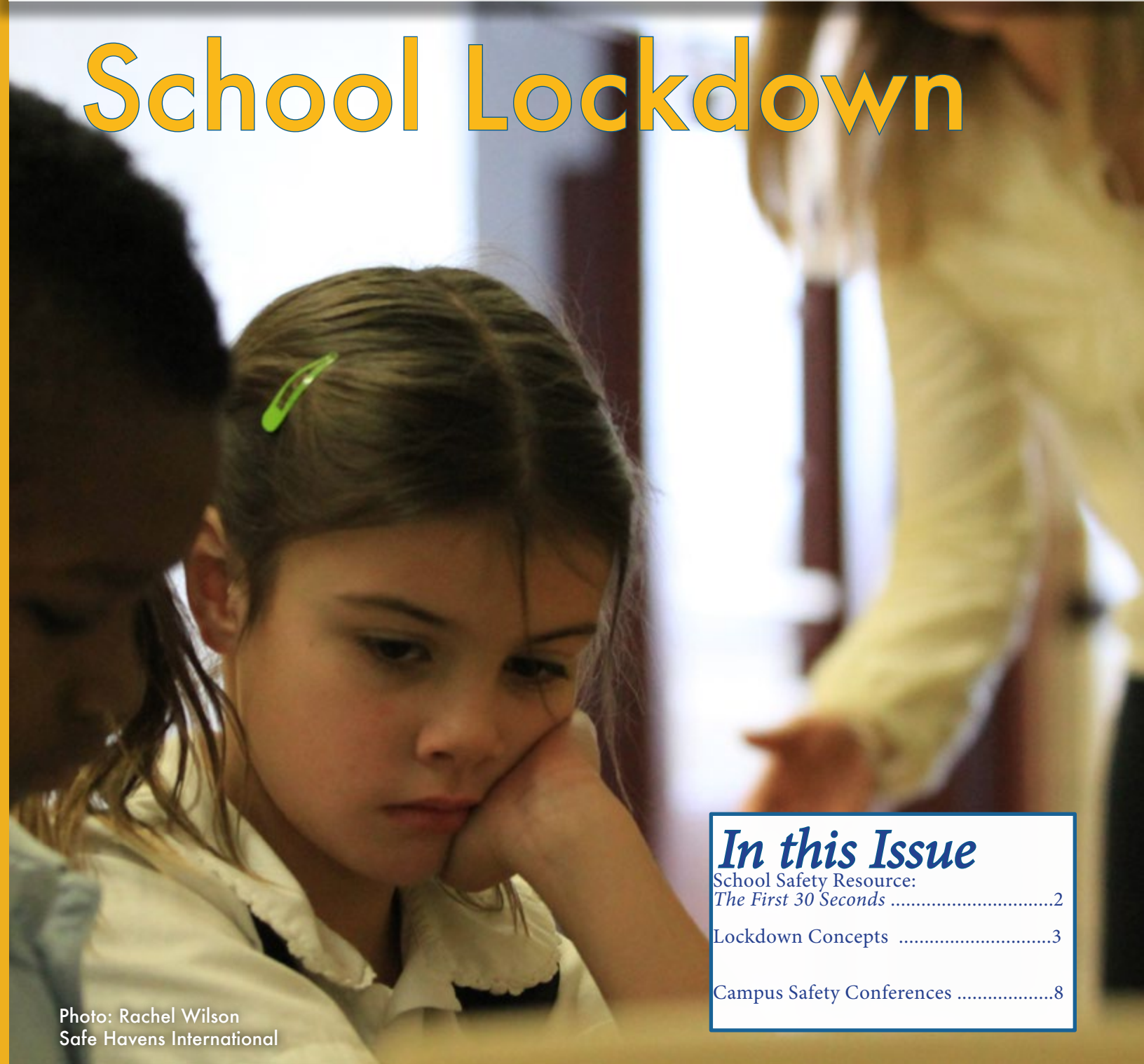




School Safety Monthly

April 2015

School Lockdown



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Photo: Rachel Wilson
Safe Havens International



Message from the Editor-in-Chief



Photo: Rachel Wilson
Safe Havens International

In this month's issue of School Safety Monthly, we take a closer look at one of the key emergency procedures of a school crisis plan: lockdown. While there will always be differences between what various school districts use as action steps for this protocol or plan annex, we will cover some key features that need to be addressed in the planning, training and drill stages.

One of the most difficult parts of school safety, and in lockdown procedures in particular, is the tendency for

an emotional focus to take hold when deliberate rational discussion and thought is necessary. Whenever young lives are at stake, and especially in light of tragic events like the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, emotion always comes to the forefront.

For those of us in the school safety profession, our key stakeholders are our staff, students and their parents. When faced with the reality of what can result when the worst happens, our survival instincts take hold and in this frame of mind it can be difficult to resist a natural emotional reaction.

It is critical for the well being of these stakeholders that we keep this in mind and find ways to refocus the discussion on proven practices and action steps that will work under stress, not just those that feel good

or that are the result of a knee-jerk reaction. In our January issue we addressed one of these approaches that can satisfy our desire to do something but can fall flat when faced with a real life threat.

Our feature this month addresses how to use drills and testing with your organization's lockdown protocols no matter what format they take. We also include a selection of scenarios that you can use to evaluate your protocol and make sure that your staff have enough variety of responses available. These scenarios can also be used to work with staff to review which protocol should be used in each of these types of crisis events.

For any questions, comments or other feedback, feel free to contact us at our website. -Chris

School Safety Tools Highlight

The First 30 Seconds is a series of realistic school-specific crisis scenarios that utilize a powerful evidence-based concept known as mental simulation. The videos are designed and organized for use in a variety of ways and are easily adapted to fit the needs of your school. They can be conducted in five to ten-minute blocks of time during weekly or monthly staff meetings, in one-on-one situations, or in group scenarios such as annual training sessions. For more information on this training resource, including sample video segments, visit: <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/safetopics/>



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Have you Properly Tested your School Lockdown Concepts?

by Michael Dorn

One of our clients recently implemented significant changes in their approach to school lockdown after they experienced a school shooting. The district had implemented a very popular approach to school lockdowns which utilizes the lockout/lockdown method. A review of school security camera footage revealed that school employees in the immediate area where the shooting occurred did an exemplary job in securing students. In fact, the video demonstrates that more than 80 students and staff were either out of the school or inside lockable space within seven seconds of the first shot being fired. The district has conducted some excellent training and drills to prepare staff to spot and react to this type of danger quickly and effectively. However, some staff in other areas of the school became confused as to which protocol to follow for the situation they faced. This fortunately had no impact on student and staff safety during the event. The security director determined that the use of the lockout/lockdown concept had caused this problem.

The type of lockdown confusion was identified as a concern for schools using the lockout/



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lockdown concept by Safe Havens analysts several years ago. Our analysts have been consistently seeing an unusually high fail rate for the lockdown/lockout approach during controlled simulation testing with a number of clients. This approach to lockdown remains very popular after more than two decades even though it has failed multiple times in the field and hundreds of times in controlled crisis simulations. This popularity derives from the fact that very few K12 schools actually test the ability of school employees to make an independent decision to implement lockdown

protocols. Unfortunately, most schools still rely on lockdown drills that are prompted by an administrator simply announcing a lockdown drill and evaluating how students and staff implement the lockdown protocol. Unreliable lockdown protocols often work fine with traditional “top down” drills of this type. Real life examples of the consequences of schools where traditional lockdown drills were relied upon include Columbine High School, Red Lake Reservation High School and Sandy Hook Elementary School. The shootings at these three schools account for more



than 70 percent of all K12 school active shooter deaths from the most recent fifteen year period of time for which we have active shooter fatality data. While each of these attacks were unusually violent and two of them involved considerable planning by aggressors, they serve to demonstrate that any community can experience an aggressively executed and planned attack.

There are many passionate proponents of a wide variety of school lockdown concepts. No real consensus on lockdown approaches for K12 schools exists at the national level. What is of much greater concern is the fact that no approach to K12 school lockdown concepts has ever been validated as effective under properly simulated conditions let alone actual crisis conditions. Though there are numerous claims by proponents of various lockdown approaches, no vendor can currently provide any peer reviewed evidence that their suggested approach actually works. In this regard, American K12 schools lag behind many other types of organizations that train their personnel on life and death procedures. Though no field has a perfect track record, there is considerable evidence that certain approaches provide much more reliable indicators of reliability than others. For example, every branch of the United States Military has found that top down drills are not a reliable means to test how well personnel can implement life-

saving procedures. For this reason, every service branch now utilizes testing protocols that require service members to not only **individually** demonstrate that they know how to properly implement emergency protocols but requires them to demonstrate that they know **when** to implement protocols based on scenarios presented to them in real time fashion.

Scenario-based testing has also been standard in the fields of law enforcement, fire service, emergency medicine and commercial aviation for decades. The lack of scenario-based evaluation in the field of K12 education is of special concern. We have documented many deaths in K12 school crisis situations that resulted from school employees being unable to implement simple emergency protocols independently. For example, we know that 95 students and staff died in the Our Lady of Angels Sacred Hearts

School fire in 1958 because no employee of the school activated the school's fire alarm for an estimated five minutes after the fire was detected. The school performed nine fire drills each year to test how well students and staff could implement fire evacuation procedures upon hearing the fire alarm. The gap between preparedness and action was that staff members had never been required to make the decision to **pull the fire alarm** during a drill. Students and staff had been conditioned to respond to directions from a central authority rather than to be prepared to act upon their own initiative. Unfortunately, they had been conditioned to respond to the sound of a fire alarm, but had never been conditioned to respond to an actual fire.

Safe Havens analysts have now tested thousands of school employees with a wide array of realistic video and

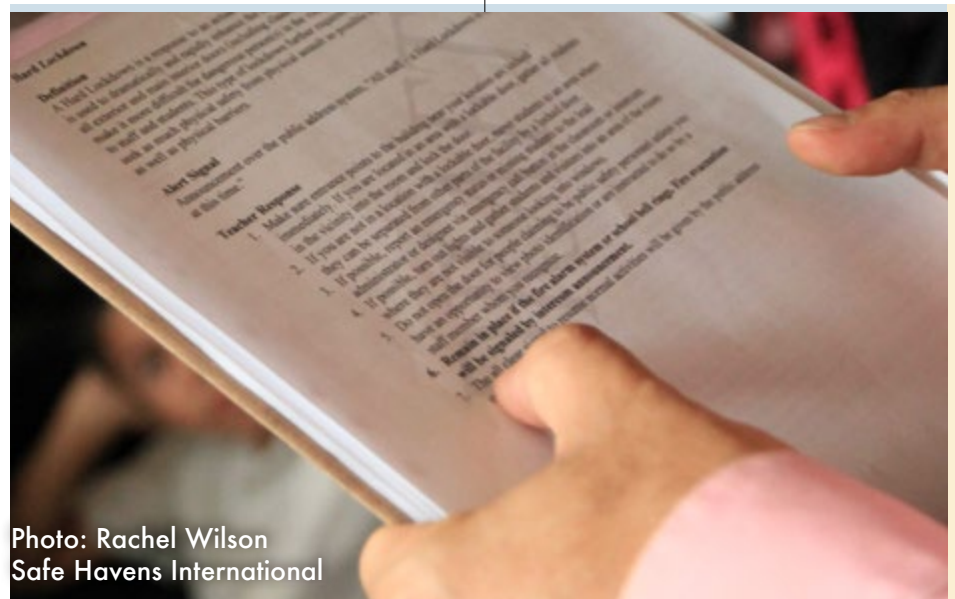


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audio crisis scenarios. During these controlled simulations, employees respond to scenarios on their own, without anyone telling them what to do when a life and death situation is presented. Our clients are typically shocked to see the types of responses their employees give. These simulations have demonstrated that is exceedingly dangerous to rely on the types of drills that have been the norm for K-12 schools. We now recommend to all clients that they require staff to respond individually to a variety of school crisis scenarios on a periodic basis to more accurately reflect how staff will likely respond during a crisis. Based on extensive research on life and death decision-making, we know that a teacher who cannot

respond with the proper action steps for a crisis simulation will typically not perform better under the stress of an actual incident. As we explain in *Staying Alive – How to Act Fast and Survive Deadly Encounters*, the reality is that they will usually perform at lower levels once the profound effects of stress are added.

Dynamic video, audio and role-play scenarios are the most practical and reliable way to measure and predict how well employees will perform if they are the first to detect a dangerous situation. Safe Havens International has developed a toolkit to help school officials better evaluate how well staff will respond to a variety of school crisis situations and provide

customized staff development sessions as a follow up to the evaluation. The *Safe Topics: The First Thirty Seconds* evaluation and staff development system was designed to provide an approach in line with the way law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel and other first responders train and test. Very importantly, the types of scenarios in this program do not focus solely on active shooter events, which while catastrophic, are rare. Instead, the scenarios involve an array of common emergencies – situations such as a child who is not breathing, an approaching tornado, a fire, an intoxicated man with a gun on a city street near the campus, an angry parent who pulls out a pocket knife in the school office, an apparently mentally ill man who has wandered into a main hallway and an emotional custody battle. Using a library of more than 80 such scenarios, our analysts have been able to gauge how well employees can respond to the most common as well as to the most catastrophic types of events schools face.

For school organizations that do not have these tools, a more rudimentary approach can be used. By simply creating a series of scripted scenarios with a list of appropriate action steps for each scenario, school and public safety officials can at least obtain an idea of how well staff would respond on an individual basis. For example, if a school security



director visits five schools in their district and randomly asks two employees at each school to respond to three different verbal scenarios each, they will obtain a better picture of how well employees as a whole have been prepared to make life and death decisions. For this approach to be valid, employees cannot be provided any advance warning, nor any guidance on which responses are appropriate for the scenarios. Employees should

be provided a brief time frame to respond to each time scenario just as they would in an actual emergency. We recommend that a variety of different types of employees participate and that the discussion occur in a private setting. Employees should be advised that they are not being tested, but rather that the organization's efforts to prepare them to make these types of decisions are being evaluated.

In our experience, even this rudimentary form of evaluation can be extremely revealing. For example, when this approach is used to test the various forms of lockdown using the lockout/lockdown approach, school employees are often unable to respond effectively to the scenarios. Employees using this approach we have tested have forgotten to implement the appropriate type of lockdown more than 90% of the time for scenarios that involve a variety of weapons but where no firing of a gun has yet taken place. This means that nine out of ten times, school employees reliant upon this approach failed to take action to protect themselves and the school as a whole fast enough to do any good. These types of responses helped our analysts accurately predict the real-life problems of this concept in an actual school shooting incident last year. Thankfully, no one was hurt as a result because of other measures the district had in place. Fortunately, the security director in this district had implemented a number of excellent practices that prepared staff to perform incredibly well when they were faced with an extremely challenging situation. If you want to know whether the lockdown approach your schools rely on will really work when lives are on the line, test the ability of individual school staff to apply it while responding to a variety of crisis scenarios in real time fashion.



Photo: Rachel Wilson
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Do your lockdown protocols prepare staff to address the following scenarios?

The following are a few very simple school crisis scenarios that in our experience should prompt any school employee to immediately initiate some form of lockdown. Be sure to note if the employees you evaluate use the appropriate form of lockdown for the specific scenario. Here are some general guidelines to use in evaluating responses:

- Scenarios 1 and 4 would make a limited (also referred to as preventive, soft, modified or partial) lockdown appropriate while the remaining scenarios should all result in a complete (emergency, full or hard) lockdown.
- Each of these situations can quickly escalate. Situations 2, 3 and 5 could result in an armed aggressor entering the school and using the weapon even if exterior doors are locked.
- Each of these situations would require that both interior doors and exterior doors be secured and that movement of students inside as well as outside of the school be restricted to adequately protect students and staff.
- Observe how long the staff member takes to respond to the scenario and the confidence they exhibit in their decision. If the staff member takes more than 10 to 20 seconds to start responding, or their overall response takes longer than 30-45 seconds, it may represent a response that would be too slow during an actual crisis.

Scenario 1: You are walking down a main hallway and you observe a man you do not know. He is not wearing a visitor badge and appears to be noticeably intoxicated and angry. What would you do?

Scenario 2: You are supervising students outside the school when you observe a woman approaching you and the children. She is about three quarters of a football field away and appears to be very agitated. You notice that she is holding a large butcher knife in her hand. What would you do?

Scenario 3: You are inside the school when you observe a man getting out of a car with a rifle. He is walking towards the school. What would you do?

Scenario 4: You observe a man walking in a main hallway. You do not recognize him and he is not wearing a visitor badge. The man appears to be highly disoriented and is making irrational statements. What would you do?

Scenario 5: You observe a man and a woman arguing loudly just outside the school. The man pulls out a pocketknife and stabs the woman repeatedly. What would you do?

The Differences Between Emergency and Preventive Lockdowns

While there will be variations depending on local first responder practices, a typical school emergency operations plan might have the following features as part of these two procedures. Emergency lockdowns typically include steps like securing all staff and students out of sight from hallways and the building exteriors and performing student accounting procedures. Preventive lockdown procedures are very similar but will allow classes and other activities to continue normally with little or no movement in hallways depending on the situation. Preventive lockdowns allow the school day to continue with little disruption while securing the facility against a potential or low level threat. Preventive lockdowns - also sometimes referred to as “soft lockdowns” or “modified lockdowns” can also be very useful in non-violent situations, such as medical emergencies, utility failures and other events which require reduced movement from students in the building. Both Emergency and Preventive lockdowns may also require a Reverse Evacuation.



Safe Havens Executive Director Michael Dorn to keynote two conferences for Campus Safety Magazine this summer

The *Campus Safety* magazine advisory board has selected Safe Havens International Executive Director Michael Dorn to keynote two of the three national conferences being hosted by *Campus Safety* this summer. Michael will be presenting different keynote topics at the National Campus Safety Forum in Washington D.C. on June 24-26th and the July 13-14th Campus Safety Chicago Conference. Safe Havens Analyst and *School Safety Monthly* contributor Steve Satterly will also be presenting a breakout session titled “How to Teach Tactical Thinking in Non-tactical Environments” at the Chicago conference. More than 500 campus safety professionals are expected to attend the National Campus



Safety Forum in Washington D.C. *Campus Safety Magazine* has been conducting national campus safety conferences for more than a decade. Thousands of campus safety professionals have attended past conferences and given them high marks in post-conference evaluations. Michael has keynoted five past *Campus Safety* conference events and is honored to keynote for *Campus Safety* again. Conference information and registration is available at the link to the right.

Upcoming Safe Havens Training Opportunities

- May 19th, 2015, Chicago, IL: Chris Dorn presents a session for school leaders “Permission to Live” - with topics ranging from active shooter response to school emergency preparedness. Presented by Cisco/Sentinel Technologies. Free copy of *Staying Alive* for all attendees!

[Click here for info & registration](#)

- Campus Safety Conferences with keynote by Michael Dorn and breakout session by SHI Analyst Stephen Satterly, Jr. at the Chicago conference. *June 24th-26th, Washington D.C.* *July 13th-14th, Chicago, IL*

www.campussafetyconference.com

- Steve Satterly presents “Relative Risks of Death in K-12 Schools” at the National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officers” conference. *June 26th-29th, Grand Rapids, MI*

[Click here for info & registration](#)

School Safety Monthly

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