



# School Safety Monthly

October 2015

## Community Preparedness & All Hazards

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Photos: Rachel Wilson

## Message from the Editor



Rachel Wilson: Editor,  
Staff Photographer and Analyst

Welcome to the Community Preparedness Edition of *School Safety Monthly*! Although this edition will cover some of the tragic events we've been following over the past month in the news, we did not want the focus of this issue to be anything less than a reminder of all the good there is in the world today.

For many of us, Halloween marks the beginning of the holiday season. This is a great time for schools & communities to involve first responders in

their celebrations. Building strong connections with local fire & police departments will not only build trust but also a better understanding of emergency plans & procedures. The cover of this issue shows one community's use of the fire department and the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) participating in events at "Halloweentown". This sort of involvement with the community is essential for smooth operations during crisis situations. CERT teams are a great resource for schools who may be short on first responders or have a large pool of interested volunteers. For more information on CERT, click here: <http://goo.gl/CpcaCs>

Today, households across the country are bustling with costume & party preparations. With so much excitement we may overlook the need to invite a little safety in our holiday planning. Here are a few Trick-or-Treat tips for you and yours to keep safe. - Rachel



Photo: Rachel Wilson



Photo: Rachel Wilson

# Trick-or-Treat Tips:

- Be Aware of Your Surroundings - practice situational awareness
- Be Visible - Wear bright colors and/or reflective materials and carry a flashlight
- Have a Reunification Plan - in case of an emergency or disaster during your evening
- Know Your Neighbors - be familiar with the area where you are trick-or-treating
- Stay Together - make plans to meet at a specific place if splitting up
- Bring a Kit (Just the basics: Cell phone, maps, flashlights, water, small first aid kit, etc.)

**And remember - Inspect Your Treats Before You Eat!**



# Fiction Becoming Fact

by Michael Dorn

As is typical of highly publicized campus shooting incidents, we have had many calls from the media about the recent shooting at Umpqua Community College in Oregon. Reporters often want our opinions regarding what transpired, what went wrong and most commonly, what could have prevented the incident. Experience has taught me to be very cautious in answering these types of questions. The first and foremost reason for this is that much of the information that is reported in the first few days of an incident is wildly inaccurate.

Having been brought in to provide assistance after a number of highly publicized campus shootings, my experience has been that much of the information that is reported does not match what I see in the ensuing after action reports, witness statements, depositions, first-hand accounts, surveillance videos and other information that is not available shortly after an incident.

Unfortunately, many pieces of inaccurate information that are reported soon after an incident become entrenched as "fact" that continues to be repeated for years. This is often further exacerbated when people incorporate these inaccuracies into peer review papers, conference presentations, articles, blogs and other communications. Unfortunately, this can occur even when people conveying the information have the best of intentions and attempt to provide accurate information.

These inaccuracies can become highly problematic when people base campus safety decisions on faulty information. There have been many instances of campus organizations changing lockdown protocols, training and other aspects of their life-safety approaches because of specific aspects of an incident that are not accurate. We urge campus officials to take care not to base their school safety decisions on initial reports of a high profile campus safety event. The confusing, complex and emotionally painful incidents we see on the news make it extremely difficult for even careful media organizations to provide accurate and reliable information until time has passed.

*Michael Dorn is the Executive Director of Safe Havens International and has provided post-incident assistance for ten K12 active shooter incidents and targeted school shootings in the United States and Canada.*



Photos: Rachel Wilson



Photo: Rachel Wilson



# Reminders of the Need for Diversity in Preparedness

by Chris Dorn

The past month has given us a number of very poignant tragedies to reflect on. The Umpqua Community College shooting, the Oklahoma State University parade incident, a number of severe weather events as well as numerous other items have shocked us week after week. It seems impossible to go a few days without hearing about some new incident where lives have been lost.

When looking at any tragedy we must remember to remain calm and focused. While new events and changing times will of course have some effect on our work, in general our mission remains unchanged despite whatever the latest tragedy is. For most risks, a successful prevention and response program depends on the basics: good procedures, good equipment and the staff training and empowerment needed to support it.

In contrast to the tragedies that remind us of the importance of increased safety and security measures, we have also seen recent events that push the sway of public opinion in the opposite direction. The incident in South Carolina where the actions of an SRO have been called into question is a reminder that while we focus on perceived risks, the details may still create difficult situations. Look for more discussion on this incident in our upcoming issue of *The Safety Net*, which will focus on concepts for school law enforcement.

As usual, recent events do not make our task of keeping schools safe any easier. But we must always persevere and keep the real risks in our sights.

*Chris Dorn is a Senior Analyst with Safe Havens International and the Editor-in-Chief of School Safety Monthly.*

## Free Resource Highlight: Relative Risks of Death in U.S. K-12 Schools

A key part of an all hazards planning process is the risk assessment and balancing the various hazards that we prepare for. While local crime statistics, survey data and site assessments should drive the focus of your local risk assessment, national data is a great barometer to measure against and give us a more robust understanding of real risk.

If you have not seen it yet, be sure to take a look at Steve Satterly's impressive paper "Relative Risks of Death in U.S. K-12 Schools" and the infographics that our intern Morgan Billinger created based on the paper. The data collected for this paper shows that our most pressing concerns are transportation accidents and general homicides, with active shooter incidents trailing behind other causes of death as well.

Download the report: <http://goo.gl/CVeazW>

Download the infographic explaining the breakdown by incident type (shown at right): <http://goo.gl/sxHeDR>

Download an infographic on active shooter incidents: <http://goo.gl/YOJuC1>





# OSU Parade Tragedy Reminds us of the Need for All-Hazards Planning

by Stephen Satterly, Jr.

A beautiful fall day was the backdrop for a story that recently made national headlines. People had lined the roads in Stillwater, Oklahoma, to watch the homecoming parade. Suddenly a car reportedly drove around barricades and slammed into some of the spectators, killing four.

This tragedy exemplifies the need for the All-Hazards approach to emergency planning in schools. Most places will not have a specific plan for vehicular assault, but many will have a mass-casualty plan that can be used for any circumstance. This incident is a prime example of why this “ready for anything” type approach can be very effective when used properly.

The key to the All-Hazards approach is the use of responses common to a lot of situations, such as evacuations (fire, utility failures, general emergencies) and lockdowns (active threats or other more mundane situations requiring enhanced protection). An organization can plan, then practice, these responses. When an incident occurs, the Incident Commander can determine the responses needed, leading the organization to effectively respond.

Schools that narrow their planning and responses to specific situations can actually hinder their responses in other areas. For example, we are finding that schools focusing on Active Shooter are struggling to effectively respond to incidents such as attempted suicides or severe weather. Except for the most common events, it is difficult to predict exactly what or how the next crisis will occur, but this approach allows us to be more well-rounded in our planning efforts. No school can plan for everything, but by planning and practicing a wider variety of responses, they will be better prepared to handle the unexpected.

*Stephen Satterly, Jr. is an adjunct analyst with Safe Havens International and is a regular contributor to school safety monthly.*

## School Safety Monthly

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