



School Safety Monthly

June/July/August 2016

Preventing and Responding to Active Shooters and Acts of Terrorism



Photos: Rachel Wilson



Message from the Editor



Welcome back from summer break and into the school year! We hope that your back-to-school transition is going well and that you had a great summer.

This special back to school issue covers a topic that has been making waves all summer: active shooters & lockdowns.

The UCLA shooting and the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando both raised a lot of tough questions including how to prevent these types of incidents as well as varying philosophies on how to respond when faced with an active assailant.

Our first article for this issue is a lengthy list of techniques and strategies from Michael Dorn that can be used to prevent not only an active shooter incident, but also everyday violence as well. Many of these excellent strategies will also create benefits in other areas as well.

Looking more closely at the response to an active shooter, Chris Dorn answers one of the top subjects we have been asked about this summer – door locks and hardware. Chris poses a series of simple questions that you can ask yourself to help evaluate your facility's door & lockdown situation.

As always, we hope you find this content helpful and we welcome your feedback!

-Rachel



Photo: Rachel Wilson



17 Strategies to Prevent Active Shooters on Your Campus

by Michael Dorn

The recent active shooter incident that ended in a hostage situation in Orlando presents a few lessons. One is a new tactical challenge: the active shooter that evolves into a standoff situation. While this tactic has been used in other countries, it has not been typical of American active shooter incidents. Next, the death toll sets a new record for active shooter events in the United States. Though there have been a number of more lethal active shooter incidents in other countries, the Pulse Nightclub attack appears to be the most deadly active shooter incident to date in the United States. International tragedies that eclipse this event include the 2014 Peshwar school massacre which left 148 dead in Pakistan, the 1982 murder of 56 victims by a police officer in Woo Bum-kon, South Korea and the 2011 Utoya Island attack at a summer camp in Norway which left 69 dead. At the same time there is one important similarity for this case, just as there has been in every other active shooter incident: the possibility of interrupting the attacker's plan. Though there are no absolute prevention strategies, there are probabilities and possibilities that are worth the effort they require.

I thought a listing of approaches that have been documented as effective in averting some planned attacks might be helpful as campus safety professionals review their prevention measures. While emergency preparedness efforts are especially important for situations where an active shooter incident cannot be prevented, it is my experience that it is unwise to spend more time, energy and

budget on preparedness for these catastrophic events than is expended on trying to prevent them in the first place. Here are 17 strategies that I have seen used effectively in preventing or mitigating campus weapons assaults and active shooter incidents.

1. Multi-disciplinary threat evaluation and management.

Properly developed and implemented multi-disciplinary threat evaluation and management teams have demonstrated considerable success in preventing many planned school, shootings, bombings and suicides since the technique was first used to stop a planned school shooting in the Bibb County, Georgia Public School system more than 25 years ago. This is one of the most effective and reliable prevention strategies when the dangerous individual is part of the campus community.

2 Visual weapons screening.

This approach has also been used to successfully prevent a number of planned campus shootings. Visual weapons screening involves training staff on how to recognize a variety of specific physical behaviors that are indicators that someone may be carrying a concealed weapon.

Schools and law enforcement agencies have been using our training videos to learn visual screening since 1998. "[Secrets of the Weapons Violator](#)" includes this training along with other weapons detection strategies on DVD.



3. Pattern matching and recognition.

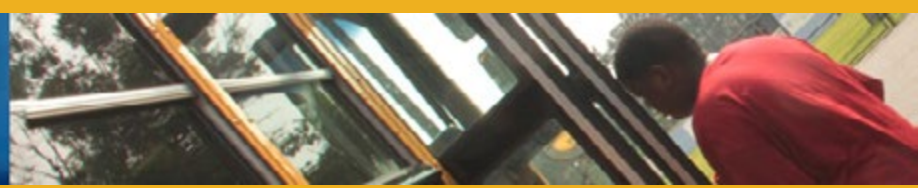
This research-based approach is known by several other names and was used to help avert a planned shooting of a school bus more than two decades ago and more recently to reduce the loss of life in a Paris terror attack. Pattern matching and recognition involves training people to pay attention to patterns of human behavior that stand out based on the setting and context. Paying attention to these subtle cues can reduce weapons incidents but also enhance the effectiveness of your staff.

4. Anonymous reporting systems.

Anonymous tip lines that are available 24/365 have been in use since at least 1990 and have helped campus officials to avert numerous planned campus shootings, suicides and other deadly situations. A planned shooting at a basketball game was averted when three suspects were arrested based on several tips that had been called in to the school district police reporting line in Macon, Georgia. School police and sheriff's deputies recovered two nine millimeter handguns and a sawed-off shotgun from the car occupied by the suspects.

5. Barring slips.

Banning potentially dangerous persons from campus property, combined with the arrest and search of violators, can help campus officials interdict a potentially dangerous person before they can open fire. As one example, a planned school shooting in Hinesville, Georgia was averted when a school resource officer arrested three individuals who returned to



the campus after he banned them earlier in the afternoon. After three guns were found in their possession, the suspects admitted they had come to the school to kill a student.

6. Good perimeter security.

Effective physical security can create significant delays and in some instances even barriers to an attacker. A stalker who had vowed to kill a Georgia primary school teacher was arrested by police after he repeatedly and unsuccessfully tried to defeat the school's secure outer doors. School district police officers recovered a loaded .32 caliber semi-automatic pistol from the man's waistband.

7. Protective glazing on glass in key areas.

A planned shooting was averted at a Minnesota Elementary school through a combination of a prompt lockdown and window glazing. When police arrived, they observed the suspect beating on the front door glass trying to gain entry with a handgun. The protective glazing prevented him from entering the school before they arrived.

8. Properly screened, trained and equipped security and law enforcement officers.

While active shooter events have occurred on campuses with armed security and police officers on duty, there have also been a number of incidents that have been averted by armed officers in the campus setting.

9. Monitoring of social media.

Though there are many challenges to this approach, there are sometimes opportunities to detect indications of impending danger via troubling social media posts.

One school system likely averted a shooting when officers from the District's school police department special operations unit confronted a former student who was posting frightening step by step plans for a hypothetical attack on his former high school.

10. Intelligence databases.

A number of planned attacks by gang members have been detected through multi-agency gang information databases. Increasingly, law enforcement agencies are using multi-agency databases to help monitor potentially dangerous individuals.

11. Internal and interagency information sharing.

While software programs can be an invaluable tool to help multiple agencies detect and monitor potentially dangerous individuals in a region, old-fashioned collaboration and cooperation are still an important means for campus organizations and area law enforcement officials to work together to identify and address potentially dangerous individuals.

12. Traffic enforcement.

Officers Woodrow Telfair and Stephanie Prater prevented a planned gang shooting when they attempted to make a traffic stop on a city street adjacent to the Central High School Campus in Macon, Georgia. When the suspects sped away, students in the area yelled to the officers that the car contained gang members who had just brandished a handgun and had stated that they were about to open fire. After a short chase, the three suspects were taken into custody by Telfair, Prater and backup officers. The department also recovered numerous firearms from convicted felons during traffic stops and license and insurance checkpoints near schools.

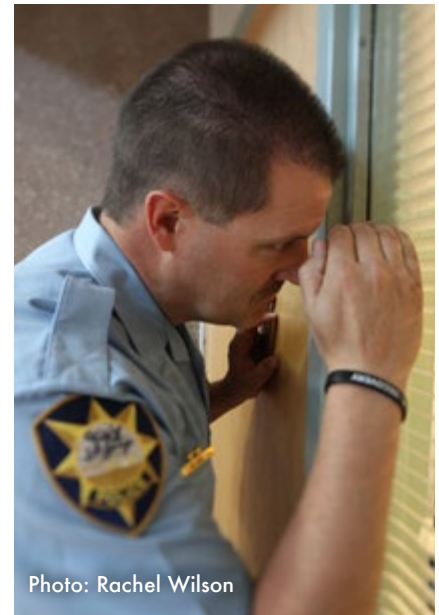


Photo: Rachel Wilson

13. Proper background checks of employees and volunteers.

Research by United States Postal Inspectors found that a number of individuals who carried out planned attacks in postal facilities had prior records and/or significant workplace behavioral issues prior to being hired by the U.S. Postal Service. Improvements in screening applicants became part of the Postal Service's approach to preventing future acts of workplace violence.

14. Gun detection canines.

In the past, K-9 search dogs have been successfully used to deter students and non-students from having firearms in their cars, in student lockers and hidden on campus grounds. In recent years, new training approaches have been developed that make it possible for officers to use dogs to detect people in public settings who are carrying a firearm or an explosive device. These impressive dogs can detect the scent trail left by a pedestrian as they walk, which can be particularly helpful for large events such as concerts, athletic events and graduation ceremonies.



15. Facial recognition software.

Security camera technology has improved dramatically in recent years. Newer systems enable the photographs of persons of interest to be uploaded into the system which can often detect the person in a crowd through facial recognition software. Though these systems have limitations, they can provide an additional layer of detection capability if photographs of a person who may oppose a threat are available. For example, if a previous employee who has been banned from the property attempts to enter the campus to attack former supervisors and/or colleagues, this type of system may be able to detect their presence on or near the campus.

16.Tag cameras.

Many campus organizations use license plate cameras to record the tag numbers of all vehicles entering their roadways and parking areas. While these can be useful tools to identify an aggressor after the fact, systems that will alert security personnel when the license plate of a known potential threat enters the campus can provide early warning for certain types of attacks. For example, if a campus employee has received death threats from their ex-husband, an alert can be set to go off any time his vehicle enters the campus.

17.Entry point metal detection.

While it is highly expensive and difficult to perform correctly, entry point metal detection can be a very effective means of keeping weapons out of a facility. Proper entry point screening requires, among other things, an armed officer at or near the checkpoint as well as very good access control for the building before, during and after the event, and no screening program is 100% effective. This type of screening is only practical for limited environments and the use of entry point screening at a typical school generally raises more risks than it addresses, except for special events other situations requiring their use.

Conclusion

While there are other viable approaches that can be helpful in reducing the risks of active shooter attacks, these are among the most practical for the majority of campus settings. They should be viewed as options to be considered rather than items that every campus organization should have. In addition, it is important to remember that each campus organization will require a blend of strategies designed to fit local risks, realities and resources. While there are no strategies that can provide absolute safety, a properly developed, implemented, tailored and integrated series of protective measures can dramatically reduce the chances that an attacker can successfully carry out an active shooter event.

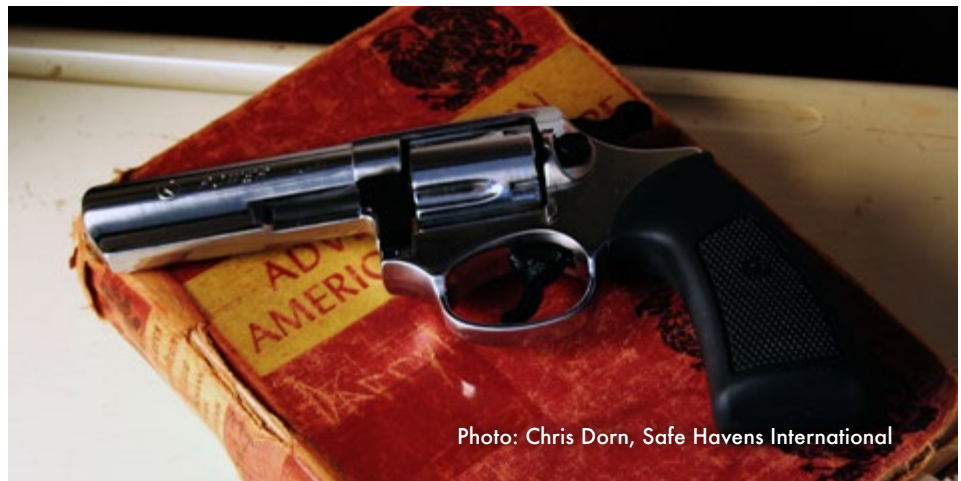


Photo: Chris Dorn, Safe Havens International



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Michael Dorn serves as the Executive Director of Safe Havens International. During his 35 years in the field, Michael's work has taken him to eleven countries and he has published 27 books. Michael has provided post-incident assistance for eleven K12 active shooter and targeted school shootings in the United States and Canada. Michael has also co-authored seven web courses focused on active shooter incidents including the United States Department of Homeland Security IS360 course which was developed as part of the 2013 White House School Safety Initiative. Michael welcomes reader feedback at mike@weakfish.org.



Lockdown Impossible: 8 Features to consider in Door Hardware

by Chris Dorn, Senior Analyst

The ability of staff to lock their classroom during an emergency has been a major concern for K12 schools for some time now. Recently, institutions of higher education have found themselves battling these issues as well. While there is no “one size fits all” solution to the problem of facilities with lockdown challenges, there are a few key questions we can examine when evaluating the adequacy of our door hardware. Think about how you use the spaces you have, and what practices you can change without any expenditure. One question to ask, especially in areas with multiple doors, is “Does this door need to be unlocked?” For example, in a large library with multiple student entrances, or in a science lab with two doors, can one door be designated as the entrance and other doors be kept locked and used only for exiting the area? Many teachers also find that keeping their classroom door locked during instruction is not only safer but more professional as well.

1. Can doors be physically locked?
2. Do occupants of each room have the capability to lock the door to their space?
3. Do occupants have to expose themselves to danger to lock their door? For example, do you have to go into the hallway to lock the door from the outside?
4. Is the door strong enough to withstand reasonable forced entry? The exact strength needed depends on the location and purpose of the door, but for most work/learning spaces a solid core door will suffice.
5. If the answer is “no” to the previous 4 questions, what would it cost to upgrade (and to what level should you upgrade), and what other safety and security expenditures must be balanced with this?
6. Do you have an escape route? This is almost always determined by building design, but is a reminder to unblock that never-used side exit in your classroom. Make sure that you are not barricading yourself to death.
7. Are you prepared to take alternate action? This might be evacuating through a window or leaving your lockdown area.
8. Does your building design make a lockdown impossible? This is frequently seen in cafeterias, libraries and other common areas, and is almost assured in open-concept school designs.

There are a number of lockdown devices commercially available for doors with the problems noted above. Some commercially available devices violate ADA & life safety codes and can increase danger by making it harder to escape and nearly impossible for first responders to come to the rescue. Here are a few examples of devices that schools use to provide a quick lockdown method for areas that must be kept open during normal operations. Each device works slightly differently but all operate on the principle of allowing the door to be quickly secured by removing or activating a device that has been installed on a pre-locked door. Many schools also have success with rubber bands, rope, tape, or other means of mechanically overriding the door lock. The key to remember is to avoid devices that would make it harder to escape quickly or bypass the primary door lock and make rescue entry impossible.

Note: Samples were provided by each vendor upon request and this does not constitute endorsement or recommendation for use of these or other lockdown devices.



Photo: Chris Dorn, Safe Havens International

Product samples obtained by request from Safe-Latch.com and All American Security Devices.

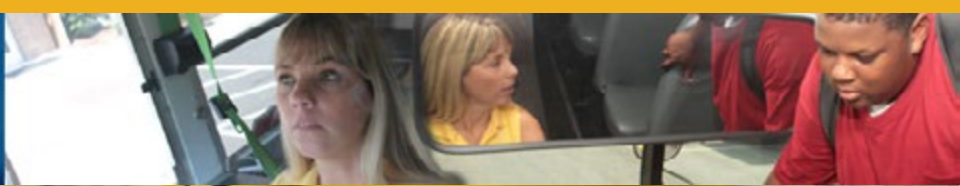


Photo of the Month:

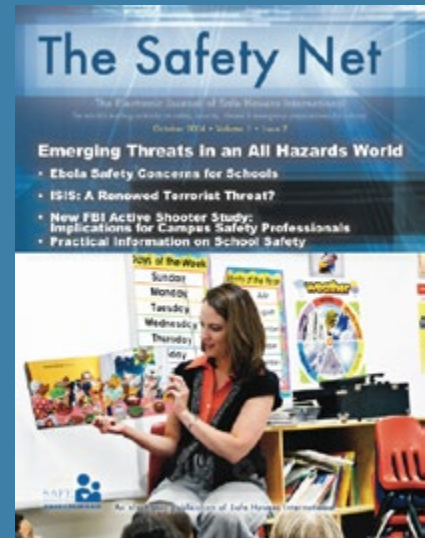
Lockdown buttons are becoming more and more common in new construction. These types of signal devices are capable - depending on the vendor - of instantly locking any doors enabled with electronic locks while notifying 911 and district staff. They are particularly useful for schools with open concept or otherwise challenging design issues.



Rachel Wilson/Safe Havens International

The Safety Net

In addition to School Safety Monthly, Safe Havens International also publishes an annual electronic journal titled The Safety Net. This is a more in-depth publication that allows for a longer format of articles and a detailed look at topics related to school safety, school security, emergency preparedness for schools, safe school design, building climate, safe school culture and school law enforcement concepts. If you are on the mailing list for School Safety Monthly you will also receive new issues of The Safety Net. If you are not already a subscriber, click here to sign up: <http://www.safehavensinternational.org/newsletter>



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