

School Safety Monthly

February 2015

Photo: Rachel Wilson, Safe Havens International

Terrorism and Schools:

A Balanced Approach



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Message from the Editor

This month's issue of *School Safety Monthly* will concentrate on school terrorism. Despite many advances in planning and awareness over recent years, many schools still lack adequate preparedness because of too much focus on specific types of incidents. We will explore how an all-hazards approach to prevention and preparedness aids K12 schools in readiness for the unexpected. The recent "lone wolf" attacks in Canada, France and Denmark as well as the rise in popularity of beheadings brings a new level of importance to the all-hazards approach, even when it comes to the narrow risk category of terrorism. The gruesome mass beheading in Libya in the past few days also demonstrates that this bizarre type of attack is not only a real threat but can lead to mass casualties. - *Morgan Billinger*

If you have any comments or suggestions on *School Safety Monthly*, contact us at www.safehavensinternational.org or on our Facebook page at [Facebook.com/SafeHavensIntl](https://www.facebook.com/SafeHavensIntl) or on Twitter via [@SafeHavensIntl](https://twitter.com/SafeHavensIntl).



Photo: Rachel Wilson
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Sandy Hook Commission Recommendations Released

This month the Sandy Hook Advisory Commission released their final report with detailed recommendations for school safety and security. Even though the report is the result of a single active shooter incident, it reaffirms the all-hazards planning model and a focus on the fundamentals of safety and security. Future issues of *School Safety Monthly* will delve more into the report and its findings, but we would be remiss to not mention the release of these findings, which aligns closely with this issue's focus: that an all-hazards back-to-basics approach is the best way to deal with any kind of emergency.

To view the full report: <http://goo.gl/cB92Ct>

To view the Campus Safety Magazine summary: <http://goo.gl/sMIgQd>

School Safety Tools Highlight



Innocent Targets: When Terrorism Comes to School

Safe Havens International is one of the most prolific publishers of school safety books and videos in the world. Authored by our own Michael Dorn and Chris Dorn, *Innocent Targets: When Terrorism Comes to School* is one of the leading texts on school terrorism and school related attacks in the world. It has been referenced around the world and was distributed to all 50 states through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). For more information, visit our online store:

shop.safehavensinternational.org



All-Hazards Planning in the Face of Terrorism

by Chris Dorn

It has been said that truth is the first casualty of war. When responding to terrorism, rational thought is sometimes the first thing to be forgotten. With each terrorist attack, we typically see a flurry of responses ranging from pessimistic to alarmist. What emergency managers remember that the layperson may forget is that an all-hazards approach is the standard in crisis preparedness for good reason. When we focus too much on any single threat, whether it is man-made or natural disaster, the result is typically a reduction in our ability to respond to a wider range of threats. My favorite example

of this is the meteor shower that struck the earth in early 2013. While the United States was still reeling from Sandy Hook and the United States, Russia and many other countries were embroiled in the fight against terrorism, the real threat to many Russian schools came from the unlikeliest of places. Who would have expected school staff to need to be prepared against a meteor strike? Until February 2013, most people would have relegated this type of incident to a Hollywood screenplay. This event, as well as hundreds of incidents that occur each year across the U.S., remind us that when we prepare

with an all-hazards mindset we are better prepared for not only the expected but the unexpected. Instead of focusing specifically on terrorism, schools are typically better off having plans and response measures that are dual-use and applicable to a wide variety of incidents. The table below contains a sample of some of the types of emergency protocols that schools should have in place for everyday events and how they naturally apply to terrorist incidents as well.

Chris Dorn is an Adjunct Senior Analyst with Safe Havens International; for his full bio visit [our website](#).

Protocol	Typical Use	Use in Response to Terrorism
Lockdown	Protection against potential or immediate violence or disruption.	Protection against an immediate or potential terrorist attack with firearms or edged weapons
Evacuation	Response to a fire, bomb threat, severe weather or other situation that renders a building unsafe.	Response to a bomb threat or other type of attack that renders a building unsafe.
Reverse Evacuation	Aids in sheltering against an unsafe situation outside of the school such as severe weather, violence or a HazMat release.	Aids in sheltering against an imminent attack with firearms, edged weapons or hazardous materials.
Shelter in Place	Response to a hazardous materials exposure, either accidental or malicious.	Response to a malicious hazardous materials release in or near a school facility.
Biological Incident Plan	Response to a naturally occurring disease outbreak or pandemic affecting a school.	Response to a disease outbreak or pandemic caused by the malicious release of infectious agents.
Weapons Use	Response to a student or non-student using a firearm or edged weapon on or near campus.	Response to a terrorist using a firearm or edged weapon on or near campus.



Photo: Rachel Wilson
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Keeping A Balanced Perspective The Importance of the All-Hazards Approach

By Michael Dorn

Troubling Trends

As mentioned in several of our previous blogs and newsletters, our analysts have found that K12 schools are often less prepared for school terrorism than they typically were prior to the Sandy Hook attack. We base this observation on our assistance with school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness assessments for more than 5,000 K12 schools prior to the Sandy Hook attack compared to our assessments of more than 1,000 schools since that tragic event. We have noted an increase in the pervasive and often overwhelming focus on active shooter events with little focus on other types of incidents in many schools during the past two years. The intensive focus of time, fiscal resources and energy on active shooter incidents often results in a reduction of quality in other areas of school safety that are also very important and statistically more likely.

What the Data Tells Us

We have noticed some startling differences in the “fail rates” we have seen during controlled one-on-one simulations with school staff during our assessments. During these simulations, test subjects are shown a control video to explain the instructions for the simulation. Each staff member

then verbalizes their response in real-time to a series of scenarios. We use a variety of realistic high-impact audio and video crisis scenarios. Our analysts score these responses and tabulate which critical action steps they remembered versus those that were omitted.

Prior to the Sandy Hook event, school staff around the country who participated in these simulations missed an average of approximately one critical action step per scenario. Since Sandy Hook, the decrease in performance has been rather high, with a new average of 1.7 missed action steps. Our preliminary observations from our most recent assessments indicate that this trend has continued. We have seen these types of results in a wide variety of K12 school organizations ranging from some of the nation’s largest urban public school systems to rural public schools and many independent, faith-based and charter schools in a wide variety of community settings.

Our analysts also identify the types and frequency of emergency drills being conducted at each school we assess. We have noted a significant increase in the number of schools performing lockdown and active shooter drills. At the same time, few schools are conducting other types of critical drills. *(Continued)*

Types of attacks used by terrorists:

- Bombings
- Shootings
- Hostage situations
- Abductions
- Arson fire attacks
- Hazardous materials attacks
- Mass casualty stabbings
- Public beheadings
- Bus/Transportation attacks
- Attacks at special events
- Attacks using a combination of the above methods

Critical Emergency Protocols

Schools that do not have these protocols and/or have not properly trained and drilled staff on them have increased exposure to mass casualty loss of life:

- Preventive lockdown
- Emergency lockdown
- Reverse evacuation
- Room clear
- Shelter in place for hazardous materials
- Fire evacuation
- Bomb threat
- Hostage situation
- Use of a weapon (to include active shooters)
- ICS/NIMS protocol (In addition to overall NIMS compliance)
- Biological incidents



For example, the majority of schools we have assessed in the past twenty four months have not conducted a shelter in place drill for hazardous materials events. This is a particularly deadly potential gap not only in regards to school terrorism, but for the very real risk of accidental hazardous materials events in most communities. Some of the most lethal school crisis events in the world have occurred due to hazardous materials exposure, with thousands dying in a single incident in India in 1984.

Conclusion

In at least some aspects, many American K12 schools are not as well prepared for the threat of school terrorism and school transportation terrorism as they were three or four years ago. There is a significant need for school and public safety officials to re-evaluate their prevention and preparedness efforts to identify gaps that may have inadvertently developed with this increased focus on one specific type of violent event. A balanced all-hazards approach remains

the standard for emergency management. In terms of school safety and school security, it can help educational institutions reduce risk and increase preparedness for active shooter incidents, natural disasters, school terrorism and for the most common types of crisis events that claim lives on K12 campuses each year.

Michael S. Dorn serves as a Senior Analyst and Executive Director for Safe Havens International. Visit [our website](#) for his full bio.



Photo: Rachel Wilson
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Key areas that schools should focus on for prevention and mitigation of school terrorism incidents:

- Good campus perimeter security
- School/District website content screenings for sensitive information
- Reasonable parking controls
- Good building access control
- Buzzer access with audio and video screening capability
- Effective visitor management software and practices
- 100% wear of photo identification for staff and visitors
- Armed security and/or law enforcement presence
- Lockdown areas in various parts of the school including the main office, cafeteria, gym, media center and other common areas
- Staff development in pattern matching and recognition, situational awareness and visual weapons screening
- Effective use of natural surveillance, territoriality and natural access control



Recent Terrorist Incidents

Compiled by Stephen Satterly, Jr. and Chris Dorn

This list of just a few of the terrorist attacks in recent years shows not only the severity of attacks but the variety of attack methodologies used by terrorists, reinforcing the importance of all-hazards preparedness.

- Chilling video shows Boko Haram shooting massacre, December 21st, 2014
<http://goo.gl/CX5IN0>
- 145 staff and students killed and Principal burned alive in Pakistan's deadliest attack to date, December 16th, 2014
<http://goo.gl/htlgvJ>
- 47 Killed in bombing attack outside boarding school, November 10th, 2014
<http://goo.gl/2hcR6c>
- 276 Schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram, April 15th, 2014
<http://goo.gl/bmSDtO>
- 63 Killed and 175 wounded in Kenyan shopping mall attack, September 21st, 2013
<http://goo.gl/mXuXn0>
- 42 Killed in shooting attack by Boko Haram at boarding school, July 6th, 2013
<http://goo.gl/WxZCVv>
- 5 Killed and 20 injured in girls' school attack, January 29th, 2007
<http://goo.gl/6hGWjp>
- Dozens killed and more than 100 wounded in a series of deadly bus arson attacks in China:
June 5th, 2009: <http://goo.gl/zDvYUv>
June 7th, 2013: <http://goo.gl/La0Y4a>
May 12th, 2014: <http://goo.gl/pyg0IT>

SCHOOL SAFETY MONTHLY

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