



Increased security vigilance needed in schools during April

BY [PATRICK FIEL, SR.](#) ON APR 2, 2018

With the recent mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., that claimed the lives of 14 students and 3 staff members, school administrators, public officials, and the general public need to be extra vigilant during the month of April.

April has become one of the deadliest months for campus massacres and homegrown terrorist activities in the U.S. We've seen it before with tragic events that seared the names of other campuses into our minds — Oikos University: 7 deaths and 3 injured (April 2, 2012); Virginia Tech: 33 deaths and 23 injured (April 16, 2007); and Columbine High School: 15 deaths and 21 injured (April 20, 1999).

The recent "March for Our Lives" protest has received national attention from around the world. Unfortunately, there is a concern over potential lone wolves or copycats following the news media who will try to make history at the expense of others. Past shooters have had a fixation with the Columbine shooting.

Here are a few recommendations I would implement as quickly as possible:

- As a school security expert, I would work with administrators and their local law enforcement, to complete a thorough risk assessment of all their schools and campuses. The results of these assessments will be the initial phase to develop a course of action, a strategic plan, and a budget to secure each school and their campuses.
- All schools should have an assigned police officer (often called a School Resource Officer). If not, a patrol plan that ensures a response within minutes to any and all types of school emergencies needs to be developed. If police are not contracted, security officers should be considered.

- All schools should have emergency/crisis plans and lockdown procedures in place, train staff, hold safety/security drills with emergency responders, and practice responses to different emergency situations, e.g., active shooter.
- Implement a close-campus policy. The main campus entrance should be controlled using security window film or door security screens and electronic access through a video intercom system; allowing access to those who belong on campus like students, teachers, staff, parents, volunteers, and contractors while keeping out the unwanted visitors: sexual predators, kidnappers, thieves, and others who have bad intentions.
- All entry, exit, and classroom doors should be locked and monitored throughout the day.
- Once a visitor is approved to enter the building, he or she must be directed to the main office. Before a temporary badge is printed for the person to wear at all times while on campus, he or she must show government-issued identification for screening purposes.
- It is imperative to test your communication/fire systems frequently: PA system, phones, radios, duress buttons, fire alarms, and other devices. Cameras in and around schools have proven to be a strong deterrent and very effective in helping to ensure policies and procedures are being followed, as well as in assessing incidents after the fact. They also provide a critical live insight for first responders during an emergency situation.

In the long run, we need to create minimum federal and state standards for school security. As we stand today, we have some schools that have made good efforts, some that have taken a few steps in the right direction, and others that have done virtually nothing to protect our students.

The safety and security of our students should no longer be left solely up to local school board members. We have already had over a dozen school shootings in 2018. It has to stop!

About the Author:

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