

Michigan shooting shines a spotlight once again on school security¹

Dec. 17, 2021

Expert discusses the steps K-12 campuses can take to develop a proactive and comprehensive security plan

Patrick Fiel, Sr.



Last month's shooting at Oxford High School in Michigan has once again raised questions about the adequacy of security and safety measures currently in place at the nation's K-12 schools.

Another school shooting is in the news, but sadly, we are still being reactive rather than proactive. Until we seriously embrace a collaborative, proactive approach, we will

¹ <https://www.securityinfowatch.com/education/article/21250653/michigan-shooting-shines-a-spotlight-once-again-on-school-security>

continue to see the high numbers of deaths and injuries associated with school mass shootings.

Last month, a mass shooting at Oxford High School in Michigan left four students dead and seven others injured, including a teacher. The suspect, a current student, has been charged. There are numerous questions coming from this shooting, including whether or not it could have been prevented.

According to [data](#) gathered by Everytown for Gun Safety, there have been 149 incidents of gunfire on school property in the U.S. thus far in 2021, resulting in 32 deaths and 94 injuries.

As a security expert with over 40 years of experience, I work with school administrators, their staff and local emergency responders to complete a thorough risk assessment to include an all-hazards approach of all their schools and campuses. I correspondingly conduct an anonymous survey to the staff and teachers. The purpose of this survey is to provide schools with the necessary tools and information to promote a safe and orderly school environment that is conducive to learning. The survey measures multiple factors including, but not limited to school climate, security, working conditions, teacher/staff perceptions, teacher/student relationships, and the extent of bullying and teasing at school.

The results of these assessments are the initial phase to develop a course of action, a strategic plan, and a budget. Any plan will undoubtedly include security technology, but no single security implementation will protect a school; true protection comes from many layers of security protocols and processes.

I highly recommend implementing a closed-campus policy, this will deny the unwanted individuals. The main campus entrance doors and windows should be controlled using safety and security film.

If a shooter starts shooting at the glass door or windows, the security film holds the shattered glass in place, impeding the intruder's entry. This allows the school administrators time to react and lockdown their campuses until the arrival of emergency responders.

All entry, exit, and classroom doors should be locked and monitored throughout the day.

It is also imperative to test your communication/fire systems frequently: PA system, phones, radios, duress buttons, fire alarms, and other devices.

The newest security weapon screening systems are touchless, intelligent, and non-invasive that can help spot guns, knives, and other weapons at the school entry or other locations. Security screening should also be used during sporting and large events.

Video surveillance cameras can create an added layer of security, giving school administrators and security officers a better idea of what is happening in and around their campus before, during, and after a crisis.

Gunshot detection systems are also now more readily available for schools. Among the different systems, some use sensor networks to identify the exact location of the shooter inside or outside and can then interface with the existing video system to send and deliver an image/video/audio of the shooter(s) to school officials and first responders within seconds. This allows the school administrators to initiate lockdown and implement their active shooter protocols.

All schools should have emergency/crisis plans and lockdown procedures in place, which include the training of staff, teachers and students, the conducting of safety/security drills with emergency responders, as well as the practicing of responses to different emergency situations, such as active shooter scenarios. This also helps keep parents and the community informed.

There is no way of predicting where the next active school shooting will occur, but school administrators can and must be prepared to take preventative measures to mitigate shootings and protect their students, staff, and visitors.

I'm all for having school resource officers in schools with additional counselors and educating parents on securing their weapons, ammunition in a safe and secured area in their home. However, the only way to abate the weapons coming in a school is by using today's modern security technology.

About the Author:

Patrick V. Fiel Sr. is a security expert working with Databuoy Corporation, the maker of Shotpoint, an acoustic gunshot detection and localization system. He has worked with thousands of schools providing security services and solutions. He can be reached at (910) 789-4265 or at pvfiel@gmail.com.