



EDUCATION

Schools must be extra vigilant against mass shootings in April

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Patrick V. Fiel, Sr.

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We've seen it before with tragic events that seared the names of campuses into our minds — April 2, 2012, Oikos University: 7 deaths and 3 injured; April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech: 33 deaths and 23 injured, and April 20, 1999, Columbine High School: 15 deaths and 21 injured.

Unfortunately, there is a concern over potential lone wolves or copycats who will try to make history at the expense of others during the month of April.

Past shooters have had a fixation with the Columbine shooting for the past 24 years. A big change from the Columbine shooting is that today we have social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other sites to allow easy access to both research past shootings and post about potential future shootings.

Be Ready to Protect

School administrators, staff, students, and parents need to be extra vigilant during this month. While attacks on campuses have garnered the most attention, we have to be ready to protect students and employees.

Before taking any action or spending money on security, one of the most important steps school administrators can take is to request a campus security review from a qualified school security expert who can help design a full security plan for securing the entire campus.

The review will identify security strengths and weaknesses. The entire process is designed to reduce incidents and try to anticipate any emergencies that might occur at their school or campus.

The results of these assessments serve as the initial phase to develop a strategic plan. The review will help reduce incidents and possibly prevent potential liabilities.

School superintendents should take immediate action and implement a closed-campus policy and review their emergency/crisis plans and lockdown procedures.

Schools must also hold appropriate safety/security drills with emergency responders, and practice responses to different emergency situations, e.g., active shooter.

All schools need to have a permanent School Resource Officer (SRO) assigned and additional SROs as needed.

Additionally, all schools -- especially elementary schools -- should be secured at all times.

The main campus entrance should be controlled using security **glazing film** to all first-floor doors and window glass. Start with door glass first and continue until all first-floor glass is secure. All entry, exit, and classroom doors should be locked throughout the day.

Allow access only to those who belong on campus. Once a visitor is approved to enter the building, he or she must be directed or escorted 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.

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.

Make Sure it Works

It is imperative to test your communication/fire systems frequently, including the 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 critical live insight for first responders during an emergency situation.

It is impossible to predict where the next active school shooting will occur, yet all schools must be prepared to take preventative measures to mitigate damages from an active shooter.

Let's all work together to provide a safe secure school environment for our students and teachers.

Patrick V. Fiel Sr. is a national security expert specializes in providing schools with a holistic security approach that creates a solid foundation for establishing or improving security policies, practices, and procedures.

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