

COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL FACILITIES PLANNERS INTERNATIONAL

# SAFE SCHOOLS

## A BEST PRACTICES GUIDE



# PREFACE

Public education is being scrutinized today. Safety for schoolchildren has the nation's attention. Every aspect of educational safety and security is under review and school districts are contemplating best practices to employ to safeguard both students and staff. As leaders in creating safety in the built environment, CEFPI orchestrated a security summit in Washington, D.C. to explore just this topic. This document is a result of the collaborative effort of the many professionals who participated in this work. Its aim is to empower stakeholders with a guide to best practices used by many practitioners. Its primary scope addresses educators and school boards charged with safeguarding students and staff...but it is also useful to parent groups, security officials, elected officials, and other such publics given to this task.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report seeks to answer the question of how to empower elected officials, educators, planners, and builders with essential knowledge certain to aid in the protection of students. Such a charge was given to those who attended the CEFPI Security Summit in Washington, D.C. on February 6, 2013.

Four interrelated elements were considered by committee within the overarching theme of discovering how the built environment lends itself to emergency preparedness and response. Those components included: Infrastructure; Crisis Communications; Staffing; and, Procedures. These security factors, in collaboration with efforts provided by security and educational agencies at the national, state, and local levels, provide a framework for emergency planning.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Reconciling the need for a true community school, built for creativity and exploration – and interaction by community members – the goal is to ensure emergency preparedness and response are woven into the very construct of the learning space; to narrow risk from a plethora of threats by creating concentric circles of protection.

## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

When time is crucial, ensuring the built environment aids in crisis communication is essential. The goal is to ensure that emergency contact is readily available to building occupants for reaching one another and emergency first responders. In a dire emergency, simple and direct communication is critical.

## STAFFING

The issue of safety and security of students involves more than just local law enforcement...it involves mental healthcare providers, building security and maintenance personnel, trained teachers and office staff, and a comprehensive campus emergency plan.

## PROCEDURES

When an emergency occurs within the school, staff and students must know how to effectively respond within mere moments. Practiced procedures produce effective results. The built environment must accommodate such response; namely, evacuation, lockdown, lockout, and shelter responses.

The recommendation is that from this information a concise guide be created designed to assist elected officials, educators, planners, and builders in matters related to safe schools.

Every day in the United States more than 50 million students attend school. Statistically speaking, those children are safe while in our schools. Yet, when danger presents itself, all stakeholders deserve to know that educational leaders have prepared for such exigencies as we wish never again to encounter.

# PLANNING GUIDE

The following guide seeks to answer the primary question of how to create a built environment which lends itself to emergency preparedness and response. It explores four major and interrelated categories in doing so: Infrastructure; Crisis Communications; Staffing; and, Procedures.

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Emergency preparedness and response must be woven into every aspect of the built learning space. The goal, simply stated, is to reduce risk and address a plethora of threats by creating concentric circles of protection:

- This safe environment begins with the ability to lock students behind doors, protecting them from aggression, as well as the ability to shield students away from large windows and to safeguard them when they meet en masse for assemblies and meals.
- It includes such measures as secured ingress (via secured vestibules) and remote access to select exterior and interior doors (through keyless entry), as well as security cameras, both interior and exterior.
- It involves a high security keying system with control measures in place relative to master keys, and seeks to have all students under one roof.
- Line-of-sight issues should be mitigated through design; gaining access through a remote point by unauthorized personnel is eliminated by doing so. The use of cameras aids in this matter as well.
- Exterior entrances are protected via bollards; ample interior and exterior lighting is in place; and, the perimeter of the school, to include parking lots, playgrounds and athletic fields, is fenced and monitored via security cameras.



## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The means to communicate in an emergency is paramount; and the key to effective communication is one of access, simplicity, and scope. To that end, the following should be considered:

- An effective Public Address system – with an alternative power source – is one that can broadcast to every student and staff member, both within the school and on adjacent fields, and is accessible from a multitude of locations, to include classrooms.
- Interagency access and use of security cameras and radio channels are crucial in an emergency.
- The use of multiple communication devices within the school is desirable; these range from the static Public Address system to mobile panic devices worn by select administrators.

## PLANNING GUIDE (cont'd)

- A concise plan for emergency contact is important; the plan directs who is called by whom as well as who speaks with the media such that a district speaks with one voice.
- Broadcast messaging to stakeholders in an emergency can aid first responders in unobstructed access to the school by informing them to stay away from an affected area.
- Emergency communication means for classroom teachers – from multiple locations – can prevent escalation of events.



## STAFFING

In a school, all training and response issues should be outlined in the district's Multihazard Emergency Operations Plan. That plan should cover the following with respect to command and control (to include staff roles, responsibilities, and training):

- Key staff within the district should be certified through the National Incident Management System. Information can be gained at the following website: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov).
  - Detail staff jobs in the district and campus emergency management plans. The goal is that one person is tasked with only one specific job.
  - Commissioned peace officers should serve as School Resource Officers and be trained to identify potential safety issues within a school setting.
  - A 24-hour security department (non-commissioned) equipped to provide property security and non-emergency daytime response is beneficial. Such can provide deterrence to issues such as bullying, theft, vandalism, drug use, etc.
  - Mental healthcare providers, as well as county and city agencies, are part of a district's emergency response team.
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- Teachers should be trained on all aspects of emergency response as well as on issues relative to the potential for violence (e.g. bullying, gang, drug awareness).
  - Site and building plans of the built environment should be shared with emergency responders; as well, security systems should be available to responders.

## PLANNING GUIDE (cont'd)

### PROCEDURES

Practiced procedures produce effective response...knowing what to do when danger invades is crucial to survival. Procedures should include the following (at a minimum):

- All school staff, to include substitute teachers, office staff, kitchen staff, custodial staff, and the like, and students, should practice emergency drills and exercises.
- Both informal and formal safety and security audits should be conducted. All findings and recommendations should be shared with the principal, and prioritized and action-planned according to a thorough cost/benefit analysis.
- The use of security devices should be governed by procedure; as a case in point, metal detectors should be strictly utilized according to board policy.
- Measures to keep drugs, alcohol, and weapons from being introduced into the school should be in place and monitored daily (e.g. the use of qualified K9 teams).
- How schools manage classroom doors...how principals announce the need for lockdown...how evacuation occurs: all should be managed by procedure.
- No code words should ever be used in announcing an emergency; plain and descriptive language only (example: “Teachers and students, we have a lockdown in the building; lockdown the school”).
- Visitor registry should be in place at every campus; staff should be trained to know what to do if they engage a stranger to the campus who is without a visitor’s badge.
- Each campus staff member should be taught to positively engage all visitors to the campus, sound the alarm when things are amiss, and teach with classroom doors locked.
- Each school principal should have a campus emergency management plan that is written and available to staff members.
- The built environment should accommodate communication, lockdown, lockout, evacuation, shelter, and other essential issues related to emergency response. (An example of this might include a catchment area with hardened walls within the school.



# REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

Every day in America more than 50 million children go to neighborhood public schools. Parents send them off with every hope they will be safe while there. And yet, as has been the case in too many cities, violence shatters that hope. CEFPI seeks to lead in the effort to bolster our schools and provide safer and more secure learning environments. As a result, this planning guide has been created to provide elected officials, educators, planners, and builders with essential knowledge certain to aid in the protection of our students. The guide seeks to answer the primary question of how to create a built environment which lends itself to emergency preparedness and response. It explores four major and interrelated categories in doing so: Infrastructure; Crisis Communications; Staffing; and, Procedures.

## THE SECURITY SUMMIT

On February 6, 2013, CEFPI hosted a security summit in Washington, D.C. Attendees included personnel from national, state, and local educational and security agencies. (Speakers and attendees are listed at the attachment.) The summit was held with the intent of recognizing and addressing significant issues impacting school safety and security. The primary goal encompassed two facets: 1) To encourage stakeholder collaboration in developing a shared vision for school security as it relates to the planning, design, and operational protocol of the built environment, and 2) To create a best practices' guide to brief school boards, parent groups, media, elected officials, educators, planners, builders, and other publics regarding school security as it relates to the physical environment.

The summit concluded with attendees having gained a better understanding of the multiple facets and considerations of the safety and security issue. They did this primarily through evaluating those key issues facing every school official with respect to his or her ability to safeguard students. The result of this work is the document you now hold, which includes a concise guide for creating and maintaining safe schools.

## THE PROCESS

Attendees were segregated into four working groups and given an overview of their particular piece of the project. Each group had interaction with an educator involved in the matter of safe schools. The group's responsibility was to explore the aspect of security given it and to create a draft working document listing both questions and recommendations. At the end of the planning time, the group reassembled and shared findings, followed by interaction from other groups. All such findings were then collated and evaluated for inclusion into the planning guide.

The guide does not portend to be exhaustive or exclusive. In some ways, it serves as a starting point; in other ways, it represents "boots on the ground" practicality. The hope of those who have assisted in the creation of this document is that it represents best practices among many practitioners.

In the context of the built environment, consideration was given to each of the following elements of safe schools:

REPORT (cont'd)

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Today's schools are built to ignite the creative genius of our students. As such, design is pushed to new paradigms equal to the challenge for such brilliance. Old environs are replaced with state-of-the-art intellectual labs designed to elicit the energy of our youth. And into this construct enters the ever existing need for safety and security; our kids cannot hope to explore new horizons by looking over their shoulders to ensure they are safe.

These are community schools. As such, emergency preparedness and response must be woven into every aspect of the built learning space. The goal, simply stated, is to narrow risk by creating concentric circles of protection.

- Thinking outwardly, this safe environment begins with the ability to physically separate students, faculty, and staff from an armed aggressor through the use of catchment areas, locked doors, fire doors, or other physical design elements.
- It involves the ability to shield students away from large classroom windows and to safeguard them when they meet en masse for assemblies and meals.
- It includes such measures as secured ingress and remote access to select exterior and interior doors, as well as security cameras, both interior and exterior.
- It involves a high security keying system with control measures in place relative to master keys.
- It seeks to have all students under one roof. (It is certainly understood that such a goal is difficult to accomplish...and that there may be value in having students spread out in multiple buildings during certain emergency situations – the idea being that if there is an active shooter, more time is provided for law enforcement since the perpetrator would have to find students in various buildings).
- Line-of-sight issues are mitigated through design; remote location access by unauthorized personnel is eliminated.
- Exterior entrances are protected via bollards; ample interior and exterior lighting is in place.
- The perimeter of the school, to include the playground and athletic fields, is fenced and monitored via security cameras.
- Parking lots are well marked, lighted, controlled by gate, and monitored via security cameras.

REPORT (cont'd)

## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

The means to communicate in an emergency is paramount; without it, the ability to successfully implement effective response is greatly diminished. In many ways, the method by which to communicate broadly within the school has not changed in decades. In that the new paradigm for school design pushes the learning environment beyond the four walls of a classroom, to the point where every aspect of the school becomes a three-dimensional learning lab, a teacher's ability to call for help from a multiplicity of sources must be present. And in every case, the best method for communicating is simple and direct.

Of course, the ability to communicate is not limited to voice only. Today's technology puts a smart, mobile device in every student's hand; and with that comes a varied array of communicative technology. Schools and districts, too, utilize broad scope communication tools for emergency notifications. As well, with digital cameras any number of educators, security, and law enforcement officials can understand the nature of events within a school's corridors and exterior. But still and yet, when seconds count and many students and staff are in harm's way, the ability to broadcast a message to every student and staff member within the walls of a school or on the fields adjacent to the school is crucial.

The key to effective communication is, therefore, one of access, simplicity, and scope. To that end, the following should be considered:

- An effective Public Address system – with an alternative power source – is one that can broadcast to every student and staff member, both within the school and on adjacent fields, and is accessible from a multitude of locations, to include classrooms.
- Interagency access and use of security cameras are crucial in an emergency.
- Interagency communication via shared radio channels is also foundational to a unified response.
- The use of multiple communication devices within the school is desirable; these range from the static Public Address system to mobile panic devices worn by select administrators.
- A concise plan for emergency contact is important; the plan directs who is called by whom as well as who speaks with the media such that a district speaks with one voice.
- Broadcast messaging to stakeholders in an emergency can aid first responders in unobstructed access to the school by informing them to stay away from an affected area.
- Means of emergency communication for classroom teachers – from multiple locations – can prevent escalation of events.

REPORT (cont'd)

## STAFFING

A comprehensive campus emergency plan entails every aspect of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. It details security response options, crisis communications, and security technologies in use. Each is important but none so much so as the individual assigned with the specific job of safeguarding students and staff. And it should be understood that any staff member assigned to a school – and those within a district – is charged with a small but critical role in providing safety and security. In many ways, a safe and secure learning environment begins with the individual.

Of course, there are those whose primary responsibilities entail safety and security. And this is not limited to local law enforcement solely; instead, it involves mental healthcare providers, building security and maintenance personnel, and trained teachers and office staff (with respect to emergency response). It also involves other city agencies, such as fire prevention personnel, hospital personnel, and county health department staff.

Interagency cooperation is key to effective response. Each person responding should do so under the guide of the National Incident Management System. This system can be summed as C3: Command, Control, and Communications. When followed, response is coordinated, which affords responders immediate access into the danger zone. As well, it offers the greatest chance for students and staff to remain safe during a violent situation.

All training and response (as well as interoperability) issues should be outlined in the district's Multihazard Emergency Operations Plan. That emergency plan should cover the following with respect to command and control (to include staff roles, responsibilities, and training):

- Key staff within the district should be certified through the National Incident Management System. Information can be gained at the following website: [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov). Key staff includes any district law enforcement or security leadership, a school's principal and assistant principal, the district superintendent, assistant superintendents, etc.
- The Multihazard Emergency Operations Plan should outline staff to fill roles relative to the Emergency Operations Center and Incident Command Post. The Emergency Operations Center is generally removed from the location of the emergency situation and gives broad oversight of response, providing coordination with outside agencies; the Incident Command Post is at or near the scene of the emergency and gives direct response supervision. Remember, within the National Incident Management System structure, the mantra is "one person, one job." This avoids the system of response being bogged down.
- The district should consider having an Interlocal Agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with local law enforcement relative to the use of commissioned peace officers as School Resource Officers, unless the district employs its own police department.
- Commissioned peace officers should be trained for school settings; they should be trained to identify potential safety issues.
- Staffing should be placed to meet the most pressing needs of the district; it should be placed in such a manner as to thwart known vulnerabilities and/or threats; and, it should create a security envelop around the district relative to both personnel safety and property security.

REPORT (cont'd)

- The district should consider having a 24-hour security department (non-commissioned) designed to provide property security, security systems monitoring, and non-emergency response during the instruction day. As well, the use of such in schools to augment the School Resource Officer is commendable; these personnel aid in monitoring activity in and around the school, provide deterrence to and detection of criminal activity and truancy, and generally provide for a more safe and secure learning environment.
- Mental healthcare providers are a part of a district's emergency response team.
- Teachers are often the district's first line of recognition; they should be trained on all aspects of emergency response as well as on issues relative to the potential for violence (e.g. bullying, gang, drug awareness).
- County and city healthcare agencies can provide essential assistance with training and response; if needed, Memoranda of Agreement should be established for services.
- School blue prints, building plans, security camera locations and network addresses should be made available and copies given to first responders. Additionally, consideration should be given to having first responders, such as police and fire department personnel, tour the school campus on an annual basis to gain familiarity with the location and ingress/egress of facilities.

PROCEDURES

Procedures that are routinely practiced with all staff and students and given the appropriate level of seriousness will produce an effective response in the event of an emergency. When an emergency occurs within the school, staff and students must know intuitively how to respond in a moment's notice. The built environment, as well, must accommodate such response, which include the following:

- Evacuation, as with a fire alarm in which all building occupants leave the building and reconvene at pre-orchestrated locations for ease in accounting for all students and staff;
- Lockdown, as when there is a shooting or other violent situation in or on the campus, in which all school personnel (i.e., those who are not commissioned peace officers, including non-commissioned security officers) shelter behind locked doors (or, in the case of those outside when the event occurs, evacuates away from the school);
- Lockout, as when there is police activity near the school, in which all exterior doors are secured with no one entering or exiting, but where relatively normal activities take place within the school; and,
- Shelter, as when there is severe weather in the area in which students and staff assume the duck-and-cover position according to a school's plan.

Safety and security procedures cover more than just emergency response. Procedures must be in place to conduct audits of security matters systematically and daily. They must be geared towards discovering and preventing dangerous drugs or weapons from being brought into the school building. And they must be designed to identify and correct any inappropriate or illegal behavior by students, staff members, or guests at the school.

REPORT (cont'd)

When considering a whole host of procedures, thought should be given to the following (at a minimum):

- Schools should conduct emergency drills and exercises, to include those conducted jointly with outside agencies (which allows for these agencies to know the layout of the school). These should involve all school staff, to include substitute teachers, office staff, kitchen staff, custodial staff, and the like.
- Both informal and formal safety and security audits should be conducted. Some are required by law while others are designed to take a snapshot of the security effort on a given day and time. All findings and recommendations should be shared with the principal, and prioritized and action-planned according to a thorough cost/benefit analysis.
- The use of security devices should be governed by procedure; as a case in point, metal detectors should be strictly utilized according to board policy.
- Measures to keep drugs, alcohol, and weapons from being introduced into the school should be in place and monitored daily. Such measures could include the use of random searches by qualified K9 teams.
- How schools manage classroom doors...how principals announce the need for lockdown...how evacuation occurs: all should be managed by procedure.
- No code words should ever be used; plain and descriptive language only (example: “Teachers and students, we have a lockdown in the building; lockdown the school”).
- Visitor registry and control should be in place at every campus; staff should be trained to know what to do if they should engage a stranger to the campus who is without a visitor’s badge.
- Each campus staff member should be taught to positively engage all visitors, sound the alarm when things are amiss, and teach with classroom doors locked.
- Each school principal should have a campus emergency management plan that is written and available to staff members.
- The built environment should accommodate communication, lockdown, lockout, evacuation, shelter, and other essential issues related to emergency response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The intent of the security summit was to create a concise Safe Schools Planning Guide. This document is designed to provide a best practices’ guide for a variety of publics. It is the hope of the committee that it effectively serves the needs of those most concerned with creating and maintaining a secure learning environment.

CONCLUSION

Many people today have asked if the public schoolhouse is still the safest place in the community. It certainly takes a collaborative effort on the part of agencies and community members to bolster that security such that students and staff feel safe while in school. No school administrator wants to have to face the challenges of violence; yet all must come to grips with that possibility. They must plan and prepare for a broad array of threats. They must work to narrow the risk associated with those threats by creating a concentric circle of protection. They must train for response options associated with each threat. Train as though this very day violence should come near. All who are associated in any way with public education must do the same, as students, teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and the community-at-large deserve to know that we have prepared for such exigencies as we wish never again to encounter.

# APPENDIX

## Speakers & Attendees to the Washington, D.C. Security Summit

*The following individuals were guest speakers during the summit:*

David Esquith, Director, Office of Safe and Healthy Schools, U.S. Department of Education  
John Cohen, Senior Advisor to the Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
John Ramsey, CEO/Executive Director, CEFPI  
Irene Nigaglioni, Chair, CEFPI  
Scott Layne, SR Board Member, CEFPI  
Pat Lamb, Director, School Safety & Operations, Irving Independent School District

*The following individuals attended the summit and participated in the committee work:*

Andrea Falken, U.S. Department of Education Green Ribbon School  
Barbara Worth, CEFPI  
Barbara Bice, Maryland State Department of Education  
Brian Gordon, American Federation of Teachers  
Caroline Simmons, U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Caroline Lobo, AIA Committee on Architecture in Education  
Claire Barnett, Healthy Schools Network  
Mark Young, Nova Scotia Department of Education  
David Waggoner, Heery International  
David Schrader, SCHRADERGROUP Architects  
Doug Westmoreland, Moseley Architects  
Ed Schmidt, Fanning Howey  
Eric Hansen, Rochester City School District  
Franklin Brown, Ohio Schools Facilities Commission  
Harvey Bernstein, McGraw Hill Construction  
Jason Hartke, U.S. Green Building Council  
Jennie Young, Boys and Girls Clubs of America  
Jim McGarry, National School Supply & Equipment Association  
Jimmy Disler, Leander Independent School District  
John Fannin, III, KCI Protection Technologies  
Kathleen Moore, California Department of Education  
Kelly Pollitt, National Association of Elementary School Principals  
Larry Johnson, Grand Rapids Public Schools  
Laura Kaiser, Architectural Record  
Lee Posey, National Conference of State Legislatures  
Mark Egan, National Education Association  
Mary Filardo, 21st Century School Fund  
Mavonne Garrity, Senior Policy Advisor to Congressman Alan Lowenthal (California)  
Michelle Mitchell, CEFPI  
Nate Allen, U.S. Green Building Council  
Nora Howley, National Education Association

Rachel Gutter, U.S. Green Building Council

Renee Parker, National Association of School Safety and Law Enforcement Officials

Ron Bogle, American Architectural Foundation

Sean O'Donnell, Perkins Eastman

Steve Turkes, Perkins+Will

Yasmin Bowers, American Association of School Administrators

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