BEYOND THE SCHOOL WALLS: COMMUNITY EVENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

Schools are an integral part of their communities; when a community experiences a major event or crisis, schools in that community are also affected. All-hazard emergency management plans should therefore be comprehensive, focusing on crises and hazards behind school walls as well as potential community events that could also impact the school community. Schools should think beyond their immediate buildings and grounds when creating emergency management plans and procedures framed within the context of the four phases of emergency management: Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery. Plans should be developed in collaboration with community partners such as law enforcement agencies, emergency medical services, the fire department, and mental health, public health, and appropriate community agencies.

Large-scale events such as hurricanes Katrina and Rita and the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, had profound long-term effects on the surrounding schools. For example, two years post-Katrina, schools in New Orleans continue to work to restore the learning environment. The impact of community events is not limited to large-scale incidents. Small-scale or isolated events such as an escaped prisoner, a train derailment, a fire at an area facilities plant, a local robbery, or Election Day, can also affect a school's operations.

Prevention-Mitigation

When developing emergency management plans, a school, in collaboration with community partners and emergency management officials, should consider its proximity to potential vulnerabilities such as industrial or nuclear plants, chemical storage facilities, highways, airports, railroads, bars or adult entertainment, national landmarks, banks, and shopping areas.

When incorporating community events into emergency management plans, schools should remember their realm of responsibilities. Schools cannot prevent community events from occurring; however, schools can implement mitigating steps to lessen the overall impact of events beyond their control. For example, preventing an armed intruder from robbing a bank near a school is not that school's responsibility; a school can, however, mitigate access into and out of its campus to help

deter the likelihood of an armed individual seeking shelter on its grounds.

One strategy for minimizing entry and controlling access is Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). CPTED is a multi-disciplinary four-strategy approach to deterring criminal behavior.

1. **Natural Surveillance.** This strategy allows for unobtrusive observation of a particular setting through: design features that maximize visibility of people, parking areas, and building entrances such as doors and windows that look out on to streets and parking areas; pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and streets; and adequate nighttime lighting.

2. **Territorial Reinforcement.** This strategy restricts who may enter or exit an environment by defining property lines and distinguishing private spaces from public spaces using landscape plantings, pavement designs, and fences.

3. **Natural Access Control.** The third strategy demonstrates ownership and respect for property by designing streets, sidewalks, building entrances, and neighborhood gateways to clearly indicate public routes and by discouraging access to private areas via structural elements such as designated visitor parking with signs pointing visitors to the front office to sign in, and signs designating restricted areas of the campus.

4. **Target Hardening.** This final strategy prohibits entry or access through features such as window locks, dead bolts for doors, and interior door hinges.

Preparedness

During the preparedness phase, schools should review current emergency management plans and conduct a gap analysis to determine if the surrounding area vulnerabilities identified during the prevention-mitigation phase have been integrated into the plans. School districts

Safe School Design: A Handbook for Educational Leaders Applying the Principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

This Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) publication (ED449541) offers an in-depth synthesis of current, effective practices for integrating the tenets of CPTED into school facilities planning and violence prevention programs. It further explains the causes of common campus vulnerabilities and methods for addressing them to create safer schools.

http://www.eric.ed.gov/

can also prepare for community events by developing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with community partners, such as the American Red Cross, or government agencies, such as the local office of public health, that have designated one of the area schools as a potential community shelter during a severe weather event, as a clinic during an infectious disease outbreak, or as a morgue during a mass casualty event. The MOUs should provide clarity about roles, resources, and protocols for setting up shelter sites on school campuses. Some examples of questions MOUs should address include:

- Who assumes responsibility for setting up, maintaining, shutting down, and cleaning the shelter or clinic?

- Who assumes responsibility for providing security?

- What resources can the outside agencies access while on campus (i.e. cleaning supplies, sanitary products, etc.)?

- For what resources is the outside agency responsible for providing or reimbursing the school?

- What additional resources may the school need to restore the learning environment after the school reopens?

It is particularly important during the MOU development phase to remember that schools should not attempt to assume responsibilities for activities that are beyond their scope of control. A school's primary responsibility in the time of a crisis is the safety of students and staff; shelter management should be the responsibility of local partners and experts.

Assembling emergency "go kits," which are portable stockpiles of essential emergency supplies, is another tool schools can use to prepare for potential community events. For more information on go-kits please refer to the U.S. Department of Education's Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) Technical Assistance (TA) Center's *Helpful Hints* publication, *Emergency "Go-Kits*," available at http://www.ercm.org/views/documents/HH_GoKits.pdf

Response

To effectively work with community partners in responding to a community incident that impacts area schools, education officials should understand the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which was developed to ensure that all first responders from different jurisdictions and disciplines can communicate and effectively work together when responding to disasters and emergencies. For more information on NIMS, refer to the ERCM TA Center's ERCM*Express*

Newsletter on this topic, available at http://www.rems.ed.gov/views/documents/NIMS.pdf. During a community event schools will need to determine the appropriate response procedures such as evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place.[1] Schools may not need to enact a traditional response during every community event; rather only a heightened level of security may be required.

Recovery

Immediately following or in preparation for a community incident, a school's crisis team should be pulled together to discuss specific steps it will take to recover from the particular event. Teams can preplan for recovery by ensuring that emergency management plans take an all-hazards approach to addressing possible community incidents. To ensure a smooth transition back to the education mission of the school, school teams should implement the basic recovery steps outlined in the plan and strategize about the specific actions the school should take to recover from the event.

When a community experiences a tragic event, schools can utilize a variety of communication mechanisms such as automated phone systems, the Intranet, and interoffice mail to provide information to faculty and staff about how the school will respond to a particular crisis. After a community incident, schools may want to have a staff meeting to distribute the following materials: a script for teachers to use to share with their classroom students regarding the event; predetermined questions that teachers should be asking their students; a list of warning signs that a student may exhibit to signal they need additional help[2] and resources for staff

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1   *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.: Author, January 2007.

2   For warning sign examples, see *Identifying Seriously Traumatized Children: Tips for Parents and Educators,* National Association of School Psychologists, at www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/psycht_general.aspx.

Tips for Helping Students Recovering From Traumatic Events.

In this document, the U.S. Department of Education provides practical information for the whole school community coping with the aftermath of a natural disaster or other school-related incident. Resources are tailored to parents, students, teachers, school psychologists, counselors and social workers, coaches, and administrators. Accessible at http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/recovering/recovering.pdf.

who may need additional help dealing with the aftermath of an event. Universal strategies such as having a class discussion to help relieve students' fears may work for some students, depending on their age, but it could traumatize other students more. For this reason teachers should be given guidance on how to handle these situations in their classrooms and be given information about a designated safe location on campus where students who are having a difficult time coping in the classroom can go.

To address the mental health recovery of students and staff, the crisis team should call upon the predetermined partners in their community to help provide services to those students and staff who utilize the recovery room. When considering designation of on-campus space for individual recovery, the school crisis team should consider the following steps:

- Establish a recovery room for students.

- Establish a procedure for determining when the on-campus space should be closed down.

- Designate a separate space for adult staff who want to seek out assistance.

- Develop procedures for identifying and sending students to the recovery room.

- Create sign-in and sign-out sheets for the recovery room.

- Work with pre-designated mental health providers to offer counseling to students and staff after the on-campus recovery room closes or to address those with more severe mental health needs.

Examples of How Community Events Can Impact Schools

Election Day

Election days may present a security challenge for schools and school districts because many designated polling places are on school grounds. Therefore, on election days, some school districts may cancel school or designate the day for teacher professional development. Other districts remain open and use the event as a lesson in democracy. Some states, including North Carolina and Georgia, have developed procedures for preparing and responding to election days.

There are several actions for schools to consider taking to prepare for any election day. These actions include:

- Plan the logistics of the day with county board of elections officials.

- Work with local law enforcement officials to schedule extra security.

- Do not schedule large student assemblies for the election day.

- Create plans to redirect student traffic away from the voting area.

- Train staff to direct visitors to the proper locations.

- Consider back-up communication systems as the phone lines may be needed by the poll workers to communicate with the central board of elections office or to download data.

- Remind students, faculty, and staff of the changes the day before.

- Before putting in place any additional security measures coordinate with the county office of elections to ensure voter rights are maintained. Given that in many states there are very specific rules about asking people to show IDs at polling places and what constitutes voter intimidation, it will be important that all security personnel be clear on these rules.

- Coordinate with poll workers regarding everyone's role in the school's emergency management plan and actions associated with lock-downs or emergency evacuations.

On election days schools may want to consider implementing some of the following strategies:

- Use signage around campus to alert voters of where the polling place is located.

- Lock all exterior doors except for those necessary for poll access and/or the main entrance to the school.

- Cordon off specific parking areas for voters away from student and staff vehicles and prepare for extra traffic and traffic flow disruptions due to increased campus population.

- Remind faculty, staff, and students to wear their identification badges.

- Have the school resource officer or other law enforcement officials visible to help deter illegal or disruptive activity.

- Be sure to cordon off the voting area to students and school officials who are not voting.

- Work with community partners such as law enforcement to provide staffing to redirect voter or student traffic near the polls and to control parking areas.

- Consider increasing the frequency of security sweeps to ensure student and voter safety. Pay close attention to the poll areas, restrooms, common areas, parking areas, and entrance and exit routes.

- Be prepared to initiate lockdowns, evacuations, or other school safety measures as needed. Notify poll workers about who will make evacuation or lockdown decisions based on the district's standard operating procedures.

- Discuss with poll workers the school's policies regarding access to the school during the day.

Community Shootings

During some community incidents schools may want to consider a non-traditional response, meaning that it may not be necessary to do a complete lockdown or a complete shelter-in-place response. An example of this would be the response local education agencies (LEAs) in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area implemented during a 20-day sniper event that occurred in October 2002.

According to Ed Clarke, former director of school safety and security for Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), "The sniper shootings significantly impacted the safety and security of the MCPS to include students, staff, parents, and the school community." After the first shooting all LEAs collaborated to activate a systemwide procedure to secure and lock all exterior school doors; post staff at main doors and portable classrooms to monitor student and visitor access; activate on-site school emergency teams; eliminate community use of school buildings; and cancel all outdoor activities, including recess, extracurricular school activities, open lunch, and field trips. During this event, LEAs, in collaboration

BACKGROUND OF THE METROPOLITAN D.C. SNIPER CRISIS

From Oct. 2 to 24, 2002, two snipers were involved in 14 area shootings resulting in 10 homicides, three injuries, and one bullet shot in a retail store window front. Six of the area shootings, all resulting in homicide, occurred in Montgomery County, Md. One of the shootings injured a 13-year-old middle school student in front of his school in Prince George's County, Md. The remaining seven shootings occurred in the following locations: one in Washington, D.C., resulting in a homicide; one in Prince William County, Va., resulting in a homicide; one in Fairfax County, Va., resulting in a homicide; two in Spotsylvania County, Va., one resulting in a homicide; and one in Hanover County, Va., resulting in one injury.

with community partners, including police, mental health professionals, and emergency management officials, were constantly cycling through all four of the phases of emergency management. For example, LEAs developed and implemented measures to prevent a sniper attack on their campuses, and mental health professionals helped students cope with fear or recovery from the loss of loved ones who were victims of previous sniper attacks. For Clarke, the biggest lesson his school district learned was, "You cannot afford to wait until the day of an emergency or crisis to start developing relationships or an emergency management plan."

Area Industry Fire

A fire at the Environmental Quality Co. Plant in Apex, N.C., which began on a Thursday evening after school hours, forced school officials to alert parents of eight schools that buses and schools in the affected area would not be operating the following day. Five schools, located in the area from which emergency officials evacuated residents, were shut down due to the chemical fire. Three additional schools were closed because they were utilized as emergency evacuation shelters for residents in the affected areas. One of the shelter schools actually began the school day as scheduled but was dismissed at 9:30 a.m. so that it could be utilized as a shelter. The fire resulted in approximately 11,000 students missing one school day. Residents in the area were evacuated for three days and schools continued to operate as shelters over the weekend until officials declared it was safe for residents to return home. Parents and students were informed about the

changes through the school system's emergency alert system, which sent messages out to all impacted households in a matter of minutes.

The LEA worked with local emergency officials and the American Red Cross to cancel school, establish shelters, and reduce the demand for services. The impacted school system had an outdated agreement in place during the crisis with emergency management officials and shelter providers, but because of strong working relationships between school officials and emergency management officials, shelter protocols were established quickly.

Wake County emergency management and the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) are currently revisiting and updating all agreements to include a comprehensive Memorandum of Understanding so that in the event of another incident roles and responsibilities will be clearly established. Russ Smith, senior director of security for WCPSS, described the two major challenges
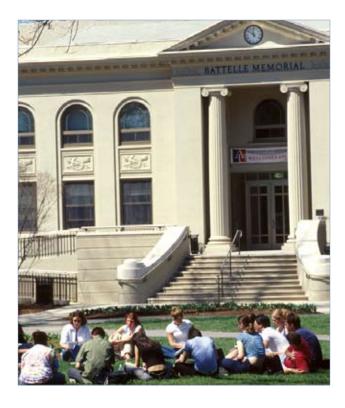
faced during the event: "We had not planned to accept pets at the shelter sites, and lack of interoperable communications between shelter staff." To address the first challenge, the new MOU with the county will include procedures and requirements for sheltering residents and their pets. WCPSS will purchase five sets of digital two-way radios solely for emergency situations to be deployed in the event shelters are opened to ensure interoperable communication among the various agencies staffing the shelter, including the American Red Cross, county human services, the school system, and security personnel.

Bank Robbery Near a School Campus

On March 11, 2004, a bank robbery occurred on a middle school campus of Kerrville Independent School District (ISD) in Kerrville, Texas. The Hill County Federal Credit Union was located on the campus of Hal Peterson Middle School. An armed gunman entered the credit union at approximately 12:30 p.m. and demanded money. A new teller, who had recently completed the bank safety training, was working at the bank that day; she thought the hold-up was a drill. This misunderstanding caused the teller to delay calling 911 and to not place a call to the school to alert them of the robbery. Once she realized it was not a drill, she dialed 911. Law enforcement called the school and all surrounding schools to alert them of the incident and arrived on the scene within two minutes of the call.

During the incident many of the students were in the cafeteria eating lunch, physical education classes were on the field approximately 100

yards from the credit union, and English as a Second Language and leadership classes were being conducted in a classroom 20 feet behind the door of the credit union. Once the school received notification of the incident from law enforcement the school immediately went into lockdown. Students from the cafeteria were moved to nearby classrooms and students from the athletic fields were moved behind locked doors. The school remained in lockdown for over two hours while law enforcement searched the campus.

Kendall Young, Kerrville ISD's director of special projects, encourages schools to know their vulnerabilities. Is there a bank at or near the school? Is a large amount of money stored on campus for other purposes such as athletic events or meal services? What material items does the school own that robbers may be drawn to,

such as computers, televisions, and audiovisual equipment? Schools need to consider their surroundings and cultivate relationships with area businesses or agencies to collaborate in the development of protocols such as providing warnings calls to area schools during the event of an emergency that may impact the campus.

Conclusion

Community events, such as those cited above, can be as difficult for schools and school districts to manage as incidents that occur within their walls. In order for schools to develop a truly comprehensive emergency management plan they will need to think beyond their walls to the community in which they exist.

RESOURCES

National Association of School Psychologists Center—Information for Educators

NASP provides crisis recovery information to educators on issues such as suicide; helping students cope with crisis, death, loss, and grief; dealing with death at school; handling media during a crisis; identifying seriously traumatized children; memorials; threat assessments; teachable moments; and understating cultural issues in death.

http://www.nasponline.org/educators/index.aspx

North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention-Center for the Prevention of School Violence

Established in 1993 as one of the nation's first state school safety centers, the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention-Center for the Prevention of School Violence serves as a resource center and "think-tank" for efforts that promote safer schools and foster positive youth development through resources such as the Critical Incident Response Kit Project.

 http://www.ncdjjdp.org

U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency's Independent Study-362: Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools

This eight-hour Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools course is a Web-based course that focuses on multi-hazard emergency planning for schools. This course: describes emergency management operations, roles, and duties; explains how to assess potential hazards that schools may face; and explains how to develop and test an Emergency Operations Plan that addresses all potential hazards, including community incidents.

http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is362.asp

How Schools Can Help Students Recover from Traumatic Experiences: A Tool Kit for Supporting Long-Term Recovery

This tool kit, produced by the RAND Corporation, is designed for schools that want to help students recover from traumatic experiences such as natural disasters, exposure to violence, abuse or assault, terrorist incidents, and war and refugee experiences. It focuses on long-term recovery as opposed to immediate disaster response.

http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2006/RAND_TR413.pdf

RESOURCES (con't.)

COPS School Safety Guides and Reports Web Page

The COPS Office presents a comprehensive Web site with a section tailored specifically to the school community, "School Safety: Guides & Reports." The school safety Web page includes the following resources: "A Guide to Developing, Maintaining, and Succeeding with Your School Resource Officer Program;" "Bomb Threats in Schools" and "Kids, COPS and Communities." Another resource is the "COPS Collaboration Toolkit: How to Build, Fix, and Sustain Productive Partnerships." Through the Web site, the COPS office provides training, guidance, and materials to assist schools in creating and maintaining safe learning communities.

http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=140

Introduction to the Incident Command System, IS-100, for Schools

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS) has collaborated with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Emergency Management Institute (EMI) to create the course IS-100.SC, Introduction to the Incident Command System (ICS) for Schools. School district and school-based professionals with key roles and responsibilities for incident management should take this course. The EMI Independent Study Web site presents this online course located at http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/IS100SC.asp.

"Children and Trauma: The School's Response"

The National Mental Health Information Center (NMHIC) is funded by the Center for Mental Health Services within the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). As one of SAMHSA's clearinghouses, NMHIC provides mental health information and treatment referrals to a varied audience throughout the United States and its territories. Children and Trauma: The School's Response was produced by NMHIC's Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program and outlines activities for districts and schools to conduct in support of the social and emotional needs of students following trauma. Ordering information is accessible at http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/cmhs/EmergencyServices/ccp_pg01.asp.

National Association of State Election Directors (NASED)

NASED provides a listing of each state's board of elections. Schools and school districts can access their state elections division Web site and review laws, guidelines, and regulations related to the election process. Schools also can find guidance for hosting elections on their campus.

http://www.nased.org/membership.htm

RESOURCES (con't.)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

As part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FEMA works to prepare the nation for all potential hazards and contributes to the federal response and recovery efforts following emergencies. FEMA also leads essential mitigation activities and trainings, and manages national programs (e.g., Flood Insurance and the U.S. Fire Administration). In addition to federal initiatives, FEMA has regional and state offices that work with state and local first responders in their emergency management activities. FEMA provides information, guidance, and resources addressing the four phases of emergency management, as well as incident-specific issues related to emergency management.

FEMA: http://www.fema.gov
FEMA Regional Contacts: http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/regions.shtm
State Offices and Agencies of Emergency Management: http://www.fema.gov/about/contact/statedr.shtm

The Safe Schools Checklist

Created by the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, the checklist combines the nation's best school facility assessment measures into one, comprehensive, Internet-accessible tool. School safety teams can use this tool to assess their physical environment and identify hazards and vulnerabilities on their campuses. The checklist addresses accident prevention, crime prevention, and disaster mitigation (e.g., the effects of potential natural disasters and terrorist acts), and applies the basic principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED).

http://www.edfacilities.org/checklist/checklist.cfm