



CAMPUS SAFETY AND EMERGENCY/CRISIS PLANNING

Are You Really Prepared?

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OCTOBER 2, 2006: WHAT BEGAN LIKE ANY OTHER DAY in a one-room Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, did not end like any before or hopefully ever again for the residents of that quiet community after a lone gunman killed five girls, aged 7 – 13, before turning the gun on himself. Five other schoolgirls were injured.

The Pennsylvania tragedy marked the third school shooting in the United States in less than a week, following incidents at Platte Canyon High School in Colorado, where six female students were taken hostage and some sexually assaulted by a lone male who shot and killed one before committing suicide; and Weston High School in Wisconsin where the school principal died of wounds received as he attempted to subdue an armed freshman student. Months later, a lone gunman would wreak havoc on the campus of Virginia Tech, killing 27 students and five faculty, before turning a gun on himself.

Are You Really Prepared?

Most schools have established fire emergency plans and practice fire evacuation drills on a regular basis. Generally, a school's location has also strongly influenced emergency planning needed in the event of a crisis brought on by natural elements, like earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes and floods. But, is your school really prepared for the myriad of disasters it might be exposed to? Are you prepared to take on an event as horrific and devastating as that which struck a peaceful little Amish school or bustling Virginia Tech, or even a single assault or death on your campus? Are you ready should your campus be affected by a train derailment, tanker truck crash or chemical plant disaster that results in the release of deadly gases or chemicals that require evacuation or "sheltering in place?" Are you ready if your campus is affected by a pandemic flu outbreak that could tax your human and financial resources beyond the imagination? Are you prepared for an "in house" chemical release, spill and contamination, or a tragic suicide, medical emergency, transportation accident or fire?

As you look at your overall program, have you analyzed your assets and potential hazards and determined your vulnerabilities? Have you worked with local authorities in developing a comprehensive emergency/crisis preparedness plan? Have you held tabletop exercises and actual drills? Have you put measures in place that will have your school up and operating following a disaster, even if you lose use of a building or possibly the whole campus for an extended period of time?

Putting the Pieces Together

While it is impossible to avert every disaster or loss that could potentially occur at a school, measures must be taken to 1) identify exposures the school could face; 2) prevent occurrences, where possible; 2) establish emergency/crisis preparedness plans that provide the appropriate response to an event to reduce the impact and hasten recovery; 3) train teachers and staff regarding their responsibilities in the event of an occurrence; 4) hold appropriate table top and actual drills to help ensure proper response by all parties; and 5) analyze drills and make the necessary corrections to the response plan and staff responsibilities.

The attached Emergency/Crisis Preparedness Worksheet is provided as a sample template to help in the early planning of a school's Crisis Management Plan; however, a school should use

whatever system works best for their program and follow any guidelines provided by their Conference and/or Union and the North American Division Education offices. Solicit additional input from teachers, staff and the local community, including emergency responders, during the planning process, and develop a team that will be responsible for the creation, implementation, evaluation, and testing of all plan elements. The “team” is addressed further under “Preparedness” in this document.

The form also includes some general Safer School Design Elements. Some items are easy to address, but unless a new school is being built, some elements present a considerable challenge when looking at implementation in older buildings.

Policies and Procedures

Emergency preparedness plans, drill requirements and staff responsibilities should be part of the school’s policies and procedures. From the perspective of violence, it is worth noting, that history has shown violence in schools can be the result of many things, including neighborhood conditions, a disgruntled employee, or even an angry student who has been bullied. While there may or may not be a relationship to the school, as in the case of the Amish shootings, violence is frequently a product of internal issues, and it is critical that schools have policies that prohibit threats, bullying, and other violent or aggressive acts. Ensure that policies are in place and that staff, students and parents fully understand what will and will not be tolerated and what the repercussions are for violations of the policies.

Design for Safety and Security

In the following sections discussions will periodically relate to the prevention of losses through the physical design of a school campus. Whether building roofing systems to withstand strong winds, or building in a manner that enhances security, each plays an important role in reducing losses. Good maintenance of the facility will also ensure that those safety and security elements do the job they were designed for.

Crisis Management

Crisis management is generally accomplished through four interconnected phases: Mitigation and Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Those phases will work together to respond to each crisis and, like business continuity plans, need to meet the following goals:

- Save lives and reduce chances of further injuries/deaths
- Protect assets (property damage, records, etc.)
- Restore critical school business processes and systems
- Reduce the length of interruption of classes and other school business
- Protect reputation damage
- Control media coverage (local regional, national, etc.)
- Maintain relations (student, parent, community)



Mitigation and Prevention

As part of this phase, schools need to determine what dangers exist in the school and community and should work closely with local authorities and emergency providers in the identification of exposures. (The worksheet can be used to develop a list of potential exposures and provides a few common examples.) Are there hazardous chemical plants, railroads, nuclear power plants or other potential exposures? Is the school in a flood zone, or within an airport's flight path? Schools must also identify any weaknesses that exist within the school's physical plant, communications and overall crisis plan. That information will be critical in identifying what can be done to reduce and/or prevent injury and property damage. Have you identified your exposures? Have you held meetings with local authorities to assist in that goal?

Obviously, schools cannot control some of the hazards that may strike. In earthquake country, tremors will happen, but measures can be taken that will minimize the impact and the amount of loss. Buildings can be retrofitted, shelves can be secured to walls, and staff and students can be trained in how to respond during and after an earthquake. Plans for relocation of classes, emergency power and supplies and other services can be developed to ensure business continuity.

Mitigation efforts are also crucial from a legal standpoint. Schools must take the necessary steps to do everything they can to create safe campuses. Failure to do so could place them at risk of lawsuits for negligence following a tragic event. Assess and address the safety and integrity of facilities, security, and the culture and climate of the school campus. Do you have the steps in place to perform threat assessments of students or even staff who may pose a danger to themselves or others?

Preparedness

Preparedness focuses on the process of planning for the "worst-case scenarios." How bad might things get? With that understanding, emergency response can be scaled down to match the actual crisis.

- Identify the stakeholders. Who should be tasked with developing the crisis management plan? They will include in-house staff who are involved with the safety of the school and those on campus who will assist when a crisis occurs. It also includes establishing a working relationship with emergency responders. While you need to know how city and county officials can help, they may also have their own plans for use of the school during a crisis, and may be considering use of your gymnasium as an emergency shelter, or for supply distribution.
- Consider existing efforts and plans. What plans already exist locally and on your campus? If a plan already exists, it may only need revisions (building or campus updates, security changes, staff changes, etc.).
- Determine what crises the plan will address. Along with Campus issues, and nearby exposures, consider the risk of incidents that can occur with community use of facilities or mission and field trips. Develop your list and attempt to prioritize the creation and implementation of plans for these exposures.
- Define roles and responsibilities. An organizational system needs to be developed that will address how the school will operate during a crisis, including what should happen

and when, as well as under whose direction? Establish who will take over for each of those responsibilities if something happens to the person in charge. Continuity of operations before and after a crisis is crucial. Roles to consider are:

- School commander
 - Liaison to emergency responders
 - Student caregivers
 - Security officers
 - Medical staff
 - Spokesperson
- Develop methods of communication. Effective communication is crucial to staff, students, families, emergency responders, and the media when a crisis occurs, during the actual event and in the aftermath. The ability to communicate internally and with emergency responders during a crisis is crucial. During a lockdown or shelter-in-place is there good communication links between all classrooms/departments, administration and the command center, if one has been established? No single form of communication should be relied on, but instead a combined use of intercoms, cell phones, land phones, text messages, email and other technology will be more effective. It will also be important to discuss the safest means of communication with emergency responders. Some electronic devices might trigger a bomb. (Note: Delayed communications is one element that has been harshly criticized following the Virginia Tech shootings.)

Communication not only involves having good equipment, but also requires using the same terminology. FEMA actually recommends using plain language rather than codes when referring to particular emergencies (fire, intruder, lockdown, etc.), but does not rule codes out where all parties utilize the same.

Every word used with the press must also be carefully weighed, and can still be twisted out of context. Plan ahead utilizing press release templates that merely need minor edits.
 - Obtain the necessary equipment and supplies. Depending on the crises planned for, this may include food and water, first aid supplies, communications equipment, tools and implements, etc.
 - Plan for Recovery as part of your Continuity of Operations Plan. Review assets and operations, determining which are essential and establish measures that will ensure to business continuity. How long can the school function without certain records (payroll, student records, accounts receivable/payable, etc.) or communications equipment (computers, etc.). Do you have redundancy in backup of information? Are there alternative locations, on or off-site, where temporary classes can be held or administrative duties can be performed?
 - Prepare for immediate response. Should a facility be evacuated? Is a lockdown or shelter in place the appropriate action? If sheltering, should air systems be shut down or remain operating?
 - Create maps and facilities information. This will provide valuable information to responders on each building, evacuation routes, and staging areas, as well as the location of each utility shut-off. If responder services are severely taxed throughout a region, it will be necessary for the college's own staff to respond and shut off utilities, if needed.

- Develop accountability procedures. At the staging areas, identify whether any staff, students or visitors are missing. In the college setting, students and staff could still report possible missing friends or coworkers upon arriving at the appropriate staging area.
- Practice. Tabletop exercises and actual drills and crisis exercises need to be conducted with staff, students and emergency responders. During an actual crisis, it is too late to be pulling out the manuals to determine how to respond. Review of those exercises will show deficiencies, and corrections can then be made.
- Address liability issues. Make every effort to correct foreseeable dangers.

Response

As stated in the Department of Education's handbook, *Practical Information on Crisis Planning, A Guide for Schools and Communities*, "expect to be surprised." With all of the time and effort we put into crisis planning, there will be surprises and confusion in an actual crisis situation. But with practice and preparation for a variety of events, staff will be able to react accordingly.

- Assess the situation and choose the appropriate response. Is there an actual crisis? Where? How bad is it?
- Respond within seconds. Analyze the situation, determine the type of action needed, and react quickly. With a good plan and adequate training, response will be rapid.
- Notify appropriate emergency responders and the school crisis response team. A common error on the part of organizations is a delay in calling emergency responders. Far too often people try to handle the crisis in house, increasing the risk of injury or further property damage than might have been had responders been called immediately.
- Evacuate or lock down, as appropriate. This needs to be one of the first decisions made.
- Triage injuries and provide emergency first aid to the injured.
- Keep supplies nearby and organized at all times. If relocation is required, take the supplies also. Replace as needed.
- Trust leadership. A lot of responsibility is placed on the internal crisis response team. When they have been trained well and they reflect knowledge, calm and a measure of authority, they will help bring calm to disorder.
- Communicate accurate and appropriate information. As previously discussed, it is crucial that all information be channeled through a trained public information officer or spokesperson to ensure consistent and accurate information is released. Families need to know that a crisis has occurred and that all possible actions are being taken to provide for their safety. How that is being done might be released depending on the situation. Parents will also need to know when and where students will be released.
- If students have been retained, activate their release to parents as soon as it is safe to do so. College students will be released to resume their normal activities or attend special assemblies or events as applicable to the circumstances.

- Allow for flexibility in implementing the crisis plan. Flexibility is crucial, since no crisis goes as planned. Trained staff will react appropriately to most deviations.
- Documentation. Document all actions taken during the response. This will provide a record of appropriate implementation of the plan, and will provide information for insurance purposes, and financial records. Original notes and records are also legal documents and must be kept.

Recovery

The goal of recovery is to return classes, business operations and physical plant back to normal as quickly as possible following a crisis.

- Plan for recovery in the preparedness phase. Delineate staff roles and responsibilities. This can include establishing service providers ahead of time who can provide utility repairs, construction assistance and even back-up counseling services. Are there back-up facilities available for temporary classes or administrative offices, if needed?
- Return to the business of education as quickly as possible. Returning to class can often help students cope better following a crisis.
- Keep students, families and the media informed. Additional questions will arise after a crisis and families will still be concerned for their children's safety.
- Focus on the building as well as the people during recovery. Repair facilities and conduct safety audits to identify additional damage that needs attention.
- Provide an assessment of the emotional needs of staff, students, families and responders. Arrange appropriate intervention as needed.
- Provide stress management during class time, as needed.
- Conduct daily debriefings for staff, responders and others assisting in the recovery. Debriefings help staff to cope with their own feelings of vulnerability.
- Take as much time as needed for recovery. Some people will bounce right back after a crisis, while others require extended lengths of time to recover.
- Remember anniversaries of crises. School crisis planning guides often recommend holding appropriate memorial services or other activities following a crisis. Depending on the event that occurred, this action may be appropriate to help students and staff cope.

Pandemic

We can't look at crisis management without considering the possibility of a Pandemic Influenza outbreak.

In February of 2007, the Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), released a document for interim planning guidance for mitigation of an influenza pandemic. That document of 106 pages and a similar 171 page *Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response Plan*, issued by the California Department of Health Services, paint a grim picture.

The purpose of the guidelines is to give communities a tool for scenario-based contingency planning to guide local preparedness efforts. Communities facing arrival of a pandemic disease will be able to use the pandemic severity index to define which mitigation interventions are indicated for implementation.

Mitigation Strategies

The CDC is of the opinion that it is highly unlikely that we will have the most effective tool for mitigating a pandemic (a well-matched pandemic strain vaccine) when a pandemic begins. That means we all must be prepared to face the first wave without vaccine and possibly without sufficient quantities of influenza antiviral medications. Mitigation strategies, therefore are based on several levels of isolation including:

1. Isolation and treatment (as appropriate) of all persons with confirmed or probable pandemic influenza. Isolation may occur at home or in the healthcare setting, depending on the severity of the illness and/or the current capacity of the healthcare infrastructure.
2. Voluntary home quarantine of members of households with confirmed or probable influenza cases and consideration of combining this intervention with the prophylactic use of antiviral medications, providing sufficient quantities of effective medications are available and that a feasible means of distributing them is in place.
3. Dismissal of students from school (including public and private schools, as well as colleges and universities) and school-based activities, and closure of childcare programs, coupled with protecting children and teenagers through social distancing in the community to achieve reductions of out-of-school social contacts and community mixing.
4. Use of social distancing measures to reduce contact between adults in the community and workplace, including, for example, cancellation of large public gatherings and alteration of workplace environments and schedules to decrease density and preserve a healthy workplace to the extent possible without disrupting essential services. Enable institution of workplace leave policies that align incentives and facilitate adherence with the non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) outlined above

All such community-based strategies should be used in combination with individual infection control measures, such as hand washing and cough etiquette.

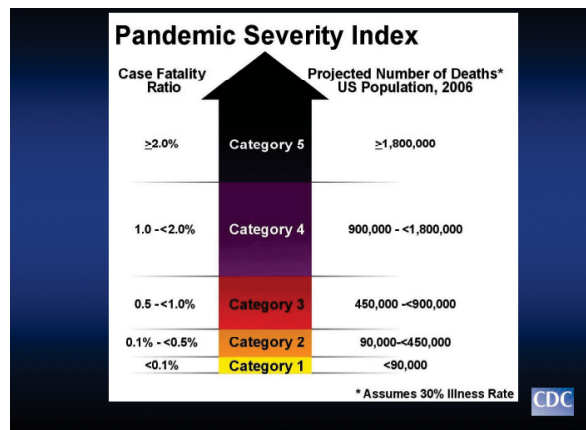
Implementation

Just as organizations and communities establish measures to mitigate the effect of natural disasters and other crisis events, they should plan and prepare for mitigating the effect of a severe pandemic. Implementation requires:

- Advanced planning
- Decisions on tools to use based on observed severity of the event. Some of the more controversial elements like prolonged dismissal of students from schools and closure of childcare programs, may not be necessary in less severe pandemics, but may save lives during severe pandemics.

Pandemic Severity

The chart at the right reflects the severity index established by the CDC. It is not the purpose of this document to discuss the factors used by the CDC to develop the index, but to look the reasons for it. Basically, the chart uses case fatality ratios as the critical driver for categorizing the severity of a pandemic.



The chart provides communities with a tool for scenario-based contingency planning to guide local pre-pandemic preparedness efforts. Those facing the arrival of a pandemic can use the pandemic severity assessment to define the mitigation measure that will be implemented.

Additional charts reflect incorporation of the mitigation strategies based on the category of the pandemic. As the severity increases, mitigation strategies take additional isolation elements for longer periods of time.

Community Strategies by Pandemic Flu Severity (1)

Interventions by Setting	Pandemic Severity Index		
	1	2 and 3	4 and 5
Home			
Voluntary isolation of ill at home (adults and children); combine with use of antiviral treatment as available and indicated	Recommend	Recommend	Recommend
Voluntary quarantine of household members in homes with ill persons (adults and children); consider combining with antiviral prophylaxis if effective, feasible, and quantities sufficient	Generally not recommended	Consider	Recommend
School			
Child social distancing —dismissal of students from schools and school-based activities, and closure of child care programs —reduce out-of-school contacts and community mixing	Generally not recommended	Consider: ≤ 4 weeks	Recommend: ≤ 12 weeks

Community Strategies by Pandemic Flu Severity (2)

Interventions by Setting	Pandemic Severity Index		
	1	2 and 3	4 and 5
Workplace/Community			
Adult social distancing			
—decrease number of social contacts (e.g., encourage teleconferences, alternatives to face-to-face meetings)	Generally not recommended	Consider	Recommend
—increase distance between persons (e.g., reduce density in public transit, workplace)	Generally not recommended	Consider	Recommend
—modify, postpone, or cancel selected public gatherings to promote social distance (e.g., stadium events, theater performances)	Generally not recommended	Consider	Recommend
—modify workplace schedules and practices (e.g., telework, staggered shifts)	Generally not recommended	Consider	Recommend

The complete booklet with more extensive charts and accompanying notes can be found in the original document, which can be downloaded from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/community/mitigation.html>.

Colleges and Universities pose a unique challenge as many aspects of student life and activity encompass factors common to both the child school environment (e.g. classroom/dormitory density) and the adult environment (commuting longer distances, and participating in activities and behaviors associated with an older student population).

Planning Recommendations

Some key mitigation strategies follow; however, more in-depth information is available in the CDC booklet and particularly in Appendix 6 of that booklet, *Pandemic Influenza Community Mitigation Interim Planning Guide for Elementary and Secondary Schools*, and in Appendix 7, *Pandemic Influenza Community Mitigation Interim Planning Guide for Colleges and Universities*. Mitigation strategies for the most part follow recommendations found in the Community Strategies charts. Without getting into the variety of Human Resources/employment issues covered, some key points include:

- Plan for individuals to remain home.
 - Develop a plan for faculty and staff absences. Plan for alternative staffing.
 - Identify critical job functions and plan now for coverage of those functions.
 - Encourage ill persons to stay at home during a pandemic and establish return-to-work policies after illness.
 - Establish policies for sick-leave absences unique to a pandemic.
 - Develop policies on observation for illness and what to do when a student or staff member becomes ill at the workplace.
- Plan for all household members of a person who is ill to voluntarily remain home.
 - Develop a plan for faculty and staff absences related to family member illness.
 - Identify critical job functions and plan now for coverage of those functions.
 - Establish policies for alternate or flexible worksite (videoconferencing, telecommuting, etc.) and flexible work hours.
- Plan for dismissal of students and childcare closure for employees.
 - Develop a plan for all levels of pandemic severity. Even with the dismissal of students, schools may remain operational.
 - Identify and plan for employees and staff who may have to stay home if schools and childcare programs dismiss students/children during a severe pandemic.
 - Plan for alternate staffing based on your assessment of critical job functions and solving gaps through flexible work policies.
 - Instruct employees to make their own plans regarding childcare and not to bring children into the workplace if childcare cannot be arranged.
- Plan for dismissal of students.
 - Develop a plan for continuity of instruction.
 - Inform teachers, students and parents of alternative learning opportunities and how they will be provided..
 - Colleges and residential Academies should plan for those students who will have to remain on campus during that period (foreign students, those who cannot return home as a result of illness at home or their own illness on campus.
- Plan for workplace and community social distancing measures.

- Use social distancing methods to minimize close contact.
- Encourage good hygiene in the workplace.
- Communicate with faculty, staff, students, and parents/families.
 - Provide faculty, staff and parents with information on the school's pandemic preparedness plan.
- Help your community.
 - Coordinate your pandemic plans and actions with local health planning.
 - Participate in community-wide exercises to enhance pandemic preparedness.
- Recovery.
 - Establish with State and local planning teams the criteria and procedures for resuming school activities.
 - Develop communications for advising employees, students and families of the resumption of school programs and activities.
 - Develop the procedures, activities and services needed to restore the learning environment.

As a matter of note, there is also a *School District (K-12) Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist* available in a downloadable PDF format from the Department of Human Services, at <http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/schoolchecklist.html>. While this is listed as K-12, many of the preparedness strategies could also apply to colleges and universities.

Are You Ready?

Crisis planning in your school is no easy task. It is an ongoing, never-ending project of the administration, crisis management team, and others. Done well, it can reduce injuries and losses and reduce downtime following a crisis; it can also present a positive image to staff, students, parents/families and the community as well. Done poorly, it will lead to additional crises you do not even want to think about.

Plan well, and do not assume. To paraphrase words by Bruce Blythe, CEO of Crisis Management International, Inc., in his article *Virginia Tech Shootings: Crisis Magnifies the Significance of Small Weakness*, if we are going to assume anything ever, anywhere, we should assume the worst, respond accordingly and pray for the best.

RESOURCES

What If? Preparing Schools For The Unthinkable, The National School Safety Center, 141 Duesenberg Drive, Suite 11, Westlake Village, CA 91362, 808-373-9977, www.schoolsafety.us

Practical Information on Crisis Planning, A Guide for Schools and Communities, ED Pubs, Education Publications Center, U.S. Department of Education, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398, 877-433-7827, www.ed.gov/emergencyplan

Threat Assessments in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates, U.S. Department of Education and U.S Secret Service

Interim Pre-pandemic Planning Guidance: Community Strategy for Pandemic Influenza Mitigation in the United States, Easily Targeted Layered Use of Nonpharmaceutical Interventions, Department of Health and Human Services, CDC

School District (K-12) Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist, Department of Human Services,
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/school/schoolchecklist.html>

