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AMERICAN  
**SCHOOL & UNIVERSITY.**

'08

# SCHOOL SECURITY SURVEY

## Strategies And Tools For Keeping Students Safe

**R**ANDOM ACTS OF VIOLENCE at the nation's schools and universities may grab the headlines, but the top security concerns among education professionals are often centered on more mundane (and manageable) threats such as vandalism or students fighting.

When school violence hits the news, it can tend to raise security awareness among schools and colleges, and in some cases such an event can drive education institutions to re-evaluate

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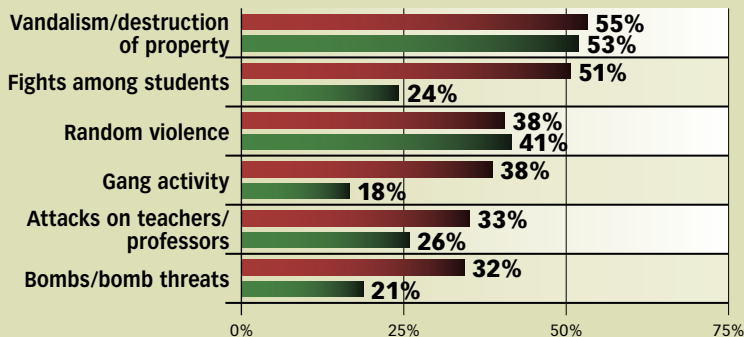
## TOP OVERALL CONCERNS FOR SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

SCHOOLS (K-12)		COLLEGES/UNIVERSITIES	
Budget issues	83%	Budget issues	79%
Test results	83%	Finding good students	77%
Technology incorporation	76%	Technology incorporation	64%
Finding/retaining teachers	70%	Finding/retaining professors	62%
<b>Security</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>Security</b>	<b>62%</b>
School infrastructure	63%	School infrastructure	48%
School overcrowding	31%	Test results	39%
		School overcrowding	18%

Although important, security ranks below other concerns at both K-12 schools and colleges/universities.



## TOP SECURITY CONCERNS



Property destruction is more likely a top concern than random violence, both at K-12 schools and colleges/universities.

## Strategies And Tools For Keeping Students Safe

(CONT.)

and review their security efforts. But more likely, a school's security plan has already been updated in the last year either because of a scheduled or routine review or because of industry standards or benchmarking.

Concerns from parents, teachers and students can also drive security planning efforts, as can requests from the school board or another school official.

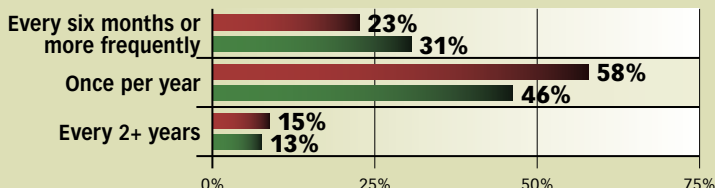
Security continues to be top-of-mind, and education professionals have noticed that security incidents are more frequent, some say more severe. Education institutions are spending more money than ever on security concerns, and the increases will continue, with part of that money being spent on a laundry list of technologies to keep schools safe.

These are among the insights to be gleaned from the **Exclusive 2008 School Security Survey** conducted by *American School & University* magazine and *Access Control & Security Systems* magazine. The e-mail survey of school and security professionals sought to quantify important trends in the school security arena, and the results illuminate changes in how professionals can protect educational facilities .... and at what cost.

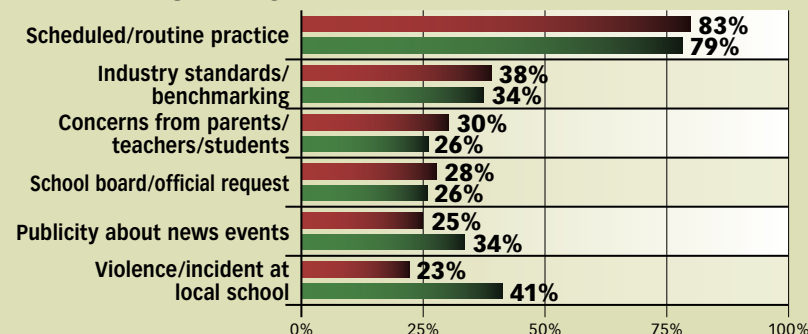
Check out our survey results on this and the following page. A total of 151 subscribers to the two magazines from K-12 schools and 97 subscribers from colleges/universities responded to our survey. ■

## TIME TO REVIEW?

How often do you typically review/update your security preparedness plan?



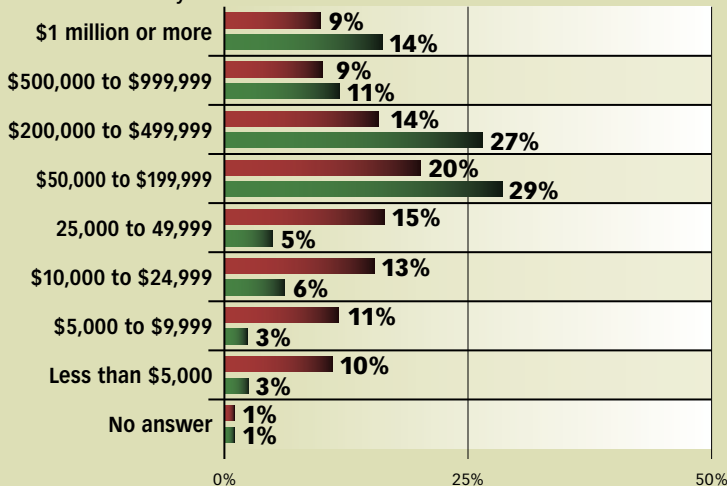
## WHAT PROMPTS THE REVIEW?



Security planning is more likely a routine practice at schools and universities, rather than a reaction to a news event or a local incident.

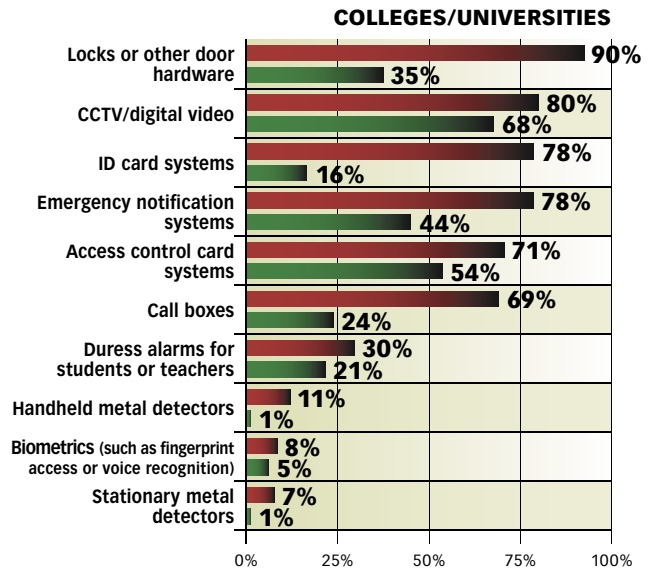
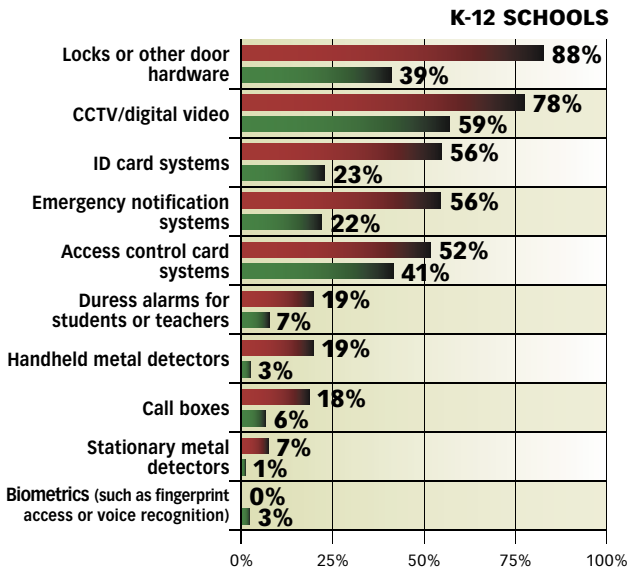
## SECURITY SPENDING

How much did your district/college/university spend on security during the 2007-2008 school year?



# SCHOOL EQUIPMENT INSTALLED/PLANNED

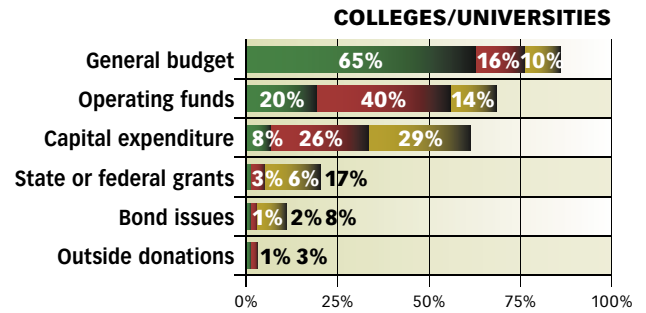
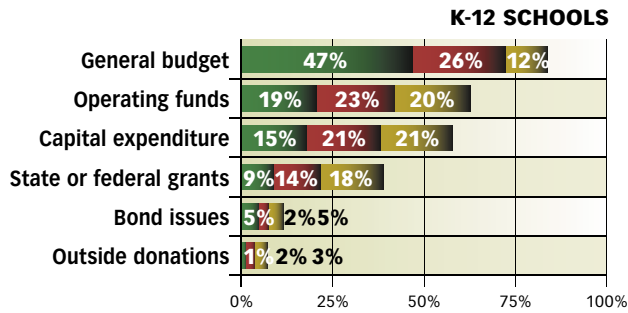
■ CURRENTLY INSTALLED  
■ PLAN TO ADD/UPGRADE



# SOURCES OF SECURITY FUNDING

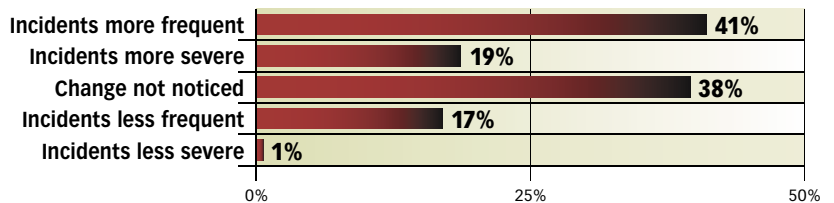
■ FIRST CHOICE ■ SECOND CHOICE ■ THIRD CHOICE

From which of the following sources do you receive funding for security measures and improvements? Please rank from 1 (largest) to 3.



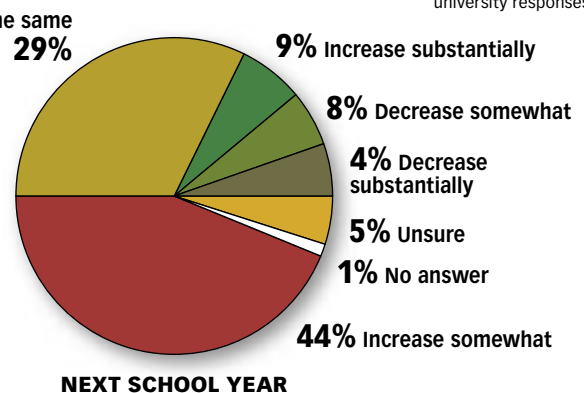
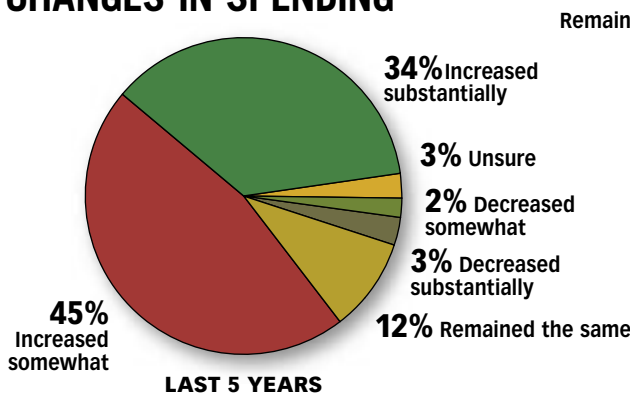
# FREQUENCY AND NATURE OF SECURITY BREACHES\*

\*combined K-12 and college/university responses



# CHANGES IN SPENDING\*

\*Combined K-12 and college/university responses





# Operating In A **New Era** Of Campus Security

Experience has shown education administrators that crises and catastrophes can happen anywhere. **BY MIKE KENNEDY**

**T**he deadly attack at the Virginia Tech campus in April 2007 is yet another horrific chapter in the ongoing story of campus security. The possibility of extreme violence is the new reality for students, staff and the rest of the education community.

The task for school and university administrators is to adapt to that new reality and try to find ways to prevent such events from recurring. The plans will be imperfect. However, in striving to correct flaws in their emergency preparedness plans, school officials may be able to prevent a violent episode or intervene before it leads to tragedy.

“While we can never eliminate the threats posed to our campuses by crime or disaster, natural or person-caused,” Missouri Gov. Matt Blunt’s Task Force on Campus Security says, “we can and must mitigate impact through effective all-hazard emergency preparedness.”

## Reviewing plans

The desire for answers and to learn lessons from these tragedies drives education administrators and security professionals to sift through the evidence and find ways they can plug any holes in their security plans and emergency preparedness.

Missouri was one of many states that reacted to what happened at Virginia Tech by re-examining the readiness of crisis plans on its own campuses. In addition, federal agencies and other organizations have stepped forward with recommendations for improving campus safety.

When an attack occurs that is as horrific as the one that befell Virginia Tech, the immediate response of many government and education officials is that something must be done — crisis plans reviewed, recovery efforts bolstered, more security personnel deployed, more access control and surveillance equipment installed and more prevention programs initiated.

The responses to crises will vary from school to school and depend on the conditions and characteristics of each campus. As the Missouri task force notes, a research institution housing a nuclear reactor has security needs vastly different from a small liberal arts school in a rural area.

In North Carolina, the Campus Safety Task Force focused its report on the four phases of crisis management: prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. The report recommends that campuses establish threat assessment teams to help faculty, staff and students recognize

signs of mental illness and improve their awareness about the resources available to help people who are a danger to themselves or others.

“Identifying potentially violent students as early as possible is one of the best preventive measures a campus can take,” the North Carolina report says.

One of the issues that arose after Virginia Tech was whether schools and universities risked violating student privacy if they shared information with other agencies about a student viewed as a potential threat. In response, the U.S. Department of Education is revising the guidelines related to the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act to clarify to what extent schools are allowed to provide private student information to others.

Schools should strive to remove the stigma associated with mental illness so that troubled students can seek treatment.

“Colleges and universities must challenge the prevailing social norms of students that frown upon seeking help,” the Missouri task force says.

In addition, campuses should make treatment more available. “Emotional crises often happen at inconvenient times, when students and other members of the campus community lack access to high-quality mental health services,” the task force says.

## A common language

To improve preparedness, schools and universities should make sure their emergency plans are compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) created by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. NIMS establishes standardized procedures for emergency responders.

“With responders using the same standardized procedures, they will all share a common focus, and will be able to place full emphasis on incident management when a Homeland security incident occurs,” the department says. “In addition, national preparedness and readiness in responding to and recovering from an incident are enhanced since all of the nation’s emergency teams and authorities are using a common language and set of procedures.”

The Missouri task force notes that

the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) offers training in NIMS and its Incident Command System (ICS), but “these resources often go untapped by senior executives who will be required to serve as incident commanders in a crisis.”

The Missouri report recommends that each campus should designate someone to coordinate emergency operations and that person should make sure the school’s “senior staff is trained in and familiar with NIMS and ICS.”

Part of complying with NIMS, the North Carolina task force says, is making sure that a campus has established aid agreements so that outside agencies can assist them when a crisis occurs.

“All campuses, particularly those without sworn police officers, [should] develop and enter into agreements with key partners, such as local law enforcement agencies and first responders,” the North Carolina report says.

The Missouri task force found that only 28 percent of higher education institutions had coordinated the development of their emergency plans with local law enforcement.

### Getting the word out

One of the key findings in the reviews of what happened at Virginia Tech was that universities need to make a more exhaustive effort to spread the word about campus emergencies. Many have criticized the Virginia Tech response because campus officials, believing the assailant had left the campus, did not send out a campus-wide alert until two hours after the initial killings took place.

The International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Officers (IACLEA) spells out what it believes a campus notification system should include in a “blueprint for safer campuses” that was released earlier this year.

“Institutions should have an array of means and methods to disseminate information to the campus community during emergencies,” the blueprint says. “Mass notification systems must include multiple means of sharing information, including high-technology and low-technology.”

To maximize the effectiveness of a system, campus administrators

and public safety officials need to have the ability to send emergency messages whether they are on or off campus, the association says.

IACLEA adds that education institutions should make sure such systems meet these criteria:

- **MULTIPOINT COMMUNICATIONS:**

The system should be capable of reaching its audience through multiple points of contact, such as voice messages, e-mail, and text messaging.

- **CAPACITY:** The system vendor

should have sufficient, demonstrated capacity to deliver all messages quickly and reliably.

- **CLIENT CARE:** A contract with a third-party vendor should include training, customer service and technical support.

- **EXPERIENCE:** A vendor should have significant experience delivering calls at institutions of various sizes across the country.

- **ASSESSMENT:** The service should have reporting capabilities that

allow the institution to monitor, manage and measure the system's effectiveness.

The association emphasizes that an alert sent out to the campus community should be timely, accurate and useful to the recipients.

### **Communication systems**

When an emergency occurs on a campus, communication among various agencies is critical.

"Interoperable communication systems allow two or more responding agencies, even those using disparate communications systems, to exchange information directly," IACLEA states in its blueprint for safer campuses. "With interoperability, on-scene personnel can quickly access each other to coordinate needed rescue and emergency activities."

The North Carolina task force recommends that campuses partner with law enforcement to ensure interoperability. Illinois has created a Statewide Radio Communications for the 21st Century network (Starcom21) to provide first providers with a single interoperable com-

munications system. The state has provided more than 300 Starcom21 radios to 70 higher education institutions, including Northern Illinois University, which used them when responding to the fatal shooting of five people on campus in February 2008.

Emergency plans should include provisions for counseling services after an incident, the North Carolina task force says. That is especially true for victims and their families. A survey by the North Carolina Department of Justice found that 81 percent of college campuses in the state had developed plans to provide counseling to students, staff and faculty after a crisis, but only 39 percent of campuses had a plan to communicate with victims and families after a crisis.

### **Technological help**

Schools and universities are finding that technological advancements can help them carry out their emergency plans more effectively and keep campuses safer.

"Equipping campus facilities with electronic card access and

key systems, and customized access privileges for students, faculty and staff is one infrastructure measure that greatly enhances the security of a campus," the New Mexico Governor's Task Force on Campus Safety says. "Integrating all security systems into a single network will make monitoring more effective, reduce theft and vandalism and help people feel safer on campus."

Other security equipment and strategies that schools and universities should consider, the task force says, include cameras, remote panic stations, lighting, landscaping and designation of safe areas. The most effective time to include such security is when schools are planning their facilities.

"In the post-9/11 world, the public has an expectation that colleges and universities will take reasonable steps to provide safety for campuses," the New Mexico report says. "In order to fulfill this expectation, it is critical that security components and standards are considered as buildings are designed." ■



**LEFT:** Heritage Tower Fountain on Florida State University campus, Tallahassee, near the T.K. Wetherell Building. Photo by Bill Lax/FSU Photo Lab

**ABOVE:** Memorial Union, a landmark of the University of Missouri campus. Photo credit: MU Publications and Alumni Communication photo

# Ready To Respond

On campuses across the nation, emergency management personnel have intensified their efforts to ensure schools are safe. **BY MIKE KENNEDY**

**T**ragedies such as the fatal shootings in February in a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb or last year's deadly shooting rampage at Virginia Tech can serve to remind emergency management personnel at other campuses of the need to assure their communities that they have plans in place to address such incidents.

Because of the enormity of the Virginia Tech massacre, most education institutions — on their own or under pressure from their communities — have undertaken a review of their emergency management systems to see whether they are working to prevent such catastrophes or can address such a crisis effectively if one occurs. *American School & University* and *Access Control & Security Systems* magazines asked emergency

management personnel at several campuses to describe how they are dealing with campus safety in the wake of recent events:

**AS&U/AC&SS:** *What are colleges and universities doing in the aftermath of the Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University incidents to make their campuses safer?*

**DAVE BUJAK**, emergency management coordinator, Florida State University (FSU), and chairman of the University & Colleges committee of the International Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM): There has been a lot of review and analysis. We have a wide gamut of topics to address including law enforcement, notification and mental-health identifying. We feel that we're pretty far ahead at FSU.

**JACK WATRING**, chief of police, University of Missouri, Columbia: We're still in the process of making improvements. We were doing a lot of those things already. Since Virginia Tech, we have had a lot of tabletop exercises such as setting up the exact scenario. Things have sped up since 9/11 and Virginia Tech. It has changed how often we do exercises in the field.

**JUSTIN HENDEE**, emergency management coordinator, California State University, Fullerton: Our officers have undergone training for how to respond to an active-shooter situation. At the same time, the rest of the campus had shelter-in-place training. Our basic thing is public education. We're now putting together a Web-based presentation that will give students and parents an idea of what to expect when they come to campus. We're also looking for other avenues to get training and information out to students and parents.

**SCOTT BULLARD**, director for emergency services, North Carolina Community College System: On the response side, you're only as good as

your planning efforts. I take an all-hazards, comprehensive emergency management approach. The focus is on what the response should be. The incident isn't always a major crisis. It could be a water main break or a power outage.

**AS&U/AC&SS:** *Do your institutions have systems in place to notify the campus community in the event of an emergency?*

**Bullard:** Just like after 9/11, we had a landslide of folks trying to sell us products after Virginia Tech. I'm not sure if there's a prevailing product for notification systems out there. A lot of the schools are looking at products with dual uses—ones that can also send notices when classes are canceled or when a fee is owed. You have to get people to register. It can be a problem when folks aren't living on campus and if they have a wireless phone that's not listed with the school.

**Hendee:** Our mass notification system can send text, e-mail or phone messages. All 37,000 of our students are signed up automatically. The response has been

overwhelmingly, 99.9 percent positive. We don't use it for routine messages like "this is the last day to drop a class." The students and staff know that if this thing goes off, their safety is in jeopardy. We also can use an external public address system that is controlled from the police dispatch. The internal fire alarm system has one-way communication.

**Bujak:** Florida State has identified a brand for our system FSU Alert. We have more than 20 emergency contact methods. Some are primary (university online homepage, outdoor sirens, weather radios, text messages, e-mail, blue light safety phones, campus hotline, visitor information radio, voicemail, reverse dialing and computer network pop-up windows), some are secondary (two-way radios, variable message boards, electronic card-swipe door access, cable TV information channel, television, radio, online campus newspaper, vehicle public address speakers, network login pages, voice-over fire alarm system, media releases and Facebook and MySpace pages on the Internet). Many of these emergency notification methods

have existed for a long time, but most schools don't realize it or think about them in that context. The system has been extensively tested and advertised. That has been our big project for the year.

**Watring:** The university system as a whole (Columbia, St. Louis, Kansas City and Rolla campuses) has a new system to notify students, faculty and staff about unusual occurrences. The university is trying to get our students, faculty and staff signed up to the system so they can receive messages. I think we're getting the word out there.

**AS&U/AC&SS:** *What do administrators need to consider when choosing emergency notification systems?*

**Bujak:** Do you want mass notification or a targeted notification to a certain building or group of individuals? Do you want the notification to be active or passive? A siren you hear whether you want to or not? With e-mail, you have to log in; with a phone, you have to answer. You have to look at speed versus accuracy. A siren is instantaneous, but the ability to say a whole lot with it is non-

existent. What will be the urgency of the messages? With hurricanes, we have days to get prepared and make decisions. For an active shooter situation, you don't have the luxury of minutes or hours to get a message out. Who decides when the system is to be used? At Florida State, we have five pre-approved situations (such as flooding or a tornado) in which a message can be sent out. We didn't want to have a convoluted approval system that would take hours before a message could go out. Who needs to be notified? The faculty? Just one building? Only students?

**AS&U/AC&SS:** *What are some of the other steps schools have taken to enhance the safety of their campuses?*

**Watring:** We are working on how we treat people who are mentally ill. A lot of people are paying closer attention to at-risk behavior. Now, we have a student behavior task force. Every week, we meet with people from the counseling center, from student affairs, judicial folks, police offices and people from student health. We talk about whom we are having problems with. The



**Langsdorf Hall** at California State University, Fullerton. Courtesy of California State University, Fullerton.

PHOTO BY PHIL CHANNING



**Westcott Building** on the campus of Florida State University, Tallahassee.  
Photo By Michele Edmunds /FSU Photo Lab

counselors can't disclose some of the things they know, but if something comes to our attention, it usually is a matter of public record, and we can pass that on.

**Bullard:** Schools should look at using the social networks that students themselves have built. There's concern that students aren't signing up for a notification system, but when you actually shoot a message out

there, it gets to a lot more people. It's like the old 'tell two friends' system except it's at the speed of light.

**Hendee:** You need to use a combination of everything. To be truly prepared, you need to have threat assessment tools on campus. When an individual is identified as a potential risk, we have a consultant that does a profile to determine the level of the threat.

**Bujak:** The [University & Colleges committee of the IAEM] is putting together a Higher Education Incident Management team that can come to the aid of other schools in the event of an emergency (e.g., helping to get a registrar's office reopened or classes rescheduled). People with administrative or facilities and maintenance experience who understand how business is done on a campus would be on this team, and schools can call on this team for assistance. The committee is also working on developing guidelines and best practices for college emergency management programs.

Since Virginia Tech, the attention on security has faded somewhat at the upper administration level, but at the worker-bee level, such as police, emergency management and campus counseling officials, we are still focusing on what needs to be done.

**AS&U/AC&SS:** *What are some of obstacles schools face in enhancing their emergency management systems?*

**Bujak:** We have a wish list of about \$1.3 million. We want to move indoors with our public address

system. We're looking at Voice-over-IP systems that we would use in our most populous buildings. We also want to extend our siren system to off-campus property. We have intramural fields that on a good night have 800 to 1,000 students using them, but they are 5 miles from campus and they're out of the range of our sirens.

Also, the cell phone infrastructure in Tallahassee isn't there. There aren't enough cell towers to handle the volume when we're trying to send 46,000 messages in a 450-acre area. It took us four hours. You might get a text message in a couple of minutes and the person next to you might not get it for a couple of hours. That's why redundancy and multiple systems are important.

**Watring:** We could always use more personnel. I'm sure that every campus in Missouri would like to have more personnel. We also are trying to get all colleges and universities in Missouri to have sworn police officers. We're still looking at things, like electronic billboards in each building that would post alerts and warnings.

**Bullard:** The mental health side of the house has not been adequately addressed. People are a little bit hesitant to get involved with that. With 58 schools and 800,000 students in the North Carolina community college system, it's harder to develop a consensus. You can turn the train, but it takes a while to turn it around. Also, in a community college system, we have a mostly commuter student population, and it's very difficult to keep track of everybody. In our system, whether campuses are large or small, they are tied in to their communities. You don't want to stymie the education process, which could happen if you lock down a campus like a prison.

**Hendee:** Out of 37,000 students, only 800 are residents on campus, making it more difficult to reach out. That's why we try to use the Web. We have also done about 45 presentations to students and parents.

**AS&U/AC&SS:** *Is the focus on active-shooter incidents after Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois taking too much attention away from plans to address other types of emergencies?*

**Watring:** In the police business, you have to be prepared for any

eventuality. We need to know what to do if there's an active shooter, a natural disaster, a fire, an evacuation, tornados or floods; we need to know how to handle it.

**Bullard:** We remain focused on natural hazards. North Carolina as well as our sister Florida has been tested by hurricanes. You have four days notice, and there aren't a lot of excuses for not at least being able to do some things such as evacuation. You can make decisions a few days in advance. You're only as good as your planning efforts.

**Hendee:** I think with the way things have been emerging, campus

violence is just another facet of the campus safety plan. It just dovetails into our emergency response plan.

**Bujak:** We (on the IAEM committee) find that a lot of schools and their emergency management systems are heavily centered on law enforcement. In California, Oregon, Washington (because of earthquake threats) and here in Florida, because of the hurricane threat, our approach is more all-hazard in nature. ■

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# Memo To Staff

You are all members of the security team. Here's how you can maximize your effectiveness. **BY STEPHANIE SILK**

**S**taff and students play a variety of roles in schools and universities, and many of these roles can affect security, for better or worse, according to school security consultants interviewed for this article.

Custodians and janitors, front office staff, administrators, teachers, nurses and social workers, food service, bus drivers and even students are all part of the security team. "It's vital to remember that in most situations, people in the building are the first responders, not the people outside," says Paul Timm, PSP, president of RETA Security Inc.

Awareness is key in maximizing security effectiveness. "We can never lose by heightening awareness; whether it's making sure the school newsletter mentions a security/safety briefing, or if the school sends

out the occasional e-mail. With awareness, collaboration of a safety committee and hardening your target, we can stop these situations," Timm says.

Check out the many security roles of various members of the education community — and be sure to share these expectations with the "front lines" of school security.

## **Custodian/Janitor**

- Remember, you are the only person who knows the building inside and out.
- You are not tied to students, giving you mobility in the building. With this mobility, gain knowledge of things such as how to get on the roof, where a closet leads or where someone can get hurt.
- You, and only you, have all key control.
- Learn which staff members have

what keys and access to what doors at what hours of the day. And although teachers should lock the doors—you should notice if it wasn't done.

- Make sure exterior lighting is bright and lit; trim shrubs and trees; and maintain doors and door hardware.
- Be the eyes and ears of the school, and alert someone to any unusual happenings.
- Build a relationship with the teachers. If a teacher doesn't allow students to throw trash on the floor to make your job easier, take responsibility for the teacher by noticing a room full of kids without an adult, or a wandering student.
- If you are working at night during a non-school event, control access to the building just as you would during the school day.
- Suggest training to your school administrators. If you are working at night, you should be trained in CPR and First Aid if there are any events in the building.

## **Front Office Administrative Assistants/Secretaries**

- You are the next barrier an intruder has to break after he or she gets past the front door. So, it is vital

that you check and verify all visitor IDs whether it's by paper or a technological device. There are still "parents" who come in and say they want to just "deliver something to their child." As a gatekeeper, all things will fall apart if you don't follow the same rules for everyone.

- Do not leave out the sign-in tools including badges and the sign-in book in reach of visitors.

- Protect information as well as people—do this by not allowing access to the personnel directory. If someone knows his or her victim is in a certain district, but doesn't know which school, he or she can look in the directory for confirmation.

- Everyday items you leave on your desk—scissors, a letter opener—should not be in grasp of any visitor, especially a walkie-talkie or other form of communication. If a problem individual comes in and you react by looking at the radio instinctively, they will know to steal it and shut down communications, rendering you helpless.

- You are on the front lines: If you handle mail, learn the suspicious mail and package rules and what to do if you encounter it. The transfer of contaminated mail would come back to you. If you answer phones, keep a bomb threat checklist at arms length.

- In case of a lockdown, do not render yourself responsible—you should not be on the sweep team. The sweep team will be made up of volunteers. Also, do not consider your desk or a near closet to be a good hiding spot. Learn where you can go that best fits your safety needs.

### Administrators

- Give your students consistent discipline. If you consider constant detention enough of a punishment—remember that each time the student repeats an offense, he or she is making themselves more of a threat.

- If you leave the school, there's a chance the rest of the school doesn't know whom to turn to in an emergency. Delineate security responsibility (before an incident occurs—not during) in your absence and keep a running tab of who manages what security function during that time. Tell your staff when to call

you and when to go straight to the police.

- There are certain policies that may enhance security, including not allowing teachers to put students' names on the walls outside of the classroom. Only you have the power to create and enforce these policies. Do not expect teachers to do it on their own without formal notice.

### Teachers/Staff

- Leave convenience in the past.

Once you prop open a door to the outside to let in fresh air or take the class on a walk, the safety of the school is in your hands.

- You should familiarize yourself with the "Wal-Mart approach." If you see someone in the hall that you do not recognize, address him or her by asking how you can help—even if you assume they have already been authorized. You can be as much a part of visitor management as the front office is.

- Even though an empty classroom seems to be an empty threat, there is still information left behind while you are at recess or lunch that intruders can steal and use.

- Request training from your school in many areas. You should know how to use a defibrillator and be ready and willing to operate one. You should also be trained in current technology trends. You should know that an iPhone looks like an iPod—but a phone can be a security threat. You should know that there are some ringtones that you will not be able to hear solely based on

your age. And you should know how to teach your students that putting personal information on a social networking Web site can be a danger to the school.

- You should also request supervision and line-of-sight training. If you walk 10 students down the hall and turn a corner, did you just lose sight of the 10th student?

- You should also be familiar with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) and creating natural surveillance. For example, if your classroom windows face a parking lot, tip the shades up so people outdoors cannot see in.

- Be aware of how easy you have made it to find a child in your classroom for a stranger. Ask yourself, if someone has already bypassed your school's screening mechanism, how will they find that child? The intruder may know the teacher's name from a conversation with the child, artwork may be placed outside the classroom or in the media center with a name on it or photos may be on display in the hallways.

- Schools should not mark parking places with your name. This makes you a target. The intruder may not have been able to access the school—but then he or she will

**If you walk 10 students down a hall and turn a corner, did you just lose sight of the 10th student?**





**Know where individuals with emergency skills (CPR-certified, bilingual) are in the school at all times of the day.**

- Have a list of “inventory skills” or individuals in the building who have emergency skills, such as being bilingual, being certified in CPR, having a CDL license to drive a bus or being trained in conflict resolution. Know where these people are located at all times of the school day.

stay at a parking spot waiting for you after hours.

**Food Service**

- Back doors are as much of a threat as front doors, and some of these doors may be located in the cafeteria. Maintain a screening system similar to the front of the school by keeping these doors locked and only open upon a doorbell system or a peephole.

- Food can present dangers itself—think about what or who has access to it. Contamination is common around self-service bars.

- Position self-service bars near security cameras, and position yourself in order to enhance natural surveillance.

**Nurses and Social Workers**

- Keep emergency supplies in more than one location.

**Students**

- You are the largest stakeholder representation in the school. It is up to you to share information. You hear more ear-to-the-ground information than anyone else—in classrooms, hallways, bathrooms, etc. Suggest to your teachers and peers to start an anonymous tip line so that you keep yourself out of any danger. You can blow the whistle on plots. ■

# An Open Forum

Blogs provide an outlet for communication about schools and security

BY STEPHANIE SILK

The latest outlet of communication on the Internet consists of blogs or, “modern online diaries.” Readers can now use blogs to respond to the news they read—posting comments, discussing through message boards, taking polls and e-mailing responses.

Related to school security, blogs give readers the opportunity to learn and participate in news about school security in real-time.

## Schoolsafetynews.com

Brad Spicer is founder of SafePlans, a risk management consulting firm, and runs SafePlans’ School Safety News Blog and Map ([schoolsafetynews.com](http://schoolsafetynews.com)). The site’s School Safety Incidents Map (see below) provides situational awareness through the posting of school safety-related incidents and success stories. Icons on the map indicate where security situations from pre-K to colleges have happened, including incidents involving intruders, need for lockdown, school shootings, IED or bomb threats, fire evacuation, damage to schools from weather or

bus accidents.

The blog, aimed at the K-12 market, was designed to educate stakeholders on best practices and to inform them on the need for better school security. “There are some school administrators and parents who understand the need for improved school safety,” Spicer says. “But there are also those who are in denial—and this is for them too.”

To educate stakeholders, the blog analyzes school safety hazards and real-world incidents while illustrating how improved planning, training, tactics and/or technology can be implemented.

Spicer updates the blog two to three times a week by posting entries that focus on a news item (“Bomb Detonates at California High School”) or a security subject (“Secondary Attacks and Their Countermeasures”). He follows it with knowledge on the subject, as well as personal thoughts and measures that he thinks should be taken to avoid the situation.

“We don’t want people to overreact [with fear], but knowledge is power, and they need to be aware of what’s going on and what can be done.”

## Wrensolutions.com

Bret Rachlin, director of marketing for Wren Solutions, (a provider of network video systems) says Wren’s network video in education blog ([wrensolutions.com/NetworkVideo-EducationBlog/tabid/532/Default.aspx](http://wrensolutions.com/NetworkVideo-EducationBlog/tabid/532/Default.aspx)) was launched as a way to establish the company in the education market while providing a forum for school safety and security issues and to include network video. “We did research and didn’t find anywhere that school administrators could collaborate about school safety and security issues,” Rachlin says. “There was a lack of cohesive information out there.”

Wren’s blog gives commentary on school security issues. “We thought, instead of preaching, we should comment on articles that we post and ask questions about how the event was handled. What did the school have for security or funding?” he asks. “We want to foster

dialogue so that schools and the people that run them investigate what their schools would have done if they were put in that situation.”

## Hackettsecurity.blogspot.com

Another blog with a rising readership is the Hackett Security Blog from Hackett Security ([hackettsecurity.blogspot.com](http://hackettsecurity.blogspot.com)). Instead of writing informational entries, the blog simply posts pre-written articles that cover major movements and specific events from the industry. Chris Maples with Hackett Security says they try to post entries before the curve. “It’s not so much about our opinion. We focus on what’s going on around us, and we disperse news for informational purposes,” Maples says.

Roughly 30-40 percent of posts on [hackettsecurity.blogspot.com](http://hackettsecurity.blogspot.com) are school-oriented, according to Maples, because it is such a hot topic. “Schools are a symbol of our future. Readers, especially parents, want to know these things.”

## Not crossing a line

There are lines that school security blogs will not cross. For example, Spicer says SafePlan blog entries will not include ongoing issues that might expose a specific school to a risk as an operational security concern and to not put anyone in danger. “For example, if school ‘X’ in ‘Y’ city doesn’t lock its doors, we would talk about the importance of locking doors, but we wouldn’t expose the school directly,” Spicer says.

Rachlin says although they will cover all school safety topics, they are still sensitive to being critical of how a school handled a certain situation. “I won’t do that since I don’t know all the facts. But I will raise questions to talk about areas of where it’s possible they didn’t look into a certain solution,” he says.

“Educational security constantly needs tweaking because with each new school year there’s a whole new group of students,” Rachlin says. “Having a blog in which someone writes about insight is another opportunity for people to think about what they are doing to avoid situations other schools face. If our blog does its job, school administrators will read it and think about what they are doing for their school.” ■



SafePlans’ School Safety News Blog also features a School Safety Incidents Map that pinpoints security situations at schools from pre-K to college. Map icons indicate incidents involving intruders, need for lockdown, school shootings, IED or bomb threats, fire evacuation, damage to schools from weather or bus accidents.