

D·PREP BACK TO SCHOOL SAFETY PREPARATION

LOCKED DOORS



One of the most important ways to prevent an attack from reaching high casualty numbers is through the securing of all campus doors. In the history of school violence, we are unaware of an attacker who gained entry through a locked door (although there have been times where shooting occurred through windows, walls, or doors). Keeping your classroom, hallways, cafeteria, gymnasium, and administration office doors secured, providing school staff with limited master keys or electronic key fobs, and taking away door wedges are essential investments in security.

COVER WINDOWS/TURN OFF LIGHTS

Consider some of these actions' pre-event. The less you must accomplish under stress the better. When in a lockdown-barricade scenario, having the windows blocked makes it harder for the attacker to acquire a target. This means having shades or tinted windows in the classroom or investing in fabric covers with magnets or buttons to secure the door window shade. The more senses we block attacker from using, the harder it makes it for them to acquire a target. Turning off lights and covering windows make it more difficult for the attacker to see their target. Keeping the children quiet reduces the attacker's ability to listen for and find a target.



KEYPAD CODES



Securing doors that access central areas, such as the front office, is another excellent security measure. These codes can be shared with parents and students to make daily access easier. Keypad codes should be short and easy to remember. Longer codes present a problem when the person is under stress and trying to enter quickly. Consider a 3–4-digit code that is easy to enter when under stress. If there is an issue with a parent or another security reason to change the code, the code can be changed quickly and the new code shared with teachers, parents, and students.

MASTER KEYS

Make sure to have master keys available on your campus for first responders. Many times, school administrators see a key box used by firefighters (commonly called a Knox box) and assume police also have access. They often do not. Giving a few sets of master keys to the police department at the beginning of the year allows them access to all the buildings on your campus. These should also be issued to all staff and substitutes so they can lockdown/barricade when out of their classroom. Ideally, move from keys to key card access.



CREATE TIME BARRIERS



We should strive for a 5-minute structural intruder delay. When in a lockdown/barricade scenario, police arrive in 3-5 minutes on average and should engage the attacker in a quick and decisive manner. The sooner we detect an attacker, the quicker this countdown clock starts to get police on scene. A layered security model can gain us that valuable time. Live cameras should be monitored in real time by staff. Fences and locked doors help to delay and deter an attacker. Each shave off seconds of time to allow police time to respond.

USE CLEAR AND CONSISTENT MESSAGING

While coded alerts (“there is a bear in the lake,” different bell combinations for different types of alerts) may seem like a good idea, these are hard to recall during a crisis. “Lockdown/barricade” is an ideal phrase that tells us two things: that we should lock **and** barricade the door. Help staff by reducing the things they need to remember during a crisis. This avoids the time it takes to decode complicated instructions, follow difficult to understand alerts, or complete too many steps. When teachers and staff are under stress, they will have a harder time remembering all the things they need to do. In the event of an intruder, this will also alert the intruder we are aware of their presence on campus.



PREVENT ALERT FATIGUE



Have two different responses to campus emergencies: lockdown/barricade and secure school. **Lockdown/barricade** is used when there is a direct threat on campus. **Secure school** is used when there is a risk somewhere outside of the school. During a secure school alert, anyone who is outside comes inside. If a student needs to use the bathroom, they can do this with an escort. The benefit to a secure school alert is twofold, 1) we can move quickly to lockdown/barricade if the situation worsens and 2) the staff, teachers and students do not become immune to the alert system (secure school will be used much more than lockdown/barricade). Using a system that does not sound the same is imperative for clarity during a crisis. For instance, using Lockdown and Lockout can sound the same during a real event being shouted on a PA system or two-way radio.

BUILDING IDENTIFICATION

Clear signs and identification of buildings are critical to help first responders find the location of the emergency quickly. This means having clear letters on each building and exterior window and large signage for rooms like the library, cafeteria, and gymnasium, and common language when a room has multiple purposes. If a room has multiple purposes, agree upon a single word to use when directing outsiders and first responders on campus to prevent confusion and have the signage reflect that. In addition to building letters and names, have wayfinder arrows to show which direction other buildings on campus are located. Make sure staff have taken the time to learn and use ordinal directions (north, south, east, and west) to better direct first responders to where they need to go.



SCHEMATIC OF SCHOOL SITE



In conjunction with building identification, each site should maintain a current blueprint of the campus grounds to include all buildings, including temporary structures such as portables and storage units and all utilities, such as HVAC, internet, water, power, etc., clearly marked. The site facility supervisor should review and update the blueprint of the school annually and note any changes such as the addition or removal of portable classrooms. Capital improvements are generally completed during the summer; have the site facility supervisor review the blueprints as part of back-to-school preparation. Include a copy of the current blueprint in each Site Safety Plan. Note the locations of all emergency shutoff valves in each blueprint, as these may be needed in the event of an earthquake, a fire, or other natural disaster.

PROVIDE BLUEPRINTS TO FIRST RESPONDER DISPATCH

First responders are generally unfamiliar with your individual school sites. Collect a copy of the blueprints of all sites in the district and provide a binder to first responder dispatchers. The information provided is beneficial for dispatchers to relay to responding personnel and can provide for an enhanced coordinated response. Additionally, consider putting a copy of the school schematics behind each of the school's fire extinguishers. You don't want first responders wasting time trying to find the location of the emergency.



TIMELY RESPONSE TO WORKORDERS



If you have a safety need, such as a broken door lock or broken window, the process to have it repaired should be prioritized. Safety workorders need to be expedited when they pose a risk of entry or to the lockdown/barricade process. Make sure all staff understand how to submit these requests and when they are submitted, ensure the repairs are completed quickly.

SAFER CORNERS

During a lockdown/barricade, we want all staff and students to quickly move a safer corner, securely away from an active shooter. These corners are outside the fatal funnel, which you can imagine as the smaller part of the funnel starting at a door or window and spreading out from there across the room. This keeps the staff and students outside the line of fire. It is important to train the students where to go prior to a lockdown/barricade and we suggest marking safer corners with a clearly visible sign, such as a mascot paw print or a large star. When classrooms are being set up or rearranged, make sure the safer corner is not blocked by artwork, wheeled televisions, or other projects. Use the same safer corner symbol in every room on campus. Make sure every space in the school has access to a safer corner.



SHORTEN THE SURVIVAL ARC



The survival arc is a three-stage process we all go through when a threat occurs. The first stage is denial. We don't believe things are serious and look for ways to explain away an otherwise overwhelming concept (e.g., we think fireworks or a car backfire rather than gunshots). The second stage is deliberation. Here we get thinking and in our heads about what we should do and overcome our fight, flight, and freeze response. The third stage is direct action. This means we take an active step to run, hide or fight, depending on the scenario at hand. We "shorten the survival arc" through preparation and training. Even reading through this document can shorten the survival arc by being better prepared to respond to an active shooter event. For more on the survival arc, read *The Unthinkable: When Disaster Strikes and Why*, by Amanda Ripley.

D·PREP



These concepts are contained in our MERIT Prevention Based Active Shooter program, available in two-hour, four-hour, and day-long formats in-person or live online. Contact jsolomon@dpred.com to book a class.