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LESSON LEARNED

School Safety: Familiarity of Emergency Response Personnel with School Campuses and Facilities

SUMMARY

Ensuring that emergency personnel are familiar with campus layout and facilities can contribute to effective responses to active shooter incidents at schools.

DESCRIPTION

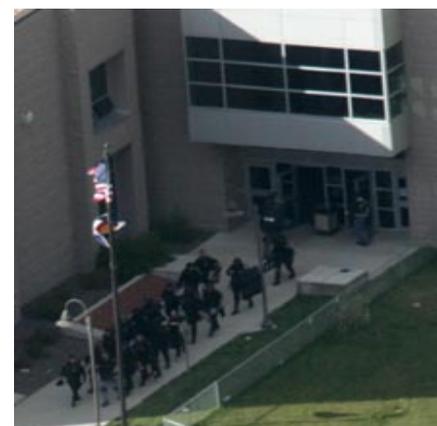
Exercise and incident after action reports (AARs) indicate that the familiarity of emergency personnel with school facilities and campuses is important for effective responses to active shooter incidents. These AARs, including the Columbine shootings in 1999, demonstrate how a lack of familiarity can hinder the ability of responders to secure the school building and to extract the injured, among other challenges.

The AARs illustrate the various ways that emergency personnel have worked with primary, secondary, and higher education institutions to build familiarity with school facilities among response personnel. Methods used to increase responders' familiarity with school layout include joint training, exercises, site visits, sharing building schematics, and assigning knowledgeable personnel to assist mutual aid personnel. Activities such as these have contributed to effective responses to active shooter incidents, including:



Columbine High School at the Time of the Shootings

- **Platte Canyon High School Shooting:** In 2006, Platte Canyon Sheriff's Office deputies responded to an active shooter incident at Platte Canyon High School. Prior to the incident, the deputies had visited the school regularly, participated in school programs, and served as school coaches. In addition, PCSO deputies held regular meetings with school personnel and students. This familiarity with the school layout as well as with students and staff helped PCSO deputies obtain and effectively use



SWAT Team Members Exit Platte Canyon High School

critical information at the onset of response operations.

- **University of Texas at Austin Active Shooter and Suicide Incident:** In 2010, the University of Texas (UT), Austin, encountered an active shooter on their campus. Prior multi-agency regional active shooter training and drills sponsored by the UT Police Department (UTPD) contributed to an effective response by promoting familiarity with the campus and teamwork among the responding agencies. During the response operations, the operations section chief assigned a UTPD officer to teams that were conducting building searches for possible accomplices. This provided each team with a person who was familiar with the location and the layout of the buildings being searched.



SWAT Team Members at UT Austin during the 2010 Shooting Incident

Finally, the AARs illustrate that maintaining the familiarity of emergency response personnel with school facilities within or adjacent to their jurisdiction requires on-going activities. Turnover as well as changes in facility structure and use can lessen responders' familiarity with school facilities.

About This *LLIS.gov* document

Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov) reviewed exercise and incident AARs and other documents on the *LLIS.gov* system to develop this *LLIS.gov* document. *LLIS.gov* will revise and update this document as new information is received. If you wish to contribute to this *LLIS.gov* document, please email your data, information, or documents to research@llis.dhs.gov.

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