

**Statement for the**  
**Senate Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness Committee**  
**and**  
**Senate Education Committee**  
**February 13, 2013**

PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Glenn M. Cannon, Esq., Director

Senator Baker, Senator Folmer, and members of the Committees, I am Glenn Cannon, Director of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA). Thank you for the opportunity to provide this statement and discuss the very important matter of school safety.

With regard to school safety, PEMA's role and focus is on planning, training, and exercise. Anything that can be done further to enhance those three areas will further strengthen school safety across the Commonwealth.

The Emergency Management Services Code, 35 Pa. C.S. §§7101 *et seq.*, as amended ("Title 35"), states: "Every school district and custodial child care facility, in cooperation with the local Emergency Management Agency, and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, shall develop and implement a comprehensive disaster response and emergency preparedness plan consistent with the guidelines developed by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency and other pertinent State requirements. The plan shall be reviewed annually and modified as necessary. A copy of the plan shall be provided to the county emergency management agency."

Although the law specifically mentions the local emergency management agency and PEMA, we have stressed and will continue to stress that the plan be a collaboration and partnership between the school and the community -- especially all first responder organizations and any other entity that would be involved in the response to, or recovery from, an incident at a school facility. These organizations and entities, along with the internal school team, should comprise the school district's and buildings' safety committees.

The current school safety guidelines consist of an "All Hazards" Safe Schools Planning Toolkit which was developed by the School Safety Planning Committee, co-chaired by PEMA and the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Other members on the committee include: the Pennsylvania State Police, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Task Force, the Office of Homeland Security, the City of Philadelphia, Carlisle Area School Districts, Milton Hershey School, Pennsylvania Catholic Conference, Lincoln Intermediate Unit #12, Office of the Attorney General, Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Center for Safe Schools, county/local emergency management professional, and first responders. The toolkit consists of a Basic Plan and guidance on how to address the four phases of an emergency: Prevention/Mitigation, Planning/Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. The kit contains references and resources, sample documents and checklists that the schools can tailor to use in their own plans. In addition to the natural and technological hazards information, the "All Hazards" toolkit addresses intentional acts and includes checklists for lockdowns, shootings, hostage situations, and intruders/trespassers.

The mass shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut was a terrible tragedy and one we want to prevent in Pennsylvania. This is an opportunity for us to review the current guidelines to schools for these types of events; it is important, however, that we maintain the “All Hazards” approach because while schools in Pennsylvania have been affected by intentional acts, they have also been affected by natural hazards (such as tornadoes and flooding) and technological hazards (such as chemistry lab explosions and nuclear power plant alerts).

An emergency plan will only work if the people who are responsible for carrying out the plan are properly trained on how to execute those responsibilities during a disaster. Training dates for staff and administration, along with safety committee meetings and exercises, must be built into each school district’s calendar. Without training, the planning efforts can have limited value.

Schools that receive federal preparedness funds are required to have all of their personnel who are assigned emergency roles and responsibilities trained to the appropriate level as identified in the National Incident Management System (NIMS). All schools should be strongly encouraged to have NIMS training for their personnel regardless of whether they accept federal funds or not. This type of training assists in providing a common language between the schools and emergency management/first responder personnel who would respond to that district in the event of an emergency.

PEMA also is responsible for providing the Multi-Hazards Safe Schools training for schools, emergency management, and first responder organizations. The updated training will be available early this summer in pilot format and be final this coming fall. The course offers training and assistance for schools and their first responders on how to develop a viable emergency preparedness plan for each of their buildings and their district.

Section 7701 (f) of Title 35 also states: “Annually, schools and custodial child care facilities shall conduct at least one disaster response or emergency preparedness plan drill.” PEMA and the county emergency management agencies assist the schools in completing this requirement by developing and conducting the Annual Severe Weather Exercise in March or April of each year. Emergency management personnel at all levels are available and able to assist schools in exercising their plans. Their plans do not need to be exercised in entirety all at once. The normal procedure is to start small with a drill and then move on to a tabletop exercise which is discussion-based, and then move to a functional or full-scale exercise.

Finally, many important school safety initiatives take money to implement. The Governor’s budget proposal calls for getting Pennsylvania out of the liquor business which is not a core function of government. The proceeds from divesting the commonwealth of this monopoly would create the Passport for Learning Block Grant, which would channel about \$1 billion to schools, which could be applied to school safety initiatives. With the shooting tragedies at Sandy Hook Elementary School, Columbine High School, Virginia Tech University, and the West Nickel Mines School in Lancaster County, it is imperative that our students feel safe in school so they can fully concentrate on learning instead of their wellbeing.

Senator Baker and Senator Folmer, thank you for your leadership on this important matter. Also, I thank the members of the Committee that have participated in this hearing. On behalf of Governor Corbett and the more than twelve million Pennsylvanians we serve, I also thank you for your continued support of PEMA and our partners in public safety across the state. I believe that with Governor Corbett's commitment and your support of our mission, PEMA will continue to move forward and become the premier emergency management agency in the nation.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and I will be happy to answer any questions that members may have.