

Standing Stone Consulting, Inc

We have been doing school security since 1999. We have worked with hundreds of schools from Alaska to Massachusetts. They have been rural, suburban and urban, both small and large.

Our consulting team consists of experts from various fields like policing, security, emergency management, medical, and management. Each has its own perspective about school security.

Making schools safe is a process. A process we rarely follow. Let me briefly explain the process.

Understand what we are protecting

- People
- Property
- Process of education
- Reputation of the schools

In that order.

Next is a threat – vulnerability – risk assessment

- **Threat** something that can hurt you. There are three classes of threats.
 - **Natural** - weather, and other natural occurrences
 - **Accidental** - a boiler explosion
 - **Intentional** - criminal actions etc.
- **Vulnerability** – how we are susceptible to a threat
- **Risk** – the consequence or loss suffered from a threat carried out through a vulnerability.

Once the threats, vulnerabilities and risks are understood then and only then, can we begin to mitigate the risks. For today I am focusing only on intentional threats but we cannot forget the natural and accidental ones.

Tactics are those actions, such as creating policies and procedures or implementing physical improvements in the environment. **Tactics** for intentional threats are designed to:

- **Deter**
- **Detect**
- **Delay**
- **Deny**

A perpetrator's actions.

Tactics are separated into 3 groups

- **Natural** – a secretary in the normal performance of their duties being able to see those approaching the school from her desk
- **Organized** – SRO's patrolling the school grounds, teachers in hallways, etc.
- **Technical** – CCTV, metal detectors, etc.

For best results there should be a balance between all three tactical groups.

Tactics should be based on the individual school. One size does not fit all. Elementary schools where threats are generally from the outside require different tactics than a High School where threats are generally from inside the school.

Tactics are usually applied in **Layers of Defense** with the most important assets at the center of the layers. For schools the layers are

- **Neighborhood** around the school
- **Perimeter** of the school property
- **Open space** between the perimeter and building
- **Building walls**
- **Building interior**

That is the process. **Unfortunately our experience is that we rarely follow this process.** Too often we have the “solution of the day” approach. As one example, CCTV. Today cameras are expected in our schools. Pennsylvania has spent millions of dollars on CCTV but what can CCTV do and not do to make a school safer?

CCTV is primarily an investigative tool used to go back after an incident to see what happened. It has little deterrent value to someone looking to commit mass murder of students and teachers. In fact CCTV is often viewed by these mass murders as a way to increase their fame.

School designs do not aid in security. It is bad enough that the design of old buildings are security risks but we continue to design new schools with these same vulnerabilities. Just a couple of examples – classroom doors recessed into walls providing hiding places for perpetrators. Main entrances that do not facilitate supervising access to the school. There are a lot of these kinds of examples.

There is a requirement in Pennsylvania that every school have an emergency plan and perform exercises to test that plan. Unfortunately, in our experience, most do not even have a basic plan. Without a good plan you cannot have effective training. Our schools are unprepared but there is no consequence, no one is held accountable – until something bad happens.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

First and foremost follow the proven security planning process.

Have a security design review, by qualified expert, (not architects or engineers) for every new and refurbished school.

Grant awards and spending should be based on the results of the security planning process. Make sure those awarding grants are knowledgeable about security. Today the Department of Education awards the grants but lack the expertise to evaluate the applications. Those at the schools making the grant applications are also not qualified to make the security decisions.

Provide some consequences for not having an Emergency Plan that meets state requirements. Without consequences schools will not devote the time and money required to have a well thought out plan based on the process I have described.

Require training and exercises of the school’s emergency plan. Students and teachers should know what to do when an emergency occurs.

Some cautions moving forward

We rely on the police for school security expertise. However the police are primarily trained to respond to and investigate crimes. That is the perspective they bring to school security. The police are about

intentional threats not prevention or other threats. Remember there are 3 classes of threat, natural, accidental and intentional not just intentional.

One principle of crime prevention is that if you target harden a space (such as a school) you will move the crime to where the target is softer. We must be aware that we may not eliminate the crime but simply move it to a new softer area. For example a school bus with 40 or so students would be a much softer target than a school building. Or we may shift attacks to arrival and dismissal times when students and teachers are outside.

QUESTIONS?