

# The Safety Net

*The Electronic Journal of Safe Havens International*

*The world's leading authority on school safety, security & emergency preparedness*

Fall 2011 • Volume 2 • Issue 1

**Best Practices for a  
New School Year**

**Risk-Assessment**

**Current Events**

**Security Planning  
for Athletic Events**

**Drills & Exercises**



*An electronic publication of Safe Havens International*



Photo: Safe Havens Video

The Safety Net is just one way that Safe Havens International provides free assistance to those who desire to make schools safer. Our mission is to make children and youth safer anywhere in the world they happen to go to school.

We welcome divergent viewpoints, suggestions, ideas for topics or general comments about **The Safety Net**. We also welcome readers forwarding The Safety Net to colleagues who may benefit from reading it. We hope you will join us and watch us grow as we continually update and improve this newsletter and its offerings into a robust resource that will benefit educators and parents around the world.

We look forward to visiting with you each issue and thank you for your efforts to make schools safe and effective places of learning where dignity, honor and respect are the norm.

As a closing comment, I'd like to ask you to please take the time to complete a short survey that will help us in creating future products. [Take the survey by clicking here!](#)

*Michael Dorn is the Executive Director of Safe Havens International. Over the past thirty years, his school safety work has taken him to Central America, Mexico, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Asia and the Middle East. A powerful keynote speaker, Michael has presented from Virginia to Vietnam. Michael can be reached at [mike@weakfish.org](mailto:mike@weakfish.org).*

## Message from the Executive Director

### *A New School Year, A New **Safety Net***

After a long hiatus, we are again publishing our e-newsletter, now presented in an expanded journal format. We hope to combine our knowledge and experience with that of you, our readers, to build an ongoing partnership with the thousands of advocates for children who receive this publication.

Dr. Sonayia Shepherd will draw on her experiences working in remote places like Thailand, Switzerland and Rwanda as she provides useful tips to improve school safety and climate. I will highlight low-cost, high impact ways to improve school safety, security, climate, culture and emergency preparedness. CFO and Senior Analyst Russell Bentley will leverage his experience in security

technology, school athletics and all around improvements in school safety.

In addition to these features, each issue will have a variety of columns and resources, including:

- *The Safety Riddle*: school hazard assessments
- *Welcome Home*: positive school body language
- *The News Digest* and current events
- *Hidden in Plain Sight*: disguised and improvised weapons
- *High as a Kite*: drug and drug paraphernalia awareness
- *Before the Smoke Clears*: tabletop scenarios
- *The Library*: learning resource review



Safe Havens International  
 P.O. Box 27390  
 Macon, GA 31220  
[www.safehavensinternational.org](http://www.safehavensinternational.org)

## The Safety Net

Editor in Chief	Phuong Dorn
Managing Editor	Chris Dorn
News Editor	Charles Fleming
Staff Photographer	Rachel Wilson
Assistant Editor	Adam Parker
Assistant Layout	Rachel Wilson

The Safety Net is the electronic journal of Safe Havens International. Each issue contains feature articles written by Safe Havens analysts as well as guest authors from the fields of school safety, mental health recovery, emergency management, anti-terrorism and related fields. Monthly features include columns and visual exercises to enhance the knowledge base in the field of school safety and emergency preparedness for the learning environment.

Safe Havens International, Inc. is the world's leading non-profit campus safety organization. Safe Havens works with K-12 schools, institutions of higher learning and faith-based organizations worldwide to improve campus climate, safety and emergency preparedness. As a non-profit center, our mission is to do what we can to make school a safe and enjoyable place for students to learn and teachers to teach, no matter where they happen to live. The Safe Havens team is comprised of international authorities and school safety, security and preparedness specialists. Our goal is to help schools improve safety while raising test scores using proven concepts tailored to fit local risks, realities and resources.

**Take a survey to help us create better training tools and receive a free book or discount code!**

*Do you want to write for The Safety Net? If you would like to be a guest author or if you have information you'd like to see featured in an upcoming issue of The Safety Net, please contact us at [newsletter@weakfish.org](mailto:newsletter@weakfish.org).*

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*About the cover: this month's cover photo was taken by Rachel Wilson, our lead photographer, in the Washington County School District, Utah.*



Photo: Michael Dorn

## The Safety Riddle

What's wrong with this photo?  
Answer on page 17

## High As a Kite

*Drugs & Paraphernalia  
Identification*

Is this an innocent item?  
Answer on page 17



Photo: Chris Dorn

## Before the Smoke Clears:

*Tabletop Scenarios*

Photo: Safe Havens Video



It is mid-morning when a slightly agitated woman enters the school office. There are two staff members in the office area. When a staff member politely says, "Hi, can I help you ma'am?", the woman loses control, screaming and cursing at the staff member. About ten seconds later, she pulls a large claw hammer out of her purse, yelling "I'm gonna smash your head in".

**What are the immediate and long-term actions you should take?**

*Each issue will feature a different scenario that you can use in planning and training for emergency situations. These may be reprinted or used without limitation if the scenario is reproduced in its entirety and the following credit is given: Source: [www.safehavensinternational.org](http://www.safehavensinternational.org).*

# Welcome Home

*Examples of Positive School Body Language*



Photo: Michael Dorn

*This independent school in Saigon, Vietnam has carefully color coordinated their school bus fleet with the building's primary color. The large mural featuring a child combined with immaculate grounds and color coordinated uniforms also sends a clear and powerful message that the school is a professional place of learning as well as a place of respect.*

## Hidden in Plain Sight

*Disguised Weapons*

This lipstick knife, like many disguised weapons, costs less than \$10. Easily hidden among other innocent items, this 1.5" steel blade is definitely more dangerous than it appears at first sight.



Photo: Chris Dorn

*Do you have a photo to share? **The Safety Net** welcomes photo submissions showing examples of positive school climate, safety hazards, drug paraphernalia or disguised weapons. To submit your photos, e-mail us at: [newsletter@weakfish.org](mailto:newsletter@weakfish.org). Due to space limitations, it may not be possible to publish all submissions.*

# News Digest

## Current Events In School Safety

*Around the World* by Charles Fleming

### **76 killed in extremist rampage Oslo, Norway**

Seventy-six people were killed in a terror rampage in the worst peacetime attack in the country's history. A bomb blast damaged buildings in Oslo, the capital, two hours before the suspect, Anders Behring Breivik, 32, went on a rampage at an island youth camp. Dressed as a police officer, Breivik corralled campers into a crowd and opened fire. The gunman, who was captured alive, is a right wing extremist.

### **Polar bear kills one, injures four Longyearbyen, Norway**

A 17-year-old British student was killed and four others injured when a polar bear attacked their camp on the Norwegian Arctic archipelago of Svalbard. The students were visiting on a school trip. Officials say tripwires used to alert campers of the bear may have malfunctioned.

### **Student murders principal Memphis, TN**

Police have charged 17-year-old Eduardo Marmolejo with stabbing to death Suzette York, 49, the principal at Memphis Junior Academy, a private Seventh-day Adventist school. York, who had been a principal at the school for more than three years, was found inside a classroom.

### **Student arrested for bomb plot Tampa, Florida**

Tampa police arrested Jared Cano, 17, after discovering a plot to set off a bomb at his former high school. The former student's plan, with minute-by-minute detail, was to cause mass casualties by placing a bomb at Freedom High School in north Tampa and detonating the device on the first day of school. He intended to cause more casualties than the 1999 Columbine High School shooting. Police discovered shrapnel, plastic tubing, timing and fusing devices and a fuel source at Cano's apartment. Cano was expelled in April 2010 because of an off-campus incident and would

have been red-flagged if he had tried to come back on campus.

### **Tighter Qualifications for School Bus Drivers – New York**

New York Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation tightening restrictions on school bus drivers. The list includes sex crimes, disseminating indecent materials to minors, sex trafficking and persistent sexual abuse. The law also makes the ban permanent rather than temporary for those convicted of vehicular manslaughter, aggravated vehicular homicide or promoting prostitution. The laws governing prohibitive convictions had not been updated since 1986.

### **Dick's Sporting Goods supports concussion testing - USA**

Through a program called Protecting Athletes through Concussion Education, or PACE, Dick's Sporting Goods will pay for testing of athletes at over 3,300 schools. The tests will be given to athletes before a season to measure brain performance, and again if athletes suffer a concussion. This same test is now given to players in the N.F.L., Major League Baseball and the National Hockey League. Dick's will pledge up to \$1 million to the program.

### **Missouri teachers suing to block social media law - Kansas City, MO**

A Missouri state senator is defending a new state law that would prohibit teachers from private communication with students over the Internet. Teachers have filed a lawsuit saying that the proposed law violates free speech. The law permits teacher-student contact only if parents, administrators or the public can view the Internet site.

### **Student brings gun on school bus Anchorage, AK**

19-year-old Anchorage high school student Bryan Briggs, was arrested after he was found carrying a loaded gun on a school bus. Briggs was carrying a .22 caliber handgun to a local vocational-education center, Anchorage School District officials said. The student was jailed with a charge of misconduct involving a weapon. No injuries or threats were reported.

### **Teacher honored for calming students during gun battle - Mexico**

Martha Rivera Alanis was recognized for her bravery in ordering her class of five- and six-year-olds to lie on the floor of their classroom during a gun battle between drug cartels outside her school in Monterrey, Mexico. She was able to calm her students by instructing them to sing a song from the television show *Barney & Friends*. Alanis used her cell phone to shoot a viral video of the situation. According to police, gunmen shot dead five people at a taxi stand near the school.

### **7-year old caught with 18 bags of heroin - Pittsburgh, PA**

A 7-year-old kindergarten student at a primary school in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Carrick gave bags of heroin to three friends, police said in a statement. After a teacher found the heroin, the schools principal found 18 bags of the drug in the boy's locker and backpack.

### **Education grants made available for nine states**

Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and South Carolina will be eligible to compete for education grants of up to \$50 million through the President's "Race to the Top" program, created as part of the 2009 federal stimulus plan, and continued in the fiscal 2011 budget. Most of the additional funding, \$500 million will go to an "Early Learning Challenge," the U.S. Education Department and Health and Human Services Agency said.

### **Inner-city schools tackle knife crime - London, UK**

Primary schools in the community of Tottenham are proactively giving workshops for students on dealing with knife crime, mugging, bullying, and other issues in their community. Concern from students about knife crime initiated this approach. When polled about issues in their neighborhood, students voted knife crime, ahead of pollution, as the issue, which concerned them the most.

### **Student suspended for Facebook post – USA**

School officials suspended a 7th grader for threatening a teacher on-line - the student claims it was a joke. The post: "I wish Osama bin Laden had killed my teacher instead of the 3,000 people in the Twin Towers."

### **Teachers Protest Firings**

#### **Providence, RI**

Firing all of nearly 2,000 teachers, Providence shut down five schools this year due to the city's \$100 million-plus deficit. The new mayor, Angel Taveras, chose terminations instead of layoffs because it ensures that teachers the city can't afford will be completely removed from the city payroll. Though most teachers were rehired, 400 were left jobless.

### **Pedophile ring member under arrest – London, UK**

Police in London caught the leader of a gang known to victimize homeless children, pick up students outside schools and use social network sites to connect to potential victims. During a court hearing, the 19 year old admitted to 13 charges of sexual activity with a child over three years.

### **Schools take action against radiation – Tokyo, Japan**

Officials in Fukushima Prefecture are taking independent action, believing state guidelines for radiation levels on school grounds inadequate. The Ministry of Education released a statement that set radiation dose limits at primary and secondary schools equivalent to 20 times the annual radiation limit. Facilities at schools have been closed because of radioactive materials from the nuclear power station after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami. The city has also decided to remove topsoil from school playgrounds.

### **Teachers & librarians demonstrate against job cuts - Los Angeles, CA**

Librarians protested The Los Angeles Unified School District's plans to lay off thousands of employees, including 85 school librarians, due to budget deficits. These plans include reclassifying librarians, currently classified as teachers, to make it easier for the school district to cut their jobs.

### **Young athletes use fewer drugs, but more alcohol - USA**

A recent study, published in *Addiction*, has found that teens who play team sports are less likely to use drugs such as cigarettes and marijuana than their peers, but drink more alcohol. The study's authors think this information could help in preventing drug and alcohol abuse in young adults.

### **Messages reveal shooter was bullied – Rio De Janeiro, Brazil**

According to messages left in letters, videos and photos, Menezes de Oliveira, the shooter who in April killed twelve children at his former school before killing himself, was motivated to perform this act by bullying. In videos taped in a hotel room the night before the shootings, he blames the murders he was planning on his past bullies, and his school's failure to intervene.

### **Vending machine decreases female absenteeism - India**

Absenteeism among female students in Coimbatore, India has dropped after installation of a sanitary napkin vending machine on campus. Absenteeism rates for female students fell from 6% to 2%.

### **Refugee Teachers Discussed at Symposium - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

The 6th Commonwealth Research Symposium on Teacher Mobility, Recruitment and Migration was held in June in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The focus was the role and status of refugee teachers and education in difficult circumstances, with topics including teachers' right to work after migration due to conflicts and natural disasters.

*News Digest is summarized from current events from reputable news publications. Articles are condensed for formatting and space considerations. If you would like more detail about an article please e-mail us at [newsletter@weakfish.org](mailto:newsletter@weakfish.org).*

## **The Library: Learning Resource Review**

by Michael Dorn

### *Book: The Fire that Will Not Die*

Author: Michele McBride

ISBN: 088280-152-X

Written by a survivor of the 1958 Our Lady of Angels Sacred Hearts School fire, *The Fire that Will Not Die* details how the fire spread and ninety-five students and staff died. An emotionally difficult read, the book takes the reader through the terrifying fire itself and the nightmare of pain and recovery from the author's severe burns. There are some key teaching points in this book for any school safety practitioner, including the effects of crisis stress and the reasons behind the extended delay in the sounding of the school's fire alarm.



Available at:

[www.olafire.com/  
TheFireThatWillNotDie.asp](http://www.olafire.com/TheFireThatWillNotDie.asp)

*In each issue, The Library will feature training resources as well as some of the publications that we use as a basis for our research and practices.*

## Colorado Votes Yes on SB11-173

### Interoperable Communications in Schools

**DENVER, CO** - In April the Colorado House of Representatives voted unanimously in favor of SB 11-173, the first bill in the nation to establish communications interoperability as a necessary part of a school safety, readiness, and incident management plan. The bill establishes partnerships between schools and local or regional homeland security personnel.

SB11-173 enhances the Colorado School Response Framework, created in 2008, and requires public schools, at least every academic term, to inventory emergency equipment and test communications equipment and its interoperability with community partners.

The bill requires collaboration between schools and community partners to develop school safety plans in line with statewide and local emergency plans.

According to the bill, schools would benefit from coordinated efforts to share best practices in emergency communications, identify the emergency communications needs at the school level, help target technical assistance and grant



“Current communications systems and practices do not promote direct and instantaneous communication between emergency agencies and schools, and this creates the potential for delays that put health and safety at risk.”

– Colorado Senator Steve King

opportunities, and prepare schools and the public safety community for next-generation communications.

According to State Senator Steve King, who introduced the bill, a lack of interoperable communications has led to crisis response failure time and time again. Examples include Columbine, 9/11, Katrina, and major tragic incidents around the world. Unable to communicate with one another during the crisis, responders were handicapped by non-interoperable communications devices.

King stated “Through interoperable communications in schools, those responding to a school incident ... can do so when needed within an established communications plan.”

The bill draws on resources offered by the Colorado School Safety Resource Center, the Division of Fire Safety within the Colorado

Department of Public Safety, and the Governor’s Office of Information Technology to help schools include interoperable communications in their school safety plans.

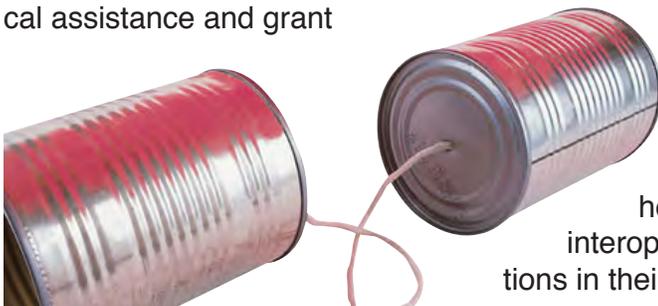
Under the bill, the School Safety Resource Center would incorporate interoperable communications into its training programs that deal with school adoption of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System.

Although the bill does not require schools to purchase new communications equipment, several potential funding sources for interoperable communications have been identified at school safety conferences hosted this year by Senator King.

The sources include Qualified Zone Academy Bonds, 911 Authority Board surcharge revenues, funding programs for new school construction, and grant programs within the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

For more information about the bill, visit:

<http://schoolsafetysummit.org/>



# Sony Says

## “What’s the risk?”

We often hear that schools should base plans, procedures and protocols on actual local risks. However, determining risks can be somewhat of a daunting task if you do not tackle it with an assessment-based approach.

Before determining risk, an organization must assess their local hazards (natural disasters, factories, proximity to military installations and other targets, etc.), community hazards (gangs, drug houses, abandoned properties, socio-economic factors, etc.), facility hazards (district/school buildings, grounds, rooms, etc.), and human resources hazards (personnel who lack the training and proficiency to deal with and respond to other risks).

In addition, evaluate each hazard on the following areas:

1. *What is the consequence on the organization?*
2. *How vulnerable is the organization?*
3. *What is the real threat to the organization?*

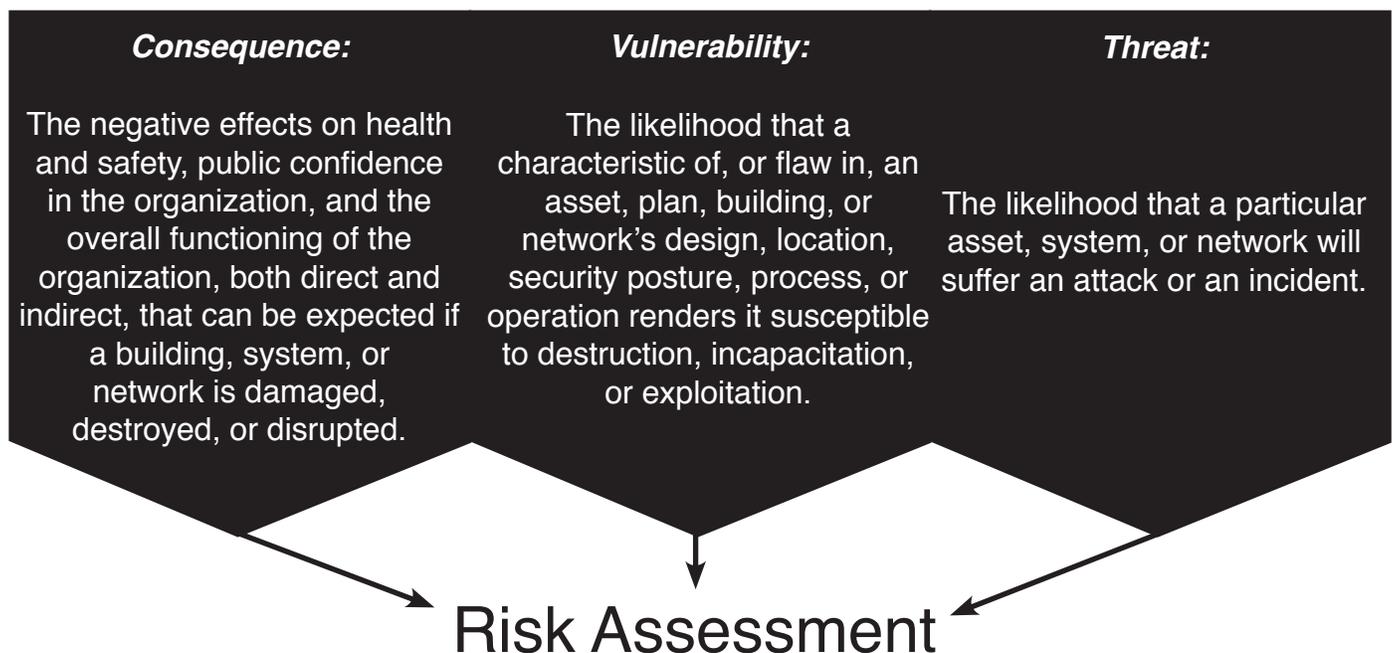
After an organization understands their risk and accurately identifies their personnel proficiency, plans and procedures can be enhanced to provide improved response systems, building and information systems can be retrofitted to mitigate against the risks, and a training program can be planned and implemented to counter the human resources risks.



Each edition of “Sony Says” explores a core concept drawn from across the four phases of the emergency planning process.

*A popular & animated keynote speaker, Dr. Sonayia N. Shepherd (Sony) has authored and co-authored sixteen books on school safety and emergency management. A co-founder of Safe Havens International, her work has taken her to five continents, responding to events ranging from the Indonesian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina crises to the G-8 summit. Sony has assisted large organizations, like FEMA and the WHO, as well as smaller organizations - including over 2,000 public and private schools and campuses.*

*Dr. Shepherd can be reached at [sony@weakfish.org](mailto:sony@weakfish.org)*



## Emergency Preparedness Planning for K-12 Athletic Events

Russell E. Bentley

“You can’t teach an old dog new tricks”

Whoever said that never met me. I recently had to learn a few new tricks when I had the privilege of preparing for a statewide conference on school safety in Pennsylvania. My topic was safety, security and emergency preparedness planning for after-hours activities and special events, with a heavy focus on emergency preparedness planning for athletic events.

Before the presentation I felt well versed in the area of athletic event safety. I felt very good about my twenty-one years of planning and managing safety at countless graduations, athletic events and other events at both the K-12 and higher education level. I’ve walked the sidelines on Friday nights and Saturday afternoon at football games and I’ve been court-side at basketball games hundreds of times over the years. But I learned a lot during my research. I’d like to share some of the key things to focus on when planning for athletic events this school year.

### Planning Complexity

Just like with schools, start with an “all-hazards” approach. There is a lot to plan for - from day to day hazards like medical emergencies, gang activity and fights - to catastrophic incidents like bio-terrorism attacks and severe weather. Analyze potential threat scenarios and be aware of community hazards - like chemical factories, military facilities and government offices that may be high priority targets. These may not be statistically likely targets, but they could still cause disruption of Friday night football.



**“Don’t drop the ball when it comes to event security.”**

Lewis Eakins  
Campus Safety, November 1, 2007

One pitfall is that this process, by nature, is often done in a vacuum when it comes to athletics. The school athletic director and other school emergency planners must balance risk and vulnerabilities when deciding the depth of plans and resources committed to the various athletic events throughout the school year.

One useful resource is a booklet created by The Colorado High School Activities Association titled *Guidelines for Security, Safety, and Crisis Management*. Some of the highlights of the booklet include:

- Site director responsibilities for security on and off-site
- Developing emergency action plans (Evacuations, Lockdown, Shelter-in-place, etc.)
- Development of a crisis management team for athletic events
- Security staffing for events
- Medical coverage
- Command center/communications
- Emergency layout for venues
- Conducting tabletop exercises
- Pre-game emergency checkups
- Game emergency planning

These are just a few of the topics covered in the guide, but this list should give you a taste of how

complex the planning process should be. Now let’s look at some detailed planning concepts.

### Creating an Emergency Action Plan

The development of an EAP for the use of AEDs/CPR at athletic events and practices is critical. According to research by **Anyone Can Save A Life**, it is estimated that nearly 250,000 Americans die each year from Sudden Cardiac Arrest. Last school year, several high school athletes were victims of Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA). A recent CBS morning news story highlighted a hockey athlete that was struck by a hockey puck in the chest area and went into SCA. This athlete was saved by the use of an AED/CPR intervention.

**Drop the Dummy** The program tests your teams’ readiness and your EAP. Having been on the scene of two incidents where having a plan in place might have saved lives, I am a living witness to the importance of this plan component.

The lives of students who have experienced cardiac arrest at practices and competitions and parents who experience cardiac trouble while attending our sporting events are justification enough.

### Severe Weather

Has your district or school developed a lightning safety plan for athletic events? Staff in St. George, Utah recently came face-to-face with this situation when two students were struck by lightning while on campus. One student was lying in a classroom motionless when staff found him. Life-saving CPR was administered by responding staff members - the school's SRO asserts that it is likely the students wouldn't be alive today without the AEDs - but more importantly, the planning and training that enabled staff to respond effectively and quickly.

The National Weather Service (NWS) has a voluntary recognition program for large outdoor venues (including those on high school campuses) to better protect individuals from the dangers of lightning. Athletic directors and administrators can view the toolkit at: [www.lightning-safety.noaa.gov/](http://www.lightning-safety.noaa.gov/). The development of such a plan is required in a number of states by athletic associations - for example in Georgia athletic site managers are required to provide a lightning meter for all outdoor athletic events.

### Event Safety Planning

The National Center for Spectator Sports & Security, located at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, offers training on risk management & event safety planning. This course was developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Homeland security to provide standardized training for risk management practices at intercollegiate athletic events.

While the initial focus was athletic events on higher-ed campuses, it is

### Have you:

- Developed severe weather safety plans for sport venues - in particular for lightning strikes?
- Conducted a risk assessment for each venue, including campus venues as well as stadiums?
- Developed a communications plan to handle announcements and information dissemination in the event of evacuation or severe weather sheltering situations?
- Cultivated adequate multi-agency collaboration to increase interoperability and trust between first response agencies?
- Learned to operate in a positive, win-win mentality?

applicable across the U.S., regardless of the size of the institution or venue capacity. Additional training offerings include sports venue evacuation preparedness, special event security planning, an online certification program and information about security technology.

### Conclusion

With the uncertainty of crisis events and growing incidents of fan misbehavior, it is impossible to ensure a risk free environment at the thousands of athletic activities that take place each year. It is our job to prepare, respond and recover from the consequences of athletic event emergencies. There is always a need for a thorough and up-to-date risk assessment to identify vulnerabilities and ways to mitigate incidents as they occur.

Most importantly, it is never too late to learn new tricks.

*Russell E. Bentley is a Senior Analyst and CFO at Safe Havens International. With more than 15 years of experience in executive positions with both K-12 and university level police departments during his 25 year law enforcement career, he is a recognized expert in the areas of athletics event security as well as security technology for schools.*

*Russell can be reached at [rbentley@weakfish.org](mailto:rbentley@weakfish.org)*

### Resources mentioned in this article:

**Anyone Can Save a Life** was formed as a partnership between the Minnesota State High School League and the Medtronic Foundation. It raises awareness of SCA among coaches, administrators, advisors, event staff, students and parents, teaching the warning signs and symptoms of SCA. The program assists schools with the development of an AED site assessment, individual sport and activity Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) and the implementation of training and drills (along with the Drop the Dummy drill program).

[www.anyonecansavealife.org/](http://www.anyonecansavealife.org/)

### Guidelines for Security, Safety, & Crisis Management:

Published by the Colorado High School Activities Association. [www.chsaa.org/home/pdf/CrisisManagement.pdf](http://www.chsaa.org/home/pdf/CrisisManagement.pdf)

### NWS Lightning Safety Toolkit:

[www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/](http://www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov/)

### National Center for Spectator Sports and Security:

118 College Drive #5193  
Hattiesburg, MS 39406-0001  
601.266.6183  
<http://www.ncs4.com/>

## **Permission to Live:** **Key Considerations for Emergency Preparedness**

by Michael S. Dorn

Are your staff prepared to perform live-saving actions in an emergency? The principal at the Our Lady of Angels Sacred Hearts School would have probably thought so until a deadly fire proved otherwise. In one of our nation's most deadly school disasters, no staff member activated the school's fire alarm system for an estimated five minutes after the fire was detected by teachers.

In fact, many teachers not only failed to instruct students to evacuate as the school filled with smoke, but told them they could not do so when students asked permission to leave the burning building. In her book *The Fire that Will Not Die*, author Michelle McBride relates how her teacher instructed her class to kneel and pray the Rosary while waiting for the principal to pull the fire alarm.

Most people are shocked when they learn that ninety-five students and staff died because many teachers did not make the decision to evacuate a clearly burning school. However, if we consider the extensive research on the effects of life and death stress on the human mind and body, we can better understand how good, dedicated, educated and intelligent people could fail to perform seemingly obvious and simple actions such as evacuating students and pulling the fire alarm.

Ms. McBride relates that the school's leadership took safety very seriously and conducted one fire drill each month, insisting that students and staff move briskly and in an orderly fashion. Each month, the school's principal would activate the fire alarm, which is how most schools then, as well as today, conducted fire drills. But this common approach to emergency drills can create a problem under actual crisis conditions. The stress of a crisis event can result in significant changes in how we physically and emotionally perform,



*Ninety-five children and staff died in a fire at a Chicago Catholic school in 1958 when teachers waited for the school's administrator to activate the fire alarm. They had been inadvertently trained to wait for the principal to activate the alarm during monthly fire drills.*

*Simple adjustments in how staff participate in emergency drills can help avert such deadly stress reactions.*

and the way we perform in drills can influence how we perform in crisis situations. In the deadly school fire, many teachers waited for the principal to activate the alarm because that was what prompted them to initiate an evacuation each month. They had unintentionally been conditioned to wait for the principal to activate the alarm before evacuating.

This type of extreme stress reaction has been documented frequently among soldiers in combat, law enforcement officers in gunfights, firefighters responding to fires, as well as in many other situations involving people who must deal with life and death situations on a regular basis. The military, public safety agencies, emergency medical professionals, pilots, and others with the awesome responsibility for the lives of others now train in a variety of specific ways to try to reduce the chances that personnel will make life and death mistakes because of the way they train and practice.

School employees don't have to train the extent of U.S. Navy SEALs or S.W.A.T. teams, but there are some relatively simple concepts that can improve performance under extreme pressure.

Death and serious injury can still occur despite well-written plans and frequent drills. Even properly prepared staff can make mistakes under stress. At the same time, staff who have been provided with a good emergency preparedness plan, have been trained properly, and have participated in effective emergency drills are more likely to make proper decisions during actual crisis events.

Repetition is a key asset in helping staff to develop increased confidence and ability to perform well under extreme stress. Taking care to direct staff to practice performing actions as they would need carry them out during an actual emergency can be important. Helping staff develop good habits and decision-making skills is often relatively easy and inexpensive. If these skills are ever needed in a real emergency, the time and energy spent will be more than worthwhile.

*Michael Dorn serves as the Executive Director of Safe Havens International and has published twenty-five books on school safety. Over the past thirty years, his school safety work has taken him to Central America, Mexico, Canada, Europe, South Africa, Asia and the Middle East. A powerful keynote speaker, Michael has presented from Virginia to Vietnam. Michael can be reached at [mike@weakfish.org](mailto:mike@weakfish.org).*



Photo: Safe Havens Video

## 5 Steps to More Effective Drills: by Michael S. Dorn

1. Don't have staff do anything during a drill in a manner that you would not want them to do it during a real emergency.
2. Involve staff in decision-making during and immediately after emergency drills, and specifically instruct them that they have permission and are expected to perform life-saving actions in the event of an emergency even though they have not been told to do so.
3. Regularly remind staff that while they should normally follow your emergency plans and procedures, they have your permission to deviate from the plan whenever following the plan as written would be a dangerous course of action based on the facts available.
4. Consider the use of a wider range of emergency drills than is required by law. For example, you may want to conduct drills for sheltering-in-place for a chemical incident in the community. This will help your staff and the children learn to think beyond fire procedures as emergency response options. Consult with your local emergency management agency, law enforcement agencies and/or fire department for assistance in developing a proper drill. You can also ask them to watch your drills and provide you with helpful feedback.
5. Tell your staff to let you know if they experience any challenges during a drill so you can assist them in finding a way to help them overcome them. Your area public safety agencies can be a valuable free resource if you address these types of concerns.

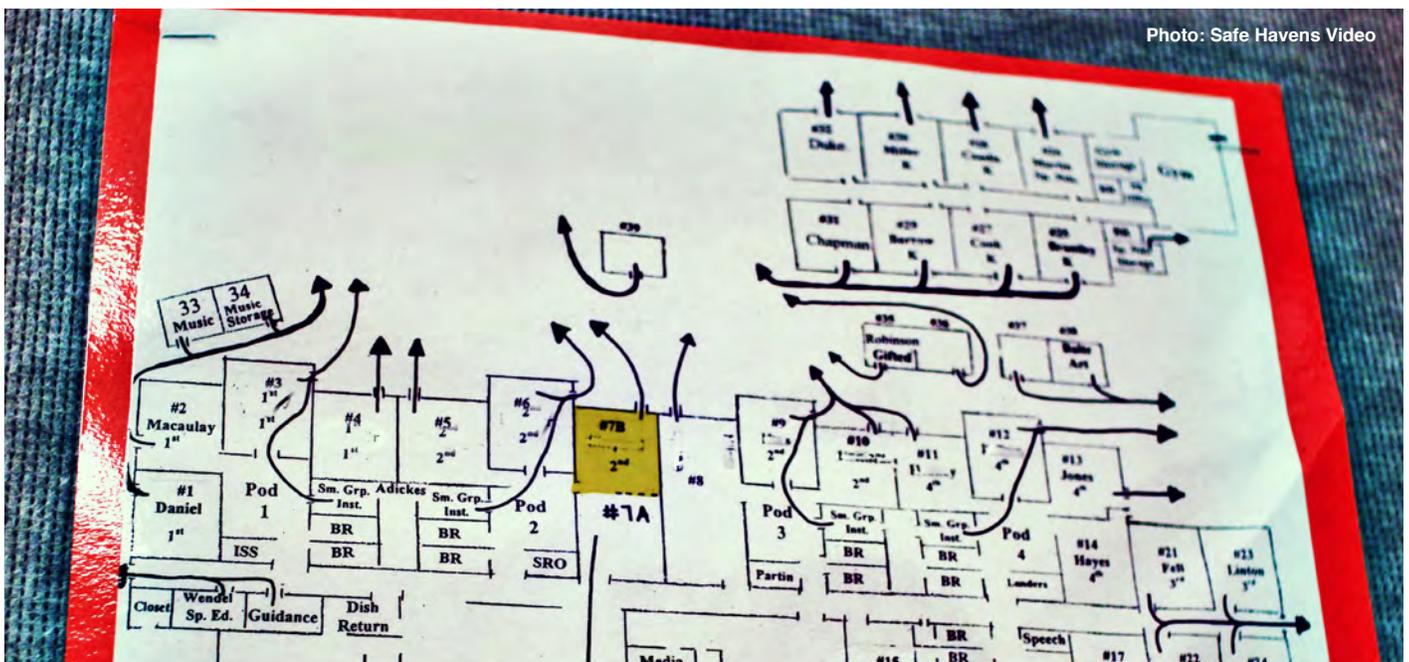


Photo: Safe Havens Video

## Training Tidbits:

# All-Hazards Training Programs in Schools

by Dr. Sonayia Shepherd

Not only should schools and other youth based organizations take an “all-hazards” approach to planning but also to training programs. All-hazards training programs provides comprehensive training for individuals and district/school crisis teams responsible for maintaining a safe learning environment for schools, youth based organizations, and university campuses. The “all-hazards” approach not only focuses on major and highly publicized school violence issues, but also on day-to-day safety and security threats, including accidents, irate parents and natural disasters.

It’s also worth noting that organizations must not exhaust all of its training time on “mandated” training, like National Incident Management System. Although this type of training is important, it must never interfere with training designed for personnel to fulfill duty responsibilities. Often, this mandated training can be phased in over a period of time.

Furthermore, training must be deliberately coordinated based on changing threats and flexible enough to reach critical masses within any organization. Organization leaders must also understand the risks and assess their personnel training needs to defeat and overcome today’s threats.

Finally and equally importantly, don’t forget to reward trained personnel beyond a completion certificate or pat on the back. It is crucial to “recognize excellence” for those individuals who go above and beyond the call of duty to maintain safe learning environments for our youth. Trained personnel are the real chance, or hope, at maintaining a constant state readiness.



### Consider the following pitfalls when developing training schedules:

1. Training is often outdated because of the time it takes to get courses approved and scheduled. Avoid this pitfall by developing a tentative training schedule during an emergency preparedness or crisis team committee meeting. These meetings typically have the relevant personnel in attendance and, in many cases, the team can also determine the type of training needed as well.
2. Qualified subject matter experts are hard to come by as there are instructors who have had limited years of “real, on-the-ground experience” in the subject matter that they present. Avoid this pitfall by conducting a staff skills inventory. You may find that you have the subject matter experts within your four walls. Also, work with community public safety officials, mental health personnel as well as public health personnel. Often these local experts can provide free training on an array of emergency management subjects, including pandemic influenza/biological incidents planning.
3. Many of the classes are not offered to anyone outside of administrators and teachers. Avoid this pitfall by offering training to all personnel of the school community. Don’t forget food nutrition staff, custodians/facilities personnel, after school program staff, special needs coordinators, and any other staff that can benefit from emergency preparedness training. Basically, if you expect them to respond in a crisis, then they should be included in the training.



Although there are many training modules and approaches that can meet the needs of an “all-hazards” approach, each tailored program should include the following points:

1. Focus on threats and gaps. If a threat concerns specific emergency response procedures, find gaps in the procedures, then design the training to defeat the threat and fill the gaps.
2. Use an experienced training coordinator. This person must work closely with key stakeholders including the organization’s command staff, supervisory personnel, and exercise planning committee members (if drills and exercises will be used to reinforce training).
3. Develop an aggressive, but flexible program that meets current and changing threats. The program must be formal and informal to reach the critical masses designed to make a difference. A program of this type should have annual training sessions that can be easily updated based on current trends in school safety and emerging threats.
4. Incorporate emergency preparedness training into existing training programs. Other training program areas, such as special needs and food nutrition, should also be incorporated. And when relevant, use an outside source to overcome specific deficiencies that require a certain expertise.
5. Use existing exercise results to outline future training topics. Based on lessons learned from the exercises, design future training to address gaps and areas that need improvement.
6. Utilize a variety of different types of training tools with as much hands-on training as possible. Don’t forget that exercises, video simulations, etc. can be great learning tools as well.

## Pedagogy Principles

- Be ready to adjust future training based on the input and suggestions of the trainees.
- Leaders, supervisors and command staff must lead by example. In other words, they, too, must participate in training to show the value and commitment of the program.
- Seek the help of other agencies or personnel when relevant. Don’t let pride interfere with quality training.
- Don’t forget refresher training for those who may need it, and redundant training to cover critical areas.
- Include everyone in safety training. No group should be left out.

*A popular & animated keynote speaker, Dr. Sonayia N. Shepherd (Sony) has authored and co-authored sixteen books on school safety and emergency management. A co-founder of Safe Havens International, her work has taken her to five continents, responding to events ranging from the Indonesian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina crises to the G-8 summit. Sony has assisted large organizations, like FEMA and the WHO, as well as smaller organizations - including over 2,000 public and private schools and campuses.*

*Dr. Shepherd can be reached at [sony@weakfish.org](mailto:sony@weakfish.org)*

## Photo from the Archives



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Each issue will feature a photo that from our archives that has never been used. This issue’s pick also serves as a reminder to make sure that your playground equipment is set up according to best practices - with the appropriate distances between each piece of equipment, the proper mulch or surfacing and the proper depth. Photo by Rachel Wilson, Staff Photographer.

# Is Your School Safety Program on a “Do Not Resuscitate” List?

by Dr. Sonayia Shepherd

Imagine medical personnel arriving at an accident and treating victims in a random fashion without prioritizing or even grasping the totality of the situation. Without an organized triage with trained personnel, you can also imagine the confusion and, perhaps, the loss of life resulting from the chaos. The same type of confusion can exist for schools when emergency preparedness activities are not triaged within a school safety program.

It's a bit of a stretch, but one could easily ponder the need for a closer look at the way planning, training and exercises are determined in schools. The first question worth asking is, “Who has the responsibility for organizing and implementing a coordinated school safety/emergency preparedness program?”

Is it the security department, risk management, building administrators, nutrition personnel, nurses, facilities or mental health personnel?” The answer to this trick question is: all the above. Each position has a responsibility for implementing a comprehensive emergency preparedness program. All areas of the school community must be involved with planning, training and exercises because all areas would be impacted by a real disaster.

Planning is the foundation of any school safety program. Most schools understand the need to have a plan, but many still lack a comprehensive all hazards plan. This type of plan should contain protocols for Prevention/Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery as individual phases.

The US Department of Education is a great resource for learning about each area of planning, and how to develop those areas into one comprehensive plan. Also, Jane's Safe Schools Planning Guide for All Hazards is a good tool to use as you go through the planning process.

Finally, it is necessary to develop a planning committee to make sure that you receive input from a variety of disciplines. The committee should include school personnel as well as community partners such as public safety, mental health, public health and members of the faith based community. Each area of the school community must also aggressively seek a comprehensive approach to training school personnel as well as the public safety community on how the school will respond in a crisis.

Drills and exercises are often one of the most overlooked elements of a comprehensive school safety program. Exercises should not only serve as training, but they should be used to rehearse crisis roles as well as identify gaps in plans, protocols and procedures. Many schools are quite familiar with conducting drills, i.e. annual fire drills. However, vast improvements can be made in how schools drill for even fire. A school safety program is a critical aspect of the academic process. Simply put, if students do not feel safe, then they cannot learn as well as they could, and should. The time you spend on resuscitating your school safety/emergency preparedness program now may save lives later.

## Here are a few tips for school-based drills and exercises:

1. Everyone should review plans and procedures prior to the drill. It is common to jump into surprise drills, but if staff have not been trained on plans and procedures, surprise drills are simply setting staff up for failure. Once faculty and staff are comfortable with their roles, surprise drills may be an effective means to add a touch of reality to the drill.
2. Every drill or exercise should be evaluated. Even monthly fire drills. The evaluation should focus on how well you met the goals and objectives of the drill/exercise. By the way, testing how fast everyone can get out of a building is not a viable goal. It is important, but if everyone got out quickly while the emergency evacuation kits were left behind, the drill was not as successful as it could have been. Establishing goals and objectives will more effectively organize the activity while determining how well the procedures are being followed and identifying potential training opportunities.
3. Develop a comprehensive exercise program including drills, tabletop exercises, functional and full-scale exercises. Exercises are a useful way of building your training program by adding a broader scope and a touch of complexity through the use of responding to carefully developed scenarios. For example, a tabletop exercise can be a 15-minute activity conducted during an in-service, crisis team or school safety committee team meeting.

**The Safety Riddle** answer: The names of students on the smaller school buses combined with the teacher's name and room number on the larger school bus can serve as what we refer to as target identifiers. Should an aggressor get past the school's access control system they may be able to find a teacher they wish to harm or a student they wish to attack or abduct in the school. In a number of instances, aggressors have come to schools to commit a crime without having prior knowledge of the location of their victim within the building. Taking care not to make it obvious where in the school a specific student or teacher can be found can improve the chances that an aggressor will be identified as a threat before they can commit a crime.

**High as a Kite** answer: These are processed doses of San Pedro cactus, ready for sale. Sliced from the cactus stalk and dried, the pieces look like shrunken stars. Eating several pieces of this cactus can cause hallucinations and a complete loss of judgment in an individual. The chemicals contained in this cactus are the same as those in the more well known Peyote cactus, but much less potent. This photo was taken in a street market in La Paz, Bolivia.

### Safe Havens Video wins Telly Awards

The Safe Havens International Video Department has won two bronze Telly Awards this year for work submitted by their video production department, Safe Havens Video. **Lincoln County School District's Emergency Procedures** was awarded in the "employee communications" category, and **School Crisis Recovery in Pennsylvania**, produced for the Pennsylvania Department of Education, won in the "low-budget productions" category.



Founded in 1979, the Telly Awards is the premier award honoring outstanding local, regional, and cable TV commercials and programs, the finest video and film productions, and web commercials, videos and films. Winners represent the best work of the most respected advertising agencies, production companies, television stations, cable operators, and corporate video departments in the world.

This year's Winners include companies, agencies and organizations of all sizes, from large multinational media companies to small ad agencies and local production houses. A sample of Winners includes: Booz Allen Hamilton, Turner Studios, The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., FOX SPORTS NET, Nickelodeon and PriceWaterhouseCoopers. To view the complete list of Silver Telly winners for the 32nd Annual competition, please visit [www.tellyawards.com](http://www.tellyawards.com).

A prestigious judging panel of over 500 accomplished industry professionals, each a past Winner of a Silver Telly and a member of The Silver Telly Council, judged the competition, upholding the historical standard of excellence that Telly represents.

### Survey, Survey Survey!

Safe Havens is conducting a survey to aid in the development of one of our newest learning resources. We would be grateful if you would take a few minutes from your schedule to complete this survey.

To show our appreciation, you can choose from a 10% discount coupon towards our new learning resource when it comes out later this year, or a copy of one of our most popular books "Weakfish – Bullying through the Eyes of a Child."

We would also appreciate it if you sent this survey to anyone else who works in the field of K-12 education!

To take the survey, please click the following link:  
[surveymonkey.com/s/safehavenssurvey](http://surveymonkey.com/s/safehavenssurvey)

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to let us know. Thank you so much for your time and contribution!

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