



### **MITIGATING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF ACTIVE THREAT DRILLS**

PROTECTING OUR SCHOOLS









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### Overview

#### In this presentation we will...

- inconsistent training.

• identify the psychological impacts of active shooter drill practices and understand the risks posed by

• consider the value of protective measures in mitigating these risks and impacts.

• discuss various protective measures you can implement to help improve safety, security and awareness of staff and students.

# Breaking down School Safety

All security is a combination of three types of measures:

- **1. Physical** (hardware and technology)
- Perimeter fencing, access control, and badge ID systems

#### 2. People

• School resource officers and other security or law enforcement personnel

#### **3.Procedures**

• Visitor management, emergency response plans, training and awareness programs





## Anatomy of an Active Threat Drill

FEMA defines **four** types of emergency training:

- 1. Tabletop Exercises (role-play with injects in a room)
- 2. Limited Drills (small parts of the overall plan)
- 3. Functional Exercises (full-on, but no equipment deployment)
- 4. Full Scale Exercises (as realistic as possible)

Many law enforcement teams practice active shooter drills to sharpen their response skills and timing, train students and staff to invest in their own safety and security, and to reduce the impact of these tragic events.



# The Impact to Students and Faculty

### But what affect do realistic drills have on students and faculty?

A study looked into how teachers feel during active threat drills and found three major concerns:

- Care for their students
- Actions they take during drills
- Strong sense of professional responsibility

Many teachers shared that they feel deeply responsible for keeping their students safe, often while dealing with their own stress.



# The Impact to Students and Faculty

#### Drilling-in' anxiety

A social media-based study revealed that active shooter drills can lead to a big rise in anxiety and depression—not just for students, but for teachers and parents too.

The research showed a 42% increase in anxiety and a 39% increase in depression after drills, **with the effects lasting up to 90 days.** 

While drills are important for safety, this highlights the need to carefully plan and deliver them in ways that reduce trauma.



### Tailoring the Training Focus on the customer

Another study focused on how elementary staff felt about ALICE training. It showed that staff felt more confident when training was tailored to the unique needs of young students. While training helped them feel more prepared, it also pointed out the challenge of making sure drills don't overwhelm or scare younger children.

These findings further illustrate the importance of careful planning and thoughtful execution of training exercises, particularly those that occur in the field and involve a high degree of realism.



#### Common Sense, just not Common Knowledge

#### Alert Lockdown Inform Counter Evacuate

ALICE is **NOT** a linear, progressive response.



alicetraining.com



# Policies and Procedures Preventative Measures

#### **Texas School Districts**

In response to concerns about the psychological effects of active shooter drills—especially those that caused heightened fear among students—Texas revised its protocols. The updated guidelines are designed to reduce trauma by modifying the type and frequency of drills. This shift highlights the growing awareness of the need to balance safety preparedness with protecting faculty and students' mental well-being.

# Improving School Culture,Communication & Preparedness

Improving school culture, communication, and preparedness is essential to creating a safe and supportive environment for both students and staff. A strong, positive school culture fosters trust, connection, and accountability—laying the foundation for how a campus responds in times of crisis.

Open and clear communication ensures everyone knows their role and feels informed, not left in the dark. When paired with thoughtful preparedness practices, such as trauma-informed drills and wellstructured emergency plans, schools can respond with confidence while minimizing fear. It's about more than just being ready—it's about building a culture where safety and well-being go hand in hand.





### Mental Health of Students and Faculty

Mental health is essential to the well-being and success of both students and faculty. Supporting emotional needs creates a safer, more positive learning environment where everyone can thrive. It's not just about academics—it's about caring for the whole person.

So how do we reduce the negative impact of active shooter threats while staying prepared? The answer lies in a balanced approach of action, knowledge, and confidence.



#### 1. Action

Is there a clear plan? Is it communicated and trained?



#### 2. Knowledge

Does staff know what to do? Do students know what to do if staff are not present?



# Action

#### Make an emergency plan that makes sense...

- As comprehensive as possible
- Detailed to each specific scenario, but simple and direct
- Flexible enough to handle unexpected fluctuations and unanticipated scenarios
- Updated at least annually, and every time a major condition changes (equipment, facility, roles, capabilities, etc.)
- Practiced regularly and consistently
- Communicated to those with roles in the plan



#### 1. Action

Is there a clear plan? Is it communicated and trained?



#### 2. Knowledge

Does staff know what to do? Do students know what to do if staff are not present?





#### 3. Confidence.

Are physical measures available, visible, effective, and intuitive?

## Knowledge

#### Plan to train, and train to the plan...

- Annual field training
- Communicate training plans
- Make regular use of Tabletop exercises
- Act on lessons learned
- Revise plans after each training session, if required
- Customize training to faculty AND to students
- Lead with confidence utilize pre-drilling exercises to hone responder skills prior to engaging faculty and students
- Benchmark other, similar institutions' programs
- Make use of industry and expert guidance



#### 1. Action

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Does staff know what to do? Do students know what to do if staff are not present?





#### 3. Confidence.

Are physical measures available, visible, effective, and intuitive?

# Confidence

#### **Confident preparation is confident response...**

- Ensure physical security hardware and technology is working partner with private experts where you can
- Design to the layered approach using the 3 D's
- Train staff to make use of technology
- Engrain security awareness in staff it should be second nature
- Make manpower measures visible make some technology visible, where it makes sense
- Embrace state-of-the-art with caution avoid the 'bleeding edge' but don't be afraid to explore options
- Deploy new hardware and technology only after very careful planning and testing – preferably industry tried and proven



#### **1. Action**

Is there a clear plan? Is it communicated and trained?



#### 2. Knowledge Does staff know what to do? Do students know what to do if staff are not present?





#### **3. Confidence.**

Are physical measures available, visible, effective, and intuitive?

## Physical Countermeasures: Window Films

- First and foremost: There is no such thing as bullet-proof glass
- Bullet- and smash-resistant glazing is multi-layered laminated glass, or thick polycarbonate
- Bullet- and smash-resistant films can perform well against ballistic or forcible attacks, but not generally as well as purpose-made glazing
- The thickness of films matters and films must be paired with laminated glass to be truly effective
- Bullet- and smash-resistant glazing/film require reinforced anchoring in the window frame to be effective, which is also determined by the 'bite' or 'selvage' – the overlap of the frame with the glazing/film
- UV light, weather, and poor installation can degrade bullet- and smash-resistant glazing/film over time
- The cost associated with bullet- and smash-resistant films or glazing is significant



## Physical Countermeasures: Security Cameras

- Cameras are not a one-size-fits-all nor a single fixes-all security solution
- Cameras are either analog (coax) or digital / IP (networked)
- Cameras can be either wireless or wired; wired is much more efficient and reliable, but more costly to install. Most commercial grade cameras are wired IP (Cat5e or Cat6a).
- As with most technology, residential grade cameras are NOT the same as commercial grade cameras.
- Cameras may be recorded on DVRs, NVRs, PC hard drives, SANs, SD disks, or in the Cloud. There are many considerations when selecting management systems (VMS') and storage.
- Higher resolution cameras require more light, storage and bandwidth
- Infrared does not equal thermal which does not equal low-light technologies
- Color images require 2x the light of black and white images



### Physical Countermeasures: Visitor Management

- Systems are most often cloud-based and priced by 'licenses'
- Raptor is a common school-focused visitor management system, although there are many solutions on the market
- School visitor management systems should include the ability to perform background checks (rudimentary, at least), including checks against sex offender registries
- Internal or shared BOLO list support is advantageous
- Printing can occur on paper badges, stick-on labels, wrist bands, or PVC badges, in color or black-and-white
- Printed badges can be self-voiding, but should include duplication prevention measures, when possible
- Some visitor management systems can integrate with access control solutions



# Physical Countermeasures: Access Controls

- There are many access control systems (ACS) on the market, but not all are scalable to large enterprises
- Card readers generally come in proximity (contactless, longer read range, easily duplicated and spoofed) and smart card (contact or contactless, short read range, encrypted and more secure). Other technologies exist but are less common today.
- Readers, electromechanical locks, door contacts and other components are managed through centralized control panels typically located in telephone or IDF rooms
- Control panels typically manage 2 to 32 readers and are networked to a central server, typically in a datacenter • Electromechanical locks are typically electric strikes, electric mortise or
- cylindrical locks, exit bars, delayed egress bars, or 'maglocks' (technically electromagnetic locks)
- All electronic locks are either fail-safe or fail-secure
- Locks (in general) are considered delay devices, and should be supplemented with other measures



## Physical Countermeasures: Intrusion Detection and Duress Signaling

- Often bundled with access control systems, but sometimes separated
- Intrusion detection systems (IDS') include door contacts, motion sensors, glass break sensors, arming/disarming switches and keypads, visual and audible alarms, and control panels.
- Most systems are third party-monitored, like fire detection, but may be self-monitored (unlike fire detection) Duress (panic) buttons are often incorporated into intrusion detection systems or access control systems, but may be stand-alone
- Duress signaling may include audio/visual alarms or may be silent (traditionally called "hold-up alarms"
- Panic buttons may be affixed to walls or under desks, overt or covert, wired or wireless, and may communicate by Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, radio, cellular, or hard-wire



# Physical Countermeasures: Barriers

- Fences are the most common perimeter barriers, and chainlink is the most common fence type
- Walls, doors, windows, roofs, floors, bollards (active and passive), gates, and natural landscaping (trees, ditches, etc.) are all barriers
- Active shooter protection benefits from additional hardware beyond the door and standard lock
- Door barricades come in many different forms
- Of critical importance in door barricade selection are type, strength, mounting method, availability, ease of use, occupant safety, and effectiveness against attack
- Additional consideration should be given to emergency responder bypass, vulnerability, and code compliance.



# The Flip Lok System

#### Checking all the boxes...

- Type: Heavy-duty hinged aluminum
- Strength: 2,000 lbs resistance
- Mount: Screwed to inner door frame and uses full door thickness to resist attack
- Availability: Affixed to the door; no need to locate it in an emergency
- Ease of use: Just flip it to engage, lift and flip to disengage. ADA Compliant
- Occupant safety: Easy to use, won't bind in a fire
- Effectiveness: Inaccessible to aggressor; tested against a .223 attack and held
- Emergency responder bypass: Unique key override from the outside to prevent accidental and prank shut-ins
- Code compliance: Approved by Harris County Fire Marshal, City of Houston, Katy Fire Department, Fort Bend County Fire Marshal, and many school districts across the country



#### FlipLok Awarded Cooperatives



THE INTERLOCAL PURCHASING SYSTEM









PACE PURCHASING COOPERATIVE







Allied States Cooperative BY ESC 7 19





#### **FlipLok Certificates**













Learn more about our School Safety Solutions on our website!

# Recap & Call to Action

**Here's the takeaway:** We need clear, consistent, and compassionate safety practices. Let's advocate for standardized drills that don't just check a box, but truly prepare our schools in a way that's effective, supportive, and trauma-informed.

**Now is the time to take action.** Start the conversation in your district. Connect with leadership. Push for policies that prioritize both security and well-being. Because every child, every teacher, and every staff member deserves to feel safe—and be safe.

**Assess your facilities:** Securing the classroom is essential to protecting students and staff. Providing simple, effective physical barriers, like FlipLok, reduces fear of the unknown—helping students feel safe enough to focus on learning and reassuring teachers that they're not alone in an emergency.

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"Preparedness is protection. Empowerment is prevention." — Anna Reger

"Security shouldn't rely on who's in the room — it should work because of what's in the room." — David Cribbs, Security Specialist









Scan the QR code and fill out the form for more information. Once submitted, we'll be in touch to review the details and confirm availability with you!





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## for your time.

Your commitment to safety, communication, and student well-being truly makes a difference.

**Together**, we can create **safer** schools and **save** lives—one step at a time.

