

# SCHOOL SAFETY AWARENESS

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Many parents have expressed concerns over school safety after the deadly shooting at a high school in Parkland, Florida.

## **These events are very rare**

While we can't promise that this will never happen here in Burlington, we do want parents to know that mass shooting incidents at schools are incredibly rare. There are more than 132,000 K-12 schools in the United States at last count, with approximately 60,000,000 (Sixty Million) students. The odds of any child being injured or killed in any type of school shooting are **less than** one in one million. This is being pointed out, not to downplay the seriousness of the issue, but rather to put in perspective, these types of events in relationship to other potential dangers that we additionally need to be aware of.

Statistically, the greater dangers to our children are accidents (especially, by far, automobile accidents), homicides outside of schools and suicides. Less than 3% of all homicides with young victims occur in or near a school.

## **Low Frequency, but Very High Risk**

However, because of the amount of fear that these attacks generate and the devastating effects they have on a school and a community, we have invested a great deal of funding, time and effort into planning, prevention, protection, mitigation and training for these events.

## **Our Strategy**

We want to let the community know that we are doing everything in our power to make our schools safe and we are writing this to share some of the things that we are doing. We want to make sure that anyone with bad intentions knows that Burlington is not a good place to succeed in a violent attack. At the same time, we also want to be mindful of not revealing too many details relating to security measures. Our efforts are focused on enhanced presence and increased situational awareness, specialized training and equipment, infrastructure upgrades, public education as well as proactive policies and procedures.

## **Enhanced Presence**

Our protective efforts include having two full-time officers as dedicated School Resource Officers. Additionally, we have another patrol officer dedicated to these duties on a part-time basis. To enhance police presence in the schools, our officers conduct regular, "Park & Walk" assignments during school hours. This serves multiple purposes by deterring any individual with malicious intent; familiarizing officers with the internal layout and with what is "normal" at each school; as well as letting the children regularly see our officers and be more comfortable with their presence at any time.

## **Awareness**

To increase situational awareness, we have video displays in our police dispatch center with a real-time feed from the external school cameras. We also have a monitor in our dispatch center with a Twitter feed using the free tool TweetDeck to monitor news networks, local police departments and emergency

management agencies. This alerts us to breaking news and situations at the local, regional and national level faster than other news sources.

### **Specialized Training**

The Burlington Police Department is nearly unmatched by any area department in the amount of advanced training we have on this topic. All of our officers typically shoot four times per year including indoor qualification, outdoor qualification, at least one surprise on-duty shooting drill and active simulator training. We regularly discuss mass shootings and what our response would be in our daily roll calls and watch the newest training videos whenever they become available. All of our officers see our school response plans prominently displayed in the roll call room every day when they come into work. Several of our officers have been to advanced active shooter, emergency management and school violence training seminars all over the United States and Canada. There are too many programs and certifications to list but some of our most notable trainings include the Active Shooter Training Conference offered by ALERRT, Active Shooter certification offered by FLETC at multiple U.S. locations, and "The Briefings" National School Safety Symposium at Columbine High School. We have brought major training events to us by hosting a two day program with national experts on school violence and school safety that was attended by nearly 200 area police officers, including a large number of Burlington officers. A number of our officers are also active members of the NEMLEC SWAT and RRT Teams. These officers receive additional tactical training and gain experience in working with other agencies to handle larger scale crisis incidents.

We have partnered with the Burlington Schools and the Burlington Fire Department to send their representatives, along with our officers, to some of these advanced programs. Perhaps our proudest training achievement is being the first police and fire departments in the area to adopt, "Rescue Task Force." Rescue Task Force is the state of the art in active shooter response and involves close coordination between police, fire and EMS personnel to greatly decrease the numbers of casualties at a hazardous event.

To bring us to the highest level of readiness, we have conducted a large number of small, "Readiness Drills" which are conducted on-duty to prepare officers to respond to a number of situations. These drills ensure that officers become very comfortable with response tactics and check the functioning of all of their equipment on a regular basis. We regularly conduct Lockdown Drills in partnership with all of our schools and we have been doing this on a regular basis for several years. Additionally, we have conducted a number of more advanced drills, tabletop exercises and larger active shooter exercises in partnership with the Burlington Schools, Burlington Mall, Lahey Clinic and other companies in town. We have included area police and fire departments in some of our tabletops and exercises as they would be called upon to assist in any major incident.

Our efforts have been so advanced, that we have officers who are now in demand to speak at local and international conferences on some of these topics and to help other police and fire agencies in the area adopt some of our initiatives.

### **Equipment**

The Burlington Police Department is very well equipped for emergency situations. All of our vehicles carry a well-stocked first aid kit, defibrillators and additional tactical gear to help in any emergency. Each officer is issued an electronic access card so that they can enter any school at any time. We have specialized weapons including patrol rifles that match anything that we might come across. We also have multiple “less-lethal” launchers that can be used in certain situations when firearms aren’t involved. We have tools that can get us into any type of building at any time, and we have additional ballistic protection to protect against large caliber rifles. All of our officers carry issued tourniquets on their duty belts that they are trained with to control extreme bleeding to extremities.

## **Infrastructure**

The Burlington School Department has fortified certain parts of the buildings using discreet techniques that will keep intruders out or, once inside, slow them down. The schools have electronic key cards to limit access only to those who are authorized to be in certain buildings. This is a great safety improvement as compared to traditional locks and keys. All of the schools keep their exterior doors locked throughout the day and access to each building is only allowed at certain entry points. Guests need to be “buzzed” in by school personnel who can see who they are allowing in. All schools have an emergency system that allows for warning messages to be broadcast in each school while automatically alerting the Burlington Police Department over the police radio frequency. All phones in the system are being upgraded so that teachers can page areas of their schools to warn others of any dangers. All classroom doors can be quickly and easily locked from the inside. These doors, even with tools, are very hard to break through.

## **All Hazards Policies and Procedures – The Standard Response Protocol**

There is no way to know what will happen in the future, but the Burlington School Department has adopted an all-hazards emergency plan called the, “**Standard Response Protocol**” that covers any type of emergency. The plan is very simple and people only need to remember four responses, “**Lockdown, Lockout, Shelter and Evacuate**.” The SRP addresses any type of hazard including active shooters, tornadoes, earthquakes, chemical spills, bomb threats and fires. It also covers the most common events that we have seen repeatedly in Burlington, which are hazards outside the school that don’t call for a full lockdown response. These incidents have included a moose in a student parking lot, nearby bank robberies, fleeing felons and suspicious people nearby. To learn more about the SRP parents and residents can go to the I LOVE YOU GUYS website and download all of the materials for free.

<http://iloveuguys.org>

For active measures during an active shooter event we recommend the, “Avoid, Deny, Defend” protocol recommended by ALERRT, Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training. ALERRT was founded in 2002 to study active shooter incidents and was named the national standard in Active Shooter Response Training by the FBI in 2013. There are other systems that are similar including, “Run, Hide, Fight” and ALICE. We have officers who have been trained and certified in a number of these systems and we recommend the ALERRT method for our students and teachers.

For bomb threats, our plan is distributed by the Massachusetts State Police and takes into account a risk assessment to determine what actions are reasonable under the circumstances. As a result, our

response to bomb threats is very balanced and based on what is recommended by the Massachusetts State Police, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security.

Our schools will soon finish adopting the Standard Reunification Method (SRM). This is a protocol developed by I LOVE YOU GUYS to cover how children are to be reunited with their parents after a serious incident. One thing that has been learned through many tragic events, is that children can't simply be dismissed as normal after a school shooting. The SRM will ensure that parents aren't left in an unnecessary state of panic while searching for their children and that all children are safely returned to the appropriate custodial parent in an orderly fashion. The materials for this program are all available on the I LOVE YOU GUYS website.

### **Public Education**

When the Burlington Schools adopted the SRP, officers went to each school to discuss the safety protocols with any concerned parents. This was done during PTO meetings and it was offered on a number of nights so that parents who missed a meeting could attend at another school. We provide training annually to all of our school bus drivers on the SRP and Active Shooter Response. Our officers regularly conduct workplace violence / active shooter training for a number of facilities in Burlington. They have been doing this training for several years now and have a great deal of experience teaching this subject to a wide array of audiences. Officers also do site assessments and make recommendations based on the latest training in crime prevention and infrastructure protection.

In addition, our officers teach safety and self-defense programs to a number of audiences in town and specifically to children. These programs are called RAD and radKIDS. The RAD program (Rape Aggression Defense) is taught to high school girls and teaches self-defense options and how to avoid crime, date rape and sexual assault. The radKIDS program (Resisting Defense Aggressively) is a program that teaches boys and girls how to avoid all of the most deadly hazards to children as well as defensive techniques to avoid potential abduction. RadKIDS covers dog safety, pool safety, fire safety, traffic safety, poisons, calling 911, bullying, what to do if finding a gun, stranger tricks, how to deal with strangers and self-defense. We have been offering these programs since 2005 and have taught hundreds of children and high school girls how to be safer. We also have similar programs for senior citizens and for men and we offer all of these programs at no cost to the community.

To learn more about RAD, RAD for Men and RAD for Seniors go to: <http://www.rad-systems.com>

For information on radKIDS go to: <http://www.radkids.org/>

The Burlington Police department is committed to community safety and our officers will visit any facility or group in town to talk about these topics. We are also happy to visit any school at any time to talk to parents about the issues around school safety.

### **To Learn More**

To learn more about our community safety efforts, contact Lieutenant Glen Mills at [gamills@bpd.org](mailto:gamills@bpd.org) or Sergeant Timothy McDonough at [tmcdonough@bpd.org](mailto:tmcdonough@bpd.org). Please contact Lieutenant Mills to learn more about RAD and radKIDS.

For any questions on school safety issues, contact Detective Thomas Fournier [tfournier@bpd.org](mailto:tfournier@bpd.org) or Officer Keith Sheppard [ksheppard@bpd.org](mailto:ksheppard@bpd.org)