

THE JOURNAL OF

# ADVENTIST EDUCATION<sup>®</sup>

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October/November 2009

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark vest over a light-colored shirt and dark pants, is holding several books. One book is titled "Public Relations Cases". She is standing next to a police officer in a dark uniform with a badge and a radio. The background is dark and indistinct.

**How Safe Is  
Your School?**

**Preparing for  
the Unexpected**

**What Adventist  
Colleges Are  
Doing to Ensure  
Campus Safety**

**Surviving a  
Natural Disaster**

**Special  
Issue:**  
*School  
Safety*

# CONTENTS

October/November 2009 • Volume 72 Number 1

11



19



25



## Features

4

Preparing for the Unexpected  
BY PATRICIA B. MUTCH

11

Can You Hear Me Now? Psychological  
Issues in School Violence at Adventist  
Schools  
BY RON COFFEN

19

What Adventist Colleges Are Doing to  
Ensure Campus Safety  
BY ELLEN POIRIER

25

How Safe Is Your School?  
BY PATTI HERRING AND ELIZABETH HOLZHAUSER

34

Responding to Crisis in the Adventist  
Educational Environment: A CISM  
Perspective  
BY HARVEY J. BURNETT, JR.

40

Emergency Notification Systems: A Next  
Step in Preparedness?  
BY EHREN NGO AND RICK WILLIAMS

44

Surviving a Natural Disaster  
BY STEPHEN DENNIS

## Departments

3 Editorial



**This issue of THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION has been peer reviewed.**

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## Ensuring the Safety and Well-Being of God's Children

**E**ven before the mass shooting at Virginia Tech and the deadly fire at Southern Adventist University, I felt strongly that the JOURNAL needed to alert its readers about the dangers facing schools today and offer some suggestions that will help them prevent and deal with disasters that may befall their campuses. To prepare an issue on school safety, I immersed myself for several months in reading about and discussing with a variety of experts the many kinds of disasters that can and do strike schools, ranging from bombings to hurricanes to pandemics.



While thinking about all these alarming possibilities, I've struggled to find a balance between trusting that God will protect us and taking reasonable precautions to ensure the safety of the children He has entrusted to our care.

Many Bible texts promise God's protection against evil people, disease, and other calamities (Psalm 91 immediately comes to mind). But other texts speak of taking appropriate precautions (Matthew 24:43-46). I believe that God has given us the privilege of cooperating with Him in caring for the young people in our classrooms and preparing them for life in a dangerous world.

Ellen White wrote: "The teacher . . . must consider the highest good of his pupils as individuals, the duties that life will lay upon them, the service it requires, and the preparation demanded. The work he is doing day by day will exert upon his pupils, and through them upon others, an influence that will not cease to extend and strengthen until time shall end. . . . The teacher who realizes this will not feel that his work is completed when he has finished the daily routine of recitations. . . . He will carry these children and youth upon his heart" (*Education*, p. 281).

With this in mind, it was time to decide what topics an issue on school safety should include. Special thanks go to Patricia Mutch, who gave unstintingly of her time and expertise in advising about the preparation of the issue. (Some of the areas we struggled with: What topics should be given the highest priority? How do we ensure that the articles are relevant to the JOURNAL's varied readership—teachers and administrators in schools around the world, whose students range from kindergarteners through graduate students? How do the hazards vary from place to place? Where do we find authors with expertise in these topics?)

Accordingly, articles were assigned on a variety of subjects: preparing for the unexpected, ensuring that troubled students get help and do not harm others, preventing school violence, setting up crisis intervention teams at schools, a summary of measures that Adventist colleges have taken to ensure student safety, how one school dealt with recovery after a natural disaster, and how to set up a mass notification system. Other topics, like preventing child abuse, legal issues relating to supervision and school safety, and bullying will be dealt with in future issues.

Helpful input from peer reviewers ensured that the information presented was accurate and up to date. Their recommendations also led to the inclusion of Websites, books, and other resources that will help your school plan for and prevent many kinds of disasters, and deal appropriately with those that do occur. Authors and reviewers also recommended curriculum materials for teaching about personal safety.

For teachers, providing instruction about planning for disasters and ensuring personal safety offers an additional bonus: Their influence can have long-term effects, benefiting the parents and siblings of their students, the local community, and later, their students' children! And teachers and administrators will have the satisfaction of having done all they could to ensure the safety and well-being of God's children.

—**Beverly J. Robinson-Rumble**

# PREPARING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

BY PATRICIA B. MUTCH



ew nightmares could be worse than the sound of gunfire within a school or a young student screaming that someone (or several people) with guns have been seen walking

down a corridor toward a classroom. Truly, we live in troublous times, and school safety has become a more complex challenge for school administrators and teachers. While we continue to rely on divine guidance and protection, God also rewards diligence in those who plan for trouble. Jesus clearly advised His disciples about what they should do—flee into Judea—when they saw “the abomination of desolation” (Matthew 24:15-20, KJV) and admonished them to be ready for the unexpected thief (Matthew 24:43-46, KJV). This article will share some ways that schools can better prepare themselves for threats from human agents bent on violence and mayhem.

For a Christian school in a quiet neighborhood, facing an emergency such as school violence and terrorism may seem unimaginable. But even these schools may be faced with the unthinkable, and all schools can prepare their personnel for quick and useful actions, even under conditions of shock and terror. How? By making good plans and then practicing



these plans until everyone who might be affected is ready to respond, and the environment is prepared for secure shelter.

This principle has guided attempts to prevent loss of life in school fires. Such efforts have paid off—during the years 2002-2005, although there were 6,560 structural fires in educational buildings in the U.S. that caused \$99 million in damage, there were no deaths reported in these fires.<sup>1</sup> During the same period, however, 121 children, teachers and others died in school-related incidents of violence.<sup>2</sup> Not all of these incidents receive national attention; therefore, many adults are unaware of the prevalence of such threats.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is



actively researching primary and secondary school-related homicides and has concluded that: (a) most violent deaths occur during transition times such as the start or end of the school day or during a lunch period; (b) homicides are more likely to occur at the start of a school term; (c) nearly half of the perpetrators gave some type of warning signal (threat, note) prior to the event; (d) among students who committed a school-associated homicide, 20 percent were known to have been victims of bullying, while 12 percent were known to have expressed suicidal thoughts

or shown suicidal behaviors.<sup>3</sup> These findings suggest that being aware and alert to threat signals can facilitate early intervention, which can help prevent school-related violence.

Increasingly, state and municipal laws are requiring all schools—private and public—to prepare for emergencies involving human threats to the safety of children and employees. They are similar in intent to regulations that require schools to conduct fire drills and comply with fire-prevention regulations. These laws are important safeguards for Christian schools and should not be viewed as unwarranted government interference in religiously affiliated schools. Further, many resources have been created to help schools develop emergency-operations plans. Many of these have been posted on the Internet, making them available worldwide.

#### **Initial Steps Toward Readiness**

As a first step, it would be wise to make contact with local emergency-management resource persons who work with the community. These are usually experienced first responders such as law enforcement, fire services, and emergency medical personnel. Many school administrators already have a coopera-

*All schools can prepare their personnel for quick and useful actions, even under conditions of shock and terror.*

*Increasingly, state and municipal laws are requiring all schools—private and public—to prepare for emergencies involving human threats to the safety of children and employees.*

tive relationship with the local fire department. It is time to develop a similar rapport with the local emergency manager at the county law-enforcement office or fire department. Most counties in the U.S. now employ professionally trained persons who are knowl-

edgeable about school safety and ready to assist in developing plans. They will be invaluable in identifying potential hazards at your school and in helping you develop a plan to deal with such hazards. Inviting this professional to visit the school is a good first step in your emergency response planning.

If your school doesn't presently have a school safety committee, creating one is another important initial step. This group can ensure good emergency plan development since it can pull together employees and volunteers with a variety of skills and knowledge. Include people such as:

- Principal
- School board member or chair
- A building supervisor or maintenance person who knows the building systems and utilities
- The health or physical education teacher, who knows first aid
- Science teachers who know about hazardous chemicals and weather hazards
- Teachers who work with students having disabilities and special needs
- The English teacher/school newspaper sponsor, who understands how to deal with media
- A parent representative
- Any teachers or staff with experience in volunteer firefighting
- A ham radio operator who can assist with communications when telephones fail
- Someone with training in counseling who can assist with student risk assessment and crisis counseling
- A pastor or local church elder who can provide spiritual support
- Members of local church or community with special knowledge or skills

The principal may be the leader of this committee or may delegate this responsibility to a teacher.

The school's safety committee should spend time familiarizing themselves about emergency planning for schools. Helpful information may be obtained from the resources in this issue of the JOURNAL. The emergency manager should meet with the school safety committee and may recommend local training

events that may be helpful. Often, this person is also willing to hold a school-wide briefing for teachers and staff, as well as parents, in order to raise awareness about the importance of school emergency preparedness. Although this article focuses on manmade emergencies, a similar process should be used in preparing for natural disasters and is thus referred to as all-hazards planning.

In the U.S., many schools in the public sector are presently engaged in this planning process. The U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a very useful free, independent-study learning module, IS 362 *Emergency Planning for Schools*, which can be taken either electronically on the Internet, or by using a downloaded self-study manual. Those who enroll in this program can download questions and take an open-book examination to demonstrate their knowledge of the module's content. By passing an exam with 70 percent accuracy, they can receive a FEMA certificate.<sup>4</sup> Another useful resource is the local Red Cross chapter, which is often able to provide low-cost training for emergencies, including courses in First Aid and home safety.

### Creating a School Emergency-Operations Plan

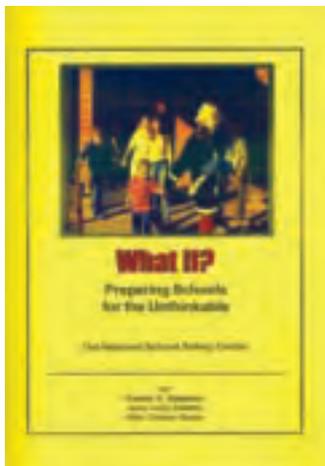
Once a planning team, such as a school safety committee, has been formed and has gathered information about planning for school emergencies, the next step is to assess both school assets as well as risks and hazards. Details on how to do this are found in the resources already mentioned.

**Assets** would include faculty and staff or nearby parents with specialized skills or experience (volunteer firefighters, health-care professionals, amateur radio operators). Does the school have a public-address system available for making school-wide emergency announcements? Does it have its own power generator in case community power supplies go down? Does it have its own well to supply clean water to the campus? Are there places in the school classrooms or other buildings where students and staff could take shelter from natural disasters such as tornadoes or hurricanes?

A map of the school should be available for handy reference in case of an emergency, showing not only all rooms, windows, and entrances, but also utility entrances and shut-offs, stored chemicals (in laboratories and farming areas) and other hazardous materials, as well as the location of fire extinguishers and first-aid equipment.

All **risks** to the school community, both natural hazards and manmade threats, should also be identified. Questions to use in making this identification are shown in the sidebar *Assessing School Hazards* on page 8.

With an updated understanding of existing risks





*If your school doesn't presently have a school safety committee, creating one is [an] important initial step.*

and available assets and resources, the planning team can develop an emergency-operations plan. In making your plan, consider the location of nearby roads, neighboring commercial or civic facilities, parks, and other schools. If you had to evacuate your students and staff, where would you send them?

Be sure to put the plan in writing, and include specific information about everyone's tasks and responsibilities during a variety of emergency conditions. The National School Safety Center's manual, *What If? Preparing Schools for the Unthinkable* (see resource list), provides detailed guidance for developing such a plan.

Because of the possibility of targeted violence in schools, the emergency-operation plan should include how to determine the appropriate response to a spoken or written threat. The National School Safety Center recommends the creation of a threat-assessment team to guide the most appropriate response. The FBI has also created a guide to effective prevention and intervention in the case of a school threat (see sidebar on page 9). Threats should be taken seriously. A trained counselor should be available to help assess the level of risk in incidents involving threats.

Once the plan has been developed, it must be communicated to several groups of people. Not only teachers and staff, but students, too, must be given instruction regarding specific and immediate actions to take when the school issues an emergency alert. This can be done through a combination of announcements in assemblies and classrooms, and emergency lockdown drills. Posted directions in all classrooms and offices are helpful tools.

Parents also must be briefed on the elements of the plan to keep their children safe and informed of school expectations for their involvement. In the event of a threat of a school shooting, local law enforcement will create a perimeter around the school and

will not permit parents and bystanders to enter the unsafe building until it has been secured. Parents need to know where they can go to receive further information about their child(ren). This place should be a safe area a short distance away from the school property. If children must be evacuated, parents must be directed to the location where their child(ren) can be picked up. The school can also take a leadership role in providing education for parents in how to ensure family readiness for emergencies. Many resources exist for families through Red Cross materials, local government



brochures, and FEMA modules. If a wider emergency, such as a terrorism incident or a community-wide disaster occurs during school hours, such as happened in the World Trade Center bombing, families need to have agreed-upon contact points and know how to reassemble in safe locations outside the immediate area.

# ASSESSING SCHOOL HAZARDS

## **Preliminary Steps – Obtain answers to these questions:**

1. What hazards are listed in emergency plans for your community? This list may be available from the police or fire department or a nearby government office. Such lists relate to general environmental and manmade risks.
2. What hazards are structural – related to your school building(s)? These relate just to your immediate building environment.
3. What hazards may relate to your neighborhood? Are you situated next to a busy highway? Is your neighborhood at high-risk for property and personal-injury crimes? Are you located some distance from emergency responders who might provide assistance?

## **Weather-Related Hazards**

1. Flooding.
2. Earthquakes.
3. High winds (cyclone, tsunami, cumulus downburst, hurricane, tornado, severe thunderstorms).
4. Wildfire/lightning strikes.
5. Winter storms.

## **Manmade Hazards**

1. Violent crime: roving gangs, civil unrest, crime against persons or property (school shootings/bombings, rape, mugging, arson, burglary, kidnapping, student strikes/riots, threats of violence).
2. Pandemic or food poisoning.
3. Nearby commercial or industrial hazards: fuel storage or gas station, nuclear power plant, chemical plant, transportation-related risk of hazardous material spills.
4. Nearness to high-voltage electrical lines or underground gas lines.
5. Threat of terrorism (including bio-terrorism) or political conflict.

## **Building-Related Hazards**

1. Soundness of roof (snow load capacity and wind resistance), walls (unreinforced masonry may collapse in earthquake or high winds), and other structural components.
2. Electrical/chemical fire or gas explosion.
3. Lack of sheltered areas for refuge from high winds.
4. Blocked or inadequate avenues for rapid evacuation of a building.
5. Storage and use of hazardous materials such as laboratory chemicals and cleaning supplies.
6. Overgrown shrubbery that could provide cover for criminals.
7. Unregulated access to school property.

## **Hazard Identification**

1. Do systematic and regular “walkarounds” to look for potential hazards.
2. Prepare a map of the school and school grounds that notes potential hazards and location of utilities, emergency equipment, and supplies. The map should also identify evacuation routes and open-air assembly points away from school property, as well as “first-responders” in the local community (fire, police, ambulance, utility companies).
3. Prepare a hazard-analysis worksheet to index school risks. A sample worksheet is shown on page 9. All hazards whose analysis yields a “Medium” or “High” Risk Priority should get attention within the school’s emergency operations plan.
4. Once hazards have been identified, develop an action plan that deals with prevention, roles and responsibilities of participants, dissemination of information, appropriate response, and update and testing of the action plan.

# SAMPLE RISK INDEX WORKSHEET (add items as needed)

HAZARD	FREQUENCY	MAGNITUDE	WARNING	SEVERITY	RISK PRIORITY
Severe Winter Storms (without power loss)	4 Often	4 Catastrophic	4 Minimal	4 Catastrophic	3 High
	3 Occasional	3 Critical	3 6-12 hours	3 Critical	2 Med
	2 Seldom	2 Limited	2 12-24 hours	2 Limited	1 Low
	1 Never	1 Negligible	1 24+ hours	1 Negligible	
Structure Fire	4 Often	4 Catastrophic	4 Minimal	4 Catastrophic	3 High
	3 Occasional	3 Critical	3 6-12 hours	3 Critical	2 Med
	2 Seldom	2 Limited	2 12-24 hours	2 Limited	1 Low
	1 Never	1 Negligible	1 24+ hours	1 Negligible	
Earthquake	4 Often	4 Catastrophic	4 Minimal	4 Catastrophic	3 High
	3 Occasional	3 Critical	3 6-12 hours	3 Critical	2 Med
	2 Seldom	2 Limited	2 12-24 hours	2 Limited	1 Low
	1 Never	1 Negligible	1 24+ hours	1 Negligible	

## Practice the Plan

No matter how good the plan may be, only by practicing it will students and staff learn well what to do in the case of an emergency. Therefore, regular drills for school lockdowns should be scheduled. An emergency manager can advise how to conduct drills (for securing classrooms) and school-wide lockdown exercises for sheltering and securing the entire school family. Such lockdowns are learning opportunities in which things in the plan that did not work well can be identified and improvements made. Different hazards should be dealt with in such emergency exer-

cises, including how to safely evacuate several school buildings at the same time.

Administrators can involve students in emergency preparations. In the U.S., Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training is now being recommended for all communities. The required 20-hour program prepares volunteers to do light search and rescue, give first aid, and follow directions to safely assist emergency responders. Many schools, both private and public, are now making such training available to their junior high and secondary students, forming school-based CERTs. Such

## IMPORTANT RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL EMERGENCY PLANS

**FEMA.** IS 362 *Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools*. Available at <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is362.asp>.

**U.S. Department of Education.** *Action Guide for Emergency Management at Institutions of Higher Education*. Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. 2009. Available at <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/index.html>.

**O'Toole, Mary Ellen.** "The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective." Available from the Federal Bureau of Investigation at <http://www.fbi.gov/publications/school/school2.pdf>.

**Citizen Corps.** "Introduction to Community Emergency Response Teams (C.E.R.T.)" Available at <http://www.citizen corps.gov/cert/index.shtm>.

**Red Cross.** "Preparing for Events, Terrorism." Available at <http://www.redcross.org/portal/site/en/menuitem.d229a5f06620c6052b1ecfbf43181aa0/?vgnextoid=fd71779a32ecb110VgnVCM10000089f0870aRCRD&vgnnextfmt=default>.

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**U.S. Department of Homeland Security.** "Ready Kids." <http://www.ready.gov/kids/index.html>.

**Adventist Risk Management, Inc.:** Contact John Dougan at [jdougan@adventist.risk.org](mailto:jdougan@adventist.risk.org) for information regarding a variety of safety measures for schools.



*Not only teachers and staff, but students, too, must be given instruction regarding specific and immediate actions to take when the school issues an emergency.*

students are an asset to any school. This is a good way to teach them a service orientation as they obtain practical knowledge and skills that will be of lifetime benefit. CERTs are trained through programs sponsored by the Citizen Corps (see sidebar on page 9).

**Summary**

While violence from manmade causes cannot always be predicted, it's possible to take steps that ensure everyone is ready to respond if such a crisis strikes your campus. Working in cooperation with local emergency response professionals in the local community, Adventist schools can develop School Safety Committees that arm themselves with knowledge about preparedness, assess the assets and hazards, and prepare an emergency operations plan. Further, they can involve older students in service by training them to become members of Student Emergency Response Teams.

Calling on God for courage and wisdom to do such preparedness is an appropriate course of action for believers, combined with prayers for divine protection in the perilous times around us. As Christ assured His disciples prior His crucifixion, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NKJV).<sup>5</sup>

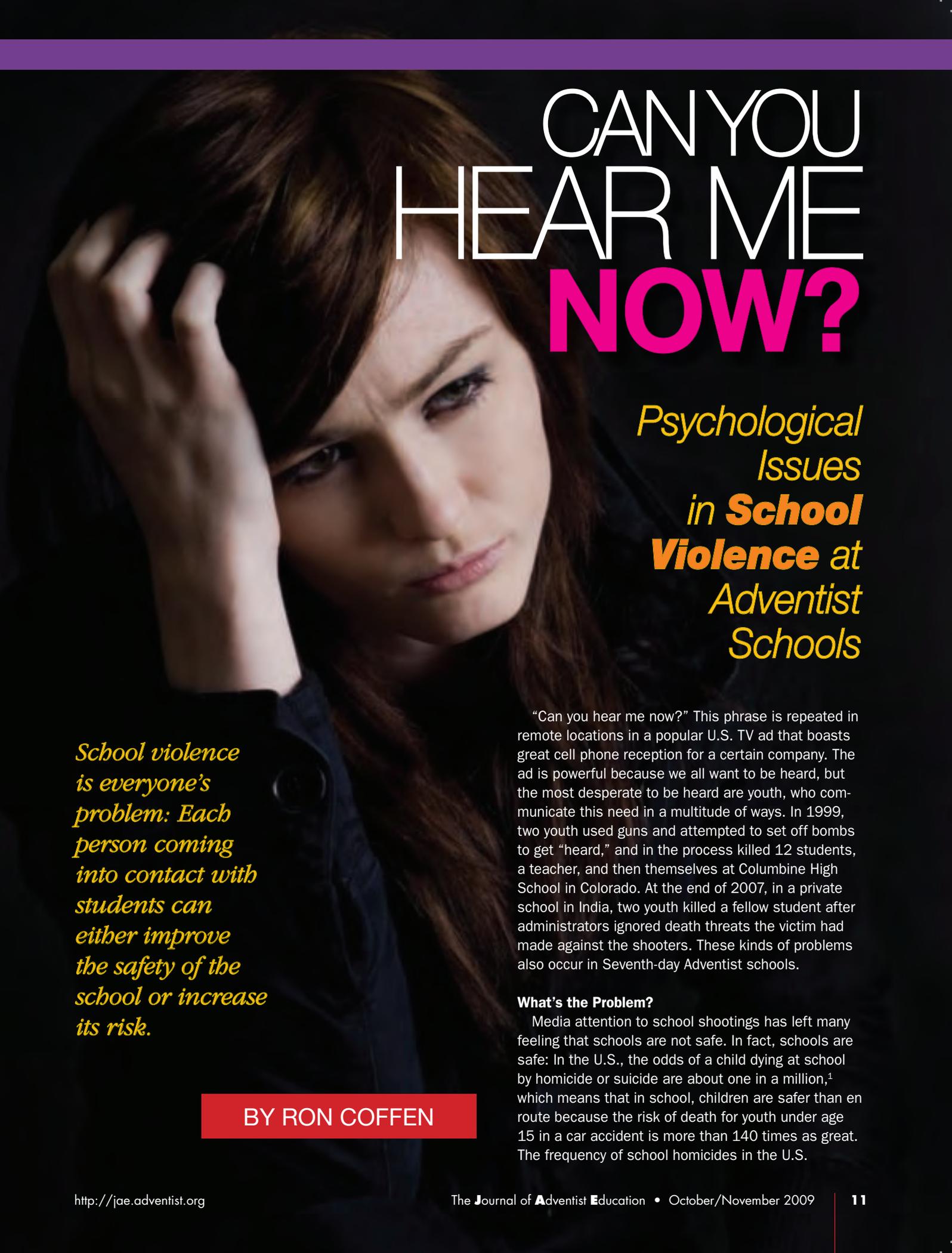


**Patricia B. Mutch, Ph.D.,** has an extensive background as a professor of Nutrition Science, an administrator with the Institute for Prevention of Addictions, and as an academic administrator, all at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Since 2006, she has served as the developer and coordinator of the university's new curriculum in Emergency Preparedness. Dr. Mutch is also responsible for the updating and

expansion of the university's Emergency Operations Plan. She holds the FEMA Certificate of Achievement in the Emergency Management Institute's Professional Development Series and has also received training in Emergency Operations Center functions as well as Emergency Exercises Development and Evaluation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. School Deaths and School Shootings. National School Safety and Security. <http://www.schoolsecurity.org>. Accessed December 6, 2007.
3. *School-Associated Violent Deaths 2007-2008*. U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, Georgia: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/YVP/SAVD.htm>. Accessed June 21, 2009.
4. Go to <http://training.fema.gov/IS/crslist.asp> for further information about the Independent Study Program (click on ISP). To receive a certificate, students must provide a U.S. Social Security number, but the ISP training is available (without certification) to anyone with access to the Internet.
5. The text credited to NKJV is from The New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers. All rights reserved.



# CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW?

## *Psychological Issues in **School Violence at Adventist Schools***

*School violence is everyone's problem: Each person coming into contact with students can either improve the safety of the school or increase its risk.*

BY RON COFFEN

"Can you hear me now?" This phrase is repeated in remote locations in a popular U.S. TV ad that boasts great cell phone reception for a certain company. The ad is powerful because we all want to be heard, but the most desperate to be heard are youth, who communicate this need in a multitude of ways. In 1999, two youth used guns and attempted to set off bombs to get "heard," and in the process killed 12 students, a teacher, and then themselves at Columbine High School in Colorado. At the end of 2007, in a private school in India, two youth killed a fellow student after administrators ignored death threats the victim had made against the shooters. These kinds of problems also occur in Seventh-day Adventist schools.

### **What's the Problem?**

Media attention to school shootings has left many feeling that schools are not safe. In fact, schools are safe: In the U.S., the odds of a child dying at school by homicide or suicide are about one in a million,<sup>1</sup> which means that in school, children are safer than en route because the risk of death for youth under age 15 in a car accident is more than 140 times as great. The frequency of school homicides in the U.S.

peaked in the 1992-1993 school year and has generally decreased since 1997.<sup>2</sup>

So, what's the problem if schools are safe? All behaviors mean *something*. Youth who turn to violence nearly always seek other (behavioral) means of communicating first.<sup>3</sup> While the odds are low that you have had a shooting at your school, the odds are 100 percent that your students need to be heard.

Adventist schools are often located in seemingly safe, smaller communities. Yet, such tight-knit communities can actually create a subculture where messages about urgent needs are not shared with caring adults because of unspoken rules of silence, or because such needs are seen as moral faults. In the relatively small Heath High School in Paducah, Kentucky, "a mass murder was inconceivable."<sup>4</sup> But in 1997, a young teen fired eight rounds into a prayer circle there, killing three students and wounding five others.

Is such an event equally "inconceivable" at your school? This may depend on whether your teachers listen to their students. In a survey of students' and teachers' perceptions, 64 percent of teachers believed that they listened carefully to what students had to say, but only 35 percent of students believed that teachers listened carefully to what students said—a difference of nearly 30 percent, with two-thirds of students feeling unsupported by teachers.<sup>5</sup>

Teachers may dismiss requests for help if a child seems to have done something to "deserve" the teasing or bullying, or if the child seems to be overreacting. Even if this is true, the pain is real to the child, and seeking help *means something*: The child needs



help! He or she needs to be taught how to behave in a way that doesn't "invite" retaliation. But the child also needs your help in getting the bullying to stop.

Even more than public school teachers, Adventist teachers have a mandate to "listen." This is part of our calling to help youth build loving connections with God and others. "Teachers often fail of coming sufficiently into social relation with their pupils. They manifest too little sympathy and tenderness, and too much of the dignity of the stern judge. . . . To be harsh and censorious, to stand aloof from his pu-

pils or treat them indifferently, is to close the avenues through which he [or she] might influence them for good. . . . The work [the teacher] is doing day by day will exert upon his [or her] pupils, and through them upon others, an influence that will not cease to extend and strengthen until time shall end."<sup>6</sup>

So, how can we listen to our youth? Students threatening violence toward themselves or others feel hopeless and helpless. They seek to regain control but typically lack social skills, self-soothing skills, or problem-solving skills. Aggressive youth tend to interpret social cues incorrectly (e.g., positive or neutral behaviors are interpreted as hostile), view others as blocking their goals, can think of few non-aggressive responses to interpersonal problems, view aggression as an acceptable way of achieving their goals, and have difficulty crafting socially acceptable responses.<sup>7</sup> Youth may also develop aggressive behaviors because they see that aggression sometimes "works."<sup>8</sup> These kinds of behaviors communicate that such youth need support to learn and

**Table 1**

## **Characteristics of School Attacks and Attackers**

- Eighty-one percent were angry at someone over a perceived grievance (e.g., bullying).
- Nearly all experienced/perceived a major loss (e.g., social status, relationships, health, etc.).
- Sixty-three percent had no disciplinary history, but 78 percent had a history of thoughts of or attempts to commit suicide.
- Motivations included revenge, seeking attention/recognition, attempting to solve an overwhelming problem, and/or fulfilling a wish to die (e.g., "suicide by cop").
- Only 27 percent of attackers were viewed by others as associated with unpopular groups; attackers rated themselves as loners considerably more often than did their peers.
- All attackers were male (although there have been shootings by females).
- Only 50 percent had expressed interest in violence of some form (writings, media, books).
- Usually attackers used guns and had relatively easy access to and experience using firearms.
- Ninety-three percent made specific plans for the attack in advance—they did not "snap."
- In 93 percent of the cases, some aspects of the attackers' plans were known to someone (usually peers) in advance.
- Students were slightly less frequently the pre-planned targets of attacks than were administrators or staff members (41 percent versus 54 percent of cases).
- Attackers did not typically directly make threats against the targeted person(s) before the attack occurred.
- Seventy-six percent of attackers were white. Only 12 percent were black, 5 percent were Hispanic, 2 percent were Asian, and 5 percent were from other ethnic or racial groups.
- Family status (two-parent, single-parent, blended, split, foster, etc.) was varied as well as quality of family community status and involvement.
- Most attackers' academic achievement was fine, although performance ranged from superior to failing.
- Attackers were as young as 11 years of age.
- Some attackers had been involved in mainstream religious groups.

*While the odds are low that you have had a shooting at your school, the odds are 100 percent that your students need to be heard.*



practice new social and coping skills.

Which behaviors predict an imminent attack? It's difficult to say precisely. An extensive evaluation<sup>9</sup> of the youthful shooters in nearly 40 school attacks between 1974 and 2000 revealed the characteristics listed in Table 1 on page 12.

Because characteristics of shooters are so varied, and a combination of factors can lead to attacks, trying to profile potentially dangerous students is not a good idea—it would misidentify innocent students and fail to identify others who don't fit the profile. However, there is a commonality. Everyone has needs for belonging/affection, esteem, and self-actualization. For every one of the shooters, these needs were not met.

Are the factors in Table 1 (guns, bullying, suicide, etc.) present in Adventist schools? Absolutely. However, because these factors often occur in students who never become violent, a check list must be replaced by an understanding of the importance of paying attention to these behaviors—not because the youth is expected to be violent but because the behavior is a message that he or she needs care, support, and attention.

Clearly, certain behaviors *must* be investigated, such as: (1) ideas or plans for hurting oneself or others, (2) interest in or statements about attacks, (3) access to weapons, and (4) approval of violence to solve problems. Although less urgent than the previous four, behavior changes in style of self-care, relating to others and daily events, activities and activity level, or health can signal suicidal or homicidal thinking. Each of these behaviors also communicates a need for support. While a follow-up interview must be scheduled to clarify whether there is clear intent and risk of imminent danger, it is equally essential to listen to and support the youth because making threats means he or she needs support and attention.

#### **Whose Problem Is It?**

School violence is everyone's problem: Each person coming into contact with students can either improve the safety of the school or increase its risk. But teachers are the school's first defense. To prevent students being "unnoticed," at the beginning of the year, teachers should review their records and talk with the

previous year's teachers about each student. Administrators must be included in discussions about students of concern since they have access to the entire student file and can spot the cumulative risk factors both inside the school and in the community.

There are many things that teachers, with the support of administrators, can do to build the relationships necessary to minimize the risk of violence at school:

- **Be a supportive adult.** To support youth with problem behaviors and recognize when something is amiss, an ongoing relationship is crucial. Administrators must not dismiss worries expressed by caring adults on the basis that the adult is "too close" to the child to be objective—these caring adults are the most credible. The support of an adult who is

consistently available to and interested in a youth is a primary factor to help young people overcome traumas and stressors.

Here is one way<sup>10</sup> the principal can systematically ensure connection for each student: (1) create a list of students; (2) have teachers put stars next to students with whom they have a positive connection; (3) ask teachers to make concerted efforts to connect with students who have no or few stars, searching for small positive points that might be traditionally viewed as "expected of all" but represent exceptions for a troubled student. Persistence, consistency, and a refusal to be put off by unpleasant behaviors is essential.

- **Prevent bullying.** This is part of "hearing" students. Bullying should never pass without comment—doing so will likely be seen by both the perpetrator and victim as condoning it.

- **Watch for behavior changes.** Increased anger or withdrawal, academic changes, writing about death, eating changes, etc., often indicate a need that teachers can address if they maintain at least a conversational relationship with each student.

- **Meet self-esteem needs.** Teachers can help each student meet his or her needs for significance and belonging; competence and mastery; power and independence; and virtue and generosity.<sup>11</sup>

- **Teach appropriate behaviors.** Teachers should provide positive, specific feedback about appropriate behaviors and rely less on punishment to manage negative behaviors, since punishment typically does not help the student learn the desired behavior. One study showed that 90 percent of teachers believed they praised students when they did well, but only 43 percent of students felt praised.<sup>12</sup>

- **Integrate social-skills training into the curriculum.** A positive classroom climate can be achieved if teachers provide training in problem-solving and social skills as *part* of the curriculum. Students trained to manage stress and relationships respond pro-socially instead of aggressively. See the list of curriculum-based,

empirically proven programs in the Resources section of this article.

School violence is also the students' problem. In nearly every case, a fellow student knew about the attack in advance. Student involvement does not just happen: the principal and teachers must get students involved. Inform students corporately and remind them frequently that to

maintain school and personal safety, students must tell a trusted adult when they hear other students say they want to obtain weapons; talk, write, joke, or otherwise communicate ideas relating to homicide or suicide; plan or threaten an attack, even if the statements are made in anger and contain little specificity (e.g., "Something big is gonna happen!"). Students must be reminded that both those in a radically different group as well as their close friends need support when desperate messages are communicated. Failure to share such statements with adults who can access support and ensure safety is dangerous.

Because youth may be uncomfortable sharing such information with an adult at school, administrators must ensure that students can submit such reports anonymously. There may be a hotline number students can call in your area—contact local school and government agencies or search the Internet.<sup>13</sup> Administrators must take these reports seriously.

Telling an adult goes against the code of youth, so students filing a report must feel certain that their identities will not be re-



vealed. Advise them that seeking support for someone's safety is not "tattling," any more than seeking medical care for a peer with a broken bone is "tattling." Adults must handle reports in a reasonable, fair, supportive, and confidential way, neither over- nor under-reacting (see below).

The principal must make sure that students know about every re-

*In a survey of students' and teachers' perceptions, 64 percent of teachers believed that they listened carefully to what students had to say, but only 35 percent of students believed that teachers listened carefully to what students said.*

source available for reporting concerns and seeking support. A printed brochure on how best to approach and inform adults will decrease the barriers to reporting. Tell students that violent youth usually talk about their plans in advance as a way of communicating a need. Peers have the opportunity to prevent violence and meet the needs of these youth.

#### **Making Sure At-Risk Students Get Help**

Principals must also ensure that at-risk youth get psychological help. Current trends in psychology are receptive toward religion. Psychologists follow a code of ethics that prohibits religious discrimination and promotes working within the *client's* worldview. In the past, some Christians have not sought help from psychologists, believing that

problems should be solved through prayer. Prayer is essential, but God also expects people to help one another. The first thing God proclaimed "not good" was Adam being alone—he needed a helper.<sup>14</sup> God expected His people to listen to priests, proph-

**Table 2**

### **Eleven Key Questions for Violence Risk Assessment**

Is there evidence, preferably from multiple sources, that the youth:

- has a motive or goal?
- has communicated (written, spoken, e-mailed, blogged, hinted at) ideas of violence?
- has excessive interest in school/mass violence or associated weaponry?
- has already performed actions related to an attack (developed a plan, obtained weapons, etc.)?
- has the capacity and means to attack (e.g., cognitive and physical abilities/access)?
- is feeling hopeless, desperate, suicidal, or overwhelmed?
- has no meaningful connection with a responsible adult or peer?
- views violence as a viable, advantageous, or realistic way to solve a problem?
- expresses a story consistent with others' reports/concerns?
- has aroused concern in others who interact with him or her?
- is experiencing or may experience life events or social pressures that would increase risk?

ets, and judges to correct their misbehaviors. Jesus' interactions with Nicodemus reveal that He expected him to provide guidance to His people. Spiritual gifts include the ability to counsel or teach. Keep in mind that the youth who has an inappropriate view of God is unlikely to benefit from prayer until he or she gains a clearer understanding of God's love—something that can be addressed in therapy.

Psychologists provide targeted interventions that address the specific needs of youth, family, and school. Treatment plans identify specific goals, tell how they will be addressed, and describe



what will be considered evidence of improvement. If a youth is referred initially because of a school's concern about his or her risk for violence, the psychologist will determine whether the youth presents an imminent threat, identify steps to keep the counselee and others safe, explore a variety of solutions, and try to reduce the youth's sense of hopelessness.

The principal should deliberately network with local mental health professionals. This might involve telephoning local psychologists when no crisis is pending to ask how they would deal with referral of a potentially violent youth from a private Adventist school. If a psychologist seems particularly helpful, the principal can ask him or her to address the teachers about various topics of interest. Some psychologists might even present such seminars free of charge as a community service. This will enable the school staff to get to know the psychologist and his or her approach, and to see him or her as a resource. It is also helpful for principals to network with crisis-management teams in local public schools to learn about available resources for private-school students and to develop a network of professional colleagues with whom to consult. Trying to make such connections *after* a crisis occurs is far riskier.

## Dealing With Threats

When a student behaves in a threatening way, how should teachers respond? The school staff must protect those under their care, *including the threatening student*. The principal and board must develop a plan before a crisis occurs.

Threats must be acted on decisively and fairly. Reports that mention violence require *immediate action*. If a student is already acting on violent ideas (e.g., heading toward the school with a gun), then police must be contacted instantly. But, because direct threats have not typically been part of the pattern of school attacks, administrators must not wait until a threat is issued to intervene, gather additional information, and refer youth for supportive services. It is important to obtain information from a variety of sources with whom the youth has been in contact because seemingly innocuous information, when pieced together, can reveal grave danger that may not be obvious to any single person.

The principal must distinguish between a student who *makes* a threat (e.g., during an angry interchange) and one who *poses* a threat (e.g., intends to act or has a plan). Although both youth must be heard and taken seriously—with immediate support and resources put into place on their behalf—those who *pose* a threat are an imminent danger, thus immediate action is required.

Interviews with the youth and others should always seek information about the youth's access to weapons, expertise in using firearms, and current efforts to obtain weapons and munitions. Fein et al. identify 11 key questions to use in assessing whether a student poses an imminent risk of violence (see Table 2 on page 14).<sup>15</sup> These must be investigated in a way that does not stigmatize the youth or increase his or her pain and discomfort.

Answers to these questions should be based on facts (not opinions or emotions). The administrator should obtain information from the following sources, in the order listed:<sup>16</sup> (1) school records and teacher interviews; (2) classmates and other adults who know the youth; (3) parents/guardians (making it clear you are seeking to help the youth); and (4) the youth himself or herself (using direct but non-accusatory questions); and (5) the identified targets (if any). Answers to the questions in Table 2 should enable you to understand the youth's needs and current risk, and prevent expulsions for playful or accidental behavior. Youth often say outrageous things that do not reflect their intent. Although discipline and supportive resources for managing student behavior are warranted for playful/accidental behaviors, expulsion would be harmful. Behaviors mean something, so addressing the need will prove

most beneficial.

If the risk assessment reveals an imminent threat, or if there is insufficient information to determine whether there is an imminent threat, then law enforcement must be involved. The school should have a policy stating when/if such a student may return to school. However, suspension, and especially expulsion, carry with them many negative outcomes, they should not be lightly added to the problems of a youth already experiencing many risk factors. Suspensions decrease school connectedness, increase risk for acting-out behaviors, and negatively affect academics and attendance—all factors linked to aggression. The goal of an assessment is to intervene to manage and reduce the risk of aggression.

An appropriate safety precaution is to require the youth to regularly visit a psychologist who can (1) help ensure that the counselee's needs are met, (2) communicate ways the school can offer support, and (3) assess the imminence of the threat. Once it is determined that the youth poses no threat, the school can develop plans for having him or her return to the classroom, with input from the psychologist, the youth, his or her family, and key school personnel. This approach should be explicitly stated in the school's policy handbook.

Referral for mental health services is one part of a larger plan of monitoring and management that will ensure that the youth's long-term needs are met. Policies for continued school enrollment should require regular reports from the psychologist, verifying attendance at therapy. When the psychologist and others verify that the youth has learned and demonstrated the use of non-violent solutions for problems, then therapy should no longer be required for continued school enrollment. Although continued therapy may be beneficial, reporting to the school should be terminated at this point.

School policies should also require that the youth's specific grievances be addressed as part of the process. The requirement of change by school personnel will help convince the youth that his or her concerns are important, valid, and seriously addressed. Such action serves to confirm a commitment to his or her future by school personnel and a belief in the effectiveness of non-violent ways to resolve conflict. Policies should also require that the school undergo a post-threat self-study to ensure that students' needs are addressed prior to threats of violence.

### Legal Issues

The school's policies should be reviewed with a lawyer to ensure that no legal rights are violated and legal mandates are followed. It is unlikely that procedures designed to identify and address reasonably foreseeable violence will be found to be unlawful. However, in the U.S., schools receiving federal fund-

*A positive classroom climate can be achieved if teachers provide training in problem-solving and social skills as part of the curriculum.*



ing must follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements regarding disclosures of student information, and policies relating to searches of a student's property or person.

The school handbook must identify circumstances when guardians will be notified about an interview of their child, when they must be invited to the interview, and when legal representation should be allowed, offered, or provided to a youth during an interview. Policies should specify that documentation be kept of all actions taken during a risk assessment and whether these reports will become a part of the youth's school file or be kept in a separate record. It is advisable to have an assessment *team*, rather than a single person.<sup>17</sup>

The summary of legal issues is: Procedures must be reasonable. Policies must balance the goal of ensuring student safety with that of developing an attentive and emotionally supportive school climate. Many school attackers described bullying (some of which met the legal definitions of harassment and assault) as contributing to their angry attacks. School policies should institute consequences corresponding with the legal prohibitions against harassment and assault that adults are afforded. To be effective, safety plans and policies must be shared with the school community. As a requirement for enrollment, older students (and parents, if the child is a minor) should sign an affirmation that they have read and agree to abide by school conduct and safety codes.

### Summary

Youth whose needs are not being met are at risk of engaging



in extreme behavior. Schools must find ways to establish and nurture relationships with every student, or else risk violence. Every school employee must recognize that behaviors have meaning and seek to determine and ameliorate the reasons for withdrawn, socially aggressive, and self-destructive behaviors. All staff must truly listen and communicate genuine praise and positive support for students.

Although there is no profile of a school shooter, most feel aggrieved and bullied. They hint at their intent to other students. This highlights the need for adults at school to develop relationships with all students so they feel safe telling an adult that a fellow student is suffering. Early referral for psychological services helps prevent student disconnection from a social support system and increases the number of caring, trusted, responsible adults in a youth's life.

Policies against bullying, and integrating social skills and problem-solving skills training into the curriculum will reduce violence. Finding ways to

help each student feel significant, competent, powerful, and virtuous will improve student connectedness to school—a factor that prevents a large variety of problems, including violence. Schools should develop ways for youth to share their concerns, while maintaining anonymity. Students must be told about available resources. Fair policies must be in place and consistently followed that identify steps for meeting students' needs and maintaining safety. Specific follow-up procedures should be implemented to ensure that youth will continue to receive support after an initial threat is resolved. And schools should use any crisis as an opportunity to make functional and structural changes that better meet student needs and avert future crises.

We are called to demonstrate “love [as] the basis of creation and of redemption. . . . the basis of true education.”<sup>18</sup> “It is the experience of love that is transformational.”<sup>19</sup> Now is the time to lovingly listen. *Can you hear me now?* Students are asking. As we do these things, we will be able to answer with a resounding Yes! ✍



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## Resources

**Report:** *Threat Assessment in Schools* by Robert A. Fein, et al. (2004)  
**URL (free PDF):** <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/threatassessmentguide.pdf>

Report identifies steps for assessment of risk, development of policies and procedures, and how to develop school environments that reduce risk. If you can read only one additional source, this is the one to read. It is rich in extremely applicable guidance and useful information for school staff, especially the school principal.

**Report:** *Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative: Implications for the Prevention of School Attacks in the United States* by Bryan Vossekuil, et al. (2004)

**URL (free PDF):** <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/preventingattacksreport.pdf>

Report produced collaboratively by the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education that identifies key behaviors and characteristics of individuals who resort to multiple-victim attacks in school settings. The report is based on extensive evaluations of 37 school attacks between 1974 through mid-2000. An essential reference.

**Book:** *Reaching and Teaching Stressed and Anxious Learners in Grades 4-8* by Barbara E. Oehlberg (Corwin Press, 2006)

**Google link (preview):** <http://books.google.com/books?id=C38AhlxvIv0C>

Gives specific assignment ideas for incorporating social skills development into the curriculum and also recommends classroom teacher behaviors to overcome children's distress, trauma, and feelings of helplessness.

**Guide:** “A Problem-Solving Approach to School Violence Prevention” in *The Handbook of School Violence and School Safety* by Shane R. Jimerson and Michael J. Furlong (Routledge, 2006)

**URL (preview):** <http://books.google.com/books?id=OGI4XmJOHywC&printsec=frontcover#PPA78,M1>

Chapter 5 of this handbook provides an excellent and comprehensive checklist to guide implementation of a complete violence prevention program that addresses the three levels of prevention (primary, secondary, and tertiary). The checklists provide an excellent guide for the principal and school board to follow while implementing school safety policies and procedures.

**Booklet:** *Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools* by K. Dwyer, D. Osher, and C. Wargner (U.S. Department of Education, 1998)

**URL (free PDF):** <http://cecp.air.org/guide/guide.pdf>

Covers specific recommendations for developing a safe school environment and noticing and responding to potential risks.

*(Continued on next page)*

# Resources

**Resource:** *Decision Tree for Implementing a Threat Assessment Process*

**URL (preview):** [http://books.google.com/books?id=X4befoE3quUC&pg=PA218&sig=ACfU3U3gCl24LBlfWs6ux7-0m1F\\_p\\_RDiA&safe=active#PPkA179,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=X4befoE3quUC&pg=PA218&sig=ACfU3U3gCl24LBlfWs6ux7-0m1F_p_RDiA&safe=active#PPkA179,M1)

Chapter 9 of Cornell (2006) covers a specific process for handling situations of threats and potential violence. A one-page decision tree describes a specific process to follow in implementing the threat-assessment process. The process is entirely reasonable to use in a private school setting. Details about types of questions to ask at each step in the process probably need to come from the Vossekuil, et al. (2004) or Fein, et al. (2004) resources.

**Resource:** *Guidelines for Assessing Threatening and Dangerous Behavior in Schools* by Judith F. Shell, Frances Mueller, and Ronda Pretzlaff Diegel (Oakland Schools, 2003)

**URL (free PDF):** <http://www.oakland.k12.mi.us/pdf/GATDBS.pdf>

A comprehensive template for gathering information about a potentially violent situation that incorporates all of the areas that Vossekuil et al. (2004) and Fein et al. (2004) identified as essential and relevant for establishing imminence of danger.

**Resource:** *PAX: Real Solutions to Gun Violence*

**URL:** <http://www.paxusa.org/speakup/about.html>

Provides the toll-free national hotline where students can report weapon-related threats of violence (1-866-SPEAK-UP [773-2587]). Also offers materials and information for schools for promoting this important resource.

**Website:** <http://www.schoolsecurity.org>

The National School Safety and Security Services Website provides information, statistics, and helpful resources for maintaining safe schools.

**Social Skills Program:** *The PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) Curriculum* by C. A. Kusché and M. T. Greenberg (Channing Bete Co., 2005)

**URL (info/order):** <http://www.channing-bete.com/prevention-programs/paths/>

Cornell (see Endnote 2) recommends the use of the PATHS program, which is presented by the classroom teacher in three 20-minute sessions each week in elementary classrooms. It includes 130 lessons to be incorporated into other subjects. It has been shown to decrease behavior problems and lower peer aggression in participants.

**Social Skills Program:** *Second Step Program* by Committee for Children (Committee for Children, 2005)

**URL (info/order):** <http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/ssp/overview/>

Cornell (ibid.) recommends the use of the Second Step program, which provides about 20 lessons of 20 to 50 minutes for preschoolers to 9th graders about empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management. It has been shown to improve prosocial behaviors and decrease aggression and disruptive behavior in participants.

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10. Fein, et al., *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*, op cit.
11. E.g., see L. K. Brendtro, S. J. Larson, and J. A. Calhoun, *The Resilience Revolution: Discovering Strengths in Challenging Kids* (Bloomington, Ind.: Solution Tree, 2006).
12. Skiba, et al., "The SRS Safe Schools Survey," op cit.
13. In the U.S., students can call the national hotline 1-866-SPEAK-UP to anonymously report threats.
14. Genesis 2:18.
15. Fein, et al., *Threat Assessment in Schools: A Guide to Managing Threatening Situations and to Creating Safe School Climates*, op cit.
16. Ibid.
17. While private K-12 schools in the United States are not subject to FERPA regulations if they do not receive federal funding, Section 99.10 implies that certain aspects of the law do apply to all U.S. schools, and the regulations definitely apply to all postsecondary institutions. Since the goal of FERPA is to protect students' rights, it will be beneficial for schools to regard it as a minimum standard to be followed. It can also serve as a guideline for schools in other countries that are attempting to craft policies in this area. See <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>; and <http://law.cornell.edu/cfr/> (under Title 34, see Section 99.31).
18. Ellen G. White, *Education*, op cit., p. 16.
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# What Adventist Colleges Are Doing to Ensure Campus Safety

BY ELLEN POIRIER

**R**ecently, the issue of campus safety has become of growing interest within Adventist schools. How safe are our students?

If a threat were issued on an Adventist campus, would the faculty and staff be prepared to handle the crisis? What steps are presently being taken to ensure that students are safe, and how can those steps be improved? With the news of unfortunate events occurring on college campuses—both public and private colleges as well as Seventh-day Adventist schools—these and many other additional questions have been raised.

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a crisis is defined as “an unstable condition, as in political, social, or economic affairs, involving an impeding abrupt or decisive change.”<sup>1</sup> As our world continues to see an increase in violence, crime, and terrorism, Adventist schools need to be prepared for anything that may come their way.

This article focuses on North American Adventist colleges but includes principles that can be adopted by K-12 schools and higher education institutions outside North America. It’s important to review what exactly our schools are doing in regard to the issue of campus safety, and what needs to be done for the future. By looking at what campuses have experienced and



*By looking at what campuses have experienced and analyzing the policies that are currently in place, the future of Adventist campus safety becomes much easier to predict and to prepare for.*

analyzing the policies that are currently in place, the future of Adventist campus safety becomes much easier to predict and to prepare for. Margaret Spellings, the former United States Secretary of Education, said this of crisis management:

“Knowing how to respond quickly and efficiently in a crisis is critical to ensuring the safety of our schools and students. The midst of a crisis is not the time to start figuring out who ought to do what. At that moment, everyone involved—from top to bottom—should know the drill and know each other.”<sup>22</sup>

Crisis management is an extremely critical issue for our education system. Our schools need to be prepared—for anything.

### Protecting Students on Campus

In the past few years, Adventist colleges have faced some difficult challenges. Some of the better known incidents include a fire at Southern Adventist University’s Thatcher Hall (the women’s dormitory) and an assault on a professor at Andrews University. Both schools had excellent safety policies and procedures in place before these tragic events happened, yet the incidents still occurred. Because of incidents like these, it is imperative to determine exactly what policies and procedures Adventist schools already have in place, how those procedures can be improved, and how fre-

quently they are updated, in order to protect everyone on campus.

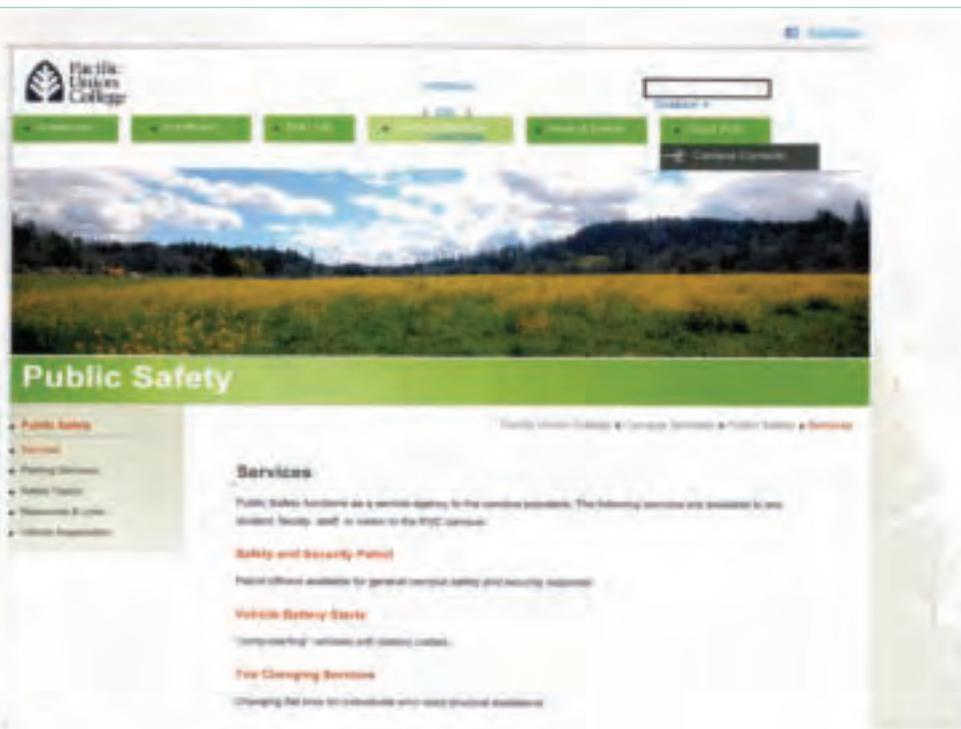
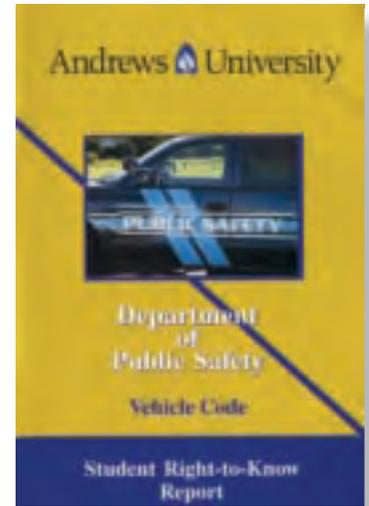
Making sure administrators, teachers/staff, and students all are aware of the current safety procedures is crucial in the event of a crisis. Without already established policies and a process for actively updating them, campus safety cannot be ensured.

So what *are* Adventist college campuses doing to protect employees and students?

1. Every North American Adventist college campus has an existing campus safety department. Each department has a director who is in charge of developing new procedures and following through on each safety procedure. The safety department is responsible for protecting the people on campus from a variety of dangers.
2. Each campus safety department provides a 24-hour safety patrol to ensure that the campus is always being watched for suspicious activity.
3. The campus safety departments provide, upon request, an escort to any location on campus.
4. Most of the college safety departments have a section on their school’s Website that provides helpful safety tips, explaining what is and what is not correct safety protocol. Students and employees can access useful information that will help keep them safe, both on and off campus.

### Guidelines for Dealing With Crime and Violence

Many schools already have specific guidelines for handling crime or violence. For those that do not, protocols must be set up so the staff and students will know what to do when a crisis happens. These guidelines must be easily accessible to dormitory residents. For example, on its Website,<sup>3</sup> La Sierra University in Riverside, California, provides a section titled “Student Rights to Know,” an excellent resource for its students and faculty that clearly explains the campus policies and



Andrews University

**In Case of  
EMERGENCY  
911 or x3321**

**Public Safety Anonymous Email**  
<http://www.andrews.edu/safety/anonymous.htm>

**Public Safety Anonymous Tip Line**  
**269-471-3338**



Reporters gather for a briefing after the dormitory fire at Southern Adventist University.

procedures in detail. The covered policies include:

- Security and Access to Campus Facilities
- Policy of Firearms, Explosives, and Other Weapons
- Sexual Assault Policy and Educational Program
- Alcohol and Drug-Free Work Site Policy and Educational Program
- Reporting a Crime
- Reporting a Crime or Emergency
- Crime Prevention and Educational Programs

According to the policy statement, the university's crime prevention program "provides students and employees with the goal to eliminate or minimize criminal activity, whenever possible, and encourages the university community to be responsible for their own safety and the safety of others."<sup>4</sup>

### Notifying Students of an Emergency

Although schools have policies currently in place to prevent crime and violence, there are times when a crisis may still occur. How does a campus filled with hundreds, and in some cases, thousands, of students, faculty, and staff successfully warn each resident of a possible threat? Because of the size of most schools, it is difficult to ensure that everyone is made aware of emergency situations.

The quickest and most convenient way to contact students and staff is through technology. Many schools use e-mail or text messages to communicate with the people on campus. Campus-wide notification systems are described in more detail in the article by Ehren Ngo and Rick Williams on page 40.

Many Adventist schools have created sections on their Websites that announce possible threats or potential crime. Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, has created a Webpage entitled "Early Warning" located in the safety department section of their Website.<sup>5</sup> "Early Warning" allows the campus safety department to communicate with people on campus and to announce to students, faculty, and staff anything that might threaten their safety on campus. If a crisis does occur in spite of all reasonable precautions, it is listed on the site along with a description of what to do until the danger has passed.

On the Website of Southern Adventist University in Col-

legedale, Tennessee, the campus safety department<sup>6</sup> issues warnings about recently occurring events and crises on campus to alert the student body, faculty, and staff. For example, if a student's backpack was recently stolen, the Website would post warning the students and staff to be extra careful with their belongings.

While technology plays a major role in notifying the students and faculty on a campus; they need to be reminded to regularly check the appropriate Websites for current information.

### A Campus on Lockdown

In some cases, the threat is too severe to allow students to leave the buildings until the crisis is resolved. When this happens, the administration orders a lockdown. According to the January 2007 edition of *Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*, lockdowns should occur "when a crisis occurs outside of the school and an evacuation would be dangerous [or] when there is a crisis inside and movement within the school will put students in jeopardy. All exterior doors are locked and students and staff stay in their classrooms. Windows may need to be covered."<sup>7</sup> This guidebook provides a useful visual aid adapted from one created by the San Diego school district showing the various options for a lockdown.

Working with law enforcement is another key element in lockdown planning for school and the overall protection of the students and staff. Gary Hile, the Associate Director of Risk Control for Adventist Risk Management, Inc. (ARM), explains that ARM "encourage[s] school personnel to work with local law enforcement in developing a plan that works for them."<sup>8</sup> Since every school is different, there is a need for flexibility in planning.

Because a college campus is much larger than that of average elementary or secondary school, successfully carrying out a lockdown can be an extremely difficult task, since each student has a different class schedule, and a va-

riety of other people are on campus, such as farm employees, repairmen, visiting professors, high school band clinic participants, retirees doing research at the library, accreditation teams, church administrators and members attending the university board meeting, newspaper reporters, delivery persons, and so on. Due to these complications, in most cases, colleges must find creative ways to notify everyone on campus and protect them as best they can with the help of local law enforcement.

### Fire Safety

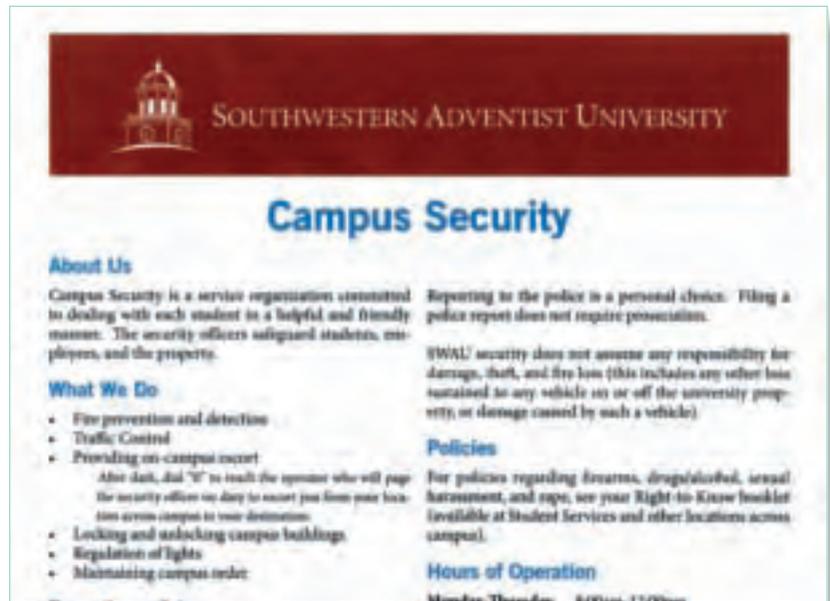
On April 26, 2005, Southern Adventist University experienced a traumatic event—a day that was “the most difficult day of my presidency,” said Gordon Bietz, the president of the university.<sup>9</sup> A fire broke out early that Tuesday morning in the women’s residence hall, resulting in the death of one of the residents and other injuries.

Ever since that unfortunate event, Southern Adventist University has rededicated itself to fire safety procedures and systems. Although the university had a code-compliant, proactive safety program at the time of the incident, they carefully reviewed their plan after the fire. The university’s Website includes a list of key fire safety elements:

1. Maps are posted around campus and within the dormitories to show evacuation routes and the reassembly point.
2. When the alarm is activated, a university officer is dispatched to the scene to assess the situation, secure the area in question, and aid in evacuating the occupants of the facility.
3. Fire extinguishers are strategically located throughout campus buildings.
4. On the back of each men’s and women’s residence hall room door, emergency procedures are posted.
5. Fire drills are conducted each semester.
6. Monthly inspections occur to ensure that the buildings are in compliance with the National Fire Protection Association codes.
7. No candles, incense, oil lamps, or other open flames are allowed in the residence halls or other university buildings.
8. Additional fire safety tips are posted on the Website.<sup>10</sup>

### Unexpected Threat

In 2007, Andrews University experienced a different type of safety incident. According to the school’s official statement, early on the morning of April 16, a Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary student attacked a seminary professor. Hearing his cries for help, the professor’s office staff called the campus safety department and the local law enforcement. The student attacked both the police and the paramedics who responded. When the student was finally under control, he was taken into custody by the local law enforcement. Fortunately, the professor did not have life-



threatening injuries and was able to return to his classroom later that afternoon.

With this sudden attention focused on its campus safety department, Andrews University immediately began to discuss and refine its procedures. Niels-Erik Andreasen, university president, assured the entire campus that Andrews did indeed have “clearly defined procedures and processes and trained, responsible individuals tasked to carry out those procedures in case of emergency. The Andrews University staff has not lost sight of emergency protocol. They are constantly working to review, revise, and renew those processes, reflecting responsible care and concern for the precious human resources on [their] campus.”<sup>11</sup> Since that time, the Andrews has assembled a University Student Intervention Team.<sup>12</sup>

### The Media

When a school is faced with a situation similar to what Southern Adventist University or Andrews University experienced, it is normal to expect the media to become involved. Rather than taking an adversarial or defensive stance, the school can view the media as crucial to the development of the school’s campus safety department and as providing insight into how the community views the school. However, most schools are unaware of how to correctly use the media, and in some cases, may suffer long-term damage from negative reporting.

*The Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities* provides helpful tips on how schools can use the media to their advantage.<sup>13</sup>

### Tips for Working With the Media

1. Make it a priority to work with the media so they are well acquainted with your school and its needs *before* something happens. Invite them to campus for a press conference describing your disaster preparedness planning. It will also be reassuring to the families of the students and to the fac-

*Making sure administrators, teachers/staff, and students all are aware of the current safety procedures is crucial in the event of a crisis.*

ulty and staff to know that there is a plan already in effect.

2. Appoint one person to deal with the media. He or she should typically be in an administrative position—someone who is well informed about campus policy making and is able to clearly articulate information to the media. This person is assigned to alert the media when a crisis occurs, and to issue follow-up statements as needed.

3. Make it clear that only the appointed person will make announcements to the media regarding the incident. This will make it easier to communicate with the media because they will already know who to contact for updates.

4. When dealing with a crisis, designate a site where all media announcements will be made. If possible, choose a site away from the students, faculty, and staff.

5. The campus staff should be alerted that when reporters ask for an interview or attempt to get pictures, they must be redirected to the designated media area. The media should get all their information from the designated person at the specified site, not from on-campus interviews with students and staff.

6. If the school coordinates one large press conference where both the emergency responders and the media are invited to attend, this gives the school more control over how much information is released and when it is given.

### After the Crisis

Following an incident on a school campus, students, faculty, and staff may react in varying ways. Dealing with a crisis is extremely difficult and, in some cases, “crisis intervention” may be necessary. According to the previously mentioned crisis planning guide, crisis intervention involves a variety of “after the crisis” solutions and can be implemented by faculty, counselors, social workers, or even community service providers, depending on their training.

The three most widely recognized crisis-intervention programs are group crisis intervention, acute traumatic stress management, and individual counseling. (See the article by Ron Coffen on page 11.)

#### 1. Group Crisis Intervention

The most common and successful type of crisis intervention is group crisis intervention (GCI). This is also the most convenient type for both the students and the institution because it involves group therapy, which is more affordable than individual treatment. The interested individuals (students or staff) meet together to discuss what happened and their various reactions to it. Together, they can share stories and provide support to everyone in the group session. However, if the supervisor finds that a participant needs more help than others in the group, individual counseling should be suggested (see **Individual Counseling** below).

#### 2. Acute Traumatic Stress Management

The goal of Acute Traumatic Stress Management (ATSM)

is “to stimulate adaptive coping mechanisms and to stabilize more severe reactions among students.”<sup>14</sup> There are 10 stages within the ATSM program:

- Assess the danger/safety for self and others.
- Consider the mechanism for injury.
- Evaluate the level of responsiveness.
- Address medical needs.
- Observe and identify at-risk individuals.
- Connect with these individuals.
- Ground the individual.
- Provide support.
- Normalize the response.
- Prepare for the future.

#### 3. Individual Counseling

When particular students cannot seem to handle the sit-



Fire fighters, Thatcher Hall fire, Southern Adventist University, 2004.

*Many schools already have specific guidelines for handling crime or violence. For those that do not, protocols must be set up so the staff and students will know what to do when a crisis happens.*



uation, individual counseling can be helpful. Though it is more expensive than group crisis intervention, it supplies more in-depth support that some individuals need following the traumatic experiences related to a crisis. Some common methods to individual counseling include art, talking, and drug therapies.

### Conclusion

Adventist school administrators do understand that the safety of those on campus is crucial; yet as more and more safety issues develop on and around our campuses, it is important to be proactive about the future of Adventist campus safety. As outlined in this article, schools have developed a number of helpful policies that they are actively maintaining and reviewing each year. By refining old policies to ad-



dress current, changing situations and by setting up new guidelines that deal with safety protocols, Adventist schools can stay up to date on safety policy issues and consequently, increase campus safety.

One of the best-known ways to develop safety guidelines is simply to evaluate past events and to seek professional guidance. By focusing on what the school did right or wrong before, during, and after a crisis, the safety department can better prepare for future crises.

Campus safety is a matter of concern for many individuals—as it should be. Without the successful management of a crisis, the overall well-being of everyone on campus may be jeopardized and serious injury or loss of life may occur. By reviewing their policies, researching other universities' safety protocols, and cooperating with local and state officials, our schools can help ensure the safety of the individuals on their campuses. By taking steps to protect our campuses and putting our trust in God, we will be able to look forward with optimism to the future God has promised: “‘Because he loves me,’ . . . ‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name’” (Psalm 91:14, NIV).<sup>15</sup>

*This article has been reviewed and approved by Adventist Risk Management, Inc.*



*At the time this article was written, **Ellen Poirier** was a Summer Intern at Adventist Risk Management, Inc., in Silver Spring, Maryland. She is currently a senior at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, and is pursuing a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Visual Communications with an emphasis in graphic design.*

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# HOW SAFE IS YOUR SCHOOL?

BY PATTI HERRING AND ELIZABETH HOLZHAUSER

***“In an urban, working class city of 62,000, a young teenage boy carrying a knife entered one of 40 mostly unlocked and unmonitored entrances at a high school of over 2,000 kids. He was not a student at the school. He searched through the building for another boy with whom he had argued the previous weekend. He found him in a second floor hallway and stabbed him, injuring him severely. The victim’s best friend was stabbed to death as he tried to help his friend. The school had never before experienced this type of violence.”***<sup>1</sup>

## **The Problem in the United States**

The Bureau of Justice Statistics in collaboration with the National Center for Education Statistics collects data from students, teachers, principals, and the public on school violence in the United States. They have found that the percentage of school violence increased from 71 percent in the 1999 to 2000 school year, and even higher, to 81 percent in the 2003-2004 school year. From July 1, 2004, through June 30, 2005, 21 children (5 to 18 years of age) were killed at U.S. schools.<sup>2</sup>

A case in point is the disturbing Amish school shooting in Nichol Mines, Pennsylvania, on October 2, 2006. A disturbed man from the outside community held 10 little girls (aged 7-13) hostage. There were 26 students in school the day he attacked, 15

boys and 11 girls. He shot all of the girls except the one who escaped, killing five, before taking his own life.<sup>3</sup> This was only one of three deadly shootings that week (the other two occurred on September 27 and September 29, 2006).<sup>4</sup>

One year later, on October 16, 2007, America’s worst mass school shooting occurred: the Virginia Tech massacre (as it is now known). Seung-Hui Cho, a 23-year-old student, shot and killed 32 people and wounded 17 before killing himself.<sup>5</sup> Many wondered what motivated the shooter, and what, if anything could have been done to prevent this tragedy and others.

## **The Problem Internationally**

Studies, although limited, clearly show that violence is a major problem in other countries as well, and not only in the U.S., as some might believe. Wherever it occurs, it has a negative impact on teaching and learning.<sup>6</sup>

Researchers who studied school violence in 37 nations around the world reported problems that caused students and teachers to be fearful at school. In more than half of these countries, one in four students feared becoming a victim (i.e., being hurt or threatened) at school; they also feared that their peers would be the victims of violence. The teachers were also concerned about the threat of violence, seeing it as interfering with their teaching and as a major barrier to their students’ learning.<sup>7</sup> This has caused a tightening of security at schools around the world.

## **The Problem in Adventist Schools**

Who would have believed that schools in the 21st century would need metal detectors and other high-powered security devices to identify weapons and other paraphernalia used in vio-

*Researchers who studied school violence in 37 nations around the world reported problems that caused students and teachers to be fearful at school.*

lent assaults? We are still adjusting to the high security measures at airports, courthouses, and other governmental facilities—and now many schools, too, must operate under high security. You might be thinking, Not in Adventist schools. We don't need expensive security devices, and our students do not have to endure the strip searches that are necessary at public schools; thank the Lord that Adventist schools do not have that problem. Furthermore, if we start securing our schools, the world might mistakenly assume that the measures are an admission that our schools are not safe.

Many people believe that school violence is perpetuated by children who dress in a certain way, or live in bad neighborhoods, or who attend inner-city public schools—and the highly publicized cases encourage these perceptions. We want to believe that our schools are special places, protected and exempt from the realities of violence. Unfortunately, it is time for a reality check. Because of sin, the world is out of balance, and violent people are everywhere; thus unbalanced behavior can and does find its way to Adventist school campuses. We must take action now to prevent this from happening. Preventing something before it happens makes a lot more sense than dealing with the consequences.

This brings us to the question of how vigilant Adventist schools should be in preventing violence of all kinds on our campuses. In this article, we will discuss what you can do to keep your school safe and thus protect your students and staff. We do not wish to unduly alarm you, but instead fast-forward you into thinking about what adjustments are necessary to ensure that your school **is safe, stays safe, and becomes safer**. In addition, we will bring you up to date on research about the complex issue of school violence, discredit some commonly held myths about the perpetrators of school violence, and present some practical recommendations and helpful resources to help you guard and protect your school environment.

### What Is Violence?

What constitutes violence? The definition differs worldwide, depending on societal and cultural norms, but the World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened, or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation.”<sup>8</sup>

• “*Self-inflicted violence*” includes acts of violence intentionally inflicted upon oneself such as suicide, skin cutting (or

mutilation), and other self-destructive acts or behaviors.

• “*Interpersonal violence*” is defined by the WHO as a victim-offender relationship-type violence, whether occurring at school, in private, in public, in the family, or in the community. Interpersonal violence includes corporal punishment used at school, bullying, harassment, child abuse, domestic violence, and violence perpetrated against someone because of gender, race/ethnicity, religious affiliations, age, disability, or sexual identity. The WHO considers such behavior violence even if it is committed or condoned by the government or those in control of an institution.

• “*Organized violence*” is perpetrated by “social or political groups motivated by specific political, economic or social objec-

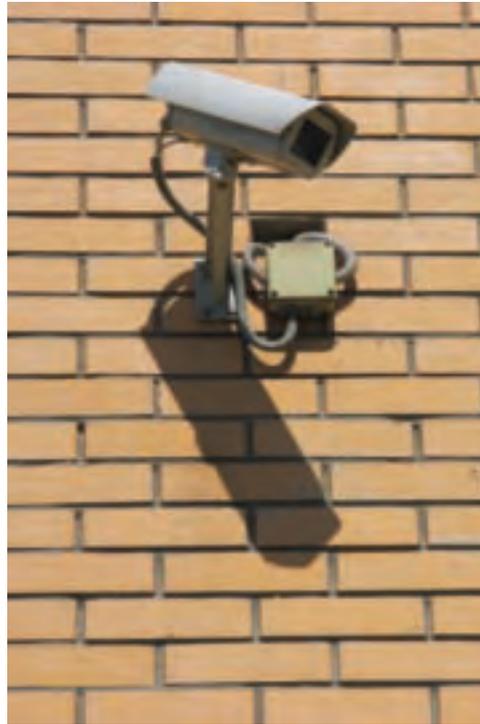


tives.” Examples include war, religious, racial, gang, mob, and other group conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

### Contributing Factors

It is important to remember that young people are not normally prone to violence,<sup>10</sup> and those who do commit violent acts learned those behaviors from life circumstances or other factors that put them at higher risk than others to become violent offenders. Some of these risk factors include the following:

- Poor interpersonal communication skills
- Substance abuse (illegal substances, alcohol, and prescription drugs)
- Observing violence or inappropriate interpersonal behavior in the home or in the community
- Being victimized (at home, at school, or in the community)
- Having access to firearms and ammunition, as well as other weapons
- Disparate or preferential treatment if a member of or affiliated with certain racial/ethnic groups, religious groups, genders, or school social groups
- Socio-economic disparities between racial/ethnic groups, genders, or school social groups
- Media influences
- Peer influences<sup>11</sup>
- Gang affiliation
- Low school performance
- Inability of caregivers to maintain a stable family unit
- Cyber abuse<sup>12</sup>



*Many people believe that school violence is perpetuated by children who dress in a certain way, or live in bad neighborhoods, or who attend inner-city public schools—and the most publicized cases encourage these perceptions.*



- Anger about perceived unfair treatment, unjust rules or policies
- Societal, cultural, or neighborhood norms that condone violent behavior<sup>13</sup>
- Lack of spirituality in the home, and thus in the youth's life.

**Spirituality:** The good news is that spirituality has a positive influence on children's attitudes and behaviors. It is impossible to shield children from all negative influences in life, no matter how hard parents and teachers might try. However, the fact that parents have had the foresight and the means to enroll their children in Adventist

*[This article] will bring you up to date on research about the complex issue of school violence, discredit some commonly held myths about the perpetrators of school violence, and present some practical recommendations and helpful resources to help you guard and protect your school environment.*



schools is an important preventive factor. Studies show that regular religious engagement can help compensate for exposure to acts of violence that children encounter in everyday life. Research also shows that children whose parents engage them in regular religious activities, and whose religious belief system and faith are exercised on a regular basis, are more likely to be able to handle accidental and occasional exposure to violence without harmful consequences (i.e., participating in delinquent behavior and choosing delinquent associations).<sup>14</sup>

### **Improving Interpersonal Relationships for Safer Schools**

To investigate why some school environments have lower rates of violence than others, Court<sup>15</sup> conducted ethnographic research at an Israeli religious middle school (grades 6 through 8), Abu Snam, to discover this institution's secrets for creating a non-violent school environment. The students came from a mixed population of Moslem, Druze, and Christian Israelis. She found that school's goal was to transmit values that encouraged students to choose non-vio-

lent behavior to resolve conflict and to get along with their peers, although the school was located in a violent community.

The vice principal, a Druze, said that the school housed "three religions but one value," which is "**respect for other people.**" Court reported: "I came away from this research feeling I had been privileged to see a remarkable school that is virtually free of violence, a considerable accomplishment in an area of the world fraught with violence and strife."<sup>16</sup>

How did they do it? Court found that **leadership** was the key to this school's success. Administrators focused on communication, and stressed teaching tolerance, respect, and non-violent behavior

## **Violence Prevention Resources**

**WHO Information Series on School Health.** *Violence Prevention: An Important Element of a Health-Promoting School:* [http://www.who.int/school\\_youth\\_health/media/en/93.pdf](http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/media/en/93.pdf).

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in response to school situations. Their anti-violence methods consisted of the following strategies:

- Implementing a Values Education Curriculum for all grade levels.
- Dealing with bullying, rudeness, or any other incidence of violence immediately when it occurred by talking, listening, engaging other students in resolving the issue or conflict—never ignor-

ing any acts.<sup>17</sup>

- Requiring that everyone (students, school personnel, including administration) refrain from gossiping or slanderous remarks, treat others with respect, and keep the doors of communication open.
- Speaking frankly with students about sensitive issues such as suicide bombings, and the consequences of such acts, and en-

## Ten Myths About School Violence Perpetrators

The following myths were carefully developed by Dedman from detailed case files of the most notorious school shooters who ultimately committed suicide, from comprehensive interviews with those convicted of school-associated violence, as well as information from the United States Secret Service, and the United States Department of Education.<sup>18</sup>

1. *“He didn’t fit the profile.”* There is no functional profile or checklist that will accurately predict whether someone is contemplating a violent act at the school site. Demographics, socioeconomic commonalities, family characteristics, and mental histories are too broad or vague to ensure that the innocent will not be unjustly profiled or stereotyped. Those who have committed acts of school violence represent all races, social and economic backgrounds, varying academic achievement, and family circumstances. Although it is true that males constitute an overwhelming majority of the perpetrators, this is one of three major commonalities.

2. *“He just snapped.”* It is a rare that people “just snap.” According to the experts, most school attackers had a preconceived plan, indicating that their act was not impulsive. Overall, the planning phase included contemplating the attack, logistical preparation, and weapon/ammunition procurement.

3. *“No one knew.”* In nearly all cases, someone besides the perpetrator knew of the plan. Some used one of three social networking Websites, YouTube, MySpace, or Facebook. Additionally, friends of the attacker, siblings, or others knew of the idea or the plan, but in most cases did not tell an adult.

4. *“He hadn’t threatened anyone.”* There is fear that any type of threat; no matter how implausible, will lead to a school shooting or an attack of some kind. This situation has led to an increase in unwarranted suspensions and expulsions.<sup>19</sup> At Rancho Middle School in Hesperia, California, 8th grader Trinity Mathieson was suspended from school for two days for writing down the names of those students who were bullying him. His mother needed this information in order to report the actions of the children to the principal. Writing down the names of his classmates on a piece of paper was not a criminal act, but the administration referred to it as a “kill list.” The climate of fear generated by an earlier incident at another school was used to

justify the suspension. “Most attackers never threatened, and an overwhelming majority who threaten never attack.”

5. *“He was a loner.”* A significant number of the most notorious school shooters did have close friendships with classmates, were involved in social activities, sports, school-related clubs, and extra-curricular activities. Being stereotyped as a “loner” is not a homicidal determinate.

6. *“He was crazy.”* For the most part, the perpetrators were never professionally diagnosed with a mental disorder. This is not to say that mental illness was not a factor. However, information from case histories did confirm that many individuals had recent past histories of depression, suicidal thoughts or attempts, as well as ineffective personal coping skills.

7. *“If only we’d had a SWAT team or metal detectors.”* Incidents begin and end quickly even when law enforcement responds promptly. Persons who are resolved to commit a crime will find a manner in which to do so.

8. *“He’d never touched a gun.”* In all cases of school attacks in which multiple fatalities occurred, firearm usage was the culprit. The weapons were either purchased by the attackers themselves, garnered from friends and relatives, or obtained from their own home environment. Moreover, the attackers usually practiced discharging the weapon prior to the event. The use of firearms is the second major commonality among school shooters.

9. *“We did everything we could to help him.”* Bullying by other students or groups of students prior to the attack was the major theme that emerged from analyzing the case histories. The shooters felt that the adults in the school environment either could not or would not assist them. Furthermore, friends and family members tended to minimize the bullying incidents. Bullying and other types of individual maltreatment is the third and final commonality. Consequently, teachers and school administrative staff were targeted in 50 percent of the fatalities.

10. *“School violence is rampant.”* Again, based upon a review of the available data, it is apparent that school shootings are extremely idiosyncratic events and not part of any discernible trend. Ironically, they may have received magnified coverage because of their rarity rather than their typicality.<sup>20</sup>

gaging in discussion about non-violent ways of dealing with conflict and disagreements in and out of the classroom.

- Structuring ongoing professional development activities for school personnel, both at school and in the community, including parents and community members when appropriate. These activities were carefully evaluated for effectiveness and modifications made as necessary.

- Including parents in the planning, implementing, and evaluating of anti-violence activities by actually inviting them to school to see the school's philosophy in action.

- Focusing on consistent, strong leadership.<sup>21</sup>

### Physical Environmental Precautions for Safer Schools

For decades, public health workers have initiated changes in the environment to prevent disease and protect and restore the public's health. Some environmental measures include quarantine to prevent the spread of communicable diseases, seat belts and airbags to reduce vehicle deaths and injuries; and community parks for safer outdoor physical activity that prevents obesity, heart disease, and other conditions related to a sedentary lifestyle. Criminologists, recognizing the strengths in this approach, followed suit by identifying some characteristics of the physical en-

*Teachers and staff should watch for and immediately deal with unacceptable behaviors, such as fighting, bullying, name-calling, and other acts of aggression meant to belittle or put down other students.*

vironment that could be altered in order to deter criminal activity. They identified such interventions as altering a building's physical design, decreasing weapon availability, and controlling and monitoring the number of people in a building and their purposes for being there.<sup>22</sup>

Because of these factors, the *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (CPTED) approach recommends changes in the physical environment that make it more difficult

for perpetrators or assailants to commit violent acts. This plan does not address what motivates perpetrators to commit violent acts; it merely gives them less opportunity to act out their aggressions. But implementing safety measures does make people feel safer and more secure, and encourages a sense of well-being. Fear is immobilizing, and interferes with the calm that is needed for teaching and learning. In protecting the school environment, CPTED suggests focusing on five major principles:<sup>23</sup>

1. **Natural surveillance** means "minimizing opportunities for out-of-sight activities." This involves using structural features that make it easier to see what is going on at all times, in all places; for example, having windows in the doors of each classroom, and at the entrance to the school office. This allows students and staff on the inside of the school to see those on the out-





side, and vice versa.

**2. Access management.** This refers to closely monitoring access to all school areas at all times, especially when school is in session. Entrances and exits should be clearly marked, and signs used directing visitors to monitored areas and steering them away from unsupervised locations. When visitors are given access, they receive nametags, which they must wear throughout the visit. At the conclusion of the visit, they return the nametag to the main office and log out; this logbook becomes an official record. Access to dormitories and other locations that are off limits to the public should be restricted through the installation of an electronic keycard/key pad system. Another example of managing access is using fencing, hedges, flowerbeds, or other landscaping features to regulate access to the school.

**3. Territoriality.** This term means having an area in the school that sends out an unmistakable message of “school pride” and “creating a warm and welcoming environment” that gives students a sense of ownership. These messages should come from students, teachers, staff, and administrators. For example, as you enter the school, there could be a mural with a painting of Christ or a sign painted in school colors. Trophy cases could display awards won by students, teachers, or staff as well as other school

*Remember—advance planning does not mean you think that something will happen. It simply means you are prepared in the rare event that it does, and that you want to ensure everyone’s safety.*

prizes, student artwork, or pictures of everyone at work and at play, etc.

**4. Physical maintenance.** This involves improving the physical appearance of the school with regular and consistent repairs and maintenance, so that it looks well kept at all times. This sends

out a positive message to students and parents. For example, immediately painting over graffiti, repairing walkways and stairways to maintain safety, keeping restroom fixtures clean and in working order, keeping water fountains clean and sanitized, etc. Pretend you are expecting a special guest to visit; how would you like your school to look? Use this as a rule of thumb to maintain your school environment.

**5. Order maintenance.** This means “fostering a sense of physical and social order” by immediately nipping unwanted behavior in the bud. For this to occur, an adult presence is needed whenever students are going from one area in the school to another, and wherever students congregate outside the classroom. Teachers and staff should watch for and immediately deal with unacceptable behaviors, such as fighting, bullying, name-calling, and other acts of aggression meant to belittle or put down other students.

Teachers should not only set and model the social norms for



**Welcome to BAS!**  
**We are glad you're here.**  
**We do ask that all visitors  
please sign in at the office  
upon entering. Thank you.**

*For entry please use the  
buzzer/intercom  
to your right.*

the school, but also monitor the activities in their classrooms and on the playgrounds.<sup>24</sup> Unacceptable behaviors should be immediately corrected, and acceptable behavior acknowledged and fostered. Teachers should instruct students in how to apply the principles of democracy, tolerance, and cultural understanding outside the classroom, and model these principles themselves in their interactions with students. This will help prevent student protests/strikes, and counter social norms that support intolerant attitudes toward women, ethnic/racial minorities, religions, or any other group.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Staying Alert and Reacting in an Emergency**

If you and your school officials are vigilant in the areas suggested in this special issue of the JOURNAL, you probably will never have to implement the following emergency plan. Nonetheless, your school must have an action plan, should an armed assailant enter your school premises. Remember—advance planning does not mean you think that something will happen. It sim-

*A collaboration among school administrators, teachers, staff, parents, PTA members, school boards, law enforcement, community programs and agencies, and the governing bodies of the worldwide church is needed to keep our schools safe.*

ply means you are prepared in the rare event that it does, and that you want to ensure everyone's safety.

One of our universities uses the following lockdown procedure “to reduce exposure” of all persons at the university from the “immediate and ongoing threat of violence” by an armed assailant. The policy includes the following:<sup>26</sup>

- Notifying everyone that the school should be locked down. This can be done in a number of ways (i.e., emergency notification system (see the article by Ehren Ngo and Rick Williams on page 40), public address system, a runner, telephone [classroom, cell], bullhorn, siren, two-way radio);
- After notification, all persons should act in the following ways:
  - ✓ Lock and barricade yourself in a classroom, office, or other closed location.
  - ✓ If violence occurs, take cover and tell others around you to do the same.

- ✓ If confronted while seated in an office or classroom, immediately fall to the floor.
- ✓ When walking down the hallway, look for an open room in which to take cover.
- ✓ Close, lock, and/or barricade doorways; turn off lights, and hide.
- ✓ If a room has shades or curtains, close them.
- ✓ When outdoors, get behind a tree, wall, or other barrier; lie down and wait for rescue.
- ✓ If caught in an open parking lot, hide behind the front wheel/engine area of a vehicle.
- ✓ Once in a secured location, stay put; wait and listen for directions from law enforcement.
- ✓ Limit phone calls to emergency purposes only.

## Conclusion

The main key to preventing and dealing with the issue of school violence is a thorough understanding of the facts surrounding this problem. First, gather the facts. This involves conducting a thorough needs assessment of your school environment to determine how safe your school is against threats from within (i.e., interpersonal behaviors) and from outside (i.e., an assailant attack). Then determine the best proactive anti-violence prevention approaches to implement.

Schools can make a difference in teaching students to be non-violent and to settle disputes peaceably, even if they have limited resources. A school's greatest resource is manpower, people who want to make their schools safe places for learning and growth. Experts agree that the quality of school personnel affects the quality of education, and no doubt can affect the quality of violence prevention programs as well.<sup>27</sup> All Adventist schools should have a values education component included in all curriculums, for all grade levels. This should be taught from a biblical and doctrinal standpoint, focusing on the *Fruits of the Spirit* (love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—Galatians 5:22, 23), as themes.

Safer school environments contribute to positive educational outcomes; unsafe ones contribute to poor future outcomes for everyone concerned. A collaboration among school administrators, teachers, staff, parents, PTA members, school boards, law enforcement, community programs and agencies, and the governing bodies of the worldwide church is needed to keep our schools safe.

*"Violence is neither ordained, nor is a necessary evil in our society. It is not caused directly by poverty or economic hardship, but is mediated by people living in poor economic conditions, living environments, and conflict-ridden schools. Violence begins in the minds of men,"*<sup>28</sup> and, with God's grace, violence can end there, too. ☺



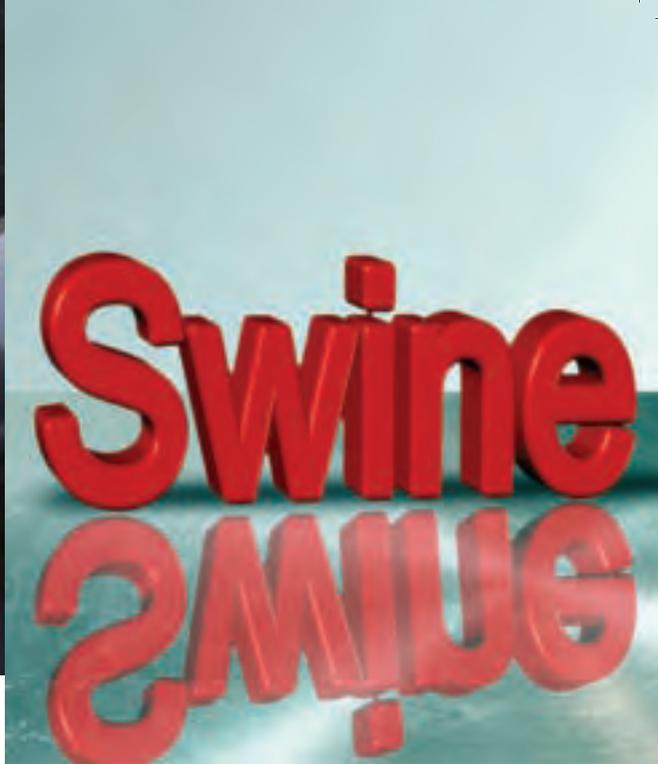
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*Responding to*



# CRISIS

*in the Adventist Educational Environment:*

**A CISM Perspective**

**BY HARVEY J. BURNETT, JR.**

**S**chools are not immune to traumatic events. Recent incidents such as the swine flu pandemic outbreak or the mass shootings that occurred at Virginia Tech painfully remind us that, in an evil world, schools will continue to face crises and threats. Schools are also affected by other challenges, which may include suicides, accidental deaths, severe life-threatening physical injuries, unexpected illnesses or deaths, and sexual assaults or abuse.

Despite the wholistic approach of their educational environment, Adventist students still remain vulnerable to traumatic events that can affect them physically, emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and spiritually. The recent vehicular deaths of four Pacific Union College students and the tragic accidental 2005 dormitory fire that occurred at Southern Adventist University provide a clear warning that all Adventist educational institutions

should develop, implement, and practice a crisis intervention response to various traumatic incidents that can affect the well being of their students, teachers, and staff. In fact, biblical principles suggest that Christian educational leaders have a moral obligation to implement such policies and procedures. Specific principles that support such action includes loving your neighbor as yourself (Galatians 5:14); children are a gift from the Lord (Psalm 127:3); educators have a valid calling (Ephesians 4:11, 12); the responsibility of training children appropriately (Proverbs 22:6); loving each other as Christ loves each of us (John 15:12); and Christ's example of meeting the immediate concerns of the people, thus creating an atmosphere in which He could present the gospel to them (Matthew 4:23).

Therefore, this article will outline a crisis intervention framework that can provide support when psychological crises occur in



an educational environment.

**Defining Crisis, Critical Incidents, Critical Incident Stress, and Trauma**

In order to understand and respond to the needs of students and others who have been exposed to traumatic events, we need to review several key terms:

A *crisis* occurs when a stressful life event overwhelms a person’s ability to cope effectively with a perceived challenge or threat.<sup>1</sup> The person’s psychological balance is disrupted, making him or her unable to function adequately in various areas of daily living (e.g., decreased academic performance, abrupt cessation of church attendance, or increased use of sick time).

*Critical incidents* are the stressor events that can produce a crisis response in many

human beings.<sup>2</sup> Table 1 lists individual and community incidents that may cause psychological trauma. Exposure to such incidents can lead to *critical incident stress*, a heightened state of arousal resulting in strong cognitive, emotional, physical, behavioral, and spiritual reactions.<sup>3</sup>

The wholistic biblical worldview embraced by Adventist educational institutions provides guiding

principles to use in helping students and others who have been exposed to a critical incident. A key factor for Christian educators to keep in mind is that these events can affect students’ relationship with God; therefore, teachers and administrators must create a learning environment that fosters a positive perception of God and His remnant church and reduces the likelihood that students will experience a crisis of faith.

**Responses of Children, Adolescents, and Adults to Critical Incidents**

As stated earlier, direct or indirect exposure to a critical incident can cause stress reactions that affect several areas of human functioning. Some common signs and signals are listed in Table 2 on page 36. Young people’s reactions to these traumas vary, depending on the following factors: proximity to the impact zone; comprehension of the nature of the disaster; physical injury sustained; amount of disability; witnessing injury or death of one or more family members or friends; perceived or actual life threat; duration of life disruption; familial and personal property loss;

*All Adventist educational institutions should develop, implement, and practice a crisis intervention response to various traumatic incidents that can affect the well being of their students, teachers, and staff.*

Table 1

**Common Individual and Community Critical (Traumatic) Incidents**

Individual	Community
Vehicle accidents and plane crashes	Earthquakes, tornados, hurricanes, fires, floods
Sexual assaults/abuse	Large-scale environmental pollution
Life-threatening experiences	Multiple injury/fatal accidents
Serious physical injury/abuse	Terrorism, war, bombings
Perception of a serious threat to self or a significant other	Highly publicized violent or sexual crimes
Psychological abuse	Traumatic events involving children
Severe injury or death of a family member	Homicides in the community
Suicide of a person close to the individual	Community-wide disasters and pandemics
Homicide	
Observing any of the individual or community incidents listed above	

parental reaction and extent of family disruption; child's predisaster state; and probability of recurrence.<sup>4</sup> Exposure to such traumas is much more widespread than might be imagined: According to Everly and Mitchell,<sup>5</sup> children and adolescents have an estimated exposure rate of 40 percent to traumas.

A study by Vogel and Vernberg suggests that a child's response to a disaster depends on his or her own perception of the trauma, which, in turn, is influenced by the child's cognitive and physical level of development.<sup>6</sup> When experiencing loss, exposure to trauma, and disruption of routine, children may exhibit five responses: increased dependency on parents or guardians; nightmares; developmental regression; specific fears when exposed to reminders of the disaster (e.g., a toy car if the child was in a car crash); and re-enactment of the disaster through play.

It is important to remember that people react differently to traumatic events. Furthermore, the signs and symptoms may not appear immediately after the critical incident. Usually, the stress reactions are temporary but can last for a month or more. It is strongly recommended that if these behaviors persist, the person be referred to a mental health professional.

### Crisis Intervention Response

Crisis intervention is defined as the provision of emergency psychological care or "psychological first aid" to people affected

*It is important to remember that people react differently to traumatic events.*

by a critical incident in order to help them return to normal functioning and prevent or mitigate the psychological effects of the event.<sup>7</sup> The hallmarks of providing effective crisis intervention are listed in Table 3.<sup>8</sup> The goals of crisis intervention are stabilization, mitigation of acute signs and symptoms of distress, restoration of independent functioning, and referral for a higher level of care when necessary.<sup>9</sup>

A well-established and effective method of caring for individuals exposed to traumatic events is the critical incident stress management (CISM) system developed by retired New York City firefighter and paramedic Dr. Jeffery T. Mitchell.<sup>10</sup> CISM interventions have three phases: pre-crisis, acute crisis, and post-crisis<sup>11</sup> and are comprehensive enough to be applied to individuals, small or large groups affected by the crisis event, families, organizations, and even an entire community.

CISM services are educational and designed to enhance performance and increase stress resistance. CISM is not psychotherapy, nor is it a substitute for psychological treatment.

The CISM crisis intervention approach has evolved so that it now includes various core components to help reduce human distress. These components correspond to the categories of disaster mental health interventions<sup>12</sup>: (1) pre-crisis planning and training; (2) large-scale demobilization and staff consultation procedures for public safety personnel as well as large-group crisis management briefings for civilian victims of terrorism, mass disaster,

Table 2

## Common Signs and Signals of a Stress Reaction

Physical	Chills; thirst; fatigue; nausea; fainting; twitches; vomiting; dizziness; weakness; chest pain; headaches; elevated blood pressure; rapid heart rate; muscle tremors; shock symptoms; grinding of teeth; visual difficulties; profuse sweating; difficulty breathing; problems sleeping
Cognitive	Confusion; nightmares; uncertainty about the present or future; hyper-vigilance; suspiciousness; intrusive images; placing blame; poor problem solving; poor abstract thinking, attention/decision making, or concentration/memory; disorientation regarding time, place, or persons; difficulty identifying objects or people; heightened or lowered alertness; increased or decreased awareness of surroundings
Emotional	Fear; guilt; grief; panic; denial; anxiety; agitation; irritability; depression; intense anger; apprehension; emotional shock or outbursts; feeling overwhelmed; loss of emotional control; inappropriate emotional responses
Behavioral	Withdrawal; antisocial acts; inability to rest; intensified pacing; erratic movements; change in social activity; change in speech patterns; loss or increase of appetite; hyper-alertness to environment; increased alcohol or drug consumption; change in usual communications patterns (e.g., abrupt decrease or increase in number of phone calls)
Spiritual	Anger at God; questioning of basic beliefs; withdrawal from places of worship; a feeling that faith practices and rituals seem empty; a loss of meaning and purpose; an uncharacteristic religious involvement; a sense of isolation from God; anger at clergy

community crises, and school system tragedies; (3) individual acute crisis intervention; (4) brief small-group discussions to help reduce acute symptom; (5) longer small-group discussions; (6) family crisis intervention; (7) pastoral/spiritual crisis intervention/disaster ministry; (8) organizational crisis planning and interventions; and (9) follow-up and referrals for additional psychological assessment and treatment where indicated.

The CISM model can be adapted to meet the needs of diverse organizations and settings,<sup>13</sup> including schools. In fact, the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) has developed two specific two-day training courses (Responding to School Crisis and Managing School Crisis) as well as a specialized training certificate to help responders meet the needs of students, parents, and teachers exposed to critical incidents.

### Providing a School-Based Crisis Intervention Response

According to Schonfeld and Newgass, schools can provide a safe place where children, adolescents, and college victims can go for help after a traumatic event.<sup>14</sup> They assert that a properly trained school crisis response team can provide care, triage, support services, short-term counseling, and referrals to community-service agencies, during and after a crisis affecting students, parents, staff, and other adults in the community. Therefore, we offer the following general suggestions that all Adventist educational institutions can implement in order to provide an effective crisis response for their institution:

First, establish a crisis intervention response team. This school-based team should include (1) a school counselor, psychologist, social worker, or a local community volunteer with training in



*The goals of crisis intervention are stabilization; mitigation of acute signs and symptoms of distress; restoration of independent functioning; and referral for a higher level of care when necessary.*

counseling; (2) teachers who are willing to work as a team and who have a sincere interest in serving others through providing crisis response; (3) a pastor or school chaplain; and (4) an administrator. Adventist colleges and universities should include their counseling center employees as organizers, facilitators, and members of the school crisis intervention teams. The size of the crisis team will depend on the complexity of the crisis response plan established by the school and the available resources.

Second, each Adventist school crisis response team should develop strategic

plans based on critical incidents that may require or benefit from a team response. In the United States, most states have created helpful crisis response templates, available to all schools through their state department of education and/or local emergency management office. Furthermore, the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse of the World Health Organization has developed guidelines for mental health and psychosocial support in emergency settings.<sup>15</sup>

The school crisis-response team can work as a subcommittee of a school health committee. The team should establish plans for the following types of crises: death of a student, staff member, or a community member whose demise affects a significant portion of the school population; natural disasters likely to occur in a school's geographic location; situations that involve a threat to the physical safety of students such as a violent crime or fire; and incidents that involve a perceived threat to the emotional stability of students such as bullying.<sup>16</sup>

Another important aspect of establishing a school crisis team is ensuring that its members receive appropriate training in the following core skill areas: assessment and triage; strategic planning; one-on-one, small group, and large group crisis interventions; and follow-up and referral mechanisms. School crisis team members should also receive additional training for school-based crisis interventions. Crisis teams should meet regularly to practice their skills, assess and update their crisis plans, and review the latest information relating to crisis-intervention management. Table 4 on page 38 lists several key training resources that are available.

Table 3

### Hallmarks of Crisis Intervention

1. Provide early intervention.
2. Offer services near the person's normal area of functioning.
3. Encourage the person or group in crisis to believe that the situation can be managed and that they can recover from the experience.
4. The intervention should be short.
5. Simple, directive interventions are the most useful.
6. Interventions should be practical.
7. The responder must be willing to use novel ideas to help.

Pre-incident education is an extremely important part of crisis intervention. Adventist schools should educate their students, parents, teacher aides, faculty, staff, and administrators about the nature of critical incidents; their potential effect; and how to respond as an event evolves. They also should teach wholistic coping strategies that are useful prior to, during, and after traumatic incidents; and share what their school plans to do if such events occur. Age-

appropriate materials can be presented by a member of the school crisis team, a faculty or staff member, or a guest lecturer.

A final key component in providing an effective crisis intervention response is developing a list of referral resources to which the administrators can turn if a critical incident occurs. This will require identifying, contacting, and networking with community mental health providers, organizations, CISM teams, churches, and other local school districts to which administrators can quickly refer students, parents, and staff for additional or more critical support. Furthermore, some conferences have developed a list of licensed Adventist medical and mental health professionals in the conference service area that school crisis teams can include in their referral repertoire.

Adventist schools that are too small or that lack the funding to develop an internal crisis team must build ongoing partnerships with neighboring school districts, colleges and universities, community mental health agencies, and if available, area



Small group critical incident stress debriefing.

and statewide CISM personnel. The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF) provides CISM training, consultations, and links to various state and local CISM teams throughout the world.<sup>17</sup> Through such partnerships, Adventist schools and their crisis response teams can obtain free or reduced cost training, access to additional referral resources, and support from other experienced and trained teams. Table 5 on page 39 provides a general listing of various resources that educational leaders and school crisis team members can contact for further information.

### Conclusion

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus warned His disciples that prior to His return, the world would experience traumatic events that would have a profound impact on all people of the earth regardless of age, race, gender, religious affiliation, level of education, and socioeconomic status. Today, the escalating number of critical incidents occurring throughout the world testifies to

Table 4

## Crisis Intervention Training Resources

**American Red Cross:** <http://www.redcross.org>

Offers several training courses in crisis intervention and disaster response.

**International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.:** <http://www.icisf.org>

Offers training in CISM interventions and CISM instructor training as well as a Certificate of Specialized Training Program in six specialty areas.

**LivingWorks:** <http://www.livingworks.net>

Offers the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) model, which is the mostly widely used suicide intervention training program in the world.

**Michigan Crisis Response Association, Inc.:** <http://www.mcrainc.com>

Provides a list of teams in Michigan that are excellent resources for crisis response in schools, and provides training and support for organizations both in Michigan and beyond.

**World Health Organization:** [http://www.who.int/mental\\_health/emergencies/en/](http://www.who.int/mental_health/emergencies/en/)

WHO's Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse provides leadership, guidance, and technical advice for policy development and field intervention activities.



## Large community briefing for CISM.

the fact that Christ's return is imminent. Therefore, it is essential that Adventist educational institutions—at all levels—prepare, plan, and train appropriate personnel to provide an appropriate response for their students, staff, parents, and members of the surrounding community who may be exposed to traumatic incidents. By providing such a timely, proactive response, they will not only be able to maintain an educational environment conducive for learning, but will also communicate a clear message of care, compassion, and hope to our students, their parents, school, staff, and surrounding community members in fulfillment of the urgent call of Matthew 28:18, 19. By responding to crises well in our schools, we can be the “hands of God” to lead others to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. ✍



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17. <http://www.icisf.org>.

Table 5

## General Crisis Intervention Response Resources

Organization	Website	Contact Information
American Association of Christian Counselors	<a href="http://www.aacc.net">http://www.aacc.net</a>	(800) 526-8673
American Association of Suicidology	<a href="http://www.suicidology.org">http://www.suicidology.org</a>	(202) 237-2280
American Red Cross	<a href="http://www.redcross.org">http://www.redcross.org</a>	(800) 733-2767
International Critical Incident Stress Foundation, Inc.	<a href="http://www.icisf.org">http://www.icisf.org</a>	(410) 750-9600 (410) 313-2473 (Emergency Hotline)
National Center for PTSD	<a href="http://www.ncptsd.org">http://www.ncptsd.org</a>	(802) 296-6300
National Suicide Hotline		800-SUICIDE



# **Emergency Notification Systems**

BY EHREN NGO AND RICK WILLIAMS

## *A Next Step in Preparedness?*

**“Do not fear”** appears repeatedly as a directive in the Bible. Sometimes, this admonition is perceived as simply spiritual advice. During times of crisis or disaster, however, there is a great need to combine our spiritual assurances with practical information and life-saving actions. Most of our educational institutions are subject to the threat of natural disasters such as earthquakes, tornadoes, fires, floods, hurricanes/cyclones, or tsunamis. Likewise, the risk of a violent incident involving a shooting or terrorism, or a nearby technological disaster such as a hazardous materials spill, is a real, and in many places, growing threat. While any of these events justifiably result in fear, having mechanisms to communicate the threat effectively during a crisis can provide a window for lifesaving actions, and prevent the panic that often occurs in emergency situations.

Early emergency warning systems have historical roots in civil defense. Similar to the concept of air-raid sirens used in times of

war, these systems were developed to warn of an imminent threat to the public that spreads over large geographic areas. During the Cold War, the United States established an emergency broadcasting system known as CONELRAD, using radio stations.<sup>1</sup> This national warning system evolved into the Emergency Broadcasting System (EBS), and subsequently into the present-day Emergency Alert System (EAS), which was now used to notify the public of many threats, including severe weather alerts.<sup>2</sup> Other countries continue to use air-raid sirens as their emergency warning system. Given the global reach of natural disasters, the importance and value of emergency warning systems that can reach out to a large population has been highlighted by the immense death tolls from recent tsunamis, tropical storms, and hurricanes/cyclones.

The proliferation of personal communication devices, such as cellular phones, pagers, texting devices, PDAs, and personal computers, is revolutionizing emergency warning systems. Typically

offered as an off-site hosted service, today's computer-based systems facilitate rapid message delivery to multiple devices, and allow for delivery of the message to specific groups or audiences that can be targeted by the recipients' attributes or geography. One example of this targeted message delivery in action was the use of an automated "reverse 911" system during the 2007 wildfires in San Diego, California, which contacted thousands of residents through their home phones, giving them the order to evacuate.<sup>3</sup>

### How They Work

Emergency notification systems use multiple communication pathways, including voice calls to landline and cellular phones, along with text messages to cellular phones, pagers, PDAs, and e-mail addresses, to simultaneously alert a large group of people about an emergency or disaster condition. On a school campus, specific instructions, such as an order to initiate a lock-down during threat of school violence, can be communicated



ual inquiries or announce the information publicly.

Emergency notification systems can also be used for non-emergency administrative purposes to reduce staff time and the reliance on phone trees. Uses might include conducting a rapid poll to determine the number of staff available for an event, informing a group of administrators about student illnesses, deaths, or localized emergencies, or automatically bridging executive leadership into an unscheduled conference call.

### Selecting a System

Selection of an emergency notification system requires an understanding of your institution's needs and existing communication resources, along with the capabilities of the service

provider. Important features to look for in an emergency notification system include the following:

1. *Supports multi-modal notification.* A notification system should be able to quickly contact all of the devices to which you

*Having mechanisms to communicate the threat effectively during a crisis can provide a window for lifesaving actions, and prevent the panic that often occurs in emergency situations.*

electronically to students, teachers, and staff within minutes, even if they are in different buildings on campus. Even individuals who are off campus would receive the notification and could be advised to stay away from the incident until the campus is deemed safe.

When integrated into our educational institutions, emergency notification systems can serve as a valuable tool to ensure early warning about a campus crisis. Several emergency notification systems also provide for two-way communication, which allows the recipients to confirm receipt of the message or even indicate their current status as "safe" or "in need of assistance." Systems that support two-way communication enable administrators to rapidly account for the status of students, teachers, and staff. Access to reliable information is valuable in assuaging the fears that naturally arise during emergency or disaster experiences. Imagine the relief in parents' hearts upon finding out that their children have confirmed through the notification system that they are safe after an earthquake or similar calamity. Similarly, emergency notification systems that include parents can be used to keep them informed about the initial incident and provide timely updates on the status of the emergency, reducing the need to answer individ-

need to communicate. This might include home, work, and cellular phones, along with text messages to phones, e-mail addresses, pagers, or even fax machines.

2. *Allows real-time, two-way communication.* The best notification systems not only send messages quickly, but can also confirm receipt of the message at the time of delivery. Confirmation reports should allow the message sender (or other authorized administrators) to view message confirmations in real-time, and provide both cumulative response data, as well as the ability to view individual confirmation responses.

3. *Provides mechanisms for reliability and redundancy.* The emergency notification system should always remain operational, even if the communication infrastructure in your area collapses. Emergency notification service providers should have mechanisms in place for service redundancy, including emergency self-sufficiency and multiple computer servers that are located in different parts of the country or world.

4. *Has adequate capacity for emergency usage.* If an emergency notification system is to be used for life-safety messages, the system's ability to deliver messages should be measured in minutes, not hours. Evaluating a notification system's total capacity,

voice and text message throughput per minute, and the percentage of utilization historically seen by the service provider, will help you determine if all members of your institution can be messaged within the notification window you need.

5. *Offers multiple access points and methods for initiating an emergency message.* Most emergency notification systems require messages to be initiated from a secure Website, or by phone, using a touchtone keypad or interactive voice menu. Some systems offer access to a live operator who is trained to take and send the message, and a few allow the initiation of messages from an application downloaded to a smart phone.

6. *Remains affordable with your usage patterns.* Emergency notification service providers offer different pricing packages—some allow a small number of messages and charge for overage, while others package large bundles of notification messages for a single price. A few providers allow unlimited usage of the notification system. Service providers' prices are competitive; thus, you should get comparative bids from several companies (many of them offer special pricing for schools). Recently, one notification system was made available to schools at no cost.<sup>4</sup>

7. *Provides a user-friendly mechanism to manage and maintain the user contact database.* Emergency notification service



providers use different mechanisms and procedures to maintain a current database, ranging from manual data entry to automated systems that link to existing databases. Manual data entry works for small user groups, while larger institutions will likely benefit from linked systems that capitalize on existing databases, such as those from human resources. Some systems allow the use of a limited database, using names of users and e-mail addresses, to invite users to enter and update personal contact information via a secure Website.

### System Limitations

Understanding the inherent limitations of emergency notification systems

*The proliferation of personal communication devices, such as cellular phones, pagers, texting devices, PDAs, and personal computers, is revolutionizing emergency warning systems.*

is crucial to the choice and successful integration of a system. Because these systems use existing communications and Internet infrastructure—telephone lines, cellular phone towers, and Internet providers—damage to these resources will compromise their ability to deliver messages. In situations with service denial due to high system usage or damaged infrastructure, text-

**Respond**  
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Emergency notification process for system in place at Loma Linda University

## *Systems that support two-way communication enable administrators to rapidly account for the status of students, teachers, and staff.*

based messages may be more reliable due to a lower consumption of bandwidth, compared to voice messages. Systems that span different technologies and use multiple methods of notification reduce the likelihood of message failure resulting from overload or damage in any one area of the infrastructure.

### **Opt-in or Opt-out?**

Emergency notification systems are only as good as the contact information entered into the system's database. For example, if an individual has an outdated cellular phone number or e-mail address listed in the database, the system won't be able to contact this person. Two primary approaches exist for enrolling users and their contact information into the notification database: opt-in and opt-out. The opt-in approach requires individual users to voluntarily enter their contact information if they wish to receive notifications. One of the disadvantages of opt-in systems has been a relatively low percentage of participants.<sup>5</sup> The opt-out approach utilizes contact information from existing databases, and requires users in the database to opt out of the system if they do not want to receive notifications. While the opt-out approach usually results in a higher percentage of participants, the information stored tends to be less reliable than obtained through opt-in programs, resulting in a higher number of undeliverable messages.<sup>6</sup> Hybrid approaches are possible in an educational setting, as students can be required to update their information and then be given the choice to opt-out during registration periods.

A database management plan is an important foundation for a successful emergency notification system. At a minimum, this plan should address which contact points will be used by the emergency notification service, whether the system will utilize an opt-in or opt-out approach, how often the database will be updated, what process will be used to update batches of users as well as individual users when the need arises, and what measures will be taken to address database privacy and security concerns. Discussing how the database will be managed and maintained with a prospective vendor is critical. And developing a clear plan for keeping the database accurate and up to date *before* contracting with an emergency notification service will help to ensure successful implementation and reliable ongoing service.

### **One of Many Tools**

Finally, as with all technological resources, emergency notification systems should be viewed as one tool in a larger communication and notification strategy. Alternative methods for localized message delivery include public address systems, sirens, bullhorns, electric signs, and even runners carrying written messages. Targeting a broader audience for message delivery includes the use of the school's Webpage and partnerships with local

broadcast media to deliver information through cable channels and radio stations. Emergency plans that integrate these methods into a layered approach with an emergency notification system will help ensure that the message is delivered even in adverse conditions.<sup>7</sup>

Successful communication is a key element in managing crises and disasters. With their ability to quickly distribute messages to individuals through multiple devices regardless of their location, emergency notification systems represent a significant breakthrough in facilitating communication during emergencies and routine business. When used in conjunction with a well-developed and maintained emergency plan, these systems can help to overcome many of the traditional challenges of delivering practical and life-saving information to an entire institution in the event of an emergency. ☞



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A tornado devastated Ardmore Adventist Academy in February 2009.

# Surviving a Natural

**I**t was February 9, 2009, and Ardmore Adventist Academy's weather radio was forecasting bad weather during the night, which only prompted me to feel concerned, as head teacher, that some windows in the gym might get broken by flying debris. So, the phone call and first sight of the tornado-ravaged building were shocking, to say the least. Broken windows? It was impossible to even tell where the windows had been in the building!

My first thought was to thank the Lord that the calamity occurred at 7:38 p.m., when no one was in the building. Not only had the tornado struck after school let out for the day, but the scheduled board meeting also had been cancelled. Although much of the building had been demolished, we were pleased to see how well the bathrooms, our emergency location, had held up during the storm.

## What to Do First?

But then the reality of the enormous task ahead of us began to hit home, raising many urgent questions: How quickly could our insurance agents make arrangements to retrieve the still-usable items from the building? Had anyone contacted the conference office? How could we quickly

find a location to hold classes? How do we get the kids through this, emotionally? What steps do we need to take in reconstructing the building? Should we build an in-ground shelter?

The tornado that struck our school in Ardmore, Oklahoma, was classified as an EF 4, with winds of around 170 miles per hour. As I looked around, I was amazed that despite the devastation, the trees were budding. Then I realized that those weren't buds; it was pink insulation splattered throughout the branches.

From the pattern of downed trees and damaged buildings in the immediate neighborhood, it appeared that the tornado had splintered into several parts. The portion that hit the school went right through the middle of the building. The back wall was left standing, but the front wall was bowed out, and the side walls were stacked like dominoes. The tornado collapsed the roof on most of the building, but totally removed it from the back third of the building, including the library where the school board would have convened.

But in that room and several others, books and papers were neatly stacked on the tables and shelves, and pictures were still hanging on the walls. It was hard to comprehend that the storm could rip off the roof while leaving stacks of papers untouched. But, unless destroyed by the falling roof, most of the classroom materials were where we had

**BY STEPHEN DENNIS**

*The tornado that struck our school in Ardmore, Oklahoma, was classified as an EF 4, with winds of around 170 miles per hour.*

left them the day before. At the front of the building, the caved-in roof had actually stopped just three feet short of crushing our expensive handbells, which looked just as we had left them after the last practice session.

Many of the items picked up by the tornado were scattered throughout our pecan orchard. Broken windows, chunks of brick, and broken furniture were all mixed together.

The most urgent concern was where to hold classes and who to hire to rescue usable items from the school. Getting a team in quickly after a disaster is important (before it rains again or the building is vandalized). But if we had taken some additional time to compare bids from several companies, things would have gone more smoothly, and we might have saved some money.

One of the most important things we learned was that we should have chosen a contact person, either before the disaster or at least immediately afterward, whose assignment was to work with all groups or individuals, checking on their fees and the quality of their work, but even more important, making sure that the actions taken in a number of areas suited our needs, rather than simply following the insurance company's directives. This included the rescue of usable materials, demolition of the current building, and reconstruction of the school plant.

Having one person in charge can prevent a variety of business problems, avoid miscommunication, promote unity in decision-making, and ensure appropriate monitoring of expenses (which may even prevent fraud). This person has the final say about a variety of decisions, and is the one through whom everyone should pass information: the insurance company, the school, the parents, the church, and the conference. Even though other people are designated to oversee certain projects, the contact person is the one ultimately in charge. When deciding how to proceed, school administrators must not allow themselves to get stuck wrangling over decisions in a variety of committees. They must designate a contact person with the authority to move forward quickly.

# Disaster



The remaining portion of the academy building being removed.

## **Avoid Snap Decisions**

Another lesson we learned is that it's unwise to make quick decisions in an emergency situation. Consultation and research are necessary before making choices with long-term and expensive implications. Yes, some decisions will have to be made right away, for purposes of emergency care and safety. But other decisions can wait until after the shock of the calamity has passed and you have had a chance to seek counsel.

In our case, the rescue team began cleaning up and removing usable materials from the building the day after the tornado struck, and finished its initial work about a week later. By that time, classes had already been moved to temporary quarters: Sabbath school rooms at the local Seventh-day Adventist church, about five miles away.

## **Temporary Schoolrooms**

Although board members and others brainstormed about a temporary location and we be-



Ardmore Adventist Academy students in one of their temporary classrooms.

gan looking for an alternate school site the same day the tornado struck, it was not until later that we realized we should have done some research to ensure that the classrooms had adequate space to conduct everyday school activities. Teachers and students and tables and supplies were all crammed in together. Having people on top of people hinders the education process in ways that are just unimaginable. The large room into which I and the upper-grade students moved was really very nice. But the smaller one was really tiny. My wife and her students actually got more done by sitting on the floor to do their work.

As we searched for a long-term solution, we had to keep in mind a variety of safety and practical issues: health-department requirements, especially the number of bathrooms and food preparation area; building security, especially in relation to visitor access; and the adequacy and location of outside play areas. With our temporary quarters, we were fortunate with the last one. The church property included a large empty grass lot.

### **Moving to Modular Buildings**

Though using the church's Sabbath school rooms was a helpful, if imperfect, short-term arrangement, we decided that installing modular classroom buildings on the playing field just west of the destroyed building would be a better long-term solution while we waited for our school to be rebuilt. It took a month to get the modular buildings in place and to prep them for classroom use. Looking back, I wish we had had shelving installed in the closets and chalkboards/whiteboards hung on the walls before we moved into the buildings. We also discovered that we needed to set up bottled-water dispensers in each room (modulars don't come with much plumbing). For in-class shelving, we did find some crates at an office supply store that worked well until we got the desks replaced. The crates were stackable and connected to each other vertically and horizontally.

*The tornado collapsed the roof on most of the building, but totally removed it from the back third of the building, including the library where the school board would have convened.*

We had to replace all of the school's outside play surface materials before we could allow the students to go outside for recess. Broken glass and other dangerous materials were strewn all over the field and playground. The gravel in our softwells beneath our playground sets had to be removed and replaced (we were able to get this done before we moved into the modular buildings). However, the grass didn't get replanted until shortly before school dismissed for the summer, so the children never did get to play on it again.

We belatedly discovered that it would have been better to delay replacing some classroom furniture until our new building was finished. We had space issues in our modulars, which were designed for classrooms, when we had to use portions of them for storage. In hindsight, we probably should have acquired an additional modular building for our storage needs, which we may do yet.

### **Connecting With the Conference**

Immediately contacting the conference educational superintendent after the disaster was, of course, vitally important. The superintendent, with help from others at the conference office and several local pastors, organized a trauma intervention event for our students the Monday after the tornado (our first day back in class). If your conference doesn't have people at the office who can provide crisis counseling, they can probably put you in touch with local people to provide this service. The conference office can also be helpful in coordinating donations of textbooks from sister schools to enable you to get started again.

As I write this article, in early July, work is moving forward on getting a stand-alone sign made. This is to identify the three modular classroom buildings, next to our destroyed school, as our temporary location while we are rebuilding. This is preferable to trying to attach a school sign to these temporary buildings. We



Temporary classrooms and storage area.

hope to get the sign up before school starts this fall. But we will probably install permanent lettering identifying the new building before we move into it, which is currently scheduled to occur in the fall of 2010. That is, if everything remains on schedule! The architectural plans will hopefully to be approved by the school board, the conference, and the state by September of this year, or sooner. We have asked the architects to keep in mind, as they draw up the plans for our new building, that we want to materials with low maintenance costs. After we have accepted the architectural blueprint, we will have to quickly obtain and decide on bids from contractors. And then I will pray for a dry winter, so construction can proceed without interruption.

#### A few additional observations:

- The insurance process can be extremely slow. Don't be afraid to ask your union or local conference to urge the insurance company to finalize on a settlement in a timely manner. Try to be reasonably patient in your expectations about their timelines.
- If you don't currently have a fireproof and wind-proof storage area for important documents and computer back-up disks, be sure to remedy this immediately. We had to ask the insurance company for a copy of our policy, since we lost ours in the storm.
- It's important to plan ahead and to practice disaster drills for a variety of likely (and some unlikely) events. If your area is subject to tornadoes and other dangerous storms, you should build a "safe room" in the building or construct an in-ground shelter.
- Check to be sure that your teachers and school board members keep up to date on their paperwork and send a copy to the local conference, especially items such as inventory lists.
- Develop an ongoing, cordial working relationship with your local newspaper and television reporters as well as church media sources. We are keeping these folks regularly informed about what

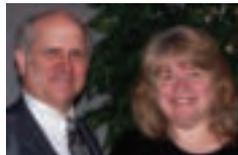
*The most urgent concern was where to hold classes and who to hire to rescue usable items from the school.*

is happening and about our plans during the rebuilding process. This has prompted an outpouring of support in cards and letters, and even funds from across the United States—one church-related school even supplied our students with paper, pencils, crayons, etc., that will last well into the next school year.

• And perhaps the most important lessons, which have been reinforced throughout the whole ordeal, is to pray for the Lord's guidance, and to depend on the wisdom of a "multitude of counselors" (Proverbs 11:14; 15:22).

One final, personal note: Don't forget to express a big THANK YOU to everyone who helps you through a crisis by their emotional and practical support of the teachers, students, and the school, especially their holding up your needs to the Lord in prayer. We are most grateful for all the help and support we've received throughout this difficult time. ☺

*The author expresses his thanks to the people who contributed to this article.*

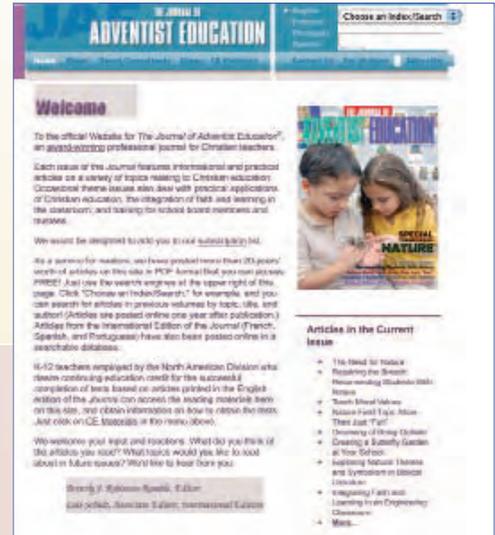


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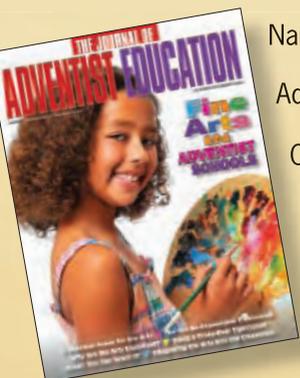
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