

HOW TO DEVELOP A MOCK CRISIS DRILL INVOLVING A SCHOOL AND EMERGENCY PERSONNEL*

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Abstract

The content in this module will help a school system prepare and carry out a mock crisis drill involving administration, faculty, parents, students, law enforcement, emergency evacuation personnel, and defense and swat personnel. The drill is intended to test the plans that are in place for all of the involved organizations as well as a share session that will allow for expanding and improving the plans.

Goal

The goal is to practice a crisis situation in a school setting that will allow for an understanding of how well the school's crisis plan will work. Communication between all of the organizations will be critiqued to ensure proper procedures are carried out in a timely fashion.

Objectives

At the conclusion of this module, you will be able to understand the planning process of running a mock crisis drill in a school system.

- Identify participants
- Plan the crisis drill
- Develop strategies for communication to the public before the crisis drill occurs
- Provide the needed forms for the participants
- Prepare all participants for the drill
- Hold a debriefing meeting for closure and suggestions
- Critique school plan versus the drill
- Build a rapport with the emergency agencies for such an occasion

Planning

On January 30, 2007, the Augusta County Sheriffs' office contacted the Superintendent for Augusta County Schools with a proposal to practice a critical incident drill in one of our high schools. Conducting a drill of this magnitude requires a tremendous amount of planning, communication, and organization. This particular drill required the participation of twenty three different community organizations with a total of approximately three hundred individuals participating. Below are some of the details that were discussed and they are items we recommend if you are planning a similar drill:

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- The initial meeting should consist of the Superintendent and his/her immediate staff and the Sheriff/Chief of Police and his/her immediate staff.
- A time and place must be established. For our school division, Fort Defiance High School (FDHS) was selected due to the fact that they are the only high school with surveillance cameras. We conducted our drill the week after school dismissed for the summer. We felt the surrounding community around FDHS would be aware of the summer break time frame, therefore they would understand that school was not really in session. Additionally, for a drill of this size, we felt it would be best if a modified student body and faculty were participating versus the entire school.
- Make the drill as realistic as possible. Only the superintendent and the Sheriff knew the exact scenario. Again, this is a drill that encompasses twenty three agencies and school administrators. If information is leaked out about the details of the incidents, then the drill would be compromised.
- In order for this to be a learning experience for Augusta County Schools, we decided to create mock student/teaching schedules. We asked for 100 student volunteers and we used all of the administrators in Augusta County to play the role of teachers in an effort to get everyone involved and see first hand what could happen in their respective schools. A parent permission letter (Attachment II) was created and sent home to the parents. Students provided a parent signature in order to participate.
- A “pre-drill” meeting was held with the student volunteers and administrators/teachers prior to the drill that morning. This meeting served to pass out room assignments and schedules. The FDHS principal conducted the meeting and instructed everyone the time of the “first bell” and to act as if it was a normal day. At no time were the students and staff notified of the start time of the shooting incident.
- A couple of days prior to the drill, copies of the FDHS emergency drill procedures were reviewed and distributed to the other administrators in the division.
- The superintendent’s staff needed to notify appropriate personnel of the drill. For example, the director of transportation was made aware of the drill in order to have two bus drivers available to be used and transports if and when students needed to be evacuated.
- It was determined that a post drill debriefing was paramount. The superintendent felt the need to serve lunch to every participant prior to the debriefing. Therefore, the director of food service had to be informed of the drill and she had to organize the luncheon.

The second meeting consisted of representatives of the community organizations, school superintendent, and law enforcement. See Attachment I for a list of community organizations that participated. The details were laid out to the other organizations without giving away the scenario.

- It was determined that the incident would be dispatched through the 911 center. Again, in an effort to inform patrons of the drill, several communication techniques were implemented. Flyers were posted by law enforcement. Letters were mailed home to all the students that attended FDHS and all that students that attended the feeder schools (Attachment III). Message boards were established on the main highway by the state department of transportation on the day of the drill. The press and media outlets were notified. The Emergency Operation Center (EOC) made a reverse 911 call the night before the drill. This call was sent to all the residences in the FDHS area.
- A staging area was determined at a location across the street from the high school. The purpose of this area was to serve as the command center for EOC and law enforcement. An area for the media/press was established and roped off.
- Details of each organization’s participation were discussed. See Attachment I for overall responsibilities.
- Time and date of incident were finalized.
- It was determined that a weapons check was paramount prior to the shooting. Law enforcement and SWAT teams met two hours prior to the incident to replace real ammunition with blanks.
- Radio frequencies were established and coordinated between all of the EOC and law enforcement agencies.
- Communication and a plan of action were finalized between the Fire and Rescue and Augusta Medical Hospital.

Chronological Order of Events

- Police and emergency data is not being included due to the significance of the information and possible use by an individual that would want to create a real crisis situation.
- Augusta County Schools' order of events was established as a learning tool. It will be critiqued and changes will be made accordingly. The log of events is not being divulged due to the sensitive nature of this information.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- All of the agencies could not communicate at the beginning as they had planned.
- A secondary means of communication was used. This backup plan was already developed for this particular reason.
- A parent contact number was created and shared with the media. This enabled concerned parents to contact Emergency Operations Center to get the latest information regarding student evacuations.
- Law enforcement located and secured a location to allow parents to pick up their child.
- A very strict accountability procedure must be in place to ensure an accurate and documented release of students.
- A methodology of accountability of the victims that are evacuated from the scene and transported to local hospital emergency room must be in place.
- Access to all locations of the school must be provided to all law enforcement agencies.
- Evacuation of students should follow the school's crisis evacuation plan under the leadership of law enforcement.
- Debriefing of school personnel is paramount.

Other information was discussed and documented but, due to the sensitive nature, it is not being presented in this module.

Attachment I

The Augusta County Sheriff's Office in conjunction with the Augusta County School System will be holding a public safety drill at Fort Defiance High School on June 7, 2007 beginning at 8:00 a.m. The drill will address a serious mock situation that will incorporate many facets of public safety. Agencies that will be participation will be:

Augusta County Sheriff's Office	Command Post, SWAT, Road Support, School Resource Officers
Staunton Police Department	Assist Command Post, SWAT, Public Information
Waynesboro Police Department	SWAT
Virginia State Police	Road Support, Crowd Control
Staunton Rescue Squad	Emergency Care, Transport victims, Organize Victims, Make Up for Victims, Coordinate with Augusta Medical Center
<i>continued on next page</i>	

Waynesboro First Aid	Emergency Care, Transport Victims
Verona Fire Department	Road Support, Emergency Care, Transport Victims
Weyers Cave Fire Department	Road Support, Emergency Care, Transport Victims
Bridgewater Rescue	Road Support, Emergency Care, Transport Victims
Air Care	Transport Victim
Augusta Medical Center	Emergency Room, Transport Victims, Coordinate Triage Center
Augusta County EOC	Command Post, Coordinate all Radio Frequencies
Augusta County Fire and Rescue	Emergency Care, Transport victims, Organize Victims, Make Up for Victims, Coordinate with Augusta Medical Center
Red Cross	Coordinate Evacuation Center, Grief Counseling
Virginia Defense Force	Secure Perimeter, Crowd Control
Central Shenandoah Emergency Medical Services Council	Coordinate Evacuation Center, Grief Counseling, Evaluators
Western State Hospital Crisis Debriefing Team	Coordinate Evacuation Center, Grief Counseling
Virginia Department of Transportation	Planning of traffic control for Drill
Shenandoah Valley Department of Social Services	Coordinate Evacuation Center, Grief Counseling
Rockingham County Fire and Rescue	Emergency Care, Transport victims, Organize Victims, Make Up for Victims, Coordinate with Augusta Medical Center
Virginia Department of Emergency Management	Evaluators
FDHS administrators/faculty/students	Role players
Augusta County Schools	FIXME: A LIST CAN NOT BE A TABLE ENTRY. Planning Permission Slips (Attachment II)Community Notification Letter (Attachment III)Coordinate Transportation for EvacuationLunchCommand PostPublic InformationAssist Command Post with Facilities and KeysProvide School CounselorsAssist Augusta Medical with accountability of victims

Table 1

Attachment II
 General Participation Consent/Release Form
 Consent to be Photographed/Published

I/we give full and knowledgeable consent for _____
 to fully participate in the Mock Disaster Drill to be held on the premises of Fort Defiance High School (FDHS) on the date of June 7, 2007. I/we understand that there are inherent risks involved with this event and have been informed of such risks and by signing this do hereby agree to understanding those risks. Furthermore, by signing this I/we do hereby release Augusta County Public Schools, Augusta County Sheriff’s Department, and any and all other agencies, personnel, or others involved from any and all liability including, but not limited to injury or illness that may occur during or after this activity.

I, _____ consent to be photographed by news media and private photographers on June 7, 2007 during the Mock Disaster Drill to be held on the premises of Fort Defiance High School. I further consent that the photographs and motion pictures (if any) may be published for any purpose and in any form. Furthermore, I will not hold Augusta County Public Schools, Augusta County Sheriff’s Department, other involved agencies and personnel involved in this activity liable for any photographs or motion pictures that may be taken and/or published.

Print Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

If participant is a minor, parent or guardian must sign below:

Print Parent/Legal Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian Signature: _____

Date: ____/____/____

Attachment III

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Augusta County Schools, in conjunction with the Augusta County Sheriff’s Office, will be conducting a “School Safety Drill” on June 7, 2007. This drill will take place at Fort Defiance High School and will be used as training to prepare the students, faculty and emergency personnel of Augusta County on what should be done in case of a disaster at any Augusta County School. Please, do not be alarmed! This is a learning opportunity for our school administrators as well as several emergency service agencies in our area. In an attempt to make this simulation as authentic as possible, SWAT team members, Deputies, Fire/Rescue, Virginia State Police, Augusta Medical Center, and other emergency personnel will be responding to Fort Defiance High School in emergency mode. Additionally, the evacuation of student and faculty volunteers will be part of the drill.

Again, we would like to remind you that this is only a practice drill that will be conducted after school has been dismissed for the summer on June 7, 2007. Should you have any questions, please call the Augusta County Sheriff’s Office at 540-245-5333 or the Augusta County School Board at 540-245-5100.