

INTRUDER SCENARIO

As the students arrived at _____ School on the first day after spring break, a woman is noticed entering through the bus entrance with the children. Because the teachers on bus duty recognize the woman as a parent and the spouse of the special education teacher, no one questioned her as she entered the building. The woman, however, did not report to the office but went to her husband's classroom with the children.

When the woman arrived in the classroom, she pulled a handgun from her purse and began screaming at her husband. (Her husband had told her the previous evening that he was going to file for divorce and petition for custody of their child.) The teacher shouted for the students to duck under their desks but before he could finish, his wife began shooting, hitting him three times in the stomach.

Upon hearing the gun shots, a teacher in a nearby classroom called the office. The principal activated the school's emergency plan and ordered an immediate lock-down.

Scenario Questions:

1. Draw your initial emergency organization, including personnel assigned to each position (by title), in the space below.

Focus on the rationale behind the groups' organization charts. Do not let the groups merely state that the organization is "in the school's emergency plan." Try to draw out the individuals' qualifications for the positions assigned.

Minimally, the groups' organization charts should include an Incident Commander, a Safety Officer, and Section Chiefs. Point out that it is better to keep the span of control small.

2. Where will you establish your Command Post for this incident?

Because the incident is within the confines of the school and the building is under lock-down, it is advisable to establish the Incident Command Post in the main office.

INTRUDER SCENARIO (CONTINUED)

3. After establishing command, what will you do first? Why?

Call 9-1-1. This is not a situation with which school personnel are equipped to deal. After calling 9-1-1, size up the situation. Try to find out what is happening in the classroom—how many people are injured? How seriously? (Note that the Incident Commander should assume that all students assigned to the classroom are present. Caution the students that they should place no one at risk to gather this information.)

4. What is your first concern in this situation?

Your first concern should be for the safety of the students, faculty, and staff. Ensure that lock-down procedures have been followed.

5. For what contingencies must you plan?

The incident is unfolding in a special education classroom. These students are not equipped to deal with a traumatic situation or to respond as directed by the teacher (who is now injured) or the shooter. You also know that gunshots have been fired but do not know how many people, other than the shooter's husband, have been injured or how seriously.

Finally, it is possible that the shooter will leave the classroom and pose a risk to others as she tries to make her escape.

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #1

[Distribute this update 20 minutes into the exercise!]

The police are on their way but it will take several minutes. According to a teacher in an adjacent classroom, a male teacher who is a friend of the shooter and her husband went to the classroom in an attempt to calm the shooter. The teacher reports that she heard two more gunshots but is unsure if anyone was hurt. The teacher also says that she does not know the condition of the shooter's husband but says that she can hear the students in the classroom screaming and crying. The shooter also sounds hysterical. She is screaming, threatening to "burn the school down."

A custodian has told the secretary that he is going to sneak down the hallway to see if he can gather more information about what's going on in the classroom.

Update #1 Questions:

1. How does this information change your planning?

Because the shooter is clearly unstable and is threatening to set fire to the building, maintaining the lock-down may not be safe. The group should at least consider an evacuation but should give careful consideration to how to evacuate those classrooms in immediate proximity to the shooter.

2. What should you do about the custodian?

If possible, stop him! The fact that at least one teacher, maybe two, have been shot is evidence enough of the volatile situation. No one should be allowed near that classroom until the police arrive.

3. How will you communicate an evacuation order to the teachers?

The groups' responses to this question will depend on the communication methods that are available in the building.

4. How will you evacuate the classrooms in close proximity to the shooter?

The groups' responses to this question will depend on the building design. It is unlikely that the classrooms can be evacuated through the hallway without alerting the shooter. Depending on the building design, it may be possible for the students to evacuate through the windows or through an exterior door from the classrooms.

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #1 (CONTINUED)

5. For what contingencies should you plan?

The groups' responses may vary widely. You may anticipate responses such as those listed below:

- **The shooter may actually start a fire.**
- **There may be fatalities in the classroom.**
- **The shooter may leave the classroom and enter another classroom or begin shooting randomly.**
- **Some students may become hysterical and present a danger to themselves or others.**

6. How will you notify parents? What will you tell them?

It is of critical importance that parents not be panicked by the information they receive, but not notifying parents is not an option. Suggest that notification be made in two ways:

- **Through the media.**
- **By personal telephone call to parents of children who are in the classroom with the shooter.**

The media announcement should include:

- **What has occurred, and the general status at the school. This information should not be too specific, in part because only general information is known and in part because specific information may: (a) panic parents and spouses, and (b) draw a crowd to the school.**
- **A strong suggestion not to pick up children at this time.**
- **A request not to call the school.**
- **Reassurance that school personnel have notified the police and that everything possible is being done to ensure the safety of students and staff.**

7. What does the fact that the male teacher placed himself at risk tell you about your school plan?

The fact that the male teacher was willing to place himself at risk was commendable—but it means that your school plan requires additional training. No one should go near the classroom in a lock-down situation.

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #2

[Distribute this handout 35 minutes into the exercise!]

The police and a hostage negotiator have arrived at the scene. They have cordoned off the area surrounding the school. Fire personnel and several emergency medical service crews have also been dispatched to the school but, at this time, only one firetruck has arrived.

Just as the police arrive, the phone rings in the office. The shooter is calling to tell the principal to tell the police to go away. Then, the shooter hangs up the phone abruptly. The situation in the classroom is uncertain.

The media have picked up the story and interrupted regularly scheduled programming with the news alert.

Three teachers have sent runners who report that some of the younger children are extremely upset and requesting additional help.

Some parents have started to arrive, including the parents of several students in the classroom with the shooter. The mother of one student is sobbing uncontrollably and is demanding that "someone" do "something" to save her child.

Update #2 Questions:

1. What information will you provide to the incoming Incident Commander (the senior officer) during your change-of-command briefing?

Critical information to be provided to the police includes:

- **Who the suspect is.**
- **That the shooter has a gun and that shots have been fired.**
- **The number of students in the classroom and the fact that they are special education students.**
- **The current situation.**
- **The actions taken by school personnel to protect the remaining students and staff.**

If possible (and assuming that the police do not already have one), the outgoing Incident Commander should provide a floor plan of the school.

2. What will you do to help the teachers who have requested assistance?

The groups' responses to this question will be dependent on their local situation. The Planning Section Chief should maintain a list of available staff. If no Planning Section Chief has been assigned, this responsibility rests with the Incident Commander. If no provision for maintaining the status of resources is included in the school plan, suggest that the groups record resource status as a "lesson learned."

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #2 (CONTINUED)

3. Draw your organization chart as it looks at this time.

4. How will you work with the police throughout the remainder of the incident?

The groups' responses should be focused on cooperation with response personnel. At this point, the incident should be managed using a Unified Command that includes law enforcement, fire, and school personnel jointly making decisions. Although the school personnel's role may be limited to providing information, nonetheless a school representative must be part of the command structure because the school district retains legal responsibility for the welfare of the students and staff.

5. Will you allow arriving parents to pick up their children? If yes, where will your parent/student reunification point be?

The groups will probably determine that there is no way to prohibit parents from picking up their children. The parent/student reunification point will be dependent on the layout of the school property. The groups will need to ensure some type of verification that parents actually pick up their own children and will have to develop some type of recordkeeping system to track which children have been picked up and by whom.

6. What will you do to calm the hysterical mother?

Separate the mother from the others until she can be calmed. Reassure her that school personnel and responders are doing everything they can to ensure that her child is safe and returns to her as soon as possible.

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #2 (CONTINUED)

7. For what long-range processes must you plan?

Because of the overall trauma of the situation and because as many as two faculty members—and perhaps some children—have been shot, the groups should plan for post-traumatic stress. All faculty and staff should receive a critical incident stress debriefing. Counselors should be made available to faculty, staff, and students who indicate the need. (Note that school personnel should be especially aware of faculty, staff, and/or students who do not request counseling to ensure that emotional problems are not being covered up or suppressed, only to come to light at a later time.) If need be, the district should bring in specialized counselors from outside the school district.

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #3

[Distribute this handout 60 minutes into the exercise!]

It is now approximately 1½ hours since the incident started. Through the efforts of the hostage negotiator, the shooter has surrendered without further violence. Police are escorting her to a police vehicle.

As the shooter surrendered, armed officers and the principal entered the classroom. They were immediately mobbed by the children, all of whom were crying loudly. The shooter's husband is lying on the floor at the front the classroom and is covered in blood. It is not immediately clear if he is alive. The male teacher who had hoped to mediate the dispute, has also been shot but is able to speak to the police.

Reporters are now on the scene from every local media outlet. Several are trying to interview teachers and students to see how they feel about the incident.

Additional parents have also arrived and are upset that they cannot pass beyond the police barrier to talk to school personnel and pick up their children.

Update #3 Questions:

1. What can you do to assist the police in calming the parents?

Ensure that the parent/student reunification point is beyond the police barrier. It may also be appropriate for the principal, assistant principal, or guidance counselor to go to the reunification point to speak with the parents. (Note that if the individual managing the response for the school district under a Unified Command goes to speak with the parents, he or she must delegate command responsibilities to the individual who is second in the line of succession—and notify the Incident Commander—before leaving the Incident Command Post.)

If necessary, the most distraught or otherwise disruptive parents should be taken to an area away from the reunification area where school personnel can talk with them quietly and avoid having the disruption spread to other parents.

2. How will you handle the media?

The Public Information Officer should speak with media representatives. They should be given a brief description of the situation and (very importantly) be given reassurances that the situation is now under control. Under no circumstances should the reporters be permitted to interview the students.

INTRUDER SCENARIO UPDATE #3 (CONTINUED)

3. What insights has participating in this exercise provided you about your school's or district's state of readiness for an emergency situation involving an intruder?

4. What revisions would you recommend for your emergency plan as a result of this exercise?