

BULLETIN NO. 6

Working With Your Local Responders



When it comes to emergencies in a school, the first people to receive the call for help are your local police department, fire department/EMS, and sheriff's office. Talking with these groups enables you to find out what their capabilities are, how they would respond to an incident, and what resources are available from these groups to help prevent, mitigate, & recover from traumatic events at schools. Equally important, such discussion allows the first responders to become familiar with the layout and needs of your facilities and their inhabitants in advance of an emergency situation.

How well do your local fire department, police department, EMS personnel, sheriff's office, and Emergency Management Officials know your facility? Do you have a system of response worked out with them? How will you tell if the person outside your door during a lockdown is an actual police officer/firefighter/medic? If you don't know the answers to these questions, then you haven't spoken with your local first responders and you are not as prepared as you should be.

Initial Contact

First and foremost, reach out to local community first responders and open a line of communication. Most, if not all, local emergency responders are proactive when it comes to safety and security, especially when it comes to children. When you speak with these agencies, have a list of questions as to what type of services they provide, what their typical response would be for certain situations, and what their capabilities are. Offer them the opportunity to visit and walk through your school buildings. Be open to any security suggestions they may have. For example, a helpful and relatively inexpensive suggestion may be to provide large scale numbering on all exterior doors to assist responders in quickly determining the location of needed assistance. It is important in discussing emergency planning to adopt a multi-hazard approach....tornado, fire, flood, intruder, etc.

Training

Now that you have opened the line of communication with your local responders and have developed a "working" plan, the next step is to conduct a table-top exercise. Table top exercises allow you to clarify roles and responsibilities, evaluate your plans, assess resources/capabilities, and identify needs and solutions. These exercises also allow you to develop effective relationships with members of the other agencies. The table-top exercises are the building blocks that help set up drills which can lead to practicing of full scale exercises. Full scale exercises will be addressed in a later bulletin

For additional information or questions, please contact one of the following:

Matt Carver, School Administrators of Iowa- mcarver@sai-iowa.org

Nicole Proesch, Iowa Dept. of Education - nicole.proesch@iowa.gov

Mary Gannon Iowa Association of School Boards - mgannon@ia-sb.org

The Iowa School Safety Coalition was formed in December 2012. Participating organizations include Iowa Homeland Security & Emergency Management, Iowa State Fire Marshal, Iowa Division of Intelligence and Fusion Center, Iowa Department of Education, Iowa Emergency Management Association, Des Moines Police Department, Iowa State Education Association, Iowa Association of School Boards, School Administrators of Iowa, American Institute of Architects – Iowa Chapter, EMC Insurance Companies.