

**STATE OF NEW MEXICO**  
**Governor's Task Force on Campus Safety**  
**Emergency Management/Public Safety Subcommittee**

# **Recommendations for Action: Emergency Preparedness in Higher Education**

May 25, 2007

*“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.”*

Margaret Spellings, in Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities.

## **OVERVIEW**

New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson established the Task Force on Campus Safety to review the preparedness level of the State's higher education institutions and develop recommendations. A subcommittee has been charged with developing guidelines for policy development and implementation to assist the State's 28 institutions of higher education in ensuring they are prepared to deal with emergency situations, to include disasters. While the initial Task Force was formed in the immediate aftermath of the shooting incident at Virginia Tech, the subcommittee is recommending policies and actions follow an “all hazards” approach, rather than just a single incident type. While active shooters present a real threat to the nation's colleges and universities, the response to them needs to be part of a comprehensive emergency management program.

## **DISCUSSION**

The subcommittee, as well as the larger Task Force, identified a number of items and issues related to emergency preparedness at colleges and universities across the state. The following lists some of the major items discussed:

- There is great diversity in size/scale among higher education, from single building community colleges up to the research universities that have hundreds of buildings spread across multiple square miles of land. Some have hundreds of students in attendance, while others have tens of thousands. As a result, there is no single solution that will work for all. However, there are common elements and themes that apply to most.
- Some institutions of higher education have full service police departments (and one has a fire department), while others do not even have security guards.

- Some institutions have integrated with emergency management agencies from their surrounding communities, while one has a full time emergency manager.
- Not all students are 18 or 19 years old. While the perception across the nation is that students at colleges and universities are “children” in need of supervision, the reality is that very large percentages are older adults that may have families and careers.
- The actions that may be taken at a K-12 public school are often not applicable at colleges and universities. The following are some of the obvious differences noted:
  - The clientele for higher education are adults who can make their own decisions, as opposed to juveniles who are temporary “wards of the state”.
  - K-12 schools are frequently restricted access areas where visitors are tightly regulated, while colleges and universities are much more open and host a variety of activities where people from the larger community come onto the campus.
  - Start and end times for K-12 schools are well defined. At colleges and universities, however, students may start and end their classes at a variety of times throughout the day, and may come early or stay later for studying, recreation, or socializing. In addition, the larger universities have at least some facilities open 24-hours per day.
  - Communication with students in K-12 schools is easy to accomplish through home rooms and a building-wide public address system used for daily announcements. These methods do not exist at colleges or universities.
  - Many students live at the larger universities, with some in dormitories or apartments, and others in family housing. K-12 public schools do not generally have this issue.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

The following recommendations for action have been identified to guide higher education institutions in developing or improving their emergency response plans and capabilities. As noted above, these are not intended as mandates, but rather as starting points for developing a comprehensive emergency management program.

- Identify designated internal emergency managers at each college or university - in essence, an incident planning team. These people will liaison with local emergency managers and help ensure plans developed by both are integrated and compatible. It is important these people be given the authority to make and carry out the plans, though final approval of plans may certainly be reserved for the president or chief executive officer for the institution. This team of people should:
  - Be responsible for developing, pulling together, and/or integrating emergency plans and incident action plan (IAP) guides. Tools are available to assist with this process. See the resources guide at the end of this document.
  - Develop and maintain lines of succession for incident decision (e.g., president or CEO) and response personnel.
  - Liaison with local emergency managers to participate in local preparedness activities
  - Identify and recommend communication tools for notification of the university community

- Regularly review and provide updates to the institution's administration regarding emergency plans and responses
- Identify response capabilities for hazards faced by the institution. These might include the following:
  - For smaller institutions, this may be a matter of dialing 911 and assisting in evacuations until outside first responders can arrive.
  - Larger institutions may identify which internal agency is responsible for taking actions, and how they can obtain additional resources in the event of a disaster. This might include use of mutual aid agreements with other agencies, pursuant to 29-8-1 NMSA 1978, et seq.
- Identify and provide appropriate resources for response to disasters. These might include the following:
  - Emergency building coordinators, who might normally carry out other assigned duties, that can direct and assist with evacuations and use fire extinguishers
  - Campus community emergency response team (C-CERT) trained personnel that can provide assistance to professional rescuers, as well as lead others in self-rescue activities
  - Unarmed security personnel that can handle minor incidents, assist with evacuations, use fire extinguishers, and render first aid and CPR
  - Armed security personnel that can respond to some violent incidents, as well as provide the other services already identified
  - Certified police officers that can do the above, plus make arrests, conduct investigations, and offer public education programs
- Ensure radio communications between the institution's response agency(ies) and outside resources are interoperable. If different, incompatible systems are used, mechanisms for establishing interoperability should be identified and established. These might include exchanging radios at the scene, use of pre-established mutual aid frequencies, or use of gateways that tie the systems together.
- Follow standard emergency management principles. As disasters transcend institutional boundaries, it is important that the institution be able to work with city, county, state, and national resources that may be brought in to assist. Using the same emergency management principles and terminology reduces confusion and facilitates a faster, more efficient response to the emergency.
- Conduct training for decision makers and responders at the institution. Training should include courses in incident management and the operations. Recommended courses include the Federal Emergency Management Agency's introductory courses to incident management (IS-100, IS-200, and IS-700), as well as the West Virginia University courses designed for campus administrators on homeland security and weapons of mass destruction (AWR-123 and 124).
- Conduct exercises across the institution. These may range from tabletop exercises for administration or individual departments all the way to full scale exercises involving outside agencies. Some type of exercise should be held at least annually, with full scale exercises held at least once every three years.
- Institutions are encouraged to regularly report progress on emergency plans to their students, staff, and faculty. This can help keep the community aware and involved in the process. Incorporation of awareness training and self-help guidance should be distributed

to all members of the campus community. This may be done through new student and employee programs, distribution of notices and bulletins, posting on the institution's website, or other such means that the institution feels are appropriate. Reports on progress and obstacles encountered should also be sent to the Cabinet Secretary of the Higher Education Department so means of resolving problems can be identified and pursued on behalf of the institutions similarly situated. This might include requests for legislative support and/or funding.

- Ask for assistance or guidance from other institutions. The subcommittee is working on developing a "train-the-trainer" program that will allow institutions to have key personnel trained in these areas so they can go back and implement the recommended steps. In addition, some of the larger institutions already have resources that might be made available to assist other institutions as they develop similar programs. These include certified instructors in active shooter response, incident management teams, crime prevention specialists, etc.

### **PITFALLS TO AVOID**

Since the Virginia Tech tragedy, colleges and universities have been inundated with offers from vendors, consultants, and others with products or services for sale. Institutions are encouraged to avoid the temptation to purchase products or services that make guarantees to fix problems without a thorough analysis and review. The following issues were identified by the subcommittee:

- Do not use "fill-in-the-blank" forms and plans that do not involve actual integration, discussion, and work by the institution in partnership with local emergency management and response personnel. As noted above, institutions vary greatly in terms of size, resources, make-up, etc. Simple fill-in-the-blank templates cannot take into account the needs of each institution, and may result in a plan that is written, but not implementable.
- At the same time, be cautious about using or hiring outside consultants. The process of working through plan development is as valuable as the plan itself. Working through the development of the plan provides critical networking and discussion opportunities. During a disaster, these relationships and the background of the discussions can significantly improve the ability to work through the incident.
- Use outside resources, such as those from Office of Emergency Management or from other institutions, but do not expect them to do all of the work. As noted above, they may be able to assist, but the actual work needs to involve people from the institution that will remain there and be able to share the knowledge gained through the process.
- Do not assume internal resources are capable of handling every type of incident on campus. While some institutions have strong response capabilities, every institution can be faced with incidents that require outside assistance.
- Do not panic. The basics for this process are readily available, and have been used in communities throughout the nation. Taking these and making them specific for each college or university, and then working through the process may be all that is required. A listing of some commonly used resources is attached.

## **OTHER ISSUES**

Other issues were identified in meetings of the larger Task Force that are not included in this report, as they do not relate specifically to the broader concept of emergency management. However, it is important to recognize these issues exist so they can be addressed in the proper forum. The issues include the following:

**Problems related to police officer recruiting and retention:** Officers working for universities are trained and certified at the same level as any other police officer in the state. However, pay and benefits (particularly retirement) are generally substantially lower at university police departments, which make them fertile recruiting grounds for other agencies seeking officers who are already trained and certified. For example, with retirement, officers working for municipalities or counties can retire at 20 years and draw 70% of their high salary. They cap out at 80% after 22 years, 10 months. University officers, who are under a different retirement system, are eligible at 25 years, but only for 59% of their high salary. In order to reach 80%, they must work 34 years. Difficulty in keeping experienced officers has the potential to impact the response to a major incident.

**University police jurisdiction:** A number of states have altered state statutes to provide for broader jurisdictional powers for university police officers in recognition that investigations into criminal activity frequently will take them off of the campus proper. With over 75% of students living off campus at larger campuses, and all living off campus at most community colleges, investigation of threats can reasonably be anticipated to require university officers to contact people off campus in the course of their duties. Expanding jurisdiction of university officers to either county-wide or statewide should be considered. (See The Chronicle of Higher Education, April 19, 2007, "College Police Departments Have Become More Professional" for examples from other states.)

**Physical security & resource needs:** University police and security departments have varying needs across the state. Some have shortages of personnel, while others are in need of physical security measures (such as electronic lock controls and security cameras). While traditionally these have been the responsibility of each university or college to fund, more examination of this issue is warranted to determine whether or not there are commonalities that might indicate systemic issues that should be addressed at the state level.

**Security guard training and certification standards:** As noted early in this report, some colleges do not have certified police officers. Many rely on security guards to provide safety to their campuses. However, there are no statewide standards for such personnel. Several schools have recommended standards be developed to ensure personnel charged with such duties are properly trained.

## **RESOURCES**

The following are resources available that may be of use for institutions as they work through the recommended action items.

Agri-Terrorism training and response. New Mexico Department of Agriculture. Website: <http://www.cahe.nmsu.edu/terrorism>

Campus Community Emergency Response Team. Michigan State University. Website: <http://cert.msu.edu>.

Community Emergency Response Team. Citizen Corp. Website: <http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/index.shtm>

Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center. New Mexico Tech. Provide nationally recognized training for first responders regarding explosives, suicide bombers, and weapons of mass destruction. Website: <http://www.emrtc.nmt.edu>.

Evaluating Risk for Targetted Violence in Schools. US Secret Service. 2001. Available at [http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac\\_ssi.shtml](http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac_ssi.shtml).

Homeland Security Training for Campus Executives (AWR-123) and Campus Public Safety Response to Weapons of Mass Destruction (AWR-124). West Virginia University. <http://www.vmc.wvu.edu/training/index.htm>.

New Mexico Emergency Management Association. Website: <http://www.nmema.org>.

Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities. Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, US Department of Education. January 2007. Can be ordered free by calling 1-877-433-7827, or on-line at [www.ed.gov/about/ordering.jsp](http://www.ed.gov/about/ordering.jsp).

The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective. Critical Incident Response Group (CIRG), National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime, F.B.I. Academy, Quantico, Virginia 22135. Available at: [www.fbi.gov/publications/school/school2.pdf](http://www.fbi.gov/publications/school/school2.pdf)

Self-Study Courses, to include IS-100, IS-200, and IS-700. Federal Emergency Management Agency. Available on-line at <http://training.fema.gov/NIMS>.

Texas Homeland Security Preparedness Website. Provides a number of courses, as well as links to courses sponsored by other nationally-recognized programs. View course listings at <http://preparingtexas.org/courselist.aspx>.

US Safe School Initiative. US Secret Service. October 2000. Available at [http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac\\_ssi.shtml](http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac_ssi.shtml).

***Need help finding other information? Contact your local emergency manager or the New Mexico Department of Homeland Security & Emergency Management.***

**SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

The following are the participants in the Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee:

<b>Don Cooper</b>	Emergency Manager	San Juan County
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**TASKFORCE MEMBERSHIP**

The following are the members of the Governor’s Task Force on Campus Safety:

Need official list for here.