



# SECONDS COUNT

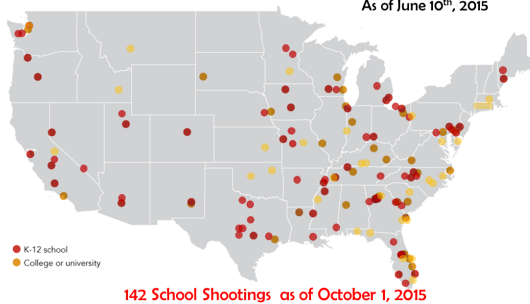
## When Securing our Schools



### The Threat is Real

The threat of violence in schools has become the norm. Just in the United States, a school shooting occurs every six days within the school year. This average does not include any other types of school violence. We can't ignore this violence when we are reminded by past and present tragic incidents. On December 14, 2012 at Sandy Hook Elementary School we were reminded once again that the threat is real. Since Sandy Hook, there have been 142 documented school shootings incidents nationwide; one of those incidents taking place locally at Santa Monica College on June 7th, 2013.

**There Have Been 74 School Shootings Since Newtown**  
Since the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in December 2012, there have been at least 74 school shootings, according to the gun reform group Everytown for Gun Safety. Most of them happened at K-12 schools, not colleges or universities.  
As of June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015



### Preparing for the Threat

As firefighters prepare schools for fire, police officers must prepare schools to respond to violence. The fire department has done their job by creating fire codes mandating schools to have fire alarms, fire walls, fire sprinklers and most important, fire drills. Fire drills are mandated quarterly in schools to help them prepare for fire. The repetition of the fire drill forges the muscle memory needed, if or when a fire occurs.

Conducting regular fire drills gives the student the knowledge and confidence to escape a fire. This preparation has saved the lives of countless children because they were ready for fire.

Schools must now prepare for the threat of violence, which is more likely to cause harm to our children, teachers and staff.

Unlike the fire department, the safety plan addressing violence can not be a single plan structured for all schools. Every school has unique conditions that must be considered when developing an individual plan.

Once the plan is created, it must be exercised regularly to reinforce the muscle memory acquired during the training. School staff must work together and should be cross trained so that everyone understands each others responsibilities in the event the threat forces staffs' roles to change.

The reaction of school staff to violence is based on their training and tolerance to fear and stress. In documented incidents, fear has been known to cause a person to freeze preventing them from reacting. Under high stress, the simple things like locking a door and dialing 911 become difficult. If you have trained your mind to practice these simple tasks, under minimal stress, the task should become second nature in a high stress situations.

*Is your child's school prepared?*

## ***Seconds Count***

The most critical time of a violent encounter on a school campus are the first five minutes. Why is this so important? This is the amount of time it will take someone to contact 911 and dispatch police to the school. Remember that the police officers responsibility is to respond as fast as possible to stop the threat. The school's responsibility is to respond as fast as possible to separate themselves from the threat until police arrive.

The clock starts the minute the school identifies a threat on campus. How the school responds to the threat will assist with preventing or limiting casualties and buy time for law enforcement to arrive. It is critical that the security plan is in place and drilled so that the reaction time is immediate. When seconds count, the decision making has to be made based on training, not guessing.

## ***Alert Systems***

Something that we learned from Newtown, Connecticut was that a secondary alert system in the school is very important. It wasn't until the office staff activated their public address system, that the school was alerted to the threat on campus. Just as a fire alarm is programmed to emit a unique sound and visible effect to alert children of fire, schools should have a secondary alert system that alerts them of a violent threat.



During documented incidents of school violence, suspects have used the fire alert system as a means of luring the kids out from class. When the children left the classroom, suspects began their assault on the school. Currently, individual schools have their own means of alerting the school which is primarily broadcasted by using the PA System.

A secondary alert system has to be immediate and easily accessed by the school to put the safety plan in motion. The sound of the alert system and/or visible signal should be unique, such as an air horn and/or flashing blue light. Ideally the system should also have the capability of immediately notifying 911 of a violent incident. Every second lost by not notifying the school or police of the threat is another foot deeper the suspects are in the school.

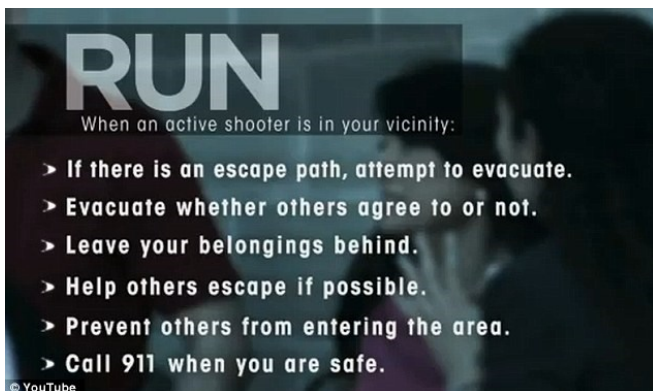
## ***What is Muscle Memory?***

Muscle memory can best be described as a type of movement with which the muscles become familiar with over time. The only way for the muscles to become accustomed to specific activities is practice and repetition. When it is time to react to a threat on campus, there is no room for error. The idea is to reinforce the simple tasks and have the plan burned into memory. For instance, some of the simple tasks include, but are not limited to; dialing 911, locking classroom doors, and turning lights out become difficult under high stress. If these specific tasks aren't thought out prior to an incident, they become secondary reactions instead of primary reactions. (Continues next page)

It is important to understand that some of the things we take for granted under minimal stress become extremely difficult under high stress. A way of minimizing that stress could be as easy as conducting a safety check of a classroom before class. Taking five minutes to look at those mechanisms that can prevent an active shooter from entering the classroom. Verifying that classroom doors are fully functional with locking mechanisms, blinds are covering windows that can be drawn, classroom phones are working and the secondary alert systems are operational. Conducting a daily safety inspection of your work environment will ensure that the practiced plan, under high stress, can be carried out without interference or failure.

## ***Run, Hide, Fight***

The United States Department of Homeland Security has developed an instructional video on how to survive an active shooter event. The instructional video takes place in the work place, but the only difference between the work place and schools is the age of the employees. The same guidelines that pertain to the work place should be taken into consideration for schools. The video can be accessed on YouTube using the phrase “Run, Hide, Fight- Surviving an Active Shooter Event”.



It has been argued that the fight component of the plan would not be conducive for schools because children do not have the same capabilities as adults. Remember that these are just options, and the fight component is a last resort when the suspect is about to make entry into a room. What is your last resort option, when running and hiding are no longer available to you? If fighting isn't an option, then create your last resort option.



## ***Have a Plan***

Parents, teachers, administrators and law enforcement are entering uncharted territory when preparing for school violence. As the fire departments has prepared schools for fire, we must be prepared for incidents of targeted school violence.

Reach out to your children's school administrators, principals and teachers to verify whether your school has a plan of action/response for violent encounters. Become involved in the planning process or work with the school to develop the plan. Preparing for violence on school campus is everyone's responsibility.

The Seconds Count program was developed to give schools the tools needed to help develop a plan to combat school violence. We must build on this program to make sure that one day, every school in our nation has the necessary tools to safeguard themselves and protect our nation's most valuable resource; our children.

## ***Contact Information***

If you would like more information about the Seconds Count K-12 Active Shooter Response Training program contact LAPD Topanga Division Senior Lead Officer Sean Dinse at (818) 756-3076 or e-mail

[34920@lapd.lacity.org](mailto:34920@lapd.lacity.org)

## ***Resources***

### **Seconds Count Training/Reference Materials**

#### **LAPD Topanga Division Website– Crime Information– Active Shooter– Seconds Count**

<https://lapdtopanga.org/active-shooter-information/>

#### **Developing a safety plan for infrastructure**

<https://connect.hsin.gov/asaware2011>

#### **Options for Consideration Active Shooter Training Video**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ol5EoWBRYmo&feature=youtu.be>

#### **Run, Hide and Fight DHS Video**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VcSwejU2D0>

#### **Active Shooter: What you can do?**

<http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is907.asp>

