

The Safety Net

The Electronic Journal of Safe Havens International

The world's leading authority on school safety, security & emergency preparedness

April 2012 • Volume 2 • Issue 3

Severe Weather Safety:

- **First-hand accounts**
- **Tips to prepare**
- **Are we desensitized to severe weather?**

Liability: Is your Language Going to Cost you?

International School Safety News

New Training Resource: School Bus Crisis Scenarios



An electronic publication of Safe Havens International

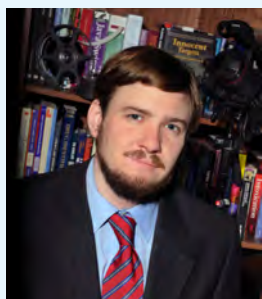


Photo: Rachel Wilson

Message from the Editor-in-Chief

The Safety Net for April 2012

Welcome back to our newest issue of The Safety Net! As Safe Havens enters our 10th year serving the nation's schools, we have a lot to be excited about and a lot to share with you.

With even more schools and organizations working towards school safety, the resources available to educators today are numerous and comprehensive. For our part, Safe Havens has continued to grow our free publications (like this one) and we plan to keep adding more content as the year goes on.

Before I tell you more about what we're going to be adding over the next few months, I'll start with a quick summary of what we'll cover in this issue. This issue is dedicated to National Severe Weather week (more background on this in Charles Fleming's article about first-hand experiences with severe weather). Most of the content in this issue is focused on the reasons why we need to prepare and giving you resources to work with no matter what your current level of preparedness may be. Russell Bentley provides a variety of concepts and resources in his article on

planning for severe weather occurrences during athletics and other after-hours events that take place outside.

I'm personally excited about the article by our first non-staff guest author, Steve Satterly on how schools can prepare for tornadoes. The photos accompanying his article were taken just weeks ago when tornadoes were striking across the country. We plan to start regularly featuring guest authors in each issue, so if you have something you'd like to submit, please contact us!

Another new perspective featured in this issue is that of Safe Havens' staff photographer Rachel Wilson. On page 13 she gives us an interesting way to think about how we prepare for safety - not only on campus, but at home or while we're on vacation.

This highlights one of my favorite parts about making schools safer: the things that we do to protect our students and ourselves on campus, at least for the most part, are things that make us safer in general. So it's really not just about rules or regulations - it's just the right thing to do.

The last thing I want to tell you about is the plethora of new resources we'll be releasing over the coming months. In addition to our daily blog posts on our website (with news and views from our team as well as guest authors), we are also starting a new video series we're going to be calling "Ask Safe Havens" and featuring short video responses to common questions about school safety. We started releasing these clips this week, and you can check those out on youtube.com or on our vimeo channel "Ask Safe Havens".

In the coming weeks we'll also begin posting links to our document database. This will be filled with electronic documents from across the web that we have found useful in our research or that we think you might find useful in yours. We'll be posting these in our new sister site safehavenstraining.org and making announcements in our regular blog when each document is posted.

As always, we welcome your suggestions and comments on any of our activities. Thank you for your support!

Chris Dorn is the Executive Producer for all Safe Havens Video projects, and he is the Editor-in-Chief of The Safety Net - the electronic journal of Safe Havens International.

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The Safety Net is the electronic journal of Safe Havens International. Each issue contains feature articles written by Safe Havens analysts as well as guest authors from the fields of school safety, mental health recovery, emergency management, anti-terrorism and related fields. Monthly features include columns and visual exercises to enhance the general knowledge base in the field of school safety and emergency preparedness for the learning environment.

Safe Havens International, Inc. is the world's leading non-profit campus safety organization. Safe Havens works with K-12 schools, institutions of higher learning and faith-based organizations worldwide to improve campus climate, safety and emergency preparedness. As a non-profit center, our mission is to do what we can to make school a safe and enjoyable place for students to learn and teachers to teach, no matter where they happen to live. The Safe Havens team is comprised of international authorities and school safety, security and preparedness specialists. Our goal is to help schools improve safety while raising test scores using proven concepts tailored to fit local risks, realities and resources.

Do you want to write for The Safety Net?

If you would like to be a guest author or if you have information you'd like to see featured in an upcoming issue of The Safety Net, please contact us at newsletter@weakfish.org.

About the cover: this school (and the entire neighborhood surrounding it) were devastated by a tornado in May of 2011.
Photo by Rachel Wilson.

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The Safety Riddle

What is the unique safety innovation in this photo?
Answer on page 23



Photo: Michael S. Dorn

Before the Smoke Clears:

Text-based Tabletop Scenario

It's 8:03AM on a Saturday morning and you have just arrived at a crisis response team meeting after being notified of a bus accident involving multiple fatalities. Your team is briefed with the following available information:

- The bus was transporting a group of children to an amusement park on a field trip across the state.
- The accident took place on a highway that spans a river.
- The bus was hit head on by a large commercial truck.
- Upon impact, the bus was thrown off of the bridge and landed upside down in the river about forty feet below and is partially submerged.
- The driver of the truck has been charged with driving under the influence of alcohol.
- Rescue crews report that they have recovered all victims and bodies of victims from the bus. They are dragging the river to ensure that there are no additional bodies and expect to complete that process late in the day.
- The incident is being widely reported on national and local media, with graphic helicopter footage showing the bus and the covered bodies of the children on the river bank.

Reported injuries are as follows:

- Fourteen children have been killed.
- The driver was killed.
- The three parent chaperones were killed.
- Eight children have been transported to three different area hospitals for treatment; at least two are in critical condition.

Discuss this scenario with your team and decide what kind of short term and longer term actions you should take.

Hidden in Plain Sight

Disguised Weapons

The first photo shows how this keychain mini-baton can be used for self defense . . .



. . . and here we see that sometimes even weapons can be used to hide other weapons!



Photos by Chris Dorn

Welcome Home

Examples of Positive School Body Language



Photo by Michael Dorn
Safe Havens International ©2011

In this photo, the girls restroom in the Perry Central Township, Indiana Public School Corporation has been spruced up with wonderful mural work to create a greater connection between students and the school. This intelligent utilization of positive territoriality is a superb example of how any public space in a school can and should be considered for positive body language.

High As a Kite

Drugs & Paraphernalia Identification

Do you know what this leaf is? Answer on page 24.



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Do you have a photo to share? The Safety Net welcomes photo submissions showing examples of positive school climate, safety hazards, drug paraphernalia or disguised weapons. To submit your photos, e-mail us at: newsletter@weakfish.org. Due to space limitations, it may not be possible to publish all submissions.

News Digest

Current Events In School Safety Around the World

by Charles Fleming

Drum Major dies after alleged hazing - Tallahassee, FL

Robert Champion Jr., a 26-year-old Florida A&M University student and drum major died after a suspected hazing incident. Champion's death, caused by severe bleeding, is still under investigation. Florida A&M University has suspended the band after this incident. Since Champion's death, parents have come forward saying that they had made complaints about the hazing. No arrests have been made, nor criminal charges filed. For months prior to Champion's death, stories about hazing in the band had been circulating. Although the band's director, Dr. Julian White, implemented initiatives to help stop hazing in the band, leaders in the band allegedly continued to participate. Students have said Champion was "crossing bus C" when he died, a "rite of passage" in which a new section member is beaten while walking from the back to the front of a bus. Deaths involving hazing are a third-degree felony in Florida.

Family says immigrant student killed himself over fears he'd never be allowed to go to college - Mission, TX

Joaquin Luna, 18, committed suicide on the Friday after Thanksgiving, feeling he would never be able to go to college in the United States, because he was in the country illegally. His brother found him in the bathroom after hearing a gunshot. Luna left letters that said he was afraid

about being in the country illegally, and began to lose hope after the Dream Act did not pass in Congress. The Dream Act was a proposed national plan that would make young immigrants legal citizens if they have been in the United States for more than five years and they attend college or serve in the military. The Dream Act was estimated to benefit about 2 million young people if it passed.

Seven teens charged with beating classmate unconscious - Ocala, FL

Seven teens, aged 12 to 15, were charged with battery and disorderly conduct after punching and kicking a 13-year-old on a school bus until she was unconscious in Ocala, Fla. The victim said no one would let her sit down since it was her first time riding the bus, and then someone threw a shoe at her. The victim threw a shoe back and other teens formed a circle and began to attack the victim. Witnesses said the victim fell on the floor, had a seizure and passed out. The victim was taken to a hospital and diagnosed with a concussion, severe bruising and muscle spasms.

9-year-old arrested in school - Fort Myers, Florida

A 9-year-old was arrested in Fort Myers, Florida after a fit of rage resulted in police bringing felony charges against her. The student jumped out of her school bus after spitting at staff members and becoming aggressive. The student then started to pick up and throw pieces of asphalt at the bus before walking into a nearby yard and throwing a metal chair at a responding deputy. She resisted when the deputy told her she was under arrest.

High school wrecked by tornadoes - Indianapolis, IN

Henryville High School in southern Indiana won a free concert by country music stars Lady Antebellum after tornadoes damaged their school during recent severe weather outbreaks in the state. The school won after many other schools from the surrounding area submitted YouTube videos asking the band to support the high school in their "Own the Night" contest. Lady Antebellum is a Grammy-Award winning country trio. The winning video was entered by Silver Creek High School, one of the winning school's biggest rivals. This is a touching story that demonstrates that there are still a lot of good people in the world.

Driver evacuates students off bus, saving them from fire - Charlotte, NC

Lindora Richardson successfully evacuated students from her bus after noticing smoke inside the bus during her afternoon route. Richardson noticed a "burning smell" and after pulling over, saw smoke coming from the dashboard of the bus. A YouTube eyewitnesses video shows smoke and fire erupting out of the bus after Richardson led the elementary school students out of the back emergency exit door. Because of her quick response there were no injuries.

**Get more news
stories plus links
to the full story on these
articles at our website:**

www.safehavensinternational.org

News Digest Page:
safehavensinternational.org/newsdigest

A Note from the President of The United States of America

Over the past year, devastating storms have tested the fabric of our Nation. From Tuscaloosa to Joplin, the Midwest to Appalachia, tornadoes have leveled communities and left profound suffering in their wake. Thousands of Americans have endured the pain of loss, loss of a home, a job, a dream, a loved one dearly held and forever missed. Yet, as winds have died and rains eased, communities have banded together and demonstrated a simple truth: that amid heartbreak and hardship, no one is a stranger.

During National Severe Weather Preparedness Week and throughout the year, we renew our promise to meet a national tragedy with a national response. To help save lives, my Administration is partnering with communities across America to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards, including severe weather. We are working to improve the accuracy of tornado and severe thunderstorm warnings, giving individuals more time to get out of harm's way. And with leadership from agencies across my Administration, we are collaborating with organizations at every level of government and throughout the private and non-profit sectors to strengthen preparedness and build resilience.

Our Nation continues to bear the impact of severe storms. When tornadoes swept across southern States and the Midwest earlier this year, we were touched by the echoes of hardship. Many Americans lost their homes and businesses; dozens lost their lives. As we reflect on these tragic outcomes, let us re-commit to doing everything we can to protect our families and our communities. I encourage all Americans to prepare an emergency plan and build an emergency kit with food, water, and essential supplies in case of severe weather. When strong storms are approaching, it is critical that individuals and families take action to secure their safety and the safety of those around them. During a tornado warning, find shelter immediately and await instructions from local emergency management officials.

This week, we rededicate ourselves to strengthening personal and community preparedness before disaster strikes.

- Barack Obama

Source: <http://www.emergencyemail.org/newsemergency/anmviewer.asp?a=1958&z=34>

Photo: Rachel Wilson

The Library: Learning Resource Review

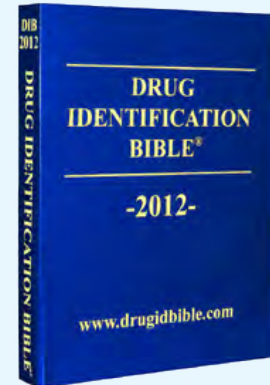
by Chris Dorn

Drug Identification Bible (2012 Edition)

ISBN 0963562681 (Previous Ed.)

Publisher: Amera-Chem, Inc.

Available at: www.drugidbible.com



This book is a great resource that I have used over the years when writing or training police and school officials on how students conceal drugs and other contraband in schools. It is an exhaustive encyclopedia of information on every type of illicit drug available - as well as legal substances that are abused. The pill identification section alone is well worth the cost of the book. The company also offers a variety of drug identification posters that are standard in police departments across the country. They are currently accepting pre-orders for the 2012 edition.

In each issue, The Library will feature training resources as well as some of the publications that we use as a basis for our research and practices. We never receive any form of compensation for the resources listed in this column.

Check Your Documents for Liability Language to Avoid Problems by Michael Dorn

I have been reluctant to serve as an expert witness in school safety cases for most of my career, declining most of the requests I have received. The few cases that I have accepted over the years have been most revealing, and the research I do for each case is always enlightening.

A reputable and skilled expert witness carefully reviews every page of each document they are provided, and only delivers opinions that are honest, defensible and carefully developed. An expert witness who is careless or dishonest can be quickly disqualified by a skilled attorney through the deposition process. Being disqualified a single time can be the kiss of death for an expert witness, since this can and usually will be brought up any time they are deposed for future cases.

This means that the most sought after expert witnesses in any field have an impeccable track record that has been developed by meticulously reviewing all of the facts before them and developing a solid foundation for their opinion in each case. This leads the sharpest expert witnesses to very carefully consider the use of language in written records, policies, statements of witnesses and transcripts of depositions. In many large court cases, the sheer volume of documents that must be reviewed can be staggering. In a single civil action against a school safety consultant who worked

extensively with a school district prior to an active shooter attack on campus, the case file weighed approximately 20 pounds.

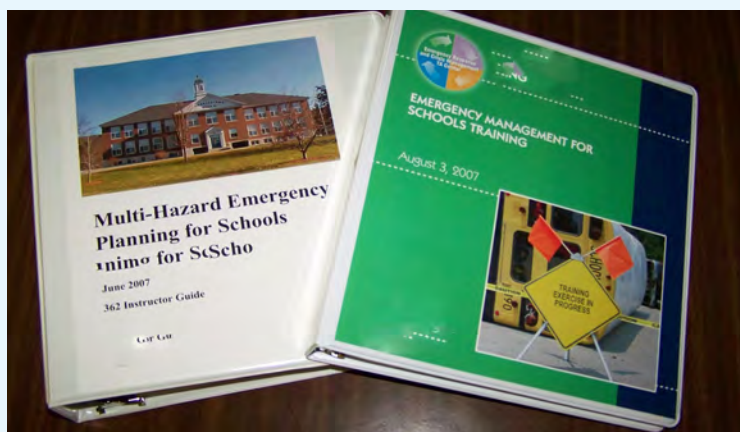
As with many court cases, this school safety malpractice case demonstrates how important specific language can be. The consultant who wrote the district's crisis plans did not have a solid background in the field of emergency management and the last action step for the lockdown protocol was "STAY PUT!!". This point was drilled into staff during regular lockdown drills, and under the stress of an actual crisis, a teacher and a number of students died when they followed these instructions under the stress of the event. The district settled 26 lawsuits and the consulting firm likewise settled 26 claims when they were litigated.

This case and others demonstrate not only how the words we choose can become a significant factor in litigation, but also how they can quickly turn into a life and death matter. More typical examples of language that can cause problems in school safety litigation include absolute statements relating to

safety such as the words "ensure", "always", "never" and other similar words when used in an unrealistic fashion.

For example, this statement in a student handbook: "To ensure student safety, teachers must carefully supervise students at all times during the school day", could create challenges during litigation in the wake of a school safety incident. This language creates challenges because it is unrealistic for staff to be able to accomplish the goal, at least as it has been written. Should a safety incident occur, this language can be even more of a problem in the way the press covers the incident.

This language creates a sense of obligation that cannot be proven or met during a deposition or trial. A very common example of this is a public statement by a school leader that "safety is our number one priority". Though this type of statement has been heard by most educators so often that it's actual meaning has become obscured by overuse, the real meaning can become clear under the pressure of a deposition when an attorney asks a superintendent or headmaster to put some tangibility



to put some tangibility to the statement. For example, a follow up question by the attorney might be "so if safety is your number one priority, what percentage of your annual budget is dedicated to safety?". Typically, safety is not the largest budget expenditure, even for schools in high crime areas or even in other parts of the world where schools are under the constant threat of terrorism.

Phrases that place an unrealistic emphasis on the actual level of safety in a school or district can be avoided by language that conveys the same meaning to the average parent or student. After all, we don't want to change the INTENT of our language, just the legal implications that might occur from over-exuberance of reassurance.

Here's one example: saying "Safety is a priority in our school district" carries the same meaning, but without the connotation of an absolute guarantee of safety (which no facility in the world can offer). Though an attack on this statement might also occur, it will carry much less weight because a school leader who is aware of the many safety measures that are in place in their organization can defend it more effectively. For example, by quickly providing a series of examples of things that are done to improve safety, this statement can be shown to be an accurate one in a school or district that truly does make safety a priority.

Taking the time to review policies, procedures, mission statements and other documents while thinking of this aspect of

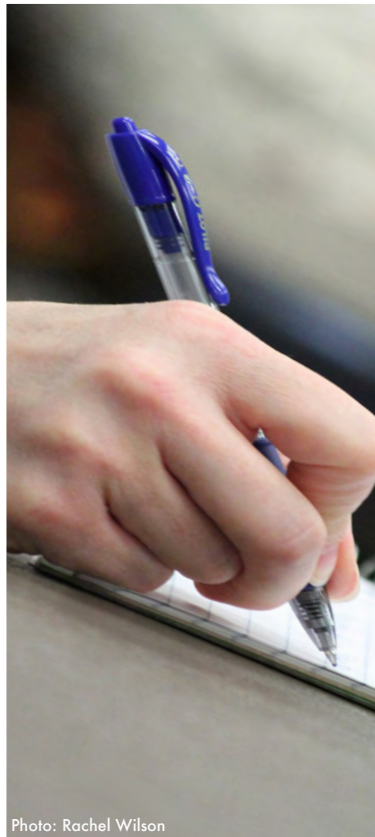


Photo: Rachel Wilson

language can pay off big-time when handling legal issues as well as interacting with the media. And always remember – say what you mean and mean what you say.



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Michael Dorn is the Executive Director of Safe Havens International. Michael has been directly involved in work relating to seven active shooter cases and numerous other school weapons assaults in K-12 schools in the United States and Canada.

Are you properly documenting your training?

Chris Dorn

How many times have you seen a school related incident – safety or not – on the news and they interview a staff member who says something like "Well I don't think I did anything wrong because I was just doing what they trained me to do." Or – worse – "I had no idea what to do" when you know this is obviously not the case? This reminds us that an important yet often overlooked aspect of training is the process of documentation. The best way to keep track of this is a system – either electronic or on paper – which will allow you to track distribution of policies.

More importantly, the training approach used should try to avert the need for this type of documentation in the first place because staff members are well trained and prepared. For example, if school employees are issued an emergency plan component, a system should be devised to allow for a fast verification that they received it, have been instructed in it's utilization and have been advised who they can contact if they have any questions about the plan component. This way we are not only making sure that employees have received documentation, but understand it and have a route for clarification if they need it. Taking this a step further, some systems combine training, testing and documentation into one seamless process so that records demonstrate not only that documentation was delivered but that it was trained and tested on (and re-tested if necessary) as well.

In the past, schools have had success with paper documentation, which does still offer some benefits over electronic approaches. At the same time, many schools have moved to a web based approach to the distribution of critical safety documents and information. The cost for this approach has dropped dramatically in recent years and it is now very inexpensive to develop and maintain a (Continued on page 22)

First hand accounts reveal the need for severe weather preparation all year long.

By Charles Fleming

Many states have "severe weather awareness weeks" throughout the year, with activities geared towards preventing and mitigating crises caused by severe weather events, such as the recent outbreak of tornadoes around the country. Supported by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the week of April 22nd to 28th is the first nationally recognized Severe Weather Preparedness Week.

While no one wants to live in fear, scientists and weather forecasters predict more frequent and powerful storms in coming years, fueled by rising global ocean temperatures that increase the amount of energy storms possess worldwide. This means that not only will areas currently affected by frequent severe weather events (such as hurricanes) see more violent storms, but also that areas not normally affected may see an increase in severe weather activity.

Although tornadoes have garnered most of the media attention in the past few months, schools must also be prepared to deal with other weather events - hurricanes, snowstorms, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods to name a few - no matter how often these events occur.

According to Wikipedia there have been 45 tornadoes with school fatalities in the United States between 1884 and 2007, killing a total of 271 people. Although death rates have fallen sharply with continually improving early-warning technology, nature can be and often is unpredictable and furious, especially in light of increasing frequency of severe weather events.

Schools should not limit severe weather preparation to "duck and cover" drills. Planning, preparation,



Photo: Rachel Wilson Ringgold Ga

training and drills need to be used together to keep staff and students up-to-date on their roles and responsibilities during a fast-breaking weather emergency. Of course, threats vary throughout the nation based on geographic location, but schools nationwide need to be prepared for the many unexpected forces of nature that we *should* expect to come eventually.

One of the topics that we produce training video resources on is severe weather. Our most memorable experience working on a project was actually our work with the Lincoln County School District on the Oregon coast. Aside from our work in the tsunami zone, our video crew has also documented first-hand the devastation caused by severe weather. In this article, I'm combining that experience along with a series of telephone interviews that I recently conducted with survivors of severe weather incidents. All of these stories reinforce the need for awareness and preparedness in schools on a daily basis.

Tornadoes

The most insightful information comes from those who have witnessed a destructive severe weather event in person. The first topic that comes up during

a crisis is usually the chaos and confusion. I confirmed this when speaking to Larry Coker, Director of Communications for the Forney Independent School District in North Texas. During the recent string of tornadoes in the region, the media reported that Forney High School had actually been hit by a tornado. This was in fact based on the report of a neighborhood eyewitness, and no schools in the district were hit that day.

Mr. Coker states: "There was a lot of confusion - a lot of severe weather in north Texas. Fifteen to twenty-five tornadoes were on the ground in the north Texas area that day." He spent the day watching reports on the situation: "Several storms popped up - Arlington was declared a disaster area by 12pm. We were in a tornado watch all day." Although fortunately a tornado did not directly impact any of their schools, one did pass within about 500 feet of hitting Crosby Elementary School. No one was seriously injured.

Despite the fact that it did not actually hit the school, the storm caused about \$2 million worth of damage - windows were broken, the roof damaged in multiple places and AC units were lost (with one actually thrown off the building). Mr. Coker also said

that cars were tossed around in the school parking lot – one parent's SUV was flipped after the mother went inside the school for shelter. The speed of the onset of the event is possibly the most alarming point: "The elementary school let out at 3:15, we were still in tornado watch at that time – the weather didn't look severe at that time – it wasn't even raining... we went into a tornado warning at about 3:30, about 3:35 the sirens went off in town, and at 3:40 the tornado hit."

The school building shook for about 30 seconds as the tornado went by, and then the power went out.

Though repairs were started immediately, the school was closed for the rest of the week. Staff convened at the school on Friday to talk about what happened, to let them see the school, and prepare for the next week. Coker said that counselors were on hand at the school on Monday for anyone who needed their services. This is an excellent response to take after any type of crisis, and this is a good example of how emotional counseling might be needed even when there were no injuries.

If your school has not implemented and practiced a plan of action for these type of events, your staff will not have time to properly respond to unpredictable acts of nature. Procedures, training and drills should be both tailored to the specific geographical challenges a school faces, (are your schools located near water, a fault line, common tornado area, flooding, etc.?) and be flexible enough to account for unforeseen events, or multiple severe weather events happening at once. For instance, if your school is located near a fault line and a large body of water, earthquakes



Photo: Chris Dorn, Ringgold GA

may be followed by aftershocks and possibly a tsunami.

Flooding

Safe Havens Video crew spoke with Washington Country School District staff members about severe flooding and thunderstorms during production of one of our recent video projects. Transportation Director Launi Schmutz told us: "This little river turned into a monstrous river, where the homes right behind us [gestures to homes near a small stream] went down the river. . . . boats, trailers, barns, everything coming down the river and hitting our bridges - bridges that we use for transportation to and from home. It's a small stream most of the time, but it just turned into a raging river that we never expected."

This is a great example of how a flood – though not necessarily life threatening – can become a serious issue if we are not prepared. For example, issues may arise with conflicting media reports of road closures and the effect that has on parents and district employees – who must remember to always defer to official district reports. Another key factor to remember, especially in areas that do not normally experience flooding, is that a

road that is covered by just a few inches of water may be hiding a deadly sinkhole, and traffic must be diverted at the slightest sign of water covering the road.

Lightning Strikes on Campus

Matt Orr, a school resource officer at Mill Creek High School in the Washington County School District, used the video production opportunity to remind staff about the importance of being trained on safety equipment. Two students in their district were struck by lightning after school during severe thunderstorms, and they were saved because staff were ready with Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs) – and more importantly, they knew how to use them. "It's important for staff to stay well trained and be up to date with equipment such as AEDs, like we learned with the recent lightning strike. Having the AEDs on scene, people trained in CPR, people getting involved, and knowing what to do, and not panicking or standing around wondering what to do – those are some of the things that helped that day."

These stories obviously remind us to be prepared for all kinds of severe weather, but more importantly, and especially with this story, we see the compelling evidence that we just need to be prepared in general, not just for the specific events that we are expecting. What are the odds that someone will be struck by lightning? And that it will be on campus, while an event is going on? These odds are probably around the same as any other tragic event that can happen on campus, so this reminds us to be prepared for anything.

Continued on page 17

Sony Says

Severe Weather

Natural disasters can strike anywhere, at anytime. Knowing what to do in any situation can help you while you're at school or while you're at home with your family. Here are some basic tips that you can do before, during and after a natural disaster to be ready:

Prepare

- Make sure that you listen to a weather radio
- Know your community's warning system
- Learn about your organization's severe weather plans, including those for tornadoes, earthquakes, lightning and any other types of weather that are possible in your area. Keep in mind that some weather phenomena – like earthquakes – may be rare but still a danger. Some areas may only have an earthquake every hundred years, but that single earthquake can be devastating as we have seen in the past few years.
- Locate alternate escape routes in case of earthquakes or other situations that can render normal escape routes unsafe. This can also be helpful in case of freak accidents like a large truck or a plane hitting the building.
- Locate a tornado safe area in your facility. This area should be on the lowest level of the building and without windows such as a central room, bathroom or interior hallway. A basement or storm cellar is ideal.

Respond

- Take cover immediately.
- Get away from windows.
- Go to a safe area (as appropriate to the situation).
- In case of an earthquake or tornado, move under something sturdy or use your arms and hands to brace yourself and protect your head and neck from falling debris.
- If you are in a mobile unit or outside in a car and there is a tornado, go immediately to a nearby sturdy building. Do not try to drive away from a tornado.
- If you are stuck outside, lie in a flat low spot, such as a ditch or ravine. Be aware of the potential for flooding.
- If you are outside during an earthquake, do not try to enter any buildings. Stay where you are and seek cover away from tall objects like trees or power lines.

Recover

- Check yourself and others for injuries.
- Look for other people who may be injured or trapped beneath fallen debris.
- Use extreme caution before entering a damaged building.
- Follow the advice of first responders.
- Remember to follow your recovery protocols.
- Follow the advice of first responders.

A popular & animated keynote speaker, Dr. Sonayia N. Shepherd (Sony) has authored and co-authored sixteen books on school safety and emergency management.

A co-founder of Safe Havens International, her work has taken her to five continents, responding to events ranging from the Indonesian Tsunami and Hurricane Katrina crises to the G-8 summit. Sony has assisted large organizations, like FEMA and the WHO, as well as smaller organizations - including over 2,000 public and private schools and campuses. She can be reached at sony@weakfish.org



Photo: Safe Havens Video

Inclement Weather and Modern Desensitization

By: Rachel T. Wilson, SHI Video Staff Photographer

As a photographer, it's my job to be aware of my surroundings. On a regular drive I am likely to observe everything - from the position of the sun on a mailbox to the slightest change in light from the clouds overhead. It isn't easy to focus on the sort of things we see every day, so I have to spend a lot of time training myself to notice the details.

Unfortunately this means I tend to miss a few things if I'm not careful. When we are at a location producing video, I have to not only be aware of what I am trying to photograph but also the status of my equipment, my crew, our time, the weather, etc. Not to mention what isn't even present - like that long list of unopened e-mails awaiting your immediate reply and that voicemail that I got while on set and can't return until after we wrap for the day at 7pm. What happens to me happens to everyone I know. My focus is pulled into a virtual explosion of directions and distractions. I can hardly be expected to know where to look. What real or virtual task needs my attention most?

Like many of you, when I need information I turn to my cell phone. I'm sorry to say that I can't quite yet tell the time by the sun. I use my phone. I text and e-mail to stay in touch. Not to mention how lost I'd be without those miniature electronic maps that Google has magically sent to my smartphone. The times certainly have changed from the days of looking up a shoot on a map and going there the night

de·sen·si·ti·za·tion

Noun

1. Describing the act or process of desensitizing.
2. The act of being made emotionally callous; specifically : to remove existing emotional response (as in fear, anxiety, or guilt) to a certain stimulus.
3. The lessening or removal of allergic sensitivity or reactions to threats.

before to check the location because you're not sure if the client's directions are quite right.

The good news about all this technology is that we are now closer than ever to sources of information that can protect us and warn us when danger is coming. Preparation in case of a weather emergency can be as simple as signing up to receive instant e-mail notifications. If you know that the weather is going to be rough, you can take precautions. Otherwise, our minds may be focused on something else. Sound Familiar?

Remember the massive earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan in March of 2011? Many of you probably spent the greater part of that week hearing, reading, and chatting about it. Disaster after disaster rolled off the media, onto our screens and

temporarily into our minds. It has already been a year and not many of us have the time to continue to look back and wonder what resolution exists for the affected communities. This may be a result of the hundreds of other tragedies populating our news feeds on a regular basis. The sad truth is that while we may have our hearts and intentions in the right place, we may be becoming dangerously desensitized to what reality is.

When we're young, we experience the world around us. We learn about our senses and what they mean. We become curious about what we see as we explore our limitations and the properties of what exists around us. We become aware. Why? So that we can survive. From learning what not to touch (hot burner on the stove!) to the meanings of traffic signals (Red means stop and green means go), we have an innate ability to learn how to use our bodies to detect danger.

Perhaps it is because we cultivate more information than we are able to ingest, but we constantly ignore the most glaringly obvious information. People ignore signs every day. Just like blocking pop-up ads on a website, we ignore traffic signs, advertisements, facial expressions, medical symptoms, and so on.

Earlier today I was talking to a good friend of mine who shared with me a perfect example of our modern day desensitization

to reality. One habit she has is regularly checking the weather using weather.com. Last month while there was a confirmed tornado moving through Marietta, Georgia, complete with debris being picked up on radars and a declaration of an actual tornado in her city, she and her husband set off to their local grocery store. She confessed to me that, even though she knew they were under a Tornado warning, they stuck to the decision to leave the comforts of their home to venture out. Not only did she hear it on the radio, but she turned to the radar for more information.

While this story may sound bizarre or haphazard, this echoes what we have seen around the country and in news reports. There are two key points in her story from which we can draw. People are less trusting of single-sourced information and they are also engaging in more risk-taking behavior to see things firsthand.

1. People need more than one resource to feel that the information they are receiving is actually valid. Just like my friend, studies by the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) found that most people almost always seek secondary confirmation before they seek protective shelter when they first hear a warning about severe weather. My friend said that she felt guilty because while inside the store (and as the funnels were probably hitting the ground) she reassured a tourist from California that "nothing is going to happen, everything will be fine." Thankfully everyone in the store was safe, but the damage of fallen trees rendered the highway impassable and

they were unable to leave. The most interesting statement she made was "we hear sirens often enough not to feel too alarmed by them."

With the fast paced nature of internet posts and status updates, fascination and awe have been reduced through familiarity. According to Infographic, "Statistics show that texting is more dangerous than talking on the phone and drunk driving, and yet so many people text while driving and assume it isn't as dangerous." Sociologists call it pluralistic ignorance. It's this concept where reality applies to everyone else but you.

2. Across the country, more and more people are putting themselves into the dangerous paths of severe weather to obtain footage and firsthand accounts. For at least five years, major news networks have asked their viewers to contribute original footage of events as they unfold. I remember seeing this on the news during the subway bombings in London (incidentally a terrorist attack site is probably one of the absolute worst places to ask civilians to inhabit to contribute news footage). In Kansas City, Missouri there have been several reports of regular citizens setting up alongside tornado paths to record the massive funnels with their cell phones. In the Kansas City Star, S. Joe Koch II, the Emergency management director in Saline County, Kansas was quoted as saying "I really couldn't tell you why it's occurring . . . it is becoming more common for people to go out and see these tornadoes."

We can clearly see implications from these two points for our

schools. For one, parents and other concerned citizens may often want to confirm media reports on their own by visiting the scene of a tragedy or other type of incident (or non-incident in many cases). As Charles Fleming describes in his article on Severe Weather First-hand Accounts in this issue of The Safety Net, a school in Texas was recently reported on the news as being hit by a tornado when the event actually never happened. The false information came from a neighbor of the school who reported to local media that the school had been hit.

But why is it we are so drawn to disaster? In the most recent issue of Psychology Today, Dr. Eric G Wilson describes a unique approach to thinking about this and dubs it the "allure of Disaster". It seems that we all do it. In spite of knowing the consequences, we all "rubber neck" from time to time when we see an accident or something exciting happening.



As a photographer I must confess that we are guilty of this often, since it is our job at Safe Havens Video to find unique footage of events across the country. But there always has to be a balance between safety and curiosity. After all, everyone remembers what happened to the cat. Fear is a primitive emotion that exists for our own survival. It is aroused by danger. Modern conveniences teach our brains not to react as they once would. We live in a world of artificial light, an abundance of food and information teaching our brain that there is no need to think critically.



Rachel Wilson brings her unique experience to Safe Havens as a veteran photographer who has covered school safety across the United States as well as in Mexico and Bolivia. Her experience as a photographer combined with her continued service with Safe Havens provides an interesting way of viewing ourselves from a different angle while learning a thing or two in the process.

To satisfy your own need for multiple sources of weather and government warnings, here are some free services that you can use to get notified:

<http://www.emergencyemail.org>

www.weather.com

FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System (IPAWS):

<http://www.fema.gov/emergency/ipaws/>

Sources:

Allport, G. (1933) *Institutional Behavior*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Prentice, D. A. and Miller, D. T. (1993) Pluralistic ignorance and alcohol use on campus: Some consequences of misperceiving the social norm. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64, 243-256.

<http://www.disastercenter.com/guide/tornado.html>

www.MyWarn.com

www.weather.com

www.Tornadoproject.com

<http://www.freep.com/>

This photo as well as several others throughout this issue of *The Safety Net* were taken by Rachel Wilson after a tornado struck Ringgold, Georgia and devastated several neighborhoods and area businesses. As with many natural disasters, this storm brought the community together to help one another, but recovery from this type of crisis is never easy.



A Few Tips on Lightning Safety

by Russell E. Bentley

The National Weather Service has developed two quick phrases to help individual community stakeholders who are responsible for safety at sporting events, state fairs and other large community gatherings. These phrases are designed to be easy to remember and stick in your mind so that you don't have to think twice about what to do when inclement weather surprises us.

The first phrase is "When Thunder Roars, Head Indoors". Event planners, sporting event venue managers and each of us as citizens are urged to develop a lightning safety plan centered on preparedness for severe weather – especially for the common occurrences of lightning and thunderstorms that happen all the time, even during otherwise peaceful weather.

The National Weather Service reported that there were 26 fatalities in an area that included 18 states and Guam as a result of lightning strikes. The states of Missouri and Utah tragically had three deaths each during this reporting period. Hundreds of people are permanently injured each year and countless others recover from injuries sustained due to being struck by lightning. Horrifying memories might linger for years. At the same time,

people are saved quite frequently by proper preparedness and response efforts. For example, the Washington County School District in Utah had the horrific experience of two high school students being struck by lightning while on campus – but both students survived because school police were prepared and ready to respond with an automatic external defibrillator (AED).

The second memorable phrase to remember is "Half-an-hour since thunder roars, now it's okay to go outdoors". This rule is especially helpful for small children when playing outdoors. Also known as the 30-30 rule, it reminds us to wait at least 30 minutes after hearing the last claps of thunder before leaving safe shelter. This is a rule most athletic associations apply when starting an outdoor sporting event after the event was suspended because of the threat of lightning or noticeable lightning strikes in the immediate area.

The Georgia High School Athletic Association (and similar organizations in many other states) now mandate the use of handheld lightning strike detectors as well as guidelines and rules for the suspension of play and a time when officials and athletes must leave the field and seek appropriate safe shelter. While this is a great

procedure for the safety of athletes and officials, many school sports venues and sporting event managers have failed to develop appropriate procedures for the safety of spectators. The National Weather Service website has guidelines to assist organizations in the development of a lightning safety program. Additionally the National Weather Service provides appropriate signage to schools that develop these programs.



I also came across a program sponsored by the National Weather Service called StormReady® School Supporters. The goal of the National Weather Service StormReady® School Supporter Program is to elevate the level of weather safety at participating schools. The program is voluntary, and the guidelines are understood to be significantly more stringent than those expected of an average school. I live in Macon, Georgia, and our community has earned the recognition of being a StormReady® community. At the time of this writing, there are three Supporter-recognized programs in the state of Georgia.

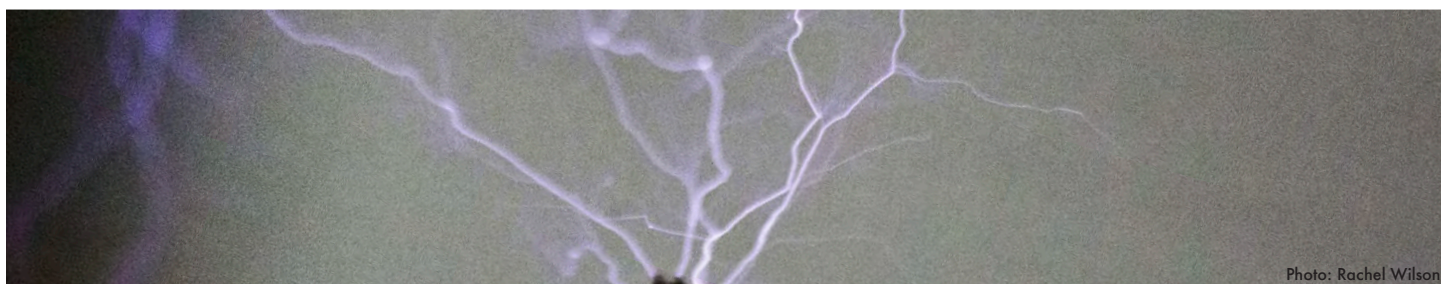


Photo: Rachel Wilson

StormReady® School Supporters are better prepared to save lives from weather events through better daily weather awareness, planning, and faculty and student education. No school is storm proof; however having a high level of weather awareness and planning can save lives. It was the quick and decisive action of two faculty members that saved the lives of the two students who were struck by lightning at Snow Canyon High School in St. George Utah. The quick thinking of those faculty members allowed them to provide timely aid to the two injured students and facilitate emergency transportation of the students to the nearest appropriate medical facility. The fact that these two students survived this incident is a testament to the importance of being prepared.

Tragically, hundreds of individuals are injured or killed by lightning each year. As a caring parent and educator, I urge any- and everyone responsible for emergency preparedness in an educational setting to take a closer look at your severe weather procedures. I urge you to visit the National Weather Service website and consider participating in the Storm-Ready® School Supporters program, and developing lightning safety procedures for outdoor sporting events and activities.

Here's another real-life case study of what can happen when lightning strikes our campuses. In Manteca, California one elementary school teacher experienced first-hand what it feels like to be struck by lightning. She was walking through the school parking lot carrying her umbrella during a

thunderstorm when lightning struck the umbrella. The teacher was quoted as saying she felt it go through her entire body. Her heart was racing and the roof of her mouth felt raw. She was just strong enough to make it indoors after the strike but was in terrible shock. If this event happened at your school, would your current plans and training allow you to provide assistance to the injured individual?



Russell Bentley is a veteran police officer and school district police chief who brings to Safe Havens a wealth of experience with school athletic events and security technology.

First Hand Accounts *Continued from page 11*

Common lessons

People who have witnessed severe weather strikes consistently say that clear communication and preparedness for immediate action are critical factors in your school's ability to respond. Larry Coker mentioned that in his district, all principals have weather alerts sent to their cell phones: *"One of the things we've learned about it is that we need to get radios with channels just for us, and chatter needs to be minimal...communication is a big thing on something like this."*

Launi Schmutz echos this: *"We also learned that you need to listen to one set of people*

who are communicating... we need to learn to listen to one source, and that's our incident command center."

Being prepared for a media response is another major lesson from first hand witnesses. Coker described the first day of school after their tornado strike:

"[It was] kind of a zoo. Every local news channel was there. When anything happens at a school, everybody wants to know about it. Be prepared, they're going to be there."

To be prepared for the uncertainty of weather, always follow best practices, the guidelines put out by NOAA and FEMA, and use the

re sources throughout this issue to make sure everyone in your school is prepared for mother nature's chaotic wonder. Larry Coker sums it up best:

"...Storms just pop up – you need to be ready immediately."



Charles Fleming is one of the original members of the Safe Havens Video crew, and has been working with Safe Havens at conferences for more than a decade. His experience includes thousands of hours working on-site with schools doing audio and video production in addition to his work assisting on Safe Havens assessment and consulting projects both on-site as well as off-site.

Safe Havens Video completes 2nd edition in series



Last month we announced the release of our new line of training videos, titled SAFE TOPICS. The first releases in this series are school crisis video scenario training tools - one edition for schools (S101) and another recently released edition for buses - S201 School Bus Crisis Scenarios. Our analysts have been using these for training tools since they were in their prototype stage last fall, and we have found that they are a great tool when training groups of any size. The series itself is the culmination of more than 5 years of research and development work and we want to thank all of the client districts that helped us as we refined this series.

For more information on
SAFE TOPICS: School Crisis Scenarios,
view the comprehensive informational video
on our website:
www.safehavensinternational.org

Or visit the product info page here:
<http://www.safehavensinternational.org/thefirst30seconds/>



Photos: Rachel Wilson

Photo from the Archives



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Each issue will feature a photo from our archives that has never been used. This issue's pick is from our video production shoot in the Lincoln County School District in Newport, Oregon. Since the topic of this issue is severe weather, we thought we'd show that we know how to handle it ourselves! In this shot, Susan Graves (the LCSD Safety Coordinator) holds an umbrella over Safe Havens Video director of photography Charles Fleming. We should point out that we were monitoring local conditions in case we needed to take shelter immediately!

Tornado Survival Guide for Schools

Article and photos By Stephen Satterly, Jr

Tornadoes are among the most violent types of storms in the world, with winds often in excess of 200 mph. They can wreak incredible havoc on schools and communities, and can change lives forever. The string of deadly tornadoes in the spring of 2011, followed by this year's deadly season, have had the positive side effect of generating renewed interest in tornado procedures for schools.

Having survived an EF3 tornado in my school several years ago, I know firsthand what it's like to experience severe weather and why preparedness is critical during these times. This article lists some basic guidelines to follow for tornado preparedness and response, as schools will vary in their needs. Be sure to modify these based on your local needs and discussions with key stakeholders. I do want to point out that Safe Havens International assumes no liability for these measures - but these tips are definitely a good starting point for your own planning.

Keep an Eye on the Sky

If a tornado watch is issued, then conditions are right for the formation of tornadoes, and you should be in a heightened state of alert. Curtail outdoor activities, monitor weather radar, weather radios and local media to track storms, and have your staff locate their emergency kits and equipment so they can be grabbed at a moment's notice. Review the locations of your best possible shelter areas, and the routes to get to them. Transportation staff should be notified and placed on alert.

Don't let clear skies fool you into a false sense of security. Super cells and squall lines can have powerful downdrafts that can reach up to 70mph, and appear miles away from the storm. An example of this is the wind that caused the Indiana State Fair Tragedy in 2011. The actual storm was miles away, but the high winds suddenly appeared, collapsing the stage, killing seven people and injuring 43.

A tornado warning means that a tornado has been sighted or indicated by weather radar. If you hear this warning, take shelter immediately! Look for the danger signs in the sky: a dark, often greenish sky, large hail or a large, dark, low-lying cloud, especially if you notice rotation, and/or a loud roar, similar to a freight train. If you find yourself outside, get into a low-lying area or dry ditch and lie flat.

Seek Assistance from Local and State Public Safety and Emergency Management Personnel in Developing your Plans

Local and state public safety agencies can be a source of highly qualified assistance and the services they provide are typically free. Take the time to ask for their assistance and you will be better prepared for it. You can also reduce your exposure to civil liability by seeking their assistance.

'Best available Shelter'

Without a FEMA 'Safe Room', you will need to find the 'best available shelter'. Many schools are not designed with tornado sheltering in mind, so you will have to do the best you can do. Once you have identified an area as a best available shelter, calculate the square footage of the area, and subtract out any unusable space that would interfere with someone using that part of the floor. This gives you the usable space in that area.



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Keep in mind that people will be sitting on the floor in the “duck and cover” position. As part of your planning, you should take into account that FEMA considers two hours as the maximum time of occupancy, although it could be longer.

How to Calculate Usable Space for Sheltering

You will need to know the maximum number of people in your building. Take this number and multiply by five. For each person in a wheel chair, multiply by 10. The resulting number is the square footage needed to shelter everyone.

For example, if you have 500 students, 70 staff members and two students in wheelchairs, your equation would be: $(570 \times 5) + (2 \times 10) = 2,850$ square feet of shelter space needed.



Image courtesy of FCIT
<http://etc.usf.edu/clipart>

Avoid Large Roof Spans

Roof span is an important consideration when locating a shelter area. This is the length of the beams that support the roof. Also important is the direction of the beams. The tremendous stresses created by a tornado can quickly overwhelm the ability of a roof beam to support its share of the weight of the roof, and diminish the structural integrity of the walls.

The maximum safe roof span is 25 feet. Anything over that, and you will risk increasing the probability of roof and/or wall failure during an extreme wind event. Long hallways are still viable, if the roof beams are perpendicular to the hallway. It is best to check by taking a look at the blueprints for the school.

Hallways as Shelters

The use of hallways during an extreme-wind event has been debated extensively, especially after the Joplin, Missouri and now the Henryville, Indiana tornadoes. Video footage shows wind-blown debris speeding through the hallways, creating great fears that students sheltering in those hallways could be injured or killed by the debris.

Hallways that open to the outside should be the last place used because the doors at the end will likely fail, and students would then be subjected to wind-borne debris. However, my review of the research has not shown a significant number of fatalities from wind-borne debris. The vast majority of fatalities in an extreme-wind event come from students being buried under collapsed walls and/or roofing material.



Photo: Steve Satterly

The 2-Wall Rule

When selecting your best possible shelter area, make sure that there are a minimum of two walls between that area and the outside. For example, the above photo shows a wall that was hit by a 15 foot long tree trunk (which landed on the teacher's desk). Had anyone been sheltering there, they would have been buried under brick, masonry, drywall and other construction materials. At Henryville High School, an exterior wall of a courtyard collapsed into a classroom. The hallway on the inside of that classroom remained structurally sound, although a bank of lockers was knocked off of its mounts from the force of the collapse.



This picture of the Henryville Elementary School gym shows a missing roof, the collapsed wall, and the impact hole next to the scoreboard.



This is a major impact scar from a large object. It also shows a tree branch that pierced the side of the school, and a hole in the upper right caused by a debris missile.

Plan for Students With Special Needs

Students with special needs should be factored into your planning. Not only do you need more space for wheelchair-bound students, but remember that many students with special needs do not react well to change, and an extreme-wind event will create major changes. Remember that the time to plan for their needs is before you need to meet those needs.

This photo was taken near the main impact area of Henryville Elementary School, on the south side. This was one of the last remaining classrooms left on the second floor on the east end of the school.



© Steve Satterly 2012

Equip Your Shelter Areas

You will need emergency equipment for your shelter areas. FEMA recommends one flashlight per 10 occupants, as well as a first aid kit. They also recommend a NOAA weather radio, and a radio that can pick up commercial stations. An extra supply of batteries is recommended, as well as a device that will create a piercing sound without a power source (Such as an air horn), to

be used to signal rescue workers if you get trapped in the shelter. You should have a communications device other than a landline phone. After a tornado, cell phone coverage may be spotty, although SMS messages may often work even if cell phones will not.

I hope that you never have to use any of this. Having survived an EF3 tornado that took utilities off of the roof of my school in 2002, I can say that it was not a fun time. What would have made it worse is if we were not prepared. Preparedness can make all the difference in the world between a natural disaster and a tragedy.

About this Guest Contributor



Stephen Satterly, Jr. is the Director of School Safety and Transportation at the CSC Southern Hancock County in East Central Indiana. He is a survivor of an EF3 tornado on September 20, 2002. He is a certified Indiana School Safety Specialist with more than 75 hours of FEMA training, and is currently working toward a Master's Certificate in Homeland Security through the School for Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA) at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis. The author welcomes questions, other viewpoints any comments at satterly.steve@att.net.

If you would like to submit an article or photos for publication, please contact us through our website.

web based verification system, either through internal systems or external ones. For example, most Learning Management Systems (LMSs) such as Moodle or Blackboard offer tools that districts can use to create this type of system. Whether paper or electronic tracking approaches are utilized, there are a number of ways to improve the reliability of information flow and documentation:

- Develop an approach that allows administrators to quickly determine which employees have received critical documents, plan components, emergency equipment and training.
- The system should allow you to correct gaps with employees who have not received these items and document the corrective action.

The approach used should be developed in a manner that will make it easier to demonstrate in a court of law that reasonable efforts to provide the appropriate resources to all employees have been made. Keep in mind that death can occur if a critical resource is not provided to a single

employee.

The documentation that is created should be stored for a period of time that is long enough in case litigation occurs at the end of the statutory time period for litigation in your state. Your legal counsel or insurance carrier should be able to tell you how long you should retain these records. Furthermore, with electronic records, it is now feasible to retain records for a much longer period of time at relatively minor costs. Consider the pros and cons of a longer record-keeping period with your legal counsel.

A consistent system should be developed for an entire organization – whether that's all schools in a public school system or all buildings in a private school campus. If different schools utilize different methods of resource dissemination, there may be an increased likelihood of a safety

failure along with increased exposure to civil liability.

Taking the time to develop an effective resource distribution, tracking and documentation system will not only reduce the chances that someone will get hurt, it can reduce the exposure of the organization to civil liability and the loss of public confidence. Taking the time to avoid these very real outcomes is usually the most time efficient approach in the long term. The prevention of a single safety incident can be well worth the time and energy invested.

Chris Dorn is the Executive Producer of Safe Havens Video and VP of Operations at Safe Havens International. He has led the creation of numerous electronic training and record-keeping tools for districts across the country.



Photo: Rachel Wilson

Internet Resource: <http://onguardonline.gov/topics/protect-kids-online>

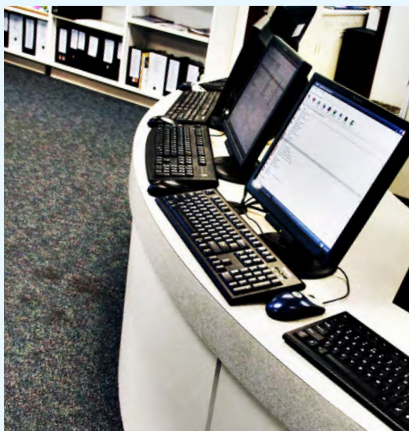


Photo: Rachel Wilson

This is a simply worded webpage that provides tips that parents should share with their children about using the internet. This is also a great resource for teachers who interact with younger students who are just starting to learn how to use the web. Just a decade ago, the internet was a newly evolving technology that had a certain built-in learning curve for it's users. Over the past several years we have seen the rapid growth of the internet to the point where the iPhone Baby Edition™ is probably already in development, so it's important that all adults who interact with children are ready to provide information about safe web usage. From basic tips like "be careful about what you post online" to more thoughtful and complex topics like cyberbullying, sexting and the use of "virtual worlds", this is a great place to start when talking to young people about the internet.

"The Safety Riddle" Answer from page 4: This photo shows a storage room with a few visible problems: first, the load at the top of some of the shelves seems a bit heavy, and is probably a hazard (the heavy objects could fall during an earthquake, or even just due to human error). Second, there are several boxes that are pressing against the ceiling with enough force to either crush the boxes or push the ceiling tiles up. This creates a number of hazards: a fire load too close to the ceiling as well as a compromised barrier (the ceiling tile) that is designed to contain a fire if one does occur. And even if there were not weight and space issues, the boxes on the top shelf also block the fire sprinkler pattern, which is a more serious underlying hazard. This is a great example of how small details can turn into big problems and how seemingly minor hazards can combine to form a disaster. For more information about this hazard, or to submit your own hazard for publication, contact us.

High as a Kite answer (from page 5):

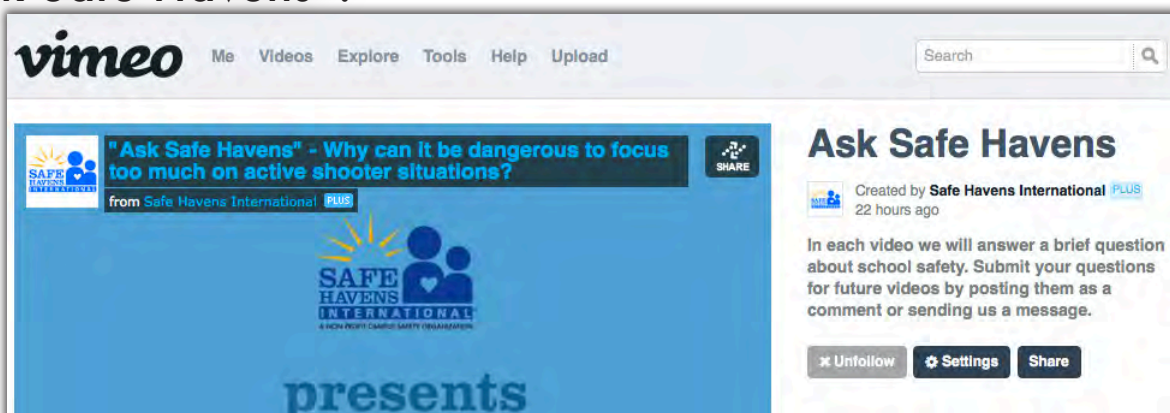
Photo: Rachel Wilson

The green bags on page 5 contain several handfuls of unprocessed coca leaves. In large quantities these are used to produce the chemically processed street drug cocaine (which can then be turned into crack). While this drug is commonly abused in the United States and other developed countries, most of the countries where the plants naturally grow use the leaves in their unprocessed form as a mild stimulant - much in the same way people use coffee or soft drinks to keep alert when they are getting fatigued. Coca tea is also a popular drink, especially in countries where high altitudes induce sickness in visiting tourists.

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