

An Open Letter to Cedarville University Faculty, Staff, and Students:

In the aftermath of the Newtown, Connecticut shooting tragedy that gripped our nation last month, we want to provide an update on Cedarville University's preparations in case of a similar situation occurring on our campus.

Before I begin, it might as well be stated up front that, if an individual is determined to commit this type of violent act at the University, there is little that we can do to prevent it. Our open campus, daily chapel, centralized dining facilities, welcoming of visitors, etc. make it virtually impossible to prevent this type of act from occurring if someone is committed to carrying it out. We need to be cognizant of the fact that active shooter situations are usually very difficult to predict and can occur without warning. When these situations happen it is difficult, if not impossible, to prevent all injury or loss of life. Therefore, it becomes imperative that the entire campus community know how they should respond in advance and help maintain good security and safety procedures. This of course includes effective planning and response procedures that focus both on education and the rapid deployment of personnel and resources that are needed to stop a perpetrator as quickly as possible, in an effort to minimize injury or loss of life.

For some years, the University has taken a proactive approach in preparing for this type of emergency by raising awareness, implementing drills, performing procedural reviews, and undertaking practical training, both internally and in cooperation with local and regional law enforcement personnel.

Realizing that an active shooter situation is perhaps one of the most disturbing and traumatic of all emergency crises that could occur on a university campus, I wanted to make you aware of measures that have been taken in the past, those currently being worked on, and on-going plans to continue preparing the University for this event.

Previous actions:

1) In 2007-08, we developed the Basic Emergency Response Plan, Security Crisis Response Plan (includes active shooter), and Communication Plans. The Board of Director's approved these plans in 2007/2008.

These plans have been reviewed and updated each year.

2) Since that time, we have met regularly with local police authorities to review our basic response to an active shooter emergency situation. .

3) Hosted a Training Program & Seminar – performed by an outside consultant working under a NIMS grant – in May, 2010 on responding to an active shooter situation. This training involved key department personnel from Student Life, Administration, Local Security and Police officials, EMS and Fire Services, Physical Plant Managers, Human Resource Managers and local school officials. The seminar also included a “table top” training session.

4) Annual reviews of procedures held with Resident Directors that has included RA’s as well.

5) A “Mass Emergency Notification System” was purchased in 2009 (and renewed annually since then) for notifying all of the campus community of any emergency situation, including an active shooter. This system is tested annually and has been used several times for emergencies – typically weather-related. Below is the website outlining the procedure for using this system.

www.cedarville.edu/EmergencyNotifProc

6) Upgraded access control systems have been installed in all hall-style residence halls. Additionally, all hall-style residence halls have been outfitted with proximity card access systems as well as surveillance cameras to improve the ability to control access and detect illegal entry, including a possible active shooter. This was a key recommendation at Virginia Tech. when their response to the 2007 event was analyzed. This process began in 2010 and was completed in 2012.

7) New hardware was added to all entrance doors to the DMC Chapel in 2010 for the purpose of improving the security of the facility and to better defend against an active shooter situation in Chapel. Cameras were also added to the Chapel and an armed security officer is present during chapel each day. The Chapel is one area that is a concern due to the mass number of people assembled there daily.

8) To better defend against an Active Shooter situation, the Campus Safety Department obtained approval from the Board of Directors in the summer of 2011 for properly trained and licensed officers to carry firearms while on duty at the university. Currently, seven (7) officers are licensed through the Ohio Police Officers Training Commission including the Director of Campus Safety. All officers must go through an annual refresher training certification.

Having armed officers is an important response to stopping an active shooter immediately, if possible, to minimize casualties.

9) A summary of an Active Shooter response plan for students and faculty staff was placed on the Campus Safety web-page in 2011, for the purpose of educating the campus community as to everyone's role.

www.cedarville.edu/lockdown

10) Cooperated with the Cedarville Police for an article that appeared in "Cedars" Campus Publication in March of 2011. This article featured information on response protocol for an active shooter situation. The article indicated Campus Safety's desire to hold a drill in the fall of 2012.

11) Training sessions were held with members of the Physical Plant lock-down teams in March of 2012 reviewing response procedures as to how to secure the campus in an active shooter situation.

Current / Recent Actions:

1) On October 17, the Campus Safety Department held a *Lock-Down Drill* involving the entire campus. The Emergency Notification System was used to notify everyone on campus that it was *only a drill* while asking everyone to go into "lock-down" mode. Designated persons went through the major buildings on campus to evaluate how we have responded as a community.

While the response to this drill was more "casual" than we had hoped (understanding that the timing was not perfect – I'm sure the timing of a real event will be!) we did learn some valuable information from this drill and are incorporating it into our planning.

Some "lessons learned" included:

- We need to re-evaluate the University "lock-down" procedures. A video called **RUN, HIDE or FIGHT!** from Homeland Security and referenced in Campus Safety Magazine was sent to the campus community on the basic principles of what each individual should do when an active shooter enters your building. These principles are the latest concepts in active shooter response. "Locking Down" often puts additional people in harm's way while not providing any additional safety for a building's occupants.

- Some people did not take the drill serious and failed to participate. For those that did participate however, the response time was very good and individuals sought immediate safety and were actually undetectable by the evaluation teams.
- We received several reports from faculty and staff that indicated that they were not signed up for the mass notification system. *Everyone should check to see that you have done this by going into Cedar Info. on the faculty/staff home page under "individual Transactions" and go to "Emergency Notification sign-up".*
- It is difficult to lock-down in certain classrooms that have much glass in them and individuals occupying those rooms needed to relocate to more safe locations such as interior offices, conference rooms, etc.
- Increased awareness among faculty, staff and students is still recommended and future drills will be considered.

2) On October 24th, 2012, the University hosted a comprehensive 3 hour table top exercise that involved an active shooter scenario on our campus. The drill was conducted by an expert consultant from "Emergency Preparedness Solutions" based at Clark State University in Springfield, Ohio. The purpose of the exercise was to participate in a discussion-based exercise designed to establish a learning environment for the "players" to review emergency response plans, policies, and procedures as they pertain to a dynamic and dangerous active shooter event occurring on campus. The exercise was evidence of the growing public safety partnership between the university and the local response partners to prepare for the many threats the university community could face. The planning team that help set-up the drill focused on evaluating emergency response procedures, identifying areas for improvement, and achieving a collaborative attitude.

The exercise focused on **4 objectives**:

- **Communications.** Discussed the ability to effectively establish and maintain communications among all appropriate response locations, organizations and university personnel.
- **Student Protective Actions.** Discussed the ability to identify and implement appropriate protective actions based upon projected risks posed to the student population.
- **Emergency Public Information.** Discuss the ability to coordinate and disseminate accurate information about the incident to the public and the media in a timely manner.

- **Responder Coordination.** Discuss the adequacy of procedures, facilities, and equipment to handle, incoming responders and coordinate activities and decision making with them.

In addition, **3 modules** were utilized in the drill.

- Module 1: Included the active shooter status, notification and warning, emergency medical response and law enforcement staffing.
- Module 2: Included the possibility of a second shooter, coordination with Cedar Cliff Schools, emergency public information and responder staging/coordination with EMS (ground & air) and Fire/Law.
- Module 3: Included resolution and recovery - family assistance center, critical incident stress debriefing, future used of areas of the shootings, legal issues, class schedules and exams and recruitment.

Participants in the drill included personnel from Public Relations, Administration, Student Life and Counseling, Campus Safety & Security, Physical Plant Management, legal counsel, communications, local law enforcement, fire and rescue and a Cedar Cliff school representative. From this, the university will review and evaluate our current plans and strategies based upon our own observations and that of the consultant and make any necessary changes.

3) Campus Safety held an updated training session on using the “Mass Emergency Notification System”. We then held a test and sent a message out to the entire campus. This is a vital part of any active shooter emergency response protocol.

4) On December 15th, 2012, the Campus Safety Department hosted an active shooter training program that included instruction from the Greene County Regional SWAT Team and involved campus safety personnel (both armed and unarmed officers) and police officers from the Cedarville Police Department. The exercise included classroom instruction and an actual field practice scenario of responding to a mock situation in the DMC to stop an assailant as quickly as possible. “Simmunitions” ammo was used to create a true to life situation that involved the use of firearms. The training that was provided included the Ohio Police Officer Training Commissions new standard on "Solo Officer Response" to active shooters. Future exercises such as this will be planned while we work in partnership with these agencies.

Future Actions:

Early 2013 (planned): We are working on setting up a time to have our consultant make a presentation in Chapel for all faculty, staff and students that would focus on further education for our campus community on how to respond in this type of emergency. You will hear more on this in the upcoming weeks.

Facility Access Control: I have already mentioned that all hall-style residence halls have had upgraded security added including cameras at access and proximity-card monitored access. The University will soon begin implementing this same technology in its administrative buildings in order to direct and control after-hours access, use cameras to monitor sensitive areas and/or high-value equipment, restrict the issuance of unnecessary keys – including an end to distributing master keys, etc. The end goals will be to better manage traffic flow in and through buildings and to create the ability to lock buildings automatically from a centralized location in the event of any emergency.

As stated at the beginning of this letter, there is nothing that we can do to guarantee that this type of incident will never happen at Cedarville University. The Campus Safety Office is taking steps to be prepared for this type of event, but our response will always be “reactive”. Faculty, staff, and students also have a role – a “proactive” role – in preventing and/or responding to an incident like this. First, never think for a moment that this can never happen in Cedarville. It always happens in places where it is least expected, i.e. Paducah, KY. Second, if someone or something looks out-of-place, report it to campus safety immediately. It is much better to check out a “false alarm” than to ignore a situation as “probably nothing”.

Rod Johnson
Associate VP for Operations

Doug Chisholm
Director, Campus Safety and Security

