

# School Officials Train for Lockdown

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Alton teachers and faculty from other schools attended a shooting class Aug. 6 at 8 a.m., in the Alton School Library with area law enforcement officers, including officers from the Oregon and Howell County Sheriff's Departments.

The instructor for the class was Vice President of Strategos International, Mark Warren. Warren is from the Alton area and graduated from Alton High School.

Strategos, Warren said, is a company that has been teaching shooter training classes for law enforcement, military and church security since 2001. Warren said the class, directed toward teaching school lockdown/safety plans, was made possible through a SEMA (State Emergency Management Agency) bid.

"Missouri is the only state that is specifically training to bring law enforcement and school personnel together," Warren said. "This is what needs to happen."

Warren said when something like a school shooting happens, it doesn't just affect the school, it affects the entire community.

He said there is also the assumption that, "Nothing like that could happen around here." Warren said most shootings happen in towns that have a population of 10,000 or less. "It happens in smaller cities as in larger ones," Warren said.

Warren presented a slideshow about various ways to handle lockdown situations at schools.

Those who attended the class listened to a four and a half minute 9-1-1 recording of a faculty member at Columbine High School who had seen a shooter and fled into the library with other students. The teacher couldn't lock the door to the library from the inside. The 9-1-1 operator instructed the teacher to tell the students to get under the desks. Most of those who were killed during the incident were killed in the library.

Warren also went through other school shooting/bombings in the past with the class and what law enforcement learned from the incidents.

One obscure school massacre occurred in 1764 before the American Revolution. As a part of Pontiac's Rebellion, Native American Indians stormed upon the Enoch Brown School in Pennsylvania and killed the teacher and 10 students in the one-room schoolhouse. Other school incidents Warren spoke of were more recent, such as Columbine and Virginia Tech.

"Columbine is what forced us to go into a rapid deployment response," Warren said, which means a faster response time for S.W.A.T. teams and law enforcement in lockdown situations.

However, as with V-Tech, terrorists have learned about rapid response teams and are planning ahead by closing off entrances. Because of this, Warren said, law enforcement officers have to continuously evolve and be prepared to break those barriers using any type of breaching tool available to them.

A demonstration lockdown at the school was held and Warren explained options faculty and staff have if a lockdown should fail. "When a teacher is backed against a wall (by a shooter), they're either going to be shot or they're willing to do something about their situation," Warren said.

He said many times a school has a written plan about what to do during a lockdown situation. Though the school may have a meeting about the plan once a year, the rest of the time the plan stays in a drawer in the teacher's desk. Warren said through this class, teachers have hands-on training by actually implementing their procedure.

Alton Superintendent Shelia Wheeler said the class was an eye opening experience. This is the first time the class has been offered at the school. "We really try to do the best we can to keep our students safe," Wheeler said.

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