

# THE Safety Minute

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## Welcome!

Welcome to the first Idaho Safety & Security Quarterly. This newsletter is written to provide school administrators, and those tasked with school safety and security, ideas and mitigation practices relevant in today's school environment. As our team travels the state we find a lack of common understanding within the relevant vocabulary; accordingly, I will begin with the basic concepts of **threat** and **mitigation**. Every school is exposed to threats. Some threats occur naturally, weather, fire, earthquake; while some are human-caused, car accidents, abduction and assaults. And a reality is that we, individually and corporately cannot control threats. They exist, and we must plan for them. Thus, safety planning must focus on the idea of mitigation, the actions that minimize the effect of a threat. The reason it is helpful to think in terms of mitigation is we can then design processes, implement facility changes and adopt policies that mitigate a wide range of threats rather than focusing on a singular threat. An example of a multi-hazard mitigation is found in the practice of fire drills. Fire drills simply a form of evacuation and are a mitigation against losing lives in a fire. You may not be able to prevent the fire, but you can create plans that mitigate the danger. The evacuation process can be used whether the threat is a gas leak, earthquake or any other time it's safer outside than inside. Similarly, the mitigation strategies that keep out random strangers help mitigate a non-custodial abduction and intruders. In these scenarios, we cannot make a stranger disappear, cannot reconcile all non-custodial disputes; we can plan the mitigation steps of controlling access to our campus spaces, devising effective visitor policies, and training staff on practices that enforce your mitigation plans. As your safety committees meet this year take a minute to discuss the reality of threats, and the process of mitigation. I sincerely hope the clarification of meaning will make your and their time more productive!

Written By Brian Armes

## Threat Assessment: An Ounce of Planning

The new school-year honeymoon is over and as students and staff settle into new routines, now is the time to review or develop a threat assessment protocol. With the inauguration of the See, Tell, Now! campaign students, staff and parents are more aware of concerning behaviors and are communicating their concerns to administrators. With increased detection, so increases the need to engage a solid threat assessment process. We know that at some point in the coming months we will have a student evidence behavior of concern and we will have to take evaluative action. This threat assessment process is best undertaken by a multidisciplinary team. Solo threat assessment is both an ineffective process exposes the assessor to higher personal liability. A team approach is the most effective and research-affirmed method for threat assessment. Identifying the team now, while you control the tempo helps to lighten the load when you won't. Identifying roles, documentation processes and responsibilities of the team members also allows each team member to become comfortable with their role and better understand the team dynamics. The team meeting for the first time 30 minutes after you've discovered a kill list is a bad use of everyone's time. It's also one that is easily avoided with a few meetings in the calm before the storm.

Written By Mike Munger

## Situational Awareness

In the Idaho Schools' new See, Tell, Now! campaign, situational awareness is highlighted as a key to your decision making. Situational Awareness involves gathering information about your surroundings and understanding that information will guide your actions, both immediate and future. Someone who has a good sense of situational awareness generally has a feel for places, people, and events in their vicinity. In order to develop good situational awareness, use your senses, assess the information, and then act to remove yourself from potential threats. Many attack survivors report that before an attack they were aware of a sense that something wasn't right. Human survival instinct has an amazing ability to detect breaks in normal patterns, if we're willing to listen. To effectively use our senses and increase situational awareness, we must be willing to put down our phones, look around, remove our earbuds, and pay attention to what's going on around us. These simple steps may well be all you need to ensure your safety for yourself and other.

Written by Mark Feddersen

## The Reason for Credentials

As a part of the back-to-school process your school staff is likely having the annual renewal of their photo ID. Before your staff puts the card in their wallet consider the following; A photo ID prominently worn and displayed by all staff members is much more than identification. It is the first step in creating the cultural expectation that authorized adults on a school campus will be identified. When you add visitor badging and management protocols to consistent staff credentialing the two combine to allow students at all grade levels to help with the detection of unauthorized individuals on your campus. We teach our youngest students pattern recognition; when all authorized adults have a credential it becomes easy to spot which one of these things is not like the others.

Written By Guy Bliesner



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