

School Administrator's Risk Management Newsletter

Volume I, Issue 1

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Welcome to the premiere issue of the *School Administrator's Risk Management Newsletter*, brought to you by **Camp and School Consulting**,

This periodic newsletter provides information on risk management tips, current risk management issues, new workshops and faculty in-services, and other services that may be of interest to you and your school community. I hope you find the information helpful.

Risk Management Tips

This month's subject area: Dealing with the Media

When an event occurs on your campus that attracts media attention, it is essential that your school is prepared to respond quickly and effectively. With the use of mobile vans and radio scanners, media personnel monitor police, fire, and EMS communications, and often arrive at your school before the requested emergency responders! There is no time to select and train a media spokesperson when an emergency or other newsworthy event occurs, and as in all areas of risk management, preparedness is the key.

What attracts media attention? A wide variety of school events, as evidenced by your area's newspaper, radio and television coverage. School closings and modification of programs, elimination of extracurricular programs, budget issues, acts or threats of school violence, medical injuries to students, faculty inappropriate behavior, school discipline policies, harassment issues, and a variety of other school polices attract media.

Your media spokesperson

You should carefully select your school's media spokesperson. The person selected for this important task should be articulate, calm, able to think quickly and be knowledgeable about your school.

Your school's senior administrator (Head of School, Principal) should NOT be the initial media spokesperson for the school. Why?

Often, information portrayed in news or radio coverage of an event is NOT accurate or complete. Information from interviews is often truncated by the media or interpreted incorrectly. When this occurs, a clarification issued by someone other than or below the senior administrator carries little weight. Likewise, the Head of School correcting their own previous statement is not as powerful. If the initial communication is not accurate, a follow-up, more-detailed explanation by the Head of School is much more credible, and is more likely accepted as a clarification than the Head correcting their own statement. This of course, does not mean that the Head of School does not approve the initial media communication. The carefully worded statement to be delivered by the school's media spokesperson is ALWAYS approved by the Head of School before release.

Communicating with many different groups

Additionally, the Head of School may need to be communicating with other important people connected with the school such as board members, diocesan officials, or the parents of the students involved in a particular incident. Have you thought of all the constituents requiring information in a crisis situation at your school? These may include:

Board members, parent organization officials (diocese, school association), faculty, parents, students, community EMS responders, as well as the media and general public. As a result, many schools will designate both an internal (faculty, staff and students) and external (media, parents, public) spokesperson.

The above information from ***"What Do We Do Now? - Crisis Response Planning for School Administrators***, a workshop designed for school administrators by Camp and School Consulting, 2003.

Current Risk Management Issues

School Violence

In recent weeks, the region has been shocked by a series of alleged plots by students to do harm at their schools.

Recent newspaper coverage included the discovery of a planned attack by a student on other students at a California public high school, similar to the Columbine High School tragedy. The plot was discovered only days before its reported planned execution.

Students charged in alleged plot

Laguna Creek pair accused of planning murders; no hate-crime counts are filed.

Sacramento Bee, By Lesli A. Maxwell, Emily Bazar and Ramon Coronado -- Bee Staff Writers
Thursday, February 12, 2004

Authorities charged two 15-year-old boys Wednesday with conspiring to murder their classmates at Laguna Creek High School, but prosecutors backed off allegations that the crimes were racially motivated.

The boys -- one a freshman, the other a sophomore -- were arrested after another student's parent tipped law enforcement officials that the pair were plotting to attack Laguna Creek High with guns and bombs. Both are charged with two counts each of conspiracy to commit murder and one count of attempted burglary, said Deputy District Attorney Rick Yenovkian.

Though authorities found no guns or explosives at the school, a .22-caliber rifle was voluntarily given to investigators by one of the boy's parents. Authorities said the pair had tried to break into a sporting goods store to steal weapons

Last month, Santa Clara County sheriff's deputies arrested a Saratoga High School student who allegedly stole bomb-making chemicals from a science lab. Saratoga High administrators said they believed the student, who had been implicated in a wide-ranging cheating scandal, -intended to blow up the school.

Police discovered a plan by 12 middle school students to burn down their school.

San Jose Mercury News, posted on Fri, Feb. 13, 2004

Plot foiled to burn school

12 SUNNYVALE STUDENTS ALLEGEDLY INVOLVED IN PLAN

By Sandra Gonzales

Mercury News

Tipped by administrators and two students who had a change of heart, Sunnyvale police uncovered a plan 12 students allegedly hatched during recess to burn down their middle school. The detailed plan also involved widespread vandalism to Cupertino Middle School and was to be carried out tonight, Sunnyvale officials said Thursday. The students were age 12 to 14.

Authorities discovered the plan at noon Wednesday after two of the boys involved alerted school administrators to the alleged plot. When Sunnyvale police interviewed the boys, officials said, they learned that each had a specific role in the plan that involved a rifle, gasoline and two-way radios.

None of those weapons or items were found during searches of the boys' homes. Police indicated that the parents of the boys were cooperative.

In all, nine arrests were made on suspicion of conspiracy to commit arson and conspiracy to commit vandalism. Six of those arrested were taken to juvenile hall and three were cited and released.

All nine students were suspended from school, according to police

Terrorist and racial threats by a student distributed over the Internet made the news at a private high school in Northern California.

Arrest in threats at S.J. school

STUDENT ALLEGEDLY SENT RACIST, TERRORIST MESSAGES

San Jose Mercury News, by Crystal Carreon

A 15-year-old student has been arrested on suspicion of making terrorist threats on the Internet, allegedly posting messages to kill African-Americans, including classmates at the San Jose campus.

The alleged threats -- detailed in a string of instant messages that began in August -- resulted in the sophomore's arrest Jan. 28, said San Jose police officer Gina Tepoorten. Another student who apparently knew of the messages alerted the school's dean of students, who then called police that morning. Police say the student was arrested on campus, though a school official said she believed he was no longer enrolled in the school.

How current and complete are your school's emergency preparedness plans?

Do they address intruders, violence by students?

Do your plans address bioterrorism, chemical and radiological (dirty bomb) incidents?

In today's world, a school would most likely be found negligent for not preparing for these types of emergencies.

Is your plan easy to understand and follow?

Is information easy to find, and are responses for faculty members clearly spelled out?

In an emergency, faculty do not have time to check the index on a large binder of information, turn to page 34, and read through instructions for dealing with intruders or violence. The information needs to be in an easy to read, quickly referenced format.

Do you rehearse emergency procedures regularly?

If all your school does for emergency drills is sound the fire alarm, walk out to the assembly area, and remind students to be quiet, that is all your faculty will be prepared to do in an emergency!

Drill intensity should escalate throughout the year, emphasizing different teams in the school's crisis response plan (one month-student attendance, next month-search and rescue, the following month-triage and first aid). Include scenarios, role plays and mock victims in your drills.

We can help!

Camp and School Consulting has developed a unique, 2-part emergency response system custom-tailored to school sites. Each faculty member in each classroom or office has an easy to reference flip chart which specifically details the required response for each type of emergency scenario. The second part of the system is a crisis response binder to be used by the administrator in charge when the school is in full crisis-response mode. This binder includes prioritized checklists for all key response units (search and rescue, security, first aid and triage), as well as a master checklist for the administrator in charge which integrates with the individual team responses.

For more information, visit www.campandschool.com and click on Custom Emergency Preparedness Plans.

New Workshops

You asked for it, and here it is!

Following last fall's statewide tour of *Risk Management for School Administrators*, many school administrators expressed interest in a similar workshop designed for faculty. Several administrators expressed frustration with faculty who **"just don't get it"** with regard to their personal liability and exposing the school to potentially litigious situations. Others commented **"I wish my faculty had this information"**.

I am pleased to announce a new workshop is now available for on-site presentation, *Hands-on Risk Management for Faculty*. Drawing from the more comprehensive administrative session, this 2-hour workshop includes an overview of general principles of liability, review of court cases and underlying principles related to negligence lawsuits, and methods and specific strategies of risk management as they apply to school activities.

During the second part of the workshop, following the presentation of the above information, faculty break into groups and apply the risk management methodology presented to **YOUR** school's activities (field trips, retreats, rallies, before and after school supervision, dances, school picnics and carnivals to name a few we have worked on with school faculties). The result is a collection of risk management worksheets for specific activities that can be kept in an administrator's office for review by specific faculty when they are responsible for the next occurrence of the event. This provides the faculty member the benefit of previously identified concerns and strategies for dealing with them.

For more information on the above workshops, visit www.campandschool.com, or contact Dan Gelineau per the information below.

Thank You to all the private schools in California for your enthusiastic support of *Camp and School Consulting*. Since forming the company in 2002, *CASC* has presented to hundreds of school administrators at area seminars and has conducted a number of on-site trainings for faculty and staff. The *CASC* Emergency Preparedness Guide is gaining wide acceptance at a variety of schools from small single-site elementary schools to multi-campus programs and large single-site high schools.

Dan Gelineau

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