



School Safety Newsletter

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Warrant: Batavia High School Bomb Suspect Researched Columbine Shooting, Building Blueprints

December 16, 2019, Daily Herald

<https://www.dailyherald.com/news/20191216/warrant-batavia-high-school-bomb-suspect-researched-columbine-shooting-building-blueprints>

A 15-year-old Batavia High School student arrested shortly before Thanksgiving after bomb-making materials and other explosive compounds were found in his bedroom at his parents' house told authorities he planned to detonate the devices on rural land along the Mississippi River.

A science supply store notified the FBI of suspicious purchases, and federal authorities worked with Batavia police and the Kane County Bomb squad in a Nov. 26 search of the teen's parents' house on the 1100 block of Davey Drive, the teen's bedroom laboratory, computer and cellphone, according to a recently unsealed search warrant.

The teen, who is identified only by his initials in court records, researched the 1999 Columbine school shooting and was searching the building blueprints of Batavia High School, according to the search warrant. The FBI also did a precursory social media check on the teen and found "suspicious accounts that were suspected to be related to anti-Semitism/Nazi/Hitler."

The teen's defense attorney, Gary Johnson, had no comment on the case Monday.

In the bedroom search, authorities found: "highly volatile, explosive, and flammable homemade chemistry experiments specifically used in bomb-making"; sodium azide, a compound used in vehicle air bags and bombs; thermite, which is used in improvised hand grenades; PVC piping with small "wick sized" holes cut into the end of three pipes; high and low voltage electronics and switches used to detonate bombs; lab equipment and numerous chemicals and compounds used to make bombs.

Authorities questioned the student, who has dual United States and German citizenship, when he came home from school. According to the warrant, the teen admitted to experiments in his room to make bombs, which "he intended to ignite in rural areas and/or on a rural property near the Mississippi River that his parents were going to purchase," according to the warrant.

FBI bomb experts said the student had an "extremely high level of knowledge" for chemistry and bomb-making. When asked about the social media accounts, the student said his anti-Semitic/Nazi/Hitler user names were part of "jokes" with his friends.

In the teen's car, authorities also found a Nov. 23 receipt for ball bearings, which can be used as shrapnel in homemade bombs, from a store in West Chicago.

The teen was taken to Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield for an evaluation and he is held at the Kane County Juvenile Justice Center in St. Charles.

On Nov. 27, the day after his arrest, a browser history on the teen's computer showed he had researched architectural blueprints and floor plans for Batavia High School and other public buildings, the Columbine shooting, gun simulators, the Hiroshima bomb and information about the high school's student resource officer, according to the warrant.

*Protecting our
future through
information
sharing*

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Warrant: Batavia High School Bomb Suspect Researched Columbine Shooting, Building Blueprints (Continued)

Police also searched the high school for explosives; none were found and no one was injured.

At a recent court appearance, the teen was ordered to undergo an psychological evaluation at the Kane County Diagnostic Center. He is next due in court Jan. 8.

Illinois Establishing Funding For School Safety Projects

December 6, 2019, Northern Public Radio

<https://www.northernpublicradio.org/post/illinois-establishing-funding-school-safety-projects>

In response to mass shootings, schools across the country are spending millions on school safety projects.

School districts across Illinois will be able to submit grant requests through the Illinois State Board of Education. The law takes effect in January.

These grants can cover costs for an array of safety-related projects including high-tech upgrades like metal detectors, professional development or school-based health centers.

Republican State Representative Jeff Keicher of Sycamore supported the bipartisan measure.

“You know, there's so many different solutions,” he said. “There's no one size fits all. You have different communities that have different needs; you have different buildings that are different ages.”

Keicher said schools should be able to develop safety solutions that work for their district, instead of conforming to state mandates.

“So it's also a hope that through this granting mechanism, if we come up with a great innovative idea, maybe we can pull back some of the some of the requirements that don't make sense,” he said.

The new granting mechanism is also supposed to prioritize under-resourced Tier 1 and 2 school districts.

Keicher said lawmakers wanted to get the office established as soon as possible, but he's not sure how much grant money will be immediately available.

The Illinois Association of School Boards recently passed a resolution to advocate for legislation providing similar grants for schools to pay for School Resource Officers.

9 Ways to Ensure Students Don't Ignore Emergency Notifications

December 2, 2019, Education Dive

<https://www.educationdive.com/spons/9-ways-to-ensure-students-dont-ignore-emergency-notifications/568198/>

Marketing your campus' emergency notification system must be a year-round endeavor. Here are some creative ways to entice students to opt-in.

College and university decision-makers should be focused not only on fostering a productive learning environment, but also keeping students, faculty and staff safe amidst an increasingly complex threat landscape.

Critical to campus safety is keeping all stakeholders informed with quick and accurate information on potential and real-time critical events, ranging from active shooters and severe weather to cybersecurity breaches and campus protests.

An Emergency Mass Notification System (EMNS) can only be as successful as its ability to reach and engage with as many stakeholders as possible — and the biggest obstacle to make that happen is ensuring contact databases are accurate and students and faculty sign up to receive the alerts.

EMNS registration is not a challenge exclusive to colleges and universities. State and local public safety, law enforcement and government agencies have long struggled to improve alert system opt-in rates for residents. Yet even

Monthly Webinars!

First Wednesday
of Every Month

at 10 am

(Except January,
July, and
August).

Next Webinars

**Wednesday,
February 5,
2019**

Each webinar has a
round table
discussion at the
end. Questions are
always welcome!

To participate, you
must be a vetted
member. For more
information please
email

isp.schoolsafety@illinois.gov

9 Ways to Ensure Students Don't Ignore Emergency Notifications (Continued)

today, only a fraction of a community residents who can register to properly receive alerts typically do so, in turn hindering emergency management efforts.

While emergency alerts are "pushed" to target audiences, the reality is that campuses first need to "pull" students to the systems via simplified registration, effective communication of the value proposition and frequent updating of contact information.

Colleges and universities must devote more resources and strategy to branding their EMNS in a way that drives registration and engagement — and do so in a way that doesn't shift a heavy burden to the students themselves.

To do so effectively, there are several strategies to consider.

Market your alert system

Many education institutions have already completed step one when it comes to building awareness of the notification system: reaching out to students entering the new school year with general information about the school's EMNS, how it works, how to sign up, benefits, etc. But the process shouldn't stop there, as that outreach came at a time when students are inundated with back-to-school information and it can be hard to process and retain everything coming at them.

Marketing the system is a year-round endeavor that should include the following components:

- **Social media.** A 2018 Knight Foundation survey found that 89% of U.S. college students got at least some of their news from social media over the previous week. Facebook was the most popular outlet, followed by Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter. The data can't be ignored when it comes to communicating with students not only about emergency events but the notification system itself. Many colleges now have active and widely followed accounts on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and other social media channels. Branding your notification system and providing updates and reminders through social media is critical to maintaining a steady drumbeat of branding to an audience with a compressed attention span.
- **Student and employee materials.** Many schools still distribute hard copy materials, like student and employee handbooks, or include that information on a student-focused or employee-focused website. Schools should consider promoting their emergency alert systems as part of this content.
- **Information booths.** Most campuses have a central meeting place like a student union. An information booth, at the start of the school year, during the start of each new semester and other times when students will congregate can raise awareness about the school emergency alert system.
- **Posters and informational fliers.** Paper products seem so old school, but posters on bulletin boards in high-traffic areas or informational fliers can still be effective. Fliers can be mailed to student and staff addresses or handed out on campus.
- **Engage with student media.** Many colleges have student newspapers, TV stations or radio stations. In some cases, they may run public-service announcements for free or for a low cost. Many colleges also make up a significant piece of the surrounding community and local media can also be a tool to get the word out.
- **Get creative.** In combination with other promotional efforts, colleges could consider contests or prizes for new emergency alert sign-ups. Many students would jump at a chance to win the latest iPhone or a \$250 Amazon gift card.

Keep students engaged

In addition to challenges with getting people to subscribe to an emergency alert system, there are some best practices for keeping them. There's an art to deciding when to send alerts and what to say in them:

- **Send only relevant alerts.** Students are bombarded regularly with communications noise from teachers, administrators, parents and friends, so campuses must be wary of overusing the alert system to communicate minor developments. Spam is everywhere, and alert systems that are too active risk being ignored when there really is an emergency situation. The last thing a school wants from its mass notification system is a series of messages that are unnecessary or are sent to the wrong group of people. In some cases, the entire student body or all staff and faculty may not need to see an alert. Tailor alerts to the group of people affected whenever possible so that it feels relevant and customized. Alerts also need to convey urgent, vital information that the campus community needs to keep safe. Even during an emergency event, too many alerts can oversaturate users.
- **Create the right messaging.** Keep messages short and to the point. The content and structure of messages are important. Messages should not be wordy or lengthy. You need to convey information as clearly and directly as possible, while referring subscribers to additional information, perhaps through a link to a website. Offer immediate actions that should be taken by individuals, such as heading to a storm shelter, evacuating the area or avoiding traffic in an affected area.

9 Ways to Ensure Students Don't Ignore Emergency Notifications (Continued)

• Test the system. Administrators may think they know how the system will work and how students will respond, but it is all hypothetical until the messages are actually sent. Test your system regularly to ensure it works as intended. Like any complex communication system, messaging in a mass notification system needs to work in critical moments. If it's not working properly, operators do a disservice to the campus community.

Build trust in the system

Finally, decision-makers must recognize you can't create an information bubble around campus. Social media disinformation, in particular, challenges emergency management. An MIT study found false news stories are 70% more likely to be retweeted on Twitter than true stories are and it takes true stories about six times as long to reach 1,500 people as it does for false stories to reach the same number of people. Social media disinformation — whether intentional or accidental — complicates the efficacy of campus emergency notification systems if students' first source of news is a false one.

Bottom line: students must trust the notification system, gain a comfort level on the source of text messages, calls and alerts that are sent, and information must be accurate, up-to-date and detailed enough to provide actionable next steps.

In the absence of trust, students will turn to less credible sources that can endanger lives.

Cannabis and New Illinois law: Assessing Impacts to School Districts, Illinois Association of School Boards

<https://www.iasb.com/about-us/publications/journal/2019/november-december-2019/cannabis-and-new-illinois-law-assessing-impacts-to/>

On January 1, 2020, Illinois will join 10 other states and Washington, D.C. in allowing recreational use of marijuana now that Governor J.B. Pritzker signed P.A. 101-27, the Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (CRTA). Some of the significant provisions of the law include:

- Allows individuals 21 years of age or older the ability to possess, use, and purchase cannabis for recreational use;
- Authorizes qualifying individuals the ability to grow cannabis for personal use;
- Provides for the regulation and licensing of several sectors of the cannabis industry, including dispensaries, packaging, and retailing;
- Provides for expungement of minor cannabis violations;
- Creates a Restore, Reinvest, and Renew Program to provide low-interest loans to social equity applicants, as well as investment in communities that have suffered as a result of drug policies;
- Creates the Community College Vocational Training Pilot Program for up to eight programs by September 1, 2020, with students in the program required to be 18 years of age or older; and
- Provides for taxation for the sale of cannabis.

Illinois is already among 33 states that allow the medical use of marijuana. With the passage of the CRTA to legalize recreational use for those 21 and older, there also continue to be laws that provide for the legal use of cannabis by anyone, including individuals under the age of 18, who has a specific medical condition pursuant to the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act, according to a compilation by the Illinois Department of Public Health.

This soon-to-be law has multiple legal and policy implications for Illinois school districts. Here, we explore some of the implications as well as suggest policy changes for school boards and school officials to contemplate in the areas of student discipline, employment policies and handbooks, public access to school facilities, and dual-credit programs.

From the outset, I need to be clear in stating that boards of education and school districts should consult their attorneys before amending existing or implementing any new policies. Further, districts need to recognize that while Illinois law permits the recreational and medical use of cannabis, federal law prohibits it. School districts risk the loss of federal funding through the federal Drug-Free Workplace Act for any violation of the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. Note, however, that the U.S. House of Representatives has voted in favor of prohibiting the U.S. Department of Justice from interfering with a state's decision to implement laws governing the legalization of cannabis (recreational and medicinal).

Student Discipline

Most school district policies will prohibit students from using, possessing, or distributing any illegal drug or controlled substance (for school boards that subscribe to IASB's Policy Reference Education Subscription Service (PRESS) or PRESS Plus, this is usually found in a Section 7 sample policy). Many policies also prohibit the possession, distribution, or use of any inhalant that would cause the user to become intoxicated or that causes a dulling of the nervous system.

Policies addressing student discipline need to be reviewed and updated in response to the Illinois CRTA as follows:

Cannabis and New Illinois law: Assessing Impacts to School Districts (Continued)

Ensure language regarding the use of illegal drugs is updated to reflect that state law no longer considers cannabis to be illegal. Policy should clearly state the use, possession, or distribution of cannabis by a student is grounds for disciplinary action (unless it is a medicinal use authorized by Ashley's Law), similar to most existing policies regarding alcohol; The conduct cited for using, possessing, or distributing inhalants that could cause intoxication should be updated to reflect that not all cannabis products are inhalants. As such, the policy should be reviewed and updated to include any form of cannabis, including edible or topical creams.

Employment Policies and Handbooks

All employers, including school districts, should consider the new legal and policy issues. School officials should review their policies and employment handbooks to address several areas, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Illinois Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act, and Ashley's Law relative to the dispensing of cannabis to students.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Because federal law bans cannabis, individual states are left to determine how to handle the use of medical marijuana by workers. In a 2018 article, "Do Disability Laws Cover Medical Marijuana Use?" in Senior Human Resource Manager magazine, author Yvette Farnsworth Baker notes that while the ADA requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities, "the act does not protect illegal drug use."

According to a brief published by the law firm Holland and Knight, the Illinois Medical Cannabis Pilot Program of 2013, which was the precursor for the latest cannabis law, allowed "employers to adopt and enforce reasonable workplace policies such as 'drug free' or 'zero tolerance' policies and to impose discipline up to, and including, termination if an employee is impaired or under the influence of cannabis while in the workplace." These provisions remained intact with the CRTA.

Thus, under the new Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act law, school districts do not have to accommodate the usage of medical cannabis by an employee while the employee is at work.

General Employment and Employee Drug Testing

Many attorneys agree that the challenge for employers to consider is how to prove if an employee has worked while under the influence. Many firms recommend that the best way to prove being under the influence or working impaired is for employers to have some system of intermittent drug testing. However, the ability to take action against an employee would require a better system of testing to determine if an individual had utilized cannabis within the past 24 hours.

Employees holding Commercial Drivers Licenses (CDLs) in transportation must abide by federal laws that prohibit the usage of cannabis. As such, a positive drug test for an employee who drives a school bus would be grounds for action against the employee. On June 20, 2019, the National Law Review noted how the CRTA will change the landscape regarding Illinois employment laws. They say (note common use of "cannabis" and "marijuana" interchangeably),

"Further, and notably, the CRTA also amended the Illinois Right to Privacy in the Workplace Act (the 'Privacy Act). [As] the CRTA becomes law, the Privacy Act will provide that except as otherwise provided by law – including the provisions of the CRTA ... regarding employer policies, permissible prohibitions and employer liability – an employer cannot take adverse action against an employee or applicant based only on his or her use of products outside of work that are lawful under state law, which will include marijuana [i.e., lawful products]. ... employers who currently engage in pre-employment testing for marijuana [use likely must] reevaluate whether they wish to continue that practice, given that a positive drug test may only indicate the use of marijuana outside of work (in a manner consistent with state law). In addition, employers should reconsider their practices which may call for or allow testing for marijuana even in the absence of evidence that the employee is impaired."

Medical Administration of Cannabis to Students

Effective August 1, 2018, Illinois students who are registered qualifying patients with designated caregivers may access cannabis products at school under P.S. 100-0660, known as Ashley's Law, and the 2019 expansion of it in P.A. 101-0370. The law states that no school employee can be required to administer the medical cannabis product, and a school does not have to allow use of these products at school if it would disrupt the school's educational environment, expose other students to the product, or if the district would lose federal funding as a result of doing so. The law does not allow students to smoke cannabis at school.

School district leaders should review policies to ensure they are clear that only designated caregivers, school nurses, and/or administrators shall administer cannabis to any student if it is determined that administration would not disrupt the educational environment. Further, they should develop a procedure for school administrators and nurses to follow when a student presents as a registered qualifying patient, e.g., with a "medical marijuana card."

Cannabis and New Illinois law: Assessing Impacts to School Districts (Continued)

Public Access to School Facilities

While smoking, or drug use, is not permitted on school grounds, school boards and administrators should review their policies relative to public access to school facilities. Our doors open daily for concerts, sporting events, and activities. Schools are the centers of our communities, and when our doors open, we know that the behaviors that some are accustomed to outside of school will be brought into our schools. Beyond a policy review, district leaders may want to consider conversations with local law enforcement regarding their needs to enforce the law. For example, like the posting of signs barring patrons from bringing in weapons, local law enforcement may find it easier to enforce laws concerning cannabis if there is signage reminding visitors of the policy.

Dual Credit

The Illinois CRTA allows for a pilot program coordinated by the Illinois Community College Board to issue up to eight program licenses for vocational training leading to a “Career in Cannabis Certificate.” Students over the age of 18 qualify to participate in any approved program that will “prepare students for a career in the cannabis industry” with courses that “allow participating students to work with, study, and grow live cannabis plants.”

An interesting question is whether community colleges would risk losing federal grants, should the federal government choose to enforce the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act. While I have that concern, it seems community colleges will see this as a way to attract students to a new program of study. Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, announced last March that it will “Blaze Trail in Community College Health Care Curriculum with Medical Cannabis Program.” An April 11, 2019, Chicago Tribune article also noted the increase in the number of community colleges considering cannabis-oriented programs. This is germane to K-12 because it raises the future concern of high school students participating in dual-credit courses at a community college where courses leading to a Career in Cannabis Certificate are taught. A question for school boards and superintendents to consider as cannabis legalization moves forward is whether their high school students who are above the age of 18 would be allowed to attend vocational programming where cannabis is grown and studied which, on its face, likely violates the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act.

Health Curriculum

While not a legal issue, school districts need to review their existing health curriculum at all grade levels as it relates to the use of cannabis. In reviewing materials available in states where the recreational use of cannabis has been in place for a period of time, I found some good resources for health curriculum available through the State of Colorado’s Department of Health and Environment (see link to resources, below). State law (105 ILCS 5/27-13.2 and 23.4) requires boards to age-appropriately educate students about drug and substance abuse prevention and relationships between drugs, alcohol, and violence.

Sale of Cannabis or Advertising of Cannabis near Schools

Cannabis cannot be advertised within 1,000 feet of the perimeter of any school grounds or a playground. There are no restrictions in the CRTA, as written, concerning the sale of cannabis near schools. The only circumstance where cannabis can be brought onto school property is for a “qualifying patient or caregiver pursuant to the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Program Act.”

State-Level or Statewide Policy Considerations

Schools already struggle with the prolific use of vaping, drugs, and alcohol among youth. The legalization of cannabis opens the doors even further to access to the drug by students, and schools need to be prepared. The law legalizing cannabis in Illinois does provide for 25% of revenues to be deposited into the Common School Fund; however, it does not require the maintenance of effort on the part of General Revenue Funds. We have seen this occur before when the lottery was created. While the revenue was aimed at the Common School Fund, it simply resulted in a decrease in school funding from the General Revenue Fund. School boards and superintendents need to take an active stance to advocate for funding to support drug prevention and intervention strategies, and for the support of a health curriculum focused on prevention. We know schools will be on the front line of this issue, and funding should be in place from the outset to help address the needs of schools relative to drug prevention.

School Safety Newsletter

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