



# School Safety Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 4

December 2013

*In Memory of*

*Sandy Hook*

*December 14, 2012*



*Protecting our  
future through  
information  
sharing*

December 14, 2013, was the one-year anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, where 20 children and six adult staff members were killed. Reports from the Connecticut State Police and the Connecticut State's Attorney's Office regarding the incident have been released and can be viewed at the following links: <http://cspsandyhookreport.ct.gov/> and <http://www.ct.gov/csao/cwp/view.asp?q=535784>

## **Newtown Police Response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School**

### **Shooting - Executive Summary**

Connecticut Police Chiefs Association - December 2013

[http://www.newtownbee.com/files/cpca\\_newtown\\_report\\_final\\_1.pdf](http://www.newtownbee.com/files/cpca_newtown_report_final_1.pdf)

In December of 2012, the nation suffered a collective tragedy when a lone gunman entered the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, and proceeded to gun down 26 defenseless children and adults. The country experienced a profound sense of loss, an emotion that President Obama expressed during a national address.

Many elements of the incident have been analyzed by professionals and amateurs alike, without the benefit of official reports or evidence. CNN reported that, "Police and other first responders arrived on scene about 20 minutes after the first calls." The News Times of Danbury, Connecticut, reported that, "There is no doubt there was some delay," referring to the time it took Newtown officers to intervene at the school. These comments were attributed to "a source familiar with the State Police investigation into the shootings."

With so much unsubstantiated information being published by the media and on the Internet, the Chief of Police of the Newtown Police Department requested an analysis of the response to the shooting by the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association.

The goal of this analysis was to determine whether the police response to the school shooting was timely and in keeping with current law enforcement best practices. The sub-committee assigned to conduct the analysis was provided access to audio and video recordings, records

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## **Newtown Police Response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting**

(Continued from page 1) of eyewitness accounts, and first responder statements. Their research was narrowly confined to Newtown officer response time and entry to the elementary school facility.

Records reveal that the first 911 call for an active shooting at the Sandy Hook Elementary School was received at 09:35:39 hours at the Newtown 911 Center. The State Police received a similar call from a cellular phone at about the same time and transferred the call to the Newtown 911 center four seconds later. Dispatchers immediately (with the caller still on the line) notified Newtown police officers via radio of the reported shooting. The transmission of this information took 16 seconds and generated a response from multiple Newtown officers, including the shift sergeant, officers in the police station, and administrators, including the Chief of Police. All units responded "Code 3" with lights and sirens. The first officer to arrive on the scene did so 2 minutes and 41 seconds after the first radio broadcast of a shooting. Entry to the building from at least two points is confirmed at 09:44:50 hours.

In analyzing the response, it is important to know the accepted practice for officers responding to such a call. Officers arriving at the school must do so in a manner that allows them quick access to the facility, but must also be cognizant of their tactical positioning. Therefore, it is expected that first arriving officers would park a reasonable distance from the building in order to afford themselves the best view of the building and surrounding space. This allows officers to begin assessing the status and location of the threat. Officers are trained to prepare for more than one threat or aggressor.

The elapsed time from first officer arrival at the school, to building entry, was 5 minutes and 57 seconds. In reviewing what occurred during those 5 minutes and 57 seconds, it is revealed that activity on the exterior of the building drew the immediate attention of arriving officers. As police officers arrived at the school, they received reports of gunshots heard toward the front of the building and at the same time received information that there was a person running along the exterior of the building. Police did not know who this person was and moved quickly to confront and identify the individual. The person was handcuffed and secured in order that police could then focus on making entry to the building. It should be noted that the person detained was later identified as a parent. The elapsed time from unit dispatch to building entry was 8 minutes and 38 seconds.

History teaches that the typical active shooter only stops when confronted; as a result, the quicker the confrontation by police, the better. In this case, Newtown officers began arriving at the scene in less than three minutes, and made entry to the school in less than six minutes later. It should be noted that Newtown, Connecticut, is a town of 59 square miles and any analysis of response times must take into account the size of the community, the nature of the roads travelled by responding officers, and the location of officers when the emergency call was received.

Based on our analysis of the police response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School, we concluded that the Newtown officers responded to the scene rapidly, positioned themselves appropriately, and followed their department policy. Since the shooter is believed to have committed suicide at 09:40:03 hours, Newtown Officers were on scene a total of 1 minute and 10 seconds before the shooter committed suicide. Unfortunately this was not enough time to assess the situation, confront the exterior threats, and tactically enter the locked building, and engage the shooter.

## **Lessons of Columbine and other school shootings helped in Arapahoe**

By Ray Sanchez, CNN - December 15, 2013

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/14/us/colorado-school-shooting-response/>

(CNN) -- It has become a tragically familiar scene in American life: law enforcement officers descending on a packed school where a gunman is on the loose. A procession of students, their hands raised, slowly making their way out of the danger zone. But the handling of Friday's shooting at Arapahoe High School -- just 10 miles from the scene of the 1999 Columbine High School shooting where two students killed 12 classmates and a teacher before fatally shooting themselves -- drew important lessons from the earlier bloodshed.

At Arapahoe High School, where senior Claire Davis, 17, was critically injured before the shooter turned the gun on himself, law enforcement officers responded within minutes and immediately entered the school to confront the gunman rather than surrounding the building, authorities said. As the sound of shots reverberated through the corridors, teachers immediately followed procedures put in place after Columbine, locking the doors and moving students to the rear of classrooms.

"That's straight out of Columbine," Kenneth Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, a Cleveland-based consulting firm, told CNN Saturday. "The goal is to proceed and neutralize the shooter. Columbine really revolutionized the way law enforcement responds to active shooters." Arapahoe County Sheriff Grayson Robinson credited the quick police response time for the fact that student Karl Pierson, the gunman, stopped firing on others and turned his weapon on himself. In fact, Robinson told reporters Saturday, Pierson killed himself less than 1 minute, 20 seconds

## Lessons of Columbine and other school shootings

(Continued from page 2) after entering the school. Robinson said a deputy sheriff assigned as a school resource officer and an unarmed security guard immediately closed in on the shooter.

"That one minute and 20 seconds, in my mind, is extraordinarily relevant," he said, noting that Pierson was heavily armed, with ammunition, a knife and three explosives. Authorities knew from research and contact with forensic psychologists that school shooters typically continue firing until confronted by law enforcement, Robinson said. "We believe that the response from the school resource officer and from the unarmed school security officer was absolutely critical to the fact we did not have additional injury and or death," he said.

Robinson said the so-called active shooter response protocol, which was developed after Columbine, was put into place. In addition, school staff and students implemented a well-rehearsed lockdown practice. "The combination of quick response by the resource officer and the implementation of a lockdown protocol caused the children and staff to be safe," he said. "Both protocols came together as they were designed to do."

Friday's shooting came on the eve of the one year anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre, where Adam Lanza killed 20 first-graders and six adults at the now-demolished elementary school in the second-deadliest school shooting in U.S. history. "It's very unfortunate that we have to say that there's a textbook response on the way to respond to these, because that textbook was written based on all of the incidents that we've had and the lessons learned," Trump said. Trump said both Sandy Hook and the latest shooting in Colorado highlight the importance of "training and engaging" school support staff -- from custodians to school secretaries to maintenance and food service workers -- on how to best respond during these incidents.

In Sandy Hook, a school custodian's 911 calls provided authorities some of the first information about what was happening. "Often these people are not getting training in school emergency planning," Trump said. "In a critical incident, they may be the first person to respond."

At Arapahoe High School, a school janitor spotted Pierson, whose intended target was a faculty member, in his tactical gear, he told CNN affiliate KMGH. "It just looked weird," Fabian Llerenas said. "He went in, and I heard two pops. That's when I knew. I said, 'They are shooting in the school.'" Llerenas said he called 911 and then escorted the targeted faculty member out of the school. Pierson had fired at the man but missed, Llerenas told KUSA. "He was so [shaken] up, he felt the wind hit, out of the shotgun just blew his hair, but it didn't hit him. It was that scary for him," Llerenas said.

"In my opinion, that was the most important tactical decision that could have been made," Robinson said. The faculty member "left that school in an effort to try to encourage the shooter to also leave the school."

Trump said other lessons learned from Columbine included the controlled evacuations and pat-down searches of students in a secure area. Self evacuations can create chaos for the police.

Additionally, schools now have predesignated parent-student "reunification centers" to prevent parents from showing up at the scene and interfering with law enforcement, as was the case in Sandy Hook, Trump said.

"The lessons of Columbine are still the best practices," Trump said.

After Sandy Hook. Trump said, some officials advocated a "run, hide or fight" approach developed for workplace shootings in which teachers and students are encouraged to be prepared to throw things at gunmen. Some even suggested that elementary school students use items such as cans of soup to attack gunmen. Trump called it a "high risk, high liability proposition."

"The good news is that we're getting better at preventing and responding to these incidents," he said. "The bad news is that there will be cases that slip through the cracks."

### Monthly Webinars!

First Wednesday of  
Every Month at 10 am.

### Next Webinar - February 5, 2014

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  
schoolsafety@isp.state.il.us



In Memory of Claire  
Davis, age 17.

Died 12/21/13.

