



Sidney Police Department

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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Having a second grader myself, I empathize with not only the parents of the children that were taken from this world in a senseless and cowardly act of violence, but also parents across the nation that have had their sense of safety and security shaken to the core. The best defense against this type of attack is preparation, practice and education, not only on our part as a police department but on the part of the school, children and parents.

I wanted to take this opportunity to do my best to reassure the parents and children that attend school in Sidney that the Police Department and the School District have placed the safety of our children as a top priority and had done so well before the tragedy in Connecticut. The Police Department and the School District have worked together to develop lock down procedures and plans to promote the highest levels of safety for our children, given the circumstances we would be facing during an incident similar to those that transpired at Sandy Hook Elementary. These plans and procedures are continually evaluated, modified and revisited. The plans are multi-dimensional and account for many different eventualities and contain primary evacuation points, secondary evacuation points, rally locations, reunification sites as well as “shelter in place” plans if the children/faculty are unable to escape the building, as well as a method of determining the status of persons sheltered in place. These plans and procedures are practiced on a regular basis by every class, from Kindergarten through 12th grade, in every building, similar to the way fire and tornado drills are practiced. I’ve attended several of these drills and the faculty/staff and children do an outstanding job at executing the plans.

Additionally, all of the Police Department officers have received extensive training in Immediate Action Rapid Deployment tactics that are specifically designed to respond to an Active Shooter incident. These tactics allow initial responding officers to immediately enter the building (not wait for SWAT or numerous back up officers), locate and neutralize the threat(s) to prevent any further loss of life or injury.

The Sidney Police Department also has a full-time School Resource Officer (SRO) which is an invaluable resource not only in the response to these types of situations but also in preventing them. Having the SRO in the schools not only maintains a law enforcement presence but also serves an intelligence gathering function that has been proven successful time and time again in detecting and preventing acts of violence in the schools.

There will never be a totally secure school or any other structure for that matter. Short of a school being built and ran like a prison, a determined, motivated assailant will find a way in and a method to spread carnage. If the assailant is determined, motivated and willing to die (which a vast majority of the ones who have attacked schools are, either by suicide or armed confrontation with law enforcement) there is not much that can be done to prevent them from at least initiating

their plans. Our (law enforcement, the school district, faculty/staff, children, parents and the community) preparedness and response is what determines the outcome.

The law enforcement and school community closely watch these incidents unfold, dissect the information available and adjust our tactics and planning as new or different information comes to light. We do this to ensure that the plans and tactics are the most effective we can possibly have. Law enforcement response to these types of situations has evolved by leaps and bounds since the Columbine incident. Tactics have gone from a “wait for SWAT” approach to getting officers inside the building to immediately deal with the threat(s) to prevent further loss of life and/or injury. School response procedures have evolved as well from “all out try to escape” to barricade and shelter in place to a hybrid of “escape if possible, if not, barricade and shelter in place”. This evolution of responses and tactics has been a multi-disciplinary effort at improving how we respond to these types of incidents based on hard lessons learned over the years.

The preparedness levels and what has actually been done to prepare school staff and our children and the training received by law enforcement is a difficult thing to publicize and is a double edged sword. The details of the plans that are in place, law enforcement tactics and procedures are not something that can or should be released to the public but at the same time, these details are the very thing most parents want to know in order to feel secure in sending their children to school every day. In the wrong hands, this type of information could and would be used to devise countermeasures that would further endanger our children, first responders and the public in general. The plans that are in place here in Sidney are solid and workable. The school district is dedicated to protecting our children. The police officers are highly trained, dedicated and willing to do whatever it takes to stop any threat against our children.

As I mentioned earlier, I have a second grader. Do I worry about his safety at school? Yes. What parent doesn't in this day and age, but am I comfortable sending him to school every morning? Yes. Yes, because I am confident in the plans and procedures in place, the practicing, the training, the skills and the dedication that are present in the Sidney School District, the Sidney Police Department and law enforcement community and the Sidney Community as a whole.

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