

Keeping Schools Safe:  
Vulnerability Assessments and  
Crime Prevention Through  
Environmental Design

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# Objective:

- Introduce students to the concepts of Vulnerability Assessments and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to assist them in keeping schools safe.

# Definition:

## Vulnerability Assessment

- The ongoing process for identifying and prioritizing risks to the individual schools and school districts – in coordination with the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP).

- US Department of Education

# DHS National Infrastructure Protection Plan (NIPP)

- Focuses on assessing risks and identifies risk as a function of consequence, vulnerability, and threat.

# Vulnerability Assessments

- Should be used to inform all four phases of emergency management (prevention-mitigation, preparedness, response, recovery) but will serve as an especially significant component of the prevention-mitigation phase of emergency management to help determine which areas should be priorities of focus.

# Vulnerability/Risk Assessment

- The likelihood that a characteristic of, or flaw in, an asset, system, or design, location, operation, etc., renders it susceptible to destruction, incapacitation, or exploitation by terrorists, mechanical failures, or natural hazards, etc.

# Key Elements of Vulnerability Assessments

- Use a team approach to bring a variety of perspectives to the process
- Consider all potential hazards around the school including travel routes
- Conduct a walk through of the school
- Review crime statistics (police input)

- USDOED

# Purpose of Assessments:

- Helps schools determine which steps to take to prevent, mitigate, and lessen the potential impact of the risks by developing customized emergency management plans in collaboration with community partners.
- Can't get from here to there - if you don't know where "here" is.

# 3 Elements of DHS Model

1. Assessing Risk
2. Assessing Vulnerabilities
3. Assessing Consequence

# Assessing Risk

- ID potential hazard that threatens school and determine how likely it is to occur, e.g.:
- wildfire
- flood
- tornado
- factory related threats (fumes, chemicals, etc.)
- gasoline stations, paint stores, junk yards, etc.
- chemical spill (truck, rail, shipping, etc.)
- active shooter, etc.

# Assessing Vulnerabilities

- Identify areas of weakness in/around school that could result in undesirable consequences e.g.:
  - school structure (roof access, sidewalks, etc.)
  - parking lots
  - bus traffic
  - hidden areas (behind trees, bushes, etc.)
  - policies and procedures
  - lawn and snow removal equipment
  - grounds, (basketball/tennis courts, etc.)

# Assessing Consequences

- Measuring the range of loss/damage that could occur from an incident e.g.:
  - injuries/death
  - lawsuits
  - disruption to physical learning environment
  - psychological impact on community
  - public confidence and morale
  - potential economic impact

# Types of Assessments

1. Needs Assessment
2. Hazards Assessment
3. Threat Assessment
4. Consequence Assessment
5. Risk Analysis

# Needs Assessment

- to identify gaps or areas needing improvement
- to determine unmet needs
- to help establish priorities.

# Hazards Assessments

- The focus is on general hazards and determining which ones a school might be most prone to, e.g. proximity to natural or man-made elements.

# Threat Assessments

- The focus on hazards that potentially threaten schools, but *generally used to assess students and/or outsiders who pose a threat to the students and /or the school.*

# Threat Assessment (Cont.)

- Likelihood that an asset will suffer an attack or incident, e.g.:
  - flash floods in low areas
  - school roof in obvious disrepair
  - several gang related incidents
  - persistently dangerous “neighborhood”
  - high risk troubled student

# Consequence Assessment

- The negative affects on the public confidence in institutions, and the functioning of government that can be expected if an asset or network is damaged destroyed, or disrupted by terrorist attack, natural disaster, or other incident.

# Risk Analysis

- Generally conducted after a specific hazard and or threat has been identified. Focus is on the calculation of specific risk levels to determine how vulnerable schools are to specific threats, and how severe the consequences might be.

# The Assessment Process

- Form the team
- Brainstorm hazards/risks
- Research and ID school's vulnerabilities
- Select hazards assessment tool
- Determine risk priorities and report them
- Review, revise, and reassess
- Repeat the process

# Team Makeup

- School building and grounds rep
- Administration rep, nurse, teacher
- Student
- Law Enforcement/security staff
- Fire Department
- Reach out to all stakeholders for input

# External Threats to Schools

- Chemicals (paint stores, gas stations, metal production/treatment, etc.)
- Rivers, creeks, low areas
- Hazardous material locations, underground pipelines, power plants, relay stations, etc.
- Railroads, highways, airports, bus stations, (near dangerous cargo, people, situations)
- Parks, drug sale areas, drug houses, etc.

# Internal Threats to Schools

- Temporary “rigging,” supports, blocks, etc.
- Emergency generators (fuel, storage, etc)
- Chemical storage
- Extension chords
- Blocked exits and halls
- Flammable decorations (doors, ceilings, etc)
- Fire extinguisher violations

# What Tools Can Assist Me In Keeping My School Safe??

- ANSWER:

Embrace the Concepts of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

# Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

- “Proper design and use of the environment can lead to reduced crime, fear of crime and improved quality of life.”

- Timothy Crowe

# CPTED Emphasis

- Physical environment
- Behavior of people
- Productive use of space
- Crime loss/prevention

# Key CPTED Concepts

- Natural surveillance: open, bright, daylight, unobstructed, etc.
- Natural access control: directing access and movement in the school
- Territorial behavior: maintaining human activity – ownership of space

# Natural Surveillance

- Parking spaces v. access control of schools
- Minimize entrances
- Channelize foot traffic
- Remove/trim trees and bushes (3'-7' rule)
- Cafeterias open, well lit, no obstructions
- Maximum use of natural light
- Offices near main entrances

# The challenge of school design

- Good design cannot overcome bad management, but bad management can overcome good design.
- Imagine how safe a school would be if a well designed school..,
- is headed by a well-prepared principal!

# Single Most Important School Security Factor?

- A trained and caring principal!

# National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities Assessment Guide

[http://www.ncef.org/pubs/mitigating\\_hazards.pdf](http://www.ncef.org/pubs/mitigating_hazards.pdf)

USOSDFS grant to combine existing safety assessment tools from a variety of districts.

Contains 25 assessment checklists for classrooms, grounds, corridors, etc..

# Times are tough!

- The superintendent who says “I have half a mind to cut the school security budget” has all the right equipment necessary to make that flawed decision.

- Peter Pochowski

**ASSESSMENT**

**Do it now!**