Too Close to Home: School Shootings and Workplace Violence Impact Students, Staff, and the Community



On the morning of January 23rd 2018, I was watching the Today Show, like I do every morning before work, when our local news station cut in to the broadcast with news of a school shooting in our immediate area. More specifically, 20 miles from our home. Shots fired at Marshall County High School. And just like that, Marshall County became the latest school on the ever-growing list of school shootings.

After the initial shock and disbelief, I checked social media and was relieved to see several friends had shared that their kids were safe. My friend's son Drew was also safe according to a post from his aunt. Sadly, on that same post was a comment from another aunt, she was asking for prayers for her family, because her 15-year-old niece was one of two students killed.

Twenty years ago, this past December, another local high school, Heath High School, was one of the first schools to make that terrible list of school shootings. I was in college at the time and remember seeing it unfold on the news, the same local station I was watching on Tuesday. This was almost two years before the Columbine shootings made national news, before the news of school shootings became too much a part of our everyday lives.

It seems unbelievable to me, even as I'm writing it now, that this latest shooting happened here. So close to home. Again.

In watching the news reports and listening to survivor interviews over the last few days, I noticed something different. Something different than the Heath shootings, and something I don't recall hearing in other reports of school or workplace shootings. "Students and members of law enforcement had received active shooter training. Many students used their active shooter training and ran for their life."

The training and the actions of these students saved their lives. "Marshall County Judge Executive Kevin Neal said the students have been taught during an active shooter situation they have to run. That's exactly what they did. They fled the scene and went to the nearest businesses."

While it is troubling to realize the frequency of these incidents necessitates our children take active shooter training, it was a small light in an otherwise dark story. Lives saved, instead of lives lost because students and staff remembered and followed their training.

Schools are also places of employment of course, and most school shooting incidents are also workplace violence incidents. Whether we are safety professionals or school principals, it is part of our job to train our employees and staff on the hazards they face at work. Sadly, that includes violent incidents.

Regardless of the business or industry we are in, we have a responsibility to prepare and train our employees on all aspects of potential workplace violence, including what to do in an active shooter situation. So, if the time ever comes, and hopefully it does not, that training will kick in and guide our employees to safety.

Update: February 14, 2018 – As we were waiting to go to press with the March editions of our newsletters I am saddened to have to write that another school shooting happened today. Less than one month from the Marshall County shooting,

This time it was too close to home for a former colleague. The school was a few blocks from his home. He doesn't have children attending Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, in Parkland, Florida, but he shared how the gravity of the situation really set in as he passed the school and the sea of police and emergency responders.

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Source:
https://www.wpsdlocal6.com/2018/01/23/students-use-active-shooter-training-techniques-and-ran-for-their-lives/

https://www.local10.com/news/parkland-school-shooting/shooting-marjory-stoneman-douglas-high-school