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July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019

**Safe Havens Like Schools & Education Institutions Are More Than Soft Targets for Domestic Terrorism, Drug Harbors, Bullying, Assaults, Sexual Abuse & Violence.**

By Nicholas Ashton, Police Best Practice

Schools and other educational establishments are usually perceived to be safe havens for students and teachers. However, over the years, a series of catastrophic incidents at schools and educational institutions across the world have pressed concerned authorities (including governments) to implement a variety of necessary security measures to make schools and other educational institutions safer.

It is these establishment's **Duty of Care** that should protect your child/teenager's safety while in their care. Failure in knowing that schools and education facilities are being exposed to radical opportunities and harmful events is a negation of their responsibility.

Sadly, in spite of several lax security measures, incidents at schools and other educational institutions continue unabated, thereby bringing forth lapses and unpreparedness on the part of concerned authorities.



Some of the horrific incidents that have occurred recently across the world are the school shooting in Peshawar, Pakistan (2014), the school shooting in Moscow, Russia (2014), and the school shootings in Florida and Santa Fe in the United States of America (both in 2018).

School issues are not just an American issue; violence is growing and manifesting day by day with society blaming anyone but themselves.

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For instance, in India, the horrific murder case at a school in Gurugram in 2017 shook the conscience of the entire nation. Unfortunately, things did not end there. In just a few days after this incident, several cases of child molestation/rape/violence/corporal punishments/deaths at schools were uncovered and reported. As a matter of fact, since the Gurugram incident, there have been over 400 'reported' serious incidents at schools across India. ***How many have been tragically ignored within your facility?***

In the aftermath of these incidents, advisories by concerned authorities (including governments) continued to lay greater importance on more security measures which include the deployment of CCTV cameras. The Peshawar school re-opened, and the army was sent to guard it. The police were protecting 700 Jewish schools in Paris after one of the terror attacks in France.

For how long can the army or police continue this? Part of the solution, therefore, is for stakeholders to take all possible measures themselves to enhance their safety, keeping costs, and complexities of technology in mind. It is their absolute **Duty of Care** to do so or face the full liability factor, which benefits no one, especially those harmed.

The ability to protect all is within the information that passes by you as the authoritarians, ignored, under-reported, and missed every moment of the day. **School Resource Officers** are key with information linkage outside of the facility. What child or teenager is having issues on the outside and bringing the problems inside the facility, causing problems? From drugs to bullying, rape to sexual abuse, it is not just the students; teachers cause major issues also that go unnoticed. ***They should not!***

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Your CCTV system was put in place and forgotten in part, but holds so much more than 'live' video feeds. Just like reviewing 'hear-say' information, documented incidents both on and off campus makes a radical difference. We must audit all daily, including the last 24 hours of video footage, it holds so much that is being missed and will enhance your understanding of what is going on right in front of your eyes — even License Plate Recognition on who is passing the facility regularly that should not be there. There is so much taken for granted and misunderstood that are absolute keys to being proactive.

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