



CRISIS OF LEADERSHIP:

A RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT

Prepared by
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October 2007

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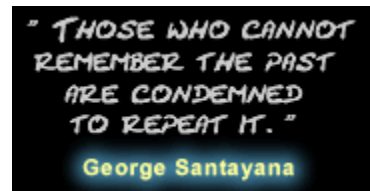
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INTRODUCTION

Shock. Outrage. Sadness.

As Americans continue to wrestle with many emotions as they reflect on the senseless killings at Virginia Tech, I am reminded of the words of philosopher George Santayana:

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."



It has been nearly a decade since the August 1998 release of ***Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools***, a document that was jointly developed by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice in response to the May 1998 school shootings at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon where two students were killed and 25 others were injured. It is self-described as a guide that *"should be seen as part of an overall effort to make sure that every school in this nation has a comprehensive violence prevention plan in place."*

Countless hours of expert resources and millions of dollars have been spent studying school tragedies since the Springfield, Oregon tragedy. Results and recommendations have been written and made available – many times at little or no cost – to assist schools in implementing plans, protocols and procedures to keep students, faculty and staff safe. Yet still, in the vast media coverage accompanying these events, an all too common response from those in positions of responsibility entrusted with safeguarding our schools and campuses is:

"We're going to look into that. We'll form a task force (or panel) to review the situation and make recommendations to ensure that this never happens again."

And yet it continues to happen. Lives are lost due to events that could have been prevented, if we had only remembered the past and put into practice the recommendations of previous reports.

RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT INTRODUCTION

On June 13 [1998], after the tragic loss of life and injuries at Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon, President Clinton directed the Department of Education and the Department of Justice to develop an early warning guide to help "adults reach out to troubled children quickly and effectively." This guide responds to that Presidential request. It is our sincere hope that this guide will provide you with the practical help needed to keep every child in your school out of harm's way.

**Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools
August 1998**

Nearly a decade later and the response to the Virginia Tech Tragedy is almost identical:

In the wake of the Virginia Tech tragedy, [President Bush] charged us to travel to communities across our Nation to meet with a wide range of leaders on the broader issues raised by this tragedy, and to report back to you what we learned, together with our recommendations for how the Federal government can help avoid such tragedies in the future. The enclosed report summarizes our findings and provides our recommendations developed through discussions with educators, mental health experts, law enforcement and other key state and local officials from more than a dozen states.

**From the Report to the President on Issues Raised by the
Virginia Tech Tragedy – June 2007**

More meetings. More task forces. More reports.

Governors and state officials responded quickly to our requests to convene key leadership.

**From the Report to the President on Issues Raised by the
Virginia Tech Tragedy – June 2007**

"Responded quickly?"

Nearly a decade later and we treat each tragedy as the first and continue to ignore the warning signs.

Nearly a decade later and we remain complacent.

Nearly a decade later and we remain indifferent.

Nearly a decade later and we have not implemented the recommendations from the *Early Warning, Timely Response* guide and the myriad of reports in the intervening years.

This is not responsible leadership. Sadly, much of the activity in response to the Virginia Tech tragedy was just more politically expedient rhetoric.

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
INTRODUCTION**

Improved Awareness and Communication are Key to Prevention: It is important that parents, students and teachers learn to recognize warning signs and encourage those who need help to seek it, so that people receive the care they need and our communities are safe.
From the Report to the President on Issues Raised by the Virginia Tech Tragedy – June 2007

Parents who lost their children at Virginia Tech can only weep as they read these words from the 2007 report. Words from the 1998 report are eerily similar:

Research-based practices can help school communities — administrators, teachers, families, students, support staff, and community members — recognize the warning signs early, so children can get the help they need before it is too late.
**Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide to Safe Schools
August 1998**

But now it is too late for those who died at Virginia Tech. Faculty and students noticed warning signs of the future killer and cried for help. Despite their cries, university officials did not heed the warnings.

The families affected by the Virginia Tech tragedy are the victims of a crisis of leadership and they have a right to be angry. They deserve to be treated with dignity. They deserve apologies from those who failed them and left an indelible scar on their hearts. They deserve to be heard.

Americans must say enough to this disregard toward those who suffer.

Americans must feel their tears and respond with the healing balm of empathy and truthfulness.

Americans must rise up and commit to transforming our nation so this senseless suffering may cease.

It is time to take a stand and together move from

<i>IGNORANCE</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>COMPETENCE</i>
<i>INDIFFERENCE</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>COMPASSION</i>
<i>ISOLATION</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>COMMUNITY</i>

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
INTRODUCTION**

PURPOSE OF THIS RESPONSE

In a post Columbine, 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina society, the demand for leadership by those entrusted with the safety and security of others has never been such a clear priority. As mentioned in the introduction, the failure of our school and campus leaders to heed the lessons of the past has led to the loss of lives.

Through an evaluation of the ***Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel***, specifically:

- **Summary of Key Findings**
- **Chapter I: Background and Scope**
- **Chapter II. University Setting and Security Campus Police and Other Local Law Enforcement**
- **Chapter III. Timeline Of Events**
- **Chapter VII. Double Murder at West Ambler Johnston**
- **Chapter VIII. Mass Murder at Norris Hall**

the purpose of this document is to draw attention to the deficiencies of crisis management on that fateful in April 2007 and continue the call for the accountability of those responsible for the safety of students, faculty and staff at Virginia Tech. Its aim is to accomplish this in an easy-to-understand format.

This text will focus on the insufficiency of leadership and lack of judgment in order that the truth is served. In doing so, it is hoped that the memory of those who perished, those who were wounded and their families will be honored and a senseless tragedy on another college campus will be prevented.

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
PURPOSE OF THIS RESPONSE**

CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION

It is understood that several perspectives may be considered when reviewing the tragic events of April 16, 2007, such as

- **Mental health and privacy issues; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**
- **Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act)**
- **Gun control issues**
- **Safety and Security issues; Crisis Management**

This response to the VT Panel's Report on the Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech will focus primarily on SAFETY AND SECURITY AWARENESS and CRISIS MANAGEMENT.

The ***Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*** report released by the Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools of the U.S. Department of Education in May 2003 provides a context for evaluation. It describes the SEQUENCE OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT.

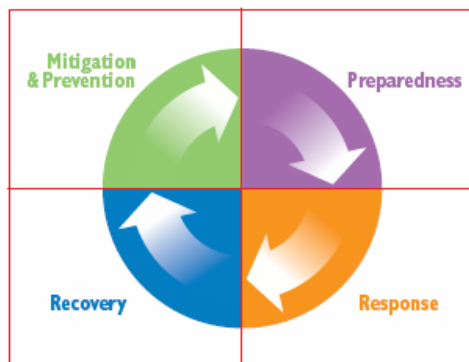
The results of extensive interviews and a review of the crisis literature reveal that experts employ four phases of crisis management:

- **MITIGATION/PREVENTION** addresses what to do in order to reduce or eliminate risk to life and property.
- **PREPAREDNESS** focuses on the process of planning for the worst-case scenario.
- **RESPONSE** is devoted to the steps to take during a crisis.
- **RECOVERY** deals with how to restore the learning and teaching environment after a crisis.

RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION

The report continues:

Crisis management is a continuous process in which all phases of the plan are being reviewed and revised. Good plans are never finished. They can always be updated based on experience, research, and changing vulnerabilities. Districts and schools may be in various stages of planning. This Guide provides the resources needed to start the planning process and is a tool used to review and improve existing plans.



The report also highlights the KEY PRINCIPLES OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT, some of which are:

- **Effective crisis planning begins with leadership at the top.**
- **Crisis plans should not be developed in a vacuum.**
- **Open the channels of communication well before a crisis.**
- **Crisis plans should be developed in partnership with other community groups, including law enforcement, fire safety officials, emergency medical services, as well as health and mental health professionals.**
- **Plan for the diverse needs of students and staff.**
- **Provide faculty and staff with ready access to the plan so they can understand its components and act on them.**
- **Training and practice are essential for the successful implementation of crisis plans.**

From a crisis management perspective, readiness is essential. The development and practice of sound crisis plans will determine how well all involved will respond to an emergency. From the leadership team to the first responders, each must know his or her role and be ready to execute under extreme conditions.

Margaret Spellings, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, may have said it best in the Introduction of the January 2007 revision of the report:

“Knowing how to respond quickly and efficiently in a crisis is critical to ensuring the safety of our schools and students. The midst of a crisis is not the time to start figuring out who ought to do what. At that moment, everyone involved – from top to bottom – should know the drill and know each other.”

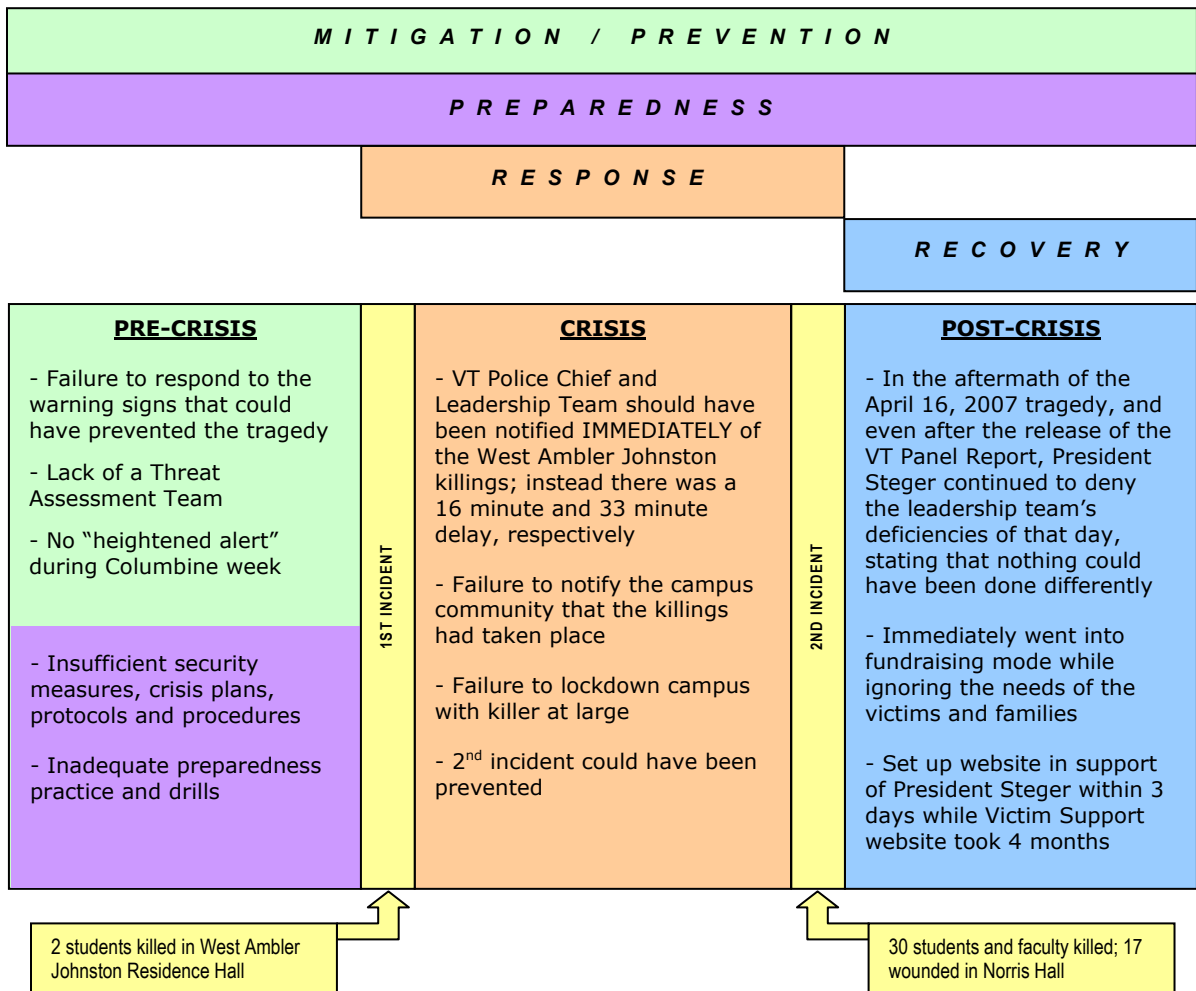
RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION

In addition to the aforementioned guide, other resources for evaluating the VT Panel Report include:

- **EARLY WARNING, TIMELY RESPONSE: A GUIDE TO SAFE SCHOOLS**–August 1998
- **SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN: AN ACTION GUIDE**–April 2000
- **THE SCHOOL SHOOTER: A THREAT ASSESSMENT PERSPECTIVE**–September 2000
- **THE FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS OF THE SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF SCHOOL ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES**–May 2002
- **THREAT ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS: A GUIDE TO MANAGING THREATENING SITUATIONS AND TO CREATING SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATES**–May 2002

These reports, as well as numerous other resources, have been available for many years and provide us with a wealth of information on how to recognize potential threats, intervene when necessary, and respond to a crisis should these efforts fail.

It is in the context of these reports that an evaluation of the Virginia Tech tragedy can be succinctly summarized:

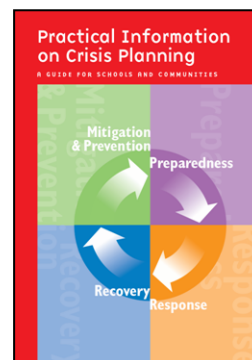


RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION

PRACTICAL INFORMATION ON CRISIS PLANNING: A GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES—May 2003

Taking action now can save lives, prevent injury, and minimize property damage in the moments of a crisis. If you do not have a crisis plan in place, it is time to develop one. If you have one, review, practice, and update your plan. This brochure is designed to assist schools and communities in either situation. Although every school's needs and circumstances are different, these checklists provide general guidance that can be adapted as appropriate to each district's or school's circumstances.

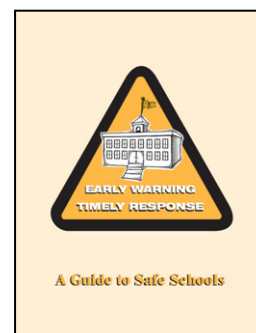
<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.html>



EARLY WARNING, TIMELY RESPONSE: A GUIDE TO SAFE SCHOOLS—August 1998

- Offers research-based practices designed to assist school communities identify these warning signs early and develop prevention, intervention and crisis response plans. The guide includes sections on:
 - Characteristics of a School that is Safe and Responsive to All Children
 - Early Warning Signs
 - Getting Help for Troubled Children
 - Developing a Prevention and Response Plan
 - Responding to Crisis
 - Resources
 - Methodology, Contributors, and Research Support

<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/gtss.html>



SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN: AN ACTION GUIDE—April 2000

On April 28, 2000, the U.S. Department of Education and Department of Justice released a jointly developed Action Guide to help schools and communities prevent school violence. The guide, Safeguarding Our Children: An Action Guide, follows up on the 1998 Early Warning, Timely Response: A Guide To Safe Schools, which offered guidelines for school safety and was also co-authored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice.

<http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/actguide/index.html>

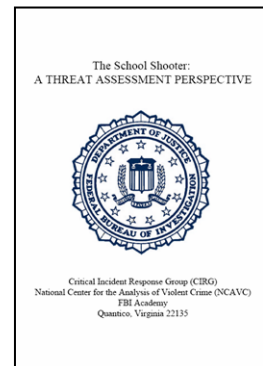


RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION

THE SCHOOL SHOOTER: A THREAT ASSESSMENT PERSPECTIVE–September 2000

This monograph presents a systematic procedure for threat assessment and intervention. The model is designed to be used by educators, mental health professionals and law enforcement agencies. This model is offered in the hope that it may help refine and strengthen those efforts. Its fundamental building blocks are the threat assessment standards outlined in Chapter II, which provide a framework for evaluating a spoken, written, and symbolic threat, and the four-pronged assessment approach, which will be described in Chapter III and provides a logical, methodical process to examine the threatener and assess the risk that the threat will be carried out.

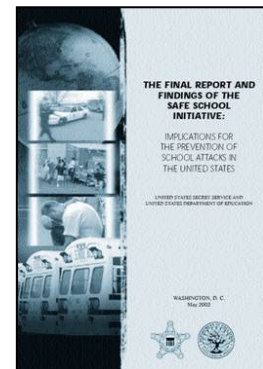
<http://www.fbi.gov/filelink.html?file=/publications/school/school2.pdf>



THE FINAL REPORT AND FINDINGS OF THE SAFE SCHOOL INITIATIVE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE PREVENTION OF SCHOOL ATTACKS IN THE UNITED STATES–May 2002

In 2002, the U.S. Secret Service completed the Safe School Initiative, a study of school shootings and other school-based attacks that was conducted in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education. The study examined school shootings in the United States as far back as 1974, through the end of the school year in 2000, analyzing a total of 37 incidents involving 41 student attackers. The study involved extensive review of police records, school records, court documents, and other source materials, and included interviews with 10 school shooters. The focus of the study was on developing information about the school shooters' pre-attack behaviors and communications. The goal was to identify information about a school shooting that may be identifiable or noticeable before the shooting occurs, to help inform efforts to prevent school-based attacks.

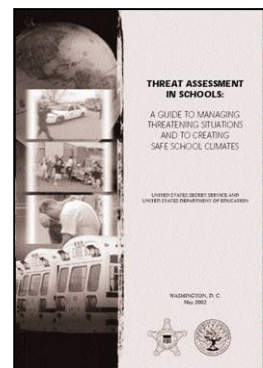
http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac_ssi.shtml



THREAT ASSESSMENT IN SCHOOLS: A GUIDE TO MANAGING THREATENING SITUATIONS AND TO CREATING SAFE SCHOOL CLIMATES-May 2002

This document was prepared by the United States Secret Service and United States Department of Education and is an outgrowth of the joint Secret Service/Department of Education Safe School Initiative. This initiative, begun in June 1999, was undertaken to explore the potential for adapting the threat assessment investigative process developed by the Secret Service to the problem of targeted school violence.

http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac_ssi.shtml



**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
CONTEXT FOR EVALUATION**

OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS TIMELINE

The VT Panel Report included a 10-page timeline of events, beginning with Seung Hui Cho's birth in 1986 and ending with April 20, 2007, the day of mourning following the tragedy.

For clarity, an abbreviated timeline is listed here, highlighting only the April 16, 2007 incident-related events.

Keep in mind the following information from the ***Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities*** document while reviewing the timeline.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION ON CRISIS PLANNING: A GUIDE FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES
May 2003, Revised January 2007,
Section 4: Response
pp. 4-1 – 4-3

“A crisis is the time to follow the crisis plan, not to make a plan from scratch.”

Expect to be surprised. Regardless of how much time and effort was spent on crisis planning, the members of the crisis team should know that there will always be an element of surprise and accompanying confusion when a school is confronted with a crisis.

Assess the situation and choose the appropriate response. Following the plan requires a very quick but careful assessment of the situation. Determine whether a crisis exists and if so, the type of crisis, the location, and the magnitude. Because the team has practiced the plan, leaders are ready to make these decisions.

Respond within seconds. When a crisis actually happens, make the basic decisions about what type of action is needed and respond within seconds. An immediate, appropriate response depends on a plan with clearly articulated roles and responsibilities, as well as training and practice. With proper training, [faculty,] staff and students will respond appropriately within seconds.

Evacuate or lock down the school as appropriate. This step is crucial and should be one of the first decisions made, regardless of the order in which initial decisions are implemented.

Trust leadership. Trust the internal crisis team members and external emergency responders who have been trained to deal with crises.

RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS TIMELINE

Baseline for elapsed time is 7:24 a.m.

7:20 a.m. The VTPD receives a call on their administrative telephone line advising that a female student in room 4040 of WAJ had possibly fallen from her loft bed.

7:21 a.m. The VTPD dispatcher notifies the Virginia Tech Rescue Squad that a female student had possibly fallen from her loft bed in WAJ.

7:24 a.m. The VTPD officer arrives at WAJ room 4040, finds two people shot inside the room, and immediately requests additional VTPD resources.

7:40 a.m. VTPD Chief Flinchum is notified by phone of the WAJ shootings.

7:51 a.m. Chief Flinchum contacts the Blacksburg Police Department (BPD) and requests a BPD evidence technician and BPD detective to assist with the investigation.

7:57 a.m. Chief Flinchum notifies the Virginia Tech Office of the Executive Vice President of the shootings. This triggers a meeting of the university's Policy Group.

8:00 a.m. Classes begin. Chief Flinchum arrives at WAJ

8:13 a.m. Chief Flinchum requests additional VTPD and BPD officers to assist with securing WAJ entrances and with the investigation.

8:16–9:24 a.m. Officers search for Hilscher's boyfriend. His vehicle is not found in campus parking lots, and officers become more confident that he has left the campus. VTPD and BPD officers are sent to his home; he is not found. A BOLO (be on the lookout) report is issued to BPD and the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office for his vehicle.

16 minutes to notify Chief Flinchum after VTPD at WAJ scene

27 minutes to notify Blacksburg Police Department

33 minutes to notify VT Office of Executive Vice President

36 minutes for Chief Flinchum to arrive at WAJ scene

49 minutes to secure WAJ entrances

52 minutes through 2 hours, officers were still unsure whether suspected killer was still on campus; KILLER-AT-LARGE situation and still no notice to campus.
"[O]fficers become more confident that he has left the campus."
At this point, officers were still UNCERTAIN whether the presumed killer had left the campus.

RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS TIMELINE

Baseline for elapsed time is 7:24 a.m.

<p>8:20 a.m. A person fitting Cho's description is seen near the Duck Pond on campus.</p>	<p>56 minutes, it is conceivable that had warnings gone out to campus and officers been on alert for suspicious activity, Cho might have been stopped here before 2nd incident.</p>
<p>8:25 a.m. The Virginia Tech Policy Group meets to plan on how to notify students of the homicides.</p>	<p>1 hour and 1 minute, Virginia Tech Policy Group meets to plan "how to notify students."</p>
<p>8:52 a.m. Blacksburg public schools lock their outer doors upon hearing of the incident at WAJ from their security chief, who had heard of the incident on police radio.</p>	<p>1 hour and 28 minutes, Blacksburg public schools lockdown; a timely response from the surrounding public school district.</p>
<p>9:00 a.m. The Policy Group is briefed on the latest events in the ongoing dormitory homicide investigation by the VTPD.</p>	<p>1 hour and 36 minutes after the killings, VT Policy Group is briefed. Note: This is 35 minutes after they arrived.</p>
<p>9:01 a.m. Cho mails a package from the Blacksburg post office to NBC News in New York that contains pictures of himself holding weapons, an 1,800-word rambling diatribe, and video clips in which he expresses rage, resentment, and a desire to get even with oppressors.</p>	<p>1 hour and 37 minutes, another opportunity where it is conceivable that had warnings gone out to campus, officers been on alert for suspicious activity, or lockdown been established, Cho might have been stopped before 2nd incident.</p>
<p>9:25 a.m. A VTPD police captain joins the Virginia Tech Policy Group as police liaison and provides updates as information becomes available.</p>	<p>2 hours and 1 minute for VTPD liaison to join Policy Group.</p>
<p>9:26 a.m. Virginia Tech administration sends e-mail to campus staff, faculty, and students informing them of the dormitory shooting.</p>	<p>2 hours and 2 minutes to send first e-mail to campus.</p>
<p>About 9:40 a.m. 2nd shooting incident in Norris Hall begins.</p>	

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
OVERVIEW OF INCIDENTS TIMELINE**

OBSERVATIONS

As mentioned in the Introduction of this document, several perspectives may be considered when reviewing the tragic events of April 16, 2007, such as

- **Mental health and privacy issues; Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**
- **Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act)**
- **Gun control issues**
- **Safety and Security issues; Crisis Management**

This response focuses on SAFETY AND SECURITY AWARENESS and CRISIS MANAGEMENT issues and, as such, these observations are limited to the following sections of the VT Panel Report

- **Summary of Key Findings**
- **Chapter I: Background and Scope**
- **Chapter II. University Setting and Security Campus Police and Other Local Law Enforcement**
- **Chapter III. Timeline Of Events**
- **Chapter VII. Double Murder at West Ambler Johnston**
- **Chapter VIII. Mass Murder at Norris Hall**

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
OBSERVATIONS**

VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT	RESPONSE
Foreword from Governor Kaine	
<p>Page viii We must now challenge ourselves to study this report carefully and make changes that will reduce the risk of future violence on our campuses. If we act in that way, we will honor the lives and sacrifices of all who suffered on that terrible day and advance the notion of service that is Virginia Tech’s fundamental mission.</p>	<p>The nation is eight years past the Columbine High School tragedy and the release of various reports from the U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Secret Service and other government entities. Unfortunately, had these recommendations been put into practice, April 16, 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech would have been prevented.</p>
Summary of Key Findings	
<p>Page 1 1. ... In 1999, after the Columbine shootings, Cho’s middle school teachers observed suicidal and homicidal ideations in his writings and recommended psychiatric counseling, which he received. It was at this point that he received medication for a short time. Although Cho’s parents were aware that he was troubled at this time, they state they did not specifically know that he thought about homicide shortly after the 1999 Columbine school shootings.</p>	<p>The Columbine High School tragedy remains a watershed event in American school violence history and its influence on Cho is evident. Schools and campuses throughout the nation should have been on heightened alert during the days preceding April 20, 2007, the eighth anniversary of Columbine.</p>
<p>Page 2 2. During Cho’s junior year at Virginia Tech, numerous incidents occurred that were clear warnings of mental instability. Although various individuals and departments within the university knew about each of these incidents, the university did not intervene effectively. No one knew all the information and no one connected all the dots.</p>	<p><i>Early Warning Timely Response</i>, a document of the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education, was completed on August 22, 1998. It is unfortunate that so many educational institutions are either unfamiliar with it or fail to put its recommendations into practice.</p>
<p>Page 2 3. University officials in the office of Judicial Affairs, Cook Counseling Center, campus police, the Dean of Students, and others explained their failures to communicate with one another or with Cho’s parents by noting their belief that such communications are prohibited by the federal laws governing the privacy of health and education records. In reality, federal laws and their state counterparts afford ample leeway to share information in potentially dangerous situations.</p>	<p>This communication breakdown and the failure to effectively deal with Cho’s mental health issues are significant.</p>
<p>Page 2 4. The Cook Counseling Center and the university’s Care Team failed to provide needed support and services to Cho during a period in late 2005 and early 2006. The system failed for lack of resources, incorrect interpretation of privacy laws, and passivity. Records of Cho’s minimal treatment at Virginia Tech’s Cook Counseling Center are missing.</p>	<p>Aside from the numerous failings cited here, one that is particularly troublesome is that of passivity – which is defined as “<i>the trait of remaining inactive; a lack of initiative.</i>”</p>

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
OBSERVATIONS**

VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT	RESPONSE
Summary of Key Findings	
<p>Page 2</p> <p>7. Cho purchased two guns in violation of federal law. The fact that in 2005 Cho had been judged to be a danger to himself and ordered to outpatient treatment made him ineligible to purchase a gun under federal law.</p> <p>8. Virginia is one of only 22 states that report any information about mental health to a federal database used to conduct background checks on would-be gun purchasers. But Virginia law did not clearly require that persons such as Cho—who had been ordered into out-patient treatment but not committed to an institution—be reported to the database. Governor Kaine’s executive order to report all persons involuntarily committed for outpatient treatment has temporarily addressed this ambiguity in state law. But a change is needed in the Code of Virginia as well.</p>	<p>The fact that Cho was able to purchase guns in violation of federal law shows the deficiencies in enforcing existing gun laws.</p> <p>Where does the accountability lie for this violation? Were any citations given?</p> <p>The fact that Cho was able to purchase these guns is yet another example of the many balls dropped prior to the tragedy.</p>
<p>Page 2-3</p> <p>11. The Virginia Tech police may have erred in prematurely concluding that their initial lead in the double homicide was a good one, or at least in conveying that impression to university officials while continuing their investigation. They did not take sufficient action to deal with what might happen if the initial lead proved erroneous. The police reported to the university emergency Policy Group that the "person of interest" probably was no longer on campus.</p> <p>12. The VTPD erred in not requesting that the Policy Group issue a campus-wide notification that two persons had been killed and that all students and staff should be cautious and alert.</p> <p>13. Senior university administrators, acting as the emergency Policy Group, failed to issue an all-campus notification about the WAJ killings until almost 2 hours had elapsed.</p>	<p>The choosing of the words “may have erred” is an understatement and calls into question the veracity of the VT Panel’s report.</p> <p>It is important that the panel use language that avoids being vague or gives the impression of minimizing the deficiency.</p> <p>It is essential that the police are not used as a scapegoat for the lack of judgment of the Policy Group, who, despite being aware that a killer was at large, did not choose the path of an abundance of caution. They failed to communicate the initial killings and immediately lockdown the campus.</p>

**RESPONSE TO THE VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT
OBSERVATIONS**

VIRGINIA TECH PANEL REPORT	RESPONSE
Chapter I. Background And Scope	
<p>Page 7 Finally, with respect to Cho's firearms purchases, the Virginia State Police, the ATF, and the gun dealers each declined to provide the panel with copies of the applications Cho completed when he bought his weapons or of other records relating to any background check that may have occurred in connection with those purchases.</p>	<p>It is despicable that there is no explanation here as to why these documents were not provided and again calls into question the veracity of the panel's findings.</p> <p>As a matter of transparency, the examination of these applications is warranted and the inability of the panel to have copies is of concern.</p>
<p>Page 7 Virginia Tech Cooperation – An essential aspect of the review was the cooperation of the Virginia Tech administration and faculty. Despite their having to deal with extraordinary problems, pressures, and demands, the university provided the panel with the records and information requested, except for a few that were missing.</p>	<p>The verbiage used here is not that of an impartial panel. It appears that the panel is giving praise to the university for their efforts, rather than investigating and reporting what else might be missing and why.</p> <p>This is in contradiction to the panel's mission to:</p> <p><i>"provide an independent, thorough, and objective incident review of this tragic event..."</i> Executive Order Number Fifty-Three (2007) VA Governor Timothy M. Kaine</p>

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<p>Page 11 The police chief reports to a university vice president. On April 16, the VTPD strength was 35 officers. It had 41 positions authorized but 6 were vacant. ... The campus police could not handle a major event by themselves with these numbers, and so they have entered into a mutual aid agreement with the Blacksburg Police Department (BPD) for immediate response and assistance. They frequently train together, and had trained for an active shooter situation in a campus building before the incident. As will be seen, this preparation was critical.</p>	<p>The police chief of a campus police department must be empowered to make decisions in a crisis situation, such as emergency alerts and/or lockdowns, as warranted. A key principle of crisis management is that seconds count.</p> <p>There were 6 vacant positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Are they full time or part time vacancies? ▪ What are the positions? ▪ What are the span of control and the breakdown of the positions of the Virginia Tech Police Department? ▪ Were individuals assigned to these vacancies who were working on overtime until the positions filled? ▪ Are these openings a common problem and if so what are the causes? ▪ Are efforts being made to fill these positions? <p>The clause “had trained for an active shooter” is not specific.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How many times did they train? How was the training conducted? ▪ Were all officers on all shifts in both departments trained? ▪ Did the university fully support the training with the finances needed to conduct it? ▪ Are there directives or laws requiring this type of training for law enforcement in the state of Virginia for all jurisdictions and were records kept of the training? ▪ Was the training conducted with other agencies involved including the Virginia State Police as well as first responders? ▪ Do law enforcement officials make visits to the school and conduct patrols and walk-throughs with documentation of these visits? ▪ Have the officers been certified?
<p>Page 13 Several leaders of the campus police chiefs of Virginia commented that they do not always have adequate input into security planning and threat assessment or the authority to access important information on students.</p>	<p>Law enforcement must be involved with the security planning, threat assessment and have the authority to access important information on students as it pertains to the public health, safety and welfare.</p>
<p>Page 13 Most classrooms, such as those in Norris Hall, have no locks. Staff offices generally do have locks, including those in Norris Hall.</p>	<p>For classroom doors not to have locks eight years after the Columbine tragedy is unacceptable. Lives could have been spared on April 16 with this very basic security measure.</p>

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<p>Page 13 There are no guards at campus buildings or cameras at the entrances or in hallways of any buildings. Anyone can enter most buildings. It is an open university.</p>	<p>The following are basic principles of crime prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deny ▪ Delay ▪ Deter ▪ Detect <p>Access control plays a critical role in preventing incidents of violence. There should be guards at buildings on campus that are particularly sensitive to public safety, particularly residence halls. If there had been a guard posted at the entry point of West Ambler Johnston Hall, it would have served as a deterrent for the first two killings.</p> <p>The lack of Closed Circuit Televisions (CCTVs) is a concern. Details on the camera system, if any, should have been an essential element of the panel report.</p>
<p>Page 14 April 16 has become the 9/11 for colleges and universities. Most have reviewed their security plans since then. The installation of security systems already planned or in progress has accelerated, including those at Virginia Tech.</p>	<p>To say that the Virginia Tech tragedy has become the 9/11 for colleges and universities does an injustice to school violence prevention programs. In effect, they are resetting the clock to 2007, when in fact, schools and campuses should have been put on notice in August of 1998, when the <i>Early Warning, Timely Response</i> document was released after the May 1998 Springfield, Oregon shootings.</p> <p>Individuals in positions of authority must take their heads out of the sand and put into practice the lessons learned from the myriad of previous events of violence.</p>
<p>Page 14 So far as the panel is aware, there was no outcry from parents, students, or faculty for improving VT campus security prior to April 16.</p>	<p>It is inconceivable that the members of the panel could make a statement like this. It is blatantly irresponsible. Once again, we must question the veracity of the panel's report.</p> <p>It was the responsibility of the leadership at Virginia Tech to provide safety and security measures without an "outcry."</p>
<p>Page 14 Existing System – Virginia Tech had the capability on April 16 to send messages to the student body, faculty, and other staff via a broadcast e-mail system. The associate vice president for University Relations had the authority and capability to send a message from anywhere that was connected to the web.</p>	<p>This highlights the simple fact that the university had the capability to send a broadcast message from anywhere to everyone.</p>

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<p>Page 14 The university also has a web site that it uses to post emergency warnings, mostly for weather events. The system has high-volume capacity. (As events unfolded on April 16, the VT web site was receiving 148,000 visits per hour.) An emergency message can be put in a box on the web site that anyone reaching the site would see no matter what they were looking for. The university also has contacts with every local radio and TV station. The Virginia Tech associate vice president for University Relations has a code by which he can send emergency messages to the stations that could be played immediately.</p>	<p>Details on the web postings should be clear in this report especially since the web site was receiving 148,000 visits per hour.</p> <p>Also, did the university issue an alert with every local radio and TV station relative to the event?</p>
<p>Page 16 Pursuant to its Emergency Response Plan in effect on April 16, the Virginia Tech Policy Group and the police chief could authorize sending an emergency message to all students and staff. Typically, the police chief would make a decision about the timing and content of a message after consultation with the Policy Group, which is comprised of the president and several other vice presidents and senior officials. This process of having the Policy Group decide on the message was used during the April 16 incidents. However, while the Virginia Tech campus police had the authority to send a message, they did not have the technical means to do so. Only two people, the associate vice president for University Relations and the director of News and Information, had the codes to send a message. The police could not access the alerting system to send a message. . The police had to contact the university leadership on the need and proposed content of a message. As a matter of course, the police would usually be consulted if not directly involved in the decision regarding the sending of an alert for an emergency.</p>	<p>As a matter of transparency and clarity all names of individuals in the Virginia Tech Policy Group should be in the context of this statement.</p>
<p>Page 16 The university's Emergency Response Plan deals with preparedness and response to a variety of emergencies, but nothing specific to shootings. The version in effect on April 16 was about 2 years old.</p>	<p>The lack of a specific plan to deal with shootings is a clear deficiency as is the fact that the version was "about 2 years old."</p>

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<p>Page 17 Two key decision groups are identified in the Emergency Response Plan: the Policy Group and the Emergency Response Resources Group. The Policy Group is comprised of nine vice presidents and support staff, chaired by the university president. The Policy Group deals with procedures to support emergency operations and to determine recovery priorities. In the events of April 16, it also decided on the messages sent and the immediate actions taken by the university after the first incident as well as the second mass shooting. The Policy Group sits above the emergency coordinator for an incident. It does not include a member of the campus police, but the campus police are usually asked to have a representative at its meetings.</p>	<p>Once again, for the sake of transparency the names of individuals in the Policy Group and the Emergency Response Resources Group along with their titles should be clearly detailed in this report. Also, as a matter of respect to the seriousness of public safety, the chief of the Virginia Tech Police Department should be a member of each of these groups.</p>
<p>Page 17 The VT Emergency Response Plan does not deal with prevention of events, such as establishing a threat assessment team to identify classes of threats and to assess the risk of specific problems and specific individuals. There are threat assessment models used elsewhere that have proven successful. For example, at two college campuses in Virginia, the chief operating officer receives daily reports of all incidents to which law enforcement responded the previous day, including violation of the student conduct code up to criminal activity. This information is then routinely shared with appropriate offices which are responsible for safety and health on campus.</p>	<p>Prevention is critical to public safety. That the VT Emergency Plan does not deal with prevention is a glaring deficiency.</p> <p>Why was there no Threat Assessment team at Virginia Tech?</p> <p>Was it a due to a lack of communication and collaboration between Virginia Tech and the least two other Virginia campuses who have used the threat assessment model successfully?</p> <p>Was it due to a lack of resources and priority give to campus security at Virginia Tech?</p> <p>Also, at the July 18, 2007 Virginia Tech Panel Report Meeting at the University of Virginia, Chief Robert Dillard of the University of Richmond spoke about the effectiveness of the threat assessment team in place there. Unfortunately, although Virginia Tech is involved with the University of Richmond in VACLEA, they still neglected to have a threat assessment team in place.</p>
<p>Page 17 The Emergency Response Plan of Virginia Tech was deficient in several respects. It did not include provisions for a shooting scenario and did not place police high enough in the emergency decision-making hierarchy. It also did not include a threat assessment team. And the plan was out of date on April 16; for example, it had the wrong name for the police chief and some other officials.</p>	<p>The clarity of the report in specifying the deficiencies here is respected yet indicates a clear lack of priority of the university toward public safety.</p>

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<p>Page 17 The protocol for sending an emergency message in use on April 16 was cumbersome, untimely, and problematic when a decision was needed as soon as possible. The police did not have the capability to send an emergency alert message on their own. The police had to await the deliberations of the Policy Group, of which they are not a member, even when minutes count. The Policy Group had to be convened to decide whether to send a message to the university community and to structure its content. The training of staff and students for emergencies situations at Virginia Tech did not include shooting incidents.</p>	<p>The police need to be in a position where they are able to immediately send an emergency alert message on their own to the campus community.</p> <p>Training of staff and students for emergency situations must include shooting incidents.</p>
<p>Page 18 It would have been extremely difficult to “lock down” Virginia Tech. The size of the police force and absence of a guard force, the lack of electronic controls on doors of most buildings other than residence halls, and the many unguarded roadways pose special problems for a large rural or suburban university. The police and security officials consulted in this review did not think the concept of a lockdown, as envisioned for elementary or high schools, was feasible for an institution such as Virginia Tech.</p>	<p>According to various documents from the university, published reports, and in the words of President Steger himself, lockdown is common terminology. In fact, a lockdown had even taken place on April 16, although too late.</p> <p>There is a significant contradiction in Steger’s approach to lockdown on the day of the tragedy and shortly prior to the release of this report:</p> <p>August 23, 2007 A lockdown “is simply not feasible on a campus the size of a small city,” Steger said, though he endorsed the suggestion to secure or “harden” individual buildings. http://www.latimes.com/news/print/edition/asection/la-na-vatech23aug23,1,6172205.story?coll=la-news-a_section&ctrack=1&cset=true</p> <p>April 16, 2007 “We had the sirens going off, we sent I messages, we sent out emails and we utilized the telephone tree and we concluded it was best once they got into the classroom that was where to lock them down....Based on, you know, we had to make this decision based on what we knew at the time....and I think we did it as well as we could.” http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2007/04/16/costello.unanswered.question.cnn</p> <p>April 16, 2007 A USA TODAY article refers to a lockdown in the Morva incident: “forced a virtual lockdown of Virginia Tech on the first day of the fall semester.” http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2006-08-21-campus-search_x.htm</p>

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	<p>Regarding the April 16, 2007 tragedy, a CNN article quoted Charles Steger as clearly referring to the effectiveness of lockdown, <i>“The school’s lockdown system worked very well,”</i> Steger said. <i>“Students were cooperative and very few people were out after the lockdown,”</i> he said. http://www.cnn.com/2007/US/04/16/campus.security/index.html</p> <p>In a Virginia Tech Job Description for a Student Assistant Manager, there is also a clear indication of the university understanding that lockdown was feasible, practical and essential: <i>“Responsible for operational keys and unit lockdown procedures.”</i></p> <p>In a lockdown search conducted through the Virginia Tech official web site is a clear reference to lockdown on April 16: <i>“Classes are canceled until further notice. We’re in complete lockdown. Please do not leave the building. Please notify faculty, staff, and students as quickly as possible.”</i> http://64.233.169.104/u/virginiatech?q=cache:7gYifAj51qJ:www.history.vt.edu/faculty/...</p> <p>In The Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets Alumni Magazine entitled “Corps Review” Vol. 17 No. 3 Summer 2007 dedicated to the memory of Matthew La Porte who was killed on April 16, is another clear reference to lockdown: <i>“Eventually the building seemed empty and we ran up to upper quad. Martinelli and Akrami went to check that Monteith was in lockdown and guarded while I checked Brodie and Rasche.”</i> http://www.vtcca.vt.edu/corps_review_lowres.pdf</p>

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<p>Page 18 It is critical to alert the entire campus population when there is an imminent danger. There are information technologies available to rapidly send messages to a variety of personal communication devices. Many colleges and universities, including Virginia Tech, are installing such campus-wide alerting systems. Any purchased system must be thoroughly tested to ensure it operates as specified in the purchase contract. Some universities already have had problems with systems purchased since April 16.</p>	<p>The <i>Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide For Schools And Communities</i> by The Office of Safe And Drug-Free Schools by the U.S. Department of Education, outlines clear action steps for crisis management which were not followed by Virginia Tech on April 16:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expect to be surprised. ▪ Assess the situation and choose the appropriate response. ▪ Respond within seconds. ▪ Notify appropriate emergency responders and the school crisis response team. ▪ Evacuate or lockdown the school as appropriate... <p>http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/crisisplanning.html</p>
<p>Page 18 No security cameras were in the dorms or anywhere else on campus on April 16. The outcome might have been different had the perpetrator of the initial homicides been rapidly identified. Cameras may be placed just at entrances to buildings or also in hallways.</p>	<p>The statement that security cameras were not in the dorms or anywhere else on campus on April 16 is an extraordinary indictment of deficient campus security.</p>
<p>Page 18 Virginia Tech did not have classroom door locks operable from the inside of the room. Whether to add such locks is controversial. They can block entry of an intruder and compartmentalize an attack. Locks can be simple manually operated devices or part of more sophisticated systems that use electromechanical locks operated from a central security point in a building or even university-wide. The locks must be easily opened from the inside to allow escape from a fire or other emergency when that is the safer course of action. While adding locks to classrooms may seem an obvious safety feature, some voiced concern that locks could facilitate rapes or assaults in classrooms and increase university liability. (An attacker could drag someone inside a room at night and lock the door, blocking assistance.) On the other hand, a locked room can be a place of refuge when one is pursued. On balance, the panel generally thought having locks on classroom doors was a good idea.</p>	<p>After the tragedy, Virginia Tech began to retrofit locks on doors throughout Norris Hall but this benefit was reactive rather than proactive and many lives could have been spared if this basic security measure was implemented. Locks serve the basic tenets of crime prevention which include denial and delay of access.</p>
<p>Page 18 There have been several excellent reviews of campus security by states and individual campuses (for example, the states of Florida and Louisiana, the University of California, and the University of Maryland). The Commonwealth of Virginia held a conference on campus security on August 13, 2007.</p>	<p>This is reactive rather than proactive and there should have been school and campus security conferences each year since the Columbine tragedy.</p>

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<p>Page 19 <i>II-1 Universities should do a risk analysis (threat assessment) and then choose a level of security appropriate for their campus.</i> How far to go in safeguarding campuses, and from which threats, needs to be considered by each institution. Security requirements vary across universities, and each must do its own threat assessment to determine what security measures are appropriate.</p>	<p>This is a general statement which does not effectively deal with Virginia Tech.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did Virginia Tech have risk analyses conducted? ▪ When and how often? ▪ Did Virginia Tech follow the recommendations of such risk analyses proactively?
<p>Page 19 <i>II-3 Virginia Tech and other institutions of higher learning should have a threat assessment team that includes representatives from law enforcement, human resources, student and academic affairs, legal counsel, and mental health functions.</i> The team should be empowered to take actions such as additional investigation, gathering background information, identification of additional dangerous warning signs, establishing a threat potential risk level (1 to 10) for a case, preparing a case for hearings (for instance, commitment hearings), and disseminating warning information.</p>	<p>Virginia Tech's lack of having a threat assessment team is a glaring deficiency on the priority of security and safety at the university.</p>
<p>Page 19 <i>II-4 Students, faculty, and staff should be trained annually about responding to various emergencies and about the notification systems that will be used.</i> An annual reminder provided as part of registration should be considered.</p>	<p>The training should be mandatory.</p>
<p>Page 19 <i>II-5 Universities and colleges must comply with the Clery Act, which requires timely public warnings of imminent danger.</i> "Timely" should be defined clearly in the federal law.</p>	<p>Security On Campus, Inc. has filed a formal complaint with the U.S. Department of Education on August 20, 2007 stating that the Clery Act was violated.</p>
<p>Page 19 <i>II-7 In an emergency, immediate messages must be sent to the campus community that provide clear information on the nature of the emergency and actions to be taken</i> The initial messages should be followed by update messages as more information becomes known.</p>	<p>Messages were not immediate and were extremely vague.</p>

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<p>Page 19 <i>II-8 Campus police as well as administration officials should have the authority and capability to send an emergency message.</i> Schools without a police department or senior security official must designate someone able to make a quick decision without convening a committee.</p>	<p>The lack of rightful empowerment to law enforcement officials handcuffed them from a cumbersome reporting requirement to Virginia Tech.</p>
<p>Page 19 <i>II-9 The head of campus police should be a member of a threat assessment team as well as the emergency response team for the university.</i> In some cases where there is a security department but not a police department, the security head may be appropriate.</p>	<p>Tragically, Virginia Tech did not have a threat assessment team.</p>
<p>Page 19 <i>II-11 Campus police must train for active shooters (as did the Virginia Tech Police Department).</i> Experience has shown that waiting for a SWAT team often takes too long. The best chance to save lives is often an immediate assault by first responders.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How often did the Virginia Tech Police train and were all members of the department trained? ▪ Did training take place with additional agencies and first responders? ▪ Is there a directive within the state of Virginia specific to active shooter and other emergency scenario training?
<p>Page 20 <i>II-12 The mission statement of campus police should give primacy to their law enforcement and crime prevention role.</i> They also must be designated as having a function in education so as to be able to review records of students brought to the attention of the university as potential threats. The lack of emphasis on safety as the first responsibility of the police department may create the wrong mindset, with the police yielding to academic considerations when it comes time to make decisions on, say, whether to send out an alert to the students that may disrupt classes. On the other hand, it is useful to identify the police as being involved in the education role in order for them to gain access to records under educational privacy act provisions.</p>	<p>The “Community Policing” philosophy should be explored as it pertains to the mission of the campus police force.</p> <p><i>Community policing focuses on crime and social disorder through the delivery of police services that includes aspects of traditional law enforcement, as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships. The community policing model balances reactive responses to calls for service with proactive problem-solving centered on the causes of crime and disorder. Community policing requires police and citizens to join together as partners in the course of both identifying and effectively addressing these issues.</i></p> <p>U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/Default.asp?Item=34</p>

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<p>Page 21 1999 During the 8th grade, suicidal and homicidal ideations are identified by Cho's middle school teachers in his writing. It is connected to the Columbine shootings this year. (He references Columbine in school writings.)</p>	<p>The fact that Virginia Tech was not on heightened alert on April 16, just days prior to the 8th anniversary of Columbine, should not be underestimated. For the foreseeable future, all schools and campuses should pay particular attention to anniversary days such as Columbine and, now, Virginia Tech.</p>
<p>Page 22 Dr. Roy removes Cho from Professor Giovanni's class and tutors him one-on-one with assistance from Professor Frederick D'Aguiar. When Cho refuses to go to counseling, Dr. Roy notifies the Division of Student Affairs, the Cook Counseling Center, the Schiffert Health Center, the Virginia Tech police, and the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Cho's problems are discussed with the university's Care Team that reviews students with problems.</p>	<p>Dr. Lucinda Roy's continued attempts for intervention are admirable, but the support is minimal at best. Despite her removal of Cho from class and her notification of many within the university, there is no explanation here of what actions taken.</p>
<p>Page 23 December 14 7 a.m. The person assigned as an independent evaluator, psychologist Roy Crouse, evaluates Cho and concludes that he does not present an imminent danger to himself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did he consult with another professional? ▪ Did he have access or ask for Cho's mental health records? ▪ Did he speak with any witnesses or family members?
<p>Page 23 December 14, 2005 Before 11 a.m. A staff psychiatrist at Carilion evaluates Cho, concludes he is not a danger to himself or others, and recommends outpatient counseling. He gathers no collateral information.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Why was no collateral information gathered?
<p>Pages 23-24 Spring 2006 Cho writes a paper for Professor Hicok's creative writing class concerning a young man who hates the students at his school and plans to kill them and himself. The writing contains a number of parallels to the events of April 16, 2007 and the recorded messages later sent to NBC.</p>	<p>Based on the seriousness of this paper, immediate and serious measured intervention was required but the Virginia Tech Panel Review does not explain how this paper was responded to and who was responsible for intervention.</p>

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<p>Page 25 April 16, 2007 About 7:15 a.m. Cho shoots Hilscher in her room (4040) at WAJ. He also shoots Ryan Christopher Clark, an RA. Clark, it is thought, most likely came to investigate noises in Hilscher's room, which is next door to his. Both of the victims' wounds prove to be fatal.</p>	<p>Residence halls require strict security protocol and the presence of security personnel. The easy access of the killer into West Ambler Johnston is a serious breach of access control issues.</p>
<p>Page 25 7:24 a.m. The VTPD officer arrives at WAJ room 4040, finds two people shot inside the room, and immediately requests additional VTPD resources.</p>	<p>Based on the information from <i>Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities</i>, the response here should have been within seconds.</p> <p>The simple fact was that two murders had taken place on the campus and a killer was a large. Therefore the entire campus community should have been notified and a lockdown implemented immediately.</p>
<p>Page 25 7:40 a.m. VTPD Chief Flinchum is notified by phone of the WAJ shootings.</p>	<p>For 16 minutes to elapse before the Chief was notified is unacceptable standard operating procedure.</p> <p>As soon as the officer walked in the door and saw the killings, he should have radioed immediately that the chief should be notified.</p>
<p>Page 25 7:57 a.m. Chief Flinchum notifies the Virginia Tech Office of the Executive Vice President of the shootings. This triggers a meeting of the university's Policy Group.</p>	<p>Despite the previous lack of communication, the chief's notification of the Executive Vice President and the triggering of a meeting of the university's Policy Group gave the President and his leadership team more than ample time to communicate the incident and immediately lockdown the campus.</p> <p>This window of opportunity is the critical crisis point. The President and the Policy Group knew of the killings and that a killer was at large and failed the Virginia Tech community. The decision should have been made here "within seconds" and any other explanation or defense of this failure is inexcusable.</p>
<p>Page 26 8:16–9:24 a.m. Officers search for Hilscher's boyfriend. His vehicle is not found in campus parking lots, and officers become more confident that he has left the campus.</p>	<p>Through 9:24 a.m., the officers were still uncertain whether the "presumed" killer was still on campus, and yet the President and the policy group still failed to alert the campus and authorize a lockdown.</p>

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<p>Page 26 8:20 a.m. A person fitting Cho's description is seen near the Duck Pond on campus.</p>	<p>If the campus community was on heightened alert due to the Columbine tragedy anniversary and if they were immediately informed of the first killings and the campus was in lockdown, this observation might have been considered suspicious and immediately reported.</p>
<p>Page 26 8:52 a.m. Blacksburg public schools lock their outer doors upon hearing of the incident at WAJ from their security chief, who had heard of the incident on police radio.</p>	<p>Although the killings did not take place at the Blacksburg public schools, they exercised leadership by choosing an abundance of caution.</p>
<p>Page 26 9:26 a.m. Virginia Tech administration sends e-mail to campus staff, faculty, and students informing them of the dormitory shooting.</p>	<p>This email is late and neglects to clearly detail the gravity of the situation and to lockdown the campus.</p>
<p>Page 26 9:31–9:48 a.m. A VSP trooper arrives at the traffic stop of the boyfriend and helps question him. A gunpowder residue field test is performed on him and the result is negative.</p>	<p>This detail omits the precise time that the gunpowder residue field test is found to be negative. Seventeen minutes is a very broad window. It is conceivable that this is another missed opportunity to inform the campus and lock it down.</p>

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<p>Page 27 About 9:40 a.m.1 until about 9:51 a.m. Cho begins shooting in room 206 in Norris Hall, where a graduate engineering class in Advanced Hydrology is underway. Cho kills Professor G. V. Loganathan and other students in the class, killing 9 and wounding 3 of the 13 students.</p> <p>Students in room 205, attending Haiyan Cheng’s class on Issues in Scientific Computing, hear Cho’s gunshots. (Cheng was a graduate assistant substituting for the professor that day.) The students barricade the door and prevent Cho’s entry despite his firing at them through the door.</p> <p>Meanwhile, in room 211 Madame Jocelyne Couture-Nowak is teaching French. She and her class hear the shots, and she asks student Colin Goddard to call 9-1-1. A student tells the teacher to put the desk in front of the door, which is done but it is nudged open by Cho. Cho walks down the rows of desks shooting people. Goddard is shot in the leg. Student Emily Haas picks up the cell phone Goddard dropped. She begs the police to hurry. Cho hears Haas and shoots her, grazing her twice in the head. She falls and plays dead, though keeping the phone cradled under her head and the line open. Cho says nothing on entering the room or during the shooting. (Three students who pretend to be dead survive.)</p> <p>About 9:45 a.m. Back in room 207, the German class, two uninjured students and two injured students go to the door and hold it shut with their feet and hands, keeping their bodies away.</p> <p>Cho tries to enter room 204 where engineering Professor Liviu Librescu is teaching Mechanics. Librescu braces his body against the door yelling for students to head for the window. He is shot through the door.</p>	<p>Tragically, these students were in harms way because they did not receive communication from the president and the policy group that killings had taken place and the campus was not locked down. Also, students and faculty were not able to protect themselves because the doors could not be locked.</p> <p>One family informed me that their daughter would have never gone to class if communication had taken place that killings had occurred and that a killer was a large. According to the family, she was a resident assistant who was intimately familiar with lockdown procedures and would have implemented these procedures immediately.</p> <p>In a sad irony, Professor Liviu Librescu, a survivor of the Holocaust, is killed in an American classroom. His heroic actions saved the lives of several students.</p>
<p>Page 28 9:50 a.m. A second e-mail is sent by the administration to all Virginia Tech e-mail addresses announcing that “A gunman is loose on campus. Stay in buildings until further notice. Stay away from all windows.” Four loudspeakers out of doors on poles broadcast a similar message.</p>	<p>Despite the continual contradictory semantics from the Virginia Tech President including that a lockdown “is simply not feasible on a campus the size of a small city,” this email is unequivocally directing a lockdown.</p> <p>http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-na-vatech23aug23,1,6172205.story?coll=la-news-a_section&ctrack=3&cset=true</p>

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<p>Page 28 10:17 a.m. A third e-mail from Virginia Tech administration cancels classes and advises people to stay where they are.</p>	<p>Once again, despite the semantics on lockdown, this is clearly advising people to lockdown.</p>

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<p>Page 79 PREMATURE CONCLUSION? At this point, the police may have made an error in reaching a premature conclusion that their initial lead was a good one, or at least in conveying that impression to the Virginia Tech administration. While continuing their investigation, they did not take sufficient action to deal with what might happen if the initial lead proved false. They conveyed to the university Policy Group that they had a good lead and that the person of interest was probably not on campus. (That is how the Policy Group understood it, according to its chair and other members who were interviewed by the panel and who presented information at one of its open hearings.) After two people were shot dead, police needed to consider the possibility of a murderer loose on campus who did a double slaying for unknown reasons, even though a domestic disturbance was a likely possibility. The police did not urge the Policy Group to take precautions, as best can be understood from the panel's interviews.</p>	<p>These remarks are laced with the inability to be decisive and unambiguous.</p> <p>Regardless of the conveyance of the police, the policy group had the ultimate responsibility and authority to make decisions regarding campus safety during a crisis.</p> <p>The fact remains that there was a killer at large and it was the policy group that failed to notify the community and immediately lockdown the campus.</p>
<p>Page 80 Based on past history, the probability of more shootings following a dormitory slaying was very low.</p>	<p>The fact remains that two murders were committed on campus, a killer was at large, the campus community had a right to know the details of the event and the Virginia Tech leadership team had the obligation to lockdown the campus. The <i>Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities</i> by the U.S. Department of Education (Page 4-2) is very clear in this regard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expect to be surprised. ▪ Respond within seconds.
<p>Page 81 Even with the police conveying the impression to campus authorities that the probable perpetrator of the dormitory killings had left campus and with the recent past history of the "panic" caused by the alert 9 months earlier, the university Policy Group still made a questionable decision. They sent out a carefully worded alert an hour and half after they heard that there was a double homicide, which was now more than 2 hours after the event.</p>	<p>The panel's statement that</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>"the university Policy Group still made a questionable decision. They sent out a carefully worded alert an hour and half after they heard that there was a double homicide, which was now more than 2 hours after the event"</i></p> <p>is unfortunately minimizing the serious lack of judgment by the Policy Group.</p>

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<p>Page 81 Vice Provost of Student Affairs David Ford presented a statement to the panel on May 21, 2007. He was a member of the university Policy Group that made the decisions on what to do after hearing about the shootings. These are parts of his statement from the report:</p> <p>“The Policy Group was further informed by the police that they were following up on leads concerning a person of interest in relation to the shooting. During this 30- minute period of time between 8:30 and 9:00 a.m., the Policy Group processed the factual information it had in the context of many questions we asked ourselves. For instance, what information do we release without causing a panic? We learned from the Morva incident last August that speculation and misinformation spread by individuals who do not have the facts cause panic.”</p>	<p>The facts were known. There was a double murder on campus and a killer was at large.</p>
<p>[The statement continues]</p> <p>Page 81 And so with the information the Policy Group had at approximately 9 a.m., we drafted and edited a communication to be released to the university community via e-mail and to be placed on the university web site. We made the best decision we could based upon the information we had at the time. Shortly before 9:30 a.m., the Virginia Tech community—faculty, staff, and students—were notified by e-mail as follows:</p> <p><i>"A shooting incident occurred at West Ambler Johnston earlier this morning. Police are on the scene and are investigating. The university community is urged to be cautious and are asked to contact Virginia Tech Police if you observe anything suspicious or with information on the case. Contact Virginia Tech Police at 231-6411. Stay tuned to the www.vt.edu. We will post as soon as we have more information"</i></p>	<p>This was a vague, misleading and confusing statement that did not specify a double homicide, that the killer was at large and did not immediately lockdown the campus.</p> <p>If the campus was on heightened alert due to the awareness of the Columbine anniversary, the first two killings would have immediately initiated a greater sense of urgency and emergency response.</p>

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<p>Page 82 Few anywhere on campus seemed to have acted on the initial warning messages; no classes were canceled, and there was no unusual absenteeism. When the Norris Hall shooting started, few connected it to the first message.</p> <p>The university body was not put on high alert by the actions of the university administration and was largely taken by surprise by the events that followed. Warning the students, faculty, and staff might have made a difference. Putting more people on guard could have resulted in quicker recognition of a problem or suspicious activity, quicker reporting to police, and quicker response of police. Nearly everyone at Virginia Tech is adult and capable of making decisions about potentially dangerous situations to safeguard themselves. So the earlier and clearer the warning, the more chance an individual had of surviving.</p>	<p>It was an injustice beyond imagination to have the campus begin April 16 as though it was just another day despite the two killings of members of their community and that a killer was at large.</p> <p>When the Norris Hall shooting started, few connected it to the first message since it was so vague.</p>
<p>Page 82 DECISION NOT TO CANCEL CLASSES OR LOCK DOWN Many people have raised the question of whether the university should have been locked down. One needs to analyze the feasibility of doing this for a campus of 35,000 people, and what the results would have been even if feasible. Most police chiefs consulted in this review believe that a lockdown was not feasible.</p>	<p>This is another outlandish statement. Lockdowns are a common protocol in certain crisis situations.</p> <p>The fact that most police chiefs consulted in this review believe that a lockdown was not feasible is meaningless. This was certainly not a scientific sample and does not include the thousands of safety and security professionals who would have relevant opinions</p> <p>This statement appears to be an attempt to absolve the University's Leadership team of any culpability by leading one to believe that a lockdown was not feasible.</p> <p>It also is in contradiction with the many references where members of the university leadership stated that the university was in lockdown.</p> <p>Finally, it is a grave injustice to those campus security and public safety directors who have lockdown procedures in place.</p>
<p>Page 83 Some people suggested that the university should have closed out of respect for the two students who were killed. However, the general practice at most large universities is not to close when a student dies, regardless of the cause (suicide, homicide, traffic accident, overdose, etc.). Universities and colleges need to make that decision based on individual criteria.</p>	<p>A student did not just die. There was a double homicide and the killer was at large thereby causing a clear and present danger to the entire campus community. This statement smacks of insensitivity and being clueless to the gravity of the first two murders.</p>

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<p>Page 83 Feasibility – A building can be locked down in the sense of locking the exterior doors, barring anyone from coming or going. Elementary schools practice that regularly, and so do some intermediate and high schools. At least some schools in Blacksburg were locked down for a while after the first shootings. Usually, a lockdown also implies locking individual classrooms. Virginia Tech does not have locks on the inside of classroom doors, as is the case for most universities and many high schools.</p>	<p>It is an irresponsible and illogical association that Virginia Tech could not lockdown because <i>“Virginia Tech does not have locks on the inside of classroom doors, as is the case for most universities and schools.”</i></p> <p>Lockdown is not the equivalent of locking the doors, though locking the doors is a component of lockdown.</p> <p>The fact that Virginia Tech does not have locks on classroom doors should have raised the priority of locking down the campus PRIOR to the start of classes on April 16, 2007 and is a further indictment of the failure to do so.</p> <p>And why, then, would President Steger say that they (the leadership team?) had <i>“concluded it was best once they got into the classroom that was where to lock them down?”</i></p> <p>April 16, 2007 <i>“We had the sirens going off, we sent I messages, we sent out emails and we utilized the telephone tree and we concluded it was best once they got into the classroom that was where to lock them down....Based on, you know, we had to make this decision based on what we knew at the time....and I think we did it as well as we could.”</i> http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2007/04/16/costello.unanswered.question.cnn</p>
<p>Page 84 Cho, too, could have shot people in the open on campus, after an alert went out, waiting for them outside. Although he was armed with only handguns, no one knew that at the time. The Texas tower shooter sniped at people with a rifle outdoors.</p>	<p>This speculation does a disservice to those who died, those who were wounded, and their families..</p> <p>They had the right to know that murders had taken place on their campus and a killer was at large.</p>

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<p>Page 84 It might be argued that the total toll would have been less if the university had canceled classes and announced it was closed for business immediately after the first shooting; or if the earlier alert message had been stronger and clearer. Even with the messaging system that was in place on April 16, many could have received messages before they left for class by e-mail or phone before 9 a.m., and the message probably would have quickly spread mouth to mouth as well. Even if it only partially reduced the university population on campus, it might have done some good. It is the panel's judgment that, all things considered, the toll could have been reduced had these actions been taken. But none of these measures would likely have averted a mass shooting altogether. There is a possibility that the additional measures would have dissuaded Cho from acting further, but he had already killed two people and sent a tape to NBC that would arrive the following morning with all but a confession. From what we know of his mental state and commitment to action that day, it was likely that he would have acted out his fantasy somewhere on campus or outside it that same day.</p>	<p>The campus community had a right to an immediate alert that there were two killings on their campus and a killer was at large.</p>
<p>Page 85 Boyfriend Questioning – At 9:30 a.m., the boyfriend of Emily Hilscher was stopped in his pickup truck on a road. He was cooperative and shocked to hear that his girlfriend had just been killed. He passed a field test for the presence of gunpowder residue. While he remained a person of interest, it appeared unlikely that he was the shooter, with the implication that the real shooter was probably still at large. The police passed this information to the university leadership through the police captain who was interacting with the university staff.</p> <p>This negative finding on the boyfriend raised the urgency of the situation, and the university proceeded to send out more alerts of the changing situation, but by then it was too late.</p>	<p>The panel had a responsibility to investigate and document here precisely what time <i>“it appeared unlikely that he was the shooter, with the implication that the real shooter was probably still at large.”</i></p> <p>If, in fact, it was prior to the start of Cho's shootings at Norris Hall, this could have been another missed opportunity to notify the community and lockdown the campus.</p> <p>According to Chapter III. Timeline of Events, it was not until 9:50a.m. that <i>“A second e-mail (the first e-mail was at 9:26 a.m. prior to the panel's documented 9:30a.m. boyfriend questioning) was sent, a full 20 minutes after “it appeared unlikely that he was the shooter...”</i></p>

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<p>Page 87 The police did not have the capability to use the university alerting system to send a warning to the students, staff, and faculty. That is, they were not given the keyword to operate the alerting system themselves, but rather they had to request a message be sent from the Policy Group or at least the associate vice president for University Relations, who did have the keyword. The police did have the authority to request that a message be sent, but did not request that be done. They gave the university administration the information on the incident, and left it to the Policy Group to handle the messaging.</p>	<p>The policy group alone had the authority to communicate the alert and therefore the policy group alone is ultimately responsible for this lack of vital communication to the campus community.</p>
<p>Page 87 The university administration failed to notify students and staff of a dangerous situation in a timely manner. The first message sent by the university to students could have been sent at least an hour earlier and been more specific. The university could have notified the Virginia Tech community that two homicides of students had occurred and that the shooter was unknown and still at large. The administration could have advised students and staff to safeguard themselves by staying in residences or other safe places until further notice. They could have advised those not en route to school to stay home, though after 8 a.m. most employees would have been en route to their campus jobs and might not have received the messages in time.</p>	<p>Although it is clear wording here that the <i>“university administration failed to notify students and staff of a dangerous situation in a timely manner”</i> the statement that the <i>“administration could have advised students and staff to safeguard themselves by staying in residences or other safe places until further notice”</i> is once again semantics for the term lockdown.</p>
<p>Page 87 <i>VII-5 Plans for canceling classes or closing the campus should be included in the university’s emergency operations plan.</i> It is not certain that canceling classes and stopping work would have decreased the number of casualties at Virginia Tech on April 16, but those actions may have done so. Lockdowns or cancellation of classes should be considered on campuses where it is feasible to do so rapidly.</p>	<p>Once again the lockdown term, already an essential element of the culture of Virginia Tech, is being avoided.</p>

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<p>Page 89 Cho may have been influenced by the two Columbine High School killers, whom he mentioned in his ranting document sent to NBC News and previously in his middle school writings. He referred to them by their first names and clearly was familiar with how they had carried out their scheme.</p>	<p>To say that Cho “<i>may have been influenced by the two Columbine killers...</i>” here is a significant understatement.</p> <p>On page 21 (Chapter III Timeline of Events) his fixation with Columbine is clear:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">1999 During the 8th grade, suicidal and homicidal ideations are identified by Cho’s middle school teachers in his writing. It is connected to the Columbine shootings this year. (He references Columbine in school writings.) The school requests that his parents ask a counselor to intervene, which leads to a psychiatric evaluation at the Multicultural Center for Human Services. He is prescribed antidepressant medication. He responds well and is taken off the medication approximately one year later.</p>
<p>Page 89 On the morning of April 16, Cho put a note on the inside of one set of chained doors warning that a bomb would go off if anyone tried to remove the chains. The note was seen by a faculty member, who carried it to the Engineering School dean’s office on the third floor. This was contrary to university instructions to immediately call the police when a bomb threat is found.</p>	<p>The panel has an obligation to be thorough and a vital question is not answered here.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Were all faculty, staff and students at Virginia Tech trained with bomb threat procedures? ▪ Were all informed to be on heightened alert during the week prior to Columbine? <p>If so the incident which took place on Saturday, April 14 at Norris Hall would have prompted an entirely different approach:</p> <p>http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/08/10/AR2007081001023_pf.html</p> <p>“Seung Hui Cho might have tried a practice run two days before the April 16 massacre at Virginia Tech, chaining an entrance of the campus building where he would later walk from room to room, methodically killing 30 people before shooting himself, investigators said Friday.</p> <p>A witness recalled seeing a man who wore a hooded sweat shirt that obscured his face lurking by the entrance to Norris Hall the morning of April 14, police said at a news conference. A second witness said one set of doors was briefly chained shut about the same time. Cho, 23, chained all three entrances during the attack two days later, slowing the police response.”</p>

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<p>Page 90 A female student trying to get into Norris Hall shortly before the shooting started found the entrance chained. She climbed through a window to get where she was going on the first floor. She did not report the chains, assuming they had something to do with ongoing construction. Other students leaving early from an accounting exam on the third floor also saw the doors chained before the shooting started, but no one called the police or reported it to the university.</p>	<p>Once again, although the chaining of the doors was suspicious, students did not take notice or report it since they were not on heightened alert during the anniversary week of Columbine.</p>
<p>Page 91 One student tried to wrench free the podium that was fastened securely to the floor in order to build a barricade at the door. She was unsuccessful and injured herself in the process. As Goddard called 9-1-1 from classroom 211, Couture-Nowak’s class tried to use the instructor’s table to barricade the door, but Cho pushed his way in, shot the professor, and walked down the aisle shooting students.</p>	<p>Students were not able to protect themselves since the doors had no locks. A comprehensive security vulnerability assessment would have recommended locks.</p>
<p>Page 94 The first team of five officers to enter Norris Hall after the door lock was shot were: VT Officer H. Dean Lucas (patrol) Blacksburg Officer Greg Evans (patrol) Blacksburg Officer Scott Craig (SWAT) Blacksburg Officer Brian Roe (SWAT) Blacksburg Officer Johnny Self (patrol)</p> <p>Page 95 They were followed seconds later by a second team of seven officers: VT Lt. Curtis Cook (SWAT) VT Sgt Tom Gallemore (SWAT) VT Sgt Sean Smith (SWAT) VT Officer Larry Wooddell (SWAT) VT Officer Keith Weaver (patrol) VT Officer Daniel Hardy (SWAT) Blacksburg Officer Jeff Robinson (SWAT)</p>	<p>All of these law enforcement personnel responded heroically, placing themselves into harm’s way. Commendations are in order and hopefully will be presented to them. Yet, as clearly as their names and titles are mentioned should also be all of the names of the Policy Group which are omitted in the chapters covering their involvement.</p>
<p>University Messages Page 96 At approximately 9:45 a.m., the Policy Group received word from the Virginia Tech police of a shooting in Norris Hall. Within five minutes, a notification was issued by the Policy Group and transmitted to the university community which read: <i>“A gunman is loose on campus. Stay in buildings until further notice. Stay away from all windows.”</i></p>	<p>Once again, this is essentially a lockdown.</p>

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<p>Page 96 The Policy Group did not have evidence to ensure that a gunman was or was not on the loose, so every precaution had to be taken.</p>	<p>In the very words of Vice Provost Ford, if <i>“every precaution had to be taken”</i> why did the alert and lockdown not begin immediately after the first two shootings at West Ambler Johnston Hall?</p>
<p>Page 96 So at approximately 10:15 a.m. another message was transmitted which read: <i>“Virginia Tech has cancelled all classes. Those on campus are asked to remain where they are, lock their doors, and stay away from windows. Persons off campus are asked not to come to campus.”</i></p> <p>Page 96 <i>“All people in university buildings are required to stay inside until further notice. All entrances to campus are closed.”</i></p> <p>Page 97 <i>“All students, faculty and staff are required to stay where they are until police execute a planned evacuation. A phased closing will be in effect today; further information will be forthcoming as soon as police secure the campus.”</i></p>	<p>This is unequivocally a lockdown.</p>
<p>Page 99 <i>VIII-4 Schools should check the hardware on exterior doors to ensure that they are not subject to being chained shut.</i></p>	<p>This recommendation would have taken place if a comprehensive security vulnerability assessment.</p>
<p>Page 99 <i>VIII-5 Take bomb threats seriously. Students and staff should report them immediately, even if most do turn out to be false alarms.</i></p>	<p>This recommendation does not adequately emphasize the importance of training for the entire educational community.</p>

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FINAL THOUGHTS

The Virginia Tech tragedy of April 16, 2007, just days prior to the eighth anniversary of Columbine, was preventable. These senseless deaths and injuries remind all Americans of the current culture of violence throughout our schools, communities, workplaces and campuses. Compounding this violent culture is a crisis of leadership characterized by the myriad of government, corporate, educational and faith-based scandals throughout the United States.

These heartbreaking events are a sad example of the collision of the culture of violence with the crisis of leadership. The only response is that we must once and for all dedicate ourselves to do all within our power to prevent these senseless killings.

Over the past decade, many school violence prevention resources have been made available and yet we have failed to put these lessons learned into practice. It is my hope that our leaders are held accountable, that justice is served, and that schools and campuses throughout our nation cultivate a transformational leadership that prevents future acts of violence.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vincent J. Bove". The signature is written in dark ink and includes a small circular mark at the end of the last name.

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October 2007

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