

HANCOCK CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

SAFETY AND SECURITY REVIEW, AUDIT AND ASSESSMENT



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PLANS, PARTICIPANTS AND DRILLS

Planning is a critical element when looking to address Emergency Management Operations. All school districts in New York State are mandated to have written plans and review and update them annually. These plans are required to be kept on file, submitted to the NYS Police and filed with the NYS Education Department. There are numerous resources available to assist in this endeavor. State and Federal agencies, private organizations and county emergency agencies can assist. The regional BOCES, (Board of Cooperative Educational Services) that covers a district typically has resources that can be utilized.

Guidance is provided by many of these resources as to who should be included on planning teams. Critical school staff is utilized in positions that will enhance planning and response. As such, you will typically see a member of the Business office acting in a position handling Finance on the Incident Command team. The remainder of the team will be cultivated from similar positions to the duties they provide to the District on a daily basis. The Hancock Central School District follows this model. A review of the updated plan shows the Superintendent as the Public Information Officer. This is a critical role in disseminating details of an event to the public in a timely and coherent manner. The most recently hired administrator in the District, Julie Bergman, has been appointed Incident Commander. This is a new role to her, and she expressed a positive outlook and will bring good skills to the position. There are a couple of other positions that have changed hands in the past couple of years due to retirements. Knowing that there is an upcoming meeting of this team, it will insure that the necessary duties of each position are passed on to the new Command Staff members. Those remaining positions are held by the appropriate individuals and have the requisite skills to deal effectively with any emergency situation. An area of concern in any district is to have good back-ups in place in the event the designated individual is not available. This can happen due to a number of reasons and should be considered in any future plan updates.

Regular updating of plans is a necessary function. People change positions and other circumstances change that can impact existing procedures. The HCS updates all of the plans on an annual basis as required. Functional and Hazard Annexes should also be reviewed each year. One very good practice is that the District conducts tabletop exercises annually. This is a good practice. These drills are conducted with local law enforcement and BOCES Health and Safety staff. These individuals are well versed in these drills and bring a level of professionalism to the District that is beneficial to the overall goals. In addition, the District practices the response actions through drills with student involvement also. There have been multiple scenarios and obstacles implemented to get a better value out of these practice events.

FACILITY SPECIFIC HAZARDS AND RESPONSES

be tied to this system and an instant lockdown would occur. However, there are drawbacks to this. Anyone in the hallways when the system were to be activated would have nowhere to go. Another potential solution would be to install locks that are operated by a fob in the possession of the staff member in the room. They would activate the lockdown of the door upon notification. This is a good solution however it carries a large cost per door. The most inexpensive method to secure the doors quickly would be to keep all doors locked all the time. Then, even if the doors are blocked open, which typically is a fire code violation, they could be quickly closed and locked with little effort and time.

Another area of concern that again is typical in most schools, and many buildings in general, is the use of full glass doors. These doors are an open invitation to intruders. By simply breaking the glass, a person could gain access by crawling through the opening or by reaching in and striking the exit device, which would open the door. These exit devices are code compliance issues and must be on all exterior doors. There are multiple potential solutions. Bullet resistance glass and film are two potential solutions. Glass is costly. It is also not perfect. Higher caliber guns and multiple impacts can cause the glass to fail. Film also carries a price and does not provide as much security as the glass. As discussed in the recommendations, there are screens available that provide a high level of security. They can have graphics applied like the Wildcat head or any other chosen by the District. These panels provide a high level of protection against unauthorized entry. If constructed and applied properly, they can be shot at multiple times and battered and they will continue to provide security.

Camera systems play an important role in any security system. Having the cameras monitored is an additional level of security that the District has instituted. This is a good practice. Recording of the cameras is also very important. During the interview process, it was determined that not all cameras were utilizing recording capabilities. This should be explored further. It was also determined that there are at least three exterior areas that are not viewed by the current cameras. The basketball court area, athletic fields and the visitor parking area at the Elementary School are not monitored. Consideration should be given to adding the number of cameras to cover these areas. Inside of the buildings also have some limitations. Areas near the Middle High School library are not covered. This too should be rectified. ***Camera's were added in the Capital Project 2019.**

Technology also plays a critical role in Emergency Planning. With the advances in systems design, many different alarm, camera and locking mechanisms can be built into one, dedicate alarm system. Currently, the systems do not work together in the Hancock Schools. Additionally some of the systems are not yet utilized. As future plans for a capital project are

PARTNERS AND THE COMMUNITY

The District maintains a good relationship with the Hancock Fire Department, a volunteer organization that covers all facilities owned by the District. They provide Ambulance Services also. As in most small communities in NYS, many of the volunteers are the same ones who can be found in the buildings and on the fields daily. This provides a level of response that is critical in an emergency situation.

Law enforcement is provided by the Hancock Police Department. They can be seen on the grounds and in the buildings during the school day and on weekends during events. This helps reinforce the relationship with the school community. The District also benefits from the visits by the Delaware County Sheriff's Deputies and NYS Troopers. Again, this helps to foster positive relationships between all of the agencies. In the event of a major incident, these relationships are critical to providing support and will help in restoring academic programs in a timely manner. The District has discussed the potential of employing a School Resource Officer. ***Budget Issue at this time. With COVID money needed to go into student related resources.** This would provide an additional level of support from law enforcement. Having a sworn officer in the school on a daily basis provides many benefits. Student/Police relationships are one of those. Providing liaison services between the District and the Department adds an additional level of awareness and preparation.

An often overlooked resource in emergency planning and response is the local community. Citizens are often knowledgeable of what is occurring in the Village long before the School ever knows. And sometimes those events can spill over into the School. Good relationships can foster good communications in both directions. Superintendent Dougherty provides numerous updates to the community through press releases. This is a good process that builds trust. Soliciting feedback from the community will further this endeavor. And in the event of a community emergency, the school can be a beneficial partner. Emergencies in the Village will impact the operations at the School. To ensure continuity in the operations of the District, community relationships are important. ***This continues to be a strong suit of the Superintendent and the District.**

Mental health awareness can also play an important role in recovery efforts once the incident has been brought under control. Whether it is injuries, destruction of buildings and belongings or in the tragic event of a death, mental health services will be necessary. The District has existing relationships with other schools and agencies that would be utilized if needed. A system for staff and students to make District officials aware of potentially dangerous situations should be made available. ***Additional Mental Health resources were employed by the District.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

This is a critical measure of security in schools today. All visitors should be directed through a common point of entry. This provides better control. It is understood



RECOMMENDATIONS

The system has been used in at least one other District when the Police, Fire and Emergency Personnel were extremely helpful in the design and implementation. While it is a unique approach, it is one that can be a tremendous resource once an individual is in the facility.

There are code compliance issues that need to be carefully addressed. The Architect that is employed by the District has experience in this as they provided the design documents and specifications to bring this system to installation.

7.) Communications Systems

The existing telephone system is in need of replacement. This has been identified by other facility analysis reports. It is currently under consideration for replacement in a future capital project. ***Replaced in 2019.**

It is recommended that this system be replaced and a system that is capable of being integrated with the Public Announcement system be investigated. In doing so, a system that allows remote access and other benefits could afford an extra level of benefit for emergency responders. There are systems that are available that allow phones to be utilized similarly to cell phones once they leave the property. This is a useful tool in the communications during an emergency.

Portable Radios should also be added. All of the facilities staff, custodial and maintenance, should be issued a radio. While there is use of multiple channels this should be reviewed for additional advantages available. ***Additional radio's were purchased.**

8.) Mental Health

The District should consider aggressively pursuing additional Mental Health resources. These should be a combination of internal staff resources, and the addition of position(s) to effectively deal with the ever increasing issues that result in behaviors that are unacceptable in the school setting. This may also require the use of addition resources from the county and other outside agencies. ***This has been done.**

9.) Additional Cameras

During the interview process, it was explained by some of the individuals that there are areas of the facilities that lack coverage. Vandalism and inappropriate behaviors could be investigated and reduced by having a view of these vulnerable areas. The

RECOMMENDATIONS

While preventing the ability of an individual with weapons to gain access to the facilities is the most important goal, having a way of stopping the person from committing destruction and harm is paramount. A properly trained and armed School Resource Officer is recommended.

This recommendation would take further design in cooperation with the Hancock Police Department. There are national programs that assist in training and guidelines for Districts and Law Enforcement Agencies to provide successful results. The duties of an SRO can be highly visible and afford community relations that develop a common bond to ensure a safe and welcoming atmosphere in the schools.

13.) Vehicle Traffic during Response Action

During an emergency, access to the facilities must be controlled. The District should consider a way to prevent access to the property at the entry points. Police agencies may have many other obligations or response actions and should not be expected to monitor points of vehicular and foot traffic.

A system of utilizing staff to assist in this need should be considered. While in a small district there are few staff members who are available to help, there are also limited points that should be closed off to all but emergency traffic until otherwise determined.

14.) Training

The District provides staff with many training opportunities. There are regular scheduled meetings of the Incident Command Team including tabletop exercises. Members of the team know what they are responsible for and how to perform those duties.

There are some changes in the team recently due to new staff being hired. Training should be provided as soon as practical so that if an emergency were to occur, they would have the necessary training. Further, the District should consider providing the team with additional FEMA trainings such as ICS 100 for Schools or the newly implemented Multi-Hazard Emergency Planning for Schools (G362). This is a new course released recently and will provide additional tools for the members to utilize. There are other opportunities provided by state and federal agencies. The District's insurance carrier also has training available.

15.) Second Shift and Weekend Concerns

STUDY PARTICIPANTS AND RESOURCES

The following individuals provided assistance and support during the process of developing this study:

Terrance Dougherty, Superintendent of Schools

Jenn Gill, Senior Account Clerk

Sharon Drumm, Retired Secretary to the Superintendent of Schools

Paul Bartholomew, Director of Facilities *Jodi Newman

Lori Asquith, Middle High School Principal

Julie Bergman, Director of Pupil Personnel

Jodi Newman, Head Bus Driver, (Shared with Deposit Central Schools)

Tammi Wadson, Secretary to the High School Principal (Now to Superintendent)

Jennifer Brock, Elementary School Secretary

Jalene Allen, BT BOCES Management Information Technology Consultant

Resources from numerous sources were reviewed for this study. They included State and Federal agency websites for school safety.

NYS SED Facilities Planning

Safe Schools Web Site

FEMA Training Site

NYS Homeland Security and NYS Police

Hancock Central Schools Website, Emergency Plans, Board Policies

BOCES IT Disaster Recovery Plan

NYS Governor's Safe School Initiative

NYS Homeland Security and Emergency Services

Utica National Insurance Company
