

White Paper on Safe and Secure School Initiative

By

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Introduction to the Organizations

The Door and Hardware Institute is a 501-C6 membership association founded in 1975 with a core purpose to advance life safety and security of the built environment throughout North America. DHI represents the architectural openings trade, a 6 billion dollar industry, with more than 5,000 members. Membership consists of individuals, consultants and corporations involved in the writing of architectural specifications, and the manufacturing and distribution of products (doors, frames, locks, architectural hardware, and access control) in all commercial buildings. DHI is uniquely devoted to the interests of the door and hardware industry with its professional certifications, publications, lobbying, and educational programs.

The Foundation for the Advancement of Life Safety and Security, formerly the Door and Hardware Institute Education Foundation, is a 501-C3 organization whose mission is to create a safer built environment by informing interested parties, through research and education, the important role that the architectural opening plays in life safety and security in every building, every day. The Foundation for the Advancement of Life Safety and Security is the public educational and research affiliate of DHI.

Strategic Direction

The Foundation, in partnership with DHI (Door and Hardware Institute), is undertaking a strategic effort to substantially improve public safety and security in regards to the door opening. Our industry provides the knowledge, analysis and solutions to insure that life safety and security in architectural openings is not compromised.

Since 9/11 our country has become intensely focused on security. Often when facility managers have taken steps to increase security in the buildings' doorways they have done so at the compromise of life safety- a dangerous trend. This is due to a lack of knowledge and comprehensive understanding of the applicable building codes which govern the opening as well as product application and capability. The result can often be disastrous whereby the doorway may be more secure but does not provide the intended egress which ensures life safety.

Furthermore, since events such as the shootings at Columbine High School and Virginia Tech, society has become concerned for the safety of our children in schools. Accordingly, schools are faced with complicated life safety and security issues like never before. Administrators, principals, teachers, parents, educational facility managers and school designers are faced with addressing the demand for security solutions every day. Of course, school life safety is a problem that requires sound psychological solutions as well as effective physical security solutions.

As noted in an article written by Dave Kopel, entitled *Defending Our Schools*, and published on the NRA-ILA web site (1/11/07) he states "Solving the problem of isolated school shootings isn't a task easily determined in just a few days, weeks or even months. Yet any dialogue on how to better protect our children in schools would be an all-encompassing one that considers a variety of strategies. One thing is certain--our children are worth protecting, whether at home, school or anywhere else. Determining how to keep them safe should be a priority for all Americans."

The psychological solutions are complicated and rapidly changing, making them difficult to address. Fortunately, physical security changes are readily available within existing products, technology and design and can make an impact. A paradigm shift needs to take place by putting a greater importance on the architectural opening (doorways) and the significant role these products play in improving life safety and security through specification design, product implementation and ongoing maintenance. Every school uses doors and hardware, but few are designed to take FULL advantage of the immense role these products can play in creating safer learning environments for our children.

In 2007, the Door and Hardware Institute through their efforts to influence building codes and standards, was successful in adding a requirement to the 2007 Edition of NFPA 80 Standard for Fire Doors and Other Opening Protectives, for the periodic inspection, by knowledgeable individuals (our industry), of fire door assemblies. In 2008 we were able to expand that requirement into NFPA 101, The Life Safety Code, to require inspections of doors which provide safe egress in the following occupancies: educational facilities, day care and rooms of assembly. Over time this will enable our industry to work with the building community to correct existing problems and to begin to offer better solutions for the balance of life safety and security. However, this is not enough to convince our nation's school systems that our products and solutions can play a role in limiting the impact of campus shootings.

Unfortunately to date, during the process of maintaining existing schools or designing new schools, the life safety and security features that doors and locks provide tend to be overlooked as to the crucial role they can play. This results in: designs which do not take advantage of simple life safety and security solutions; costly and unnecessary changes during the life of the building; and band-aid solutions which satisfy only an emotional response.

In the study produced by a Virginia Tech Review Panel appointed by Governor Timothy M. Kaine in an effort to respond to the terrible events of April 16, a recommendation is offered by the Panel in regards to improving the security infrastructure of Universities across the country. Emergency Planning Recommendation II-1 states, "Universities should do a risk analysis (threat assessment) and then choose a level of security appropriate for their campus. 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."

The Virginia Tech Report addresses doors and locking systems and specifically noted that in regards to Virginia Tech "most classrooms, such as those in Norris Hall, have no locks. Staff offices generally do have locks, including those in Norris Hall". It further states that "some universities have locks on classroom doors, but they typically operate by a key from the hallway. They are intended to keep students and strangers out when they are not in

use and often cannot be locked from the inside.” This illustrates the lack of knowledge within the university systems with regards to simple solutions. A report generated after the Columbine event noted the use of classroom function locks, which enable teachers to lock the doorways from inside the classroom, resulted in saved lives. These “classroom function” locks have been in the market for quite some time and illustrate the need for our industry to be working closer with universities to properly secure their campuses with simple solutions.

The VT Report also addressed “lockdowns” noting that they are not always feasible. However, there are sophisticated systems in place that can provide workable solutions to produce an effective lockdown.

The Future

The Door and Hardware Institute and the Foundation for the Advancement of Life Safety and Security are in the process of developing relationships with interested parties to create coalitions that address school security. One key objective of the coalition will be to advance the awareness of effective solutions that are available with physical security, and to support the concept of audits to assess the appropriate life safety and security strategies for schools.

As DHI has spent the last year and a half participating in meetings on Capitol Hill, it is clear that our legislators are searching for solutions at the federal and state level as well. We have had numerous conversations with the leadership who are searching for a response. Limited legislation has been offered. For instance, S.1217 and companion bill HR. 2353 attempt to address funding for school audits from the federal government. We understand that there has also been some legislative efforts at the state level to require locks in schools. This is a start, and DHI would like to participate in developing legislation to address avenues for physical security improvements as well.

Furthermore the Foundation is working with the State of Virginia on educating school facility and security personnel on the role security products can play. We are hopeful that this effort can be duplicated throughout our country.

Wayne LaPierre, NRA Executive Vice President stated in an article entitled *It's Time to Take Our Place* (NRA-ILA of January 11, 2007), "For almost a decade, ever since the mass shootings at Columbine High School, NRA leadership has been challenged to join the debate about safety in American schools. Until now, NRA has rightfully declined because no effective solution to school shootings includes infringement of the Second Amendment. Although tragic, these incidents called for no more anti-gun measures than any other crime committed with firearms."

There is no simple solution, but our industry offers workable effective solutions which must receive national attention.