



Campus Cops Corner

-Public Safety Tips for the PPCC Community-

Important Numbers & websites:

- 24-7 Emergency Number: 502-2911
- Emergency Alert Sign Up: www.ppcc.edu/alert

Public Safety Bi-Weekly Newsletter

This past week, news headlines displayed a number of disturbing stories:

1. Mentally Ill Man Kills Pastor During Illinois Service, (3/8/09).
2. Gunman Kills 10 in Alabama (3/11/09).
3. 16 Die in Rampage at German School (3/11/09)

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“Situational Awareness,” “Fight, Flight or Freeze” and “What If ..?”

We are traditionally taught that humans respond in fight or flight fashion when faced with incidents such as these. Psychologist David Grossman, a well-respected author who specializes in the study of the psychology of killing, argues that too often we actually freeze rather than fight or flee.

In the Illinois church shooting, two alert parishioners quickly subdued the killer before he could hurt many others. Admittedly, not everyone has the mindset or capability to respond in that fashion. Tim Kretschmer, 17, is accused of killing several students at his former school in Germany. He reportedly entered one classroom and shot five students, and then another where he shot four more. As he stepped into the hallway to reload, a teacher alertly locked the door. As Kretschmer tried to reenter that door, he found it locked. Although he tried to shoot it open, he was unsuccessful (NY Times / Der Spiegel).

Although the suspect in the Alabama tragedy apparently targeted members of his own extended family first, his victims soon became random as he fled the areas of his crimes and drove through the community. The suspect in the German school shooting also fled the scene and continued his rampage throughout the town. In both cases, unsuspecting victims became additional casualties.

In the aftermath of many of these tragedies, surviving witnesses often express denial toward the initial signs that something bad was happening, i.e., thought it was a joke or fireworks, etc. I encourage you to be situationally aware, think ahead and play what if? Where is the nearest exit? Is there a back door? How can I defeat that window? Am I prepared to take aggressive action if necessary? Is that even an option?

Even in the absence of proof, trust your instincts. If something doesn't feel or look right, take steps to insure your safety. It can be as simple as waiting for the next elevator, crossing the street rather than walking by that person coming toward you, or asking a store clerk for an escort to your car.

Despite the headlines, statistics tell us that schools remain a relatively safe place. None the less, simple preventative measures exercised at home, work and around town can help insure your safety.