



**MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT  
AT VIRGINIA TECH:  
THE FIRST DECADE**

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MANAGING PARTNER



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www.SIGMATMA.com

 **GENE DEISINGER, PH.D.**

**SIGMA Threat Management Associates**

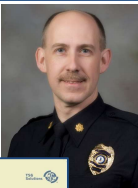

- Managing Partner / Co-Founder
- Virginia Center for School & Campus Safety**
- Threat Management Consultant


**Education, Training & Certifications:**


- Ph.D., Counseling Psychology;
- Licensed Psychologist (IA);
- Certified Health Service Provider in Psychology;
- Certified Law Enforcement Officer (until 11/14);

**Experience:**

- Virginia Tech (Retired 11/2014)
  - Deputy Chief of Police
  - Director, Threat Management Services
- Iowa State University
  - Primary Threat Manager 1994-2009
- Lead Author:
  - *The Handbook for Campus Threat Assessment & Management Teams (2008)*






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 **AGENDA**


**Agenda**


- Overview of the Mass Casualty Incident at Virginia Tech
- Lessons Confirmed and Learned
- Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management (BTAM) in the United States

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**MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT:  
Virginia Tech  
April 16, 2007**


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 **VIRGINIA TECH: APRIL 16, 2007**


- 32 victims dead
  - West Ambler Johnson: 2
  - Norris: 30
- 17 victims wounded
- 10 physically injured
- Perpetrator suicide
- ~100 witnesses or directly impacted individuals




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**LESSONS  
CONFIRMED & LEARNED**

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**WERE WE PREPARED?**

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**LESSONS CONFIRMED & LEARNED**

**Active / Regular Training Program**

- Active threat response
  - All officers, every year
  - Collaboration with local and state agencies
  - Integrated Tactical Medics

**Preparation & Equipment**

- Breaching & Access for patrol units
- Weapons & Ammunition for patrol units
- Victim / Responder trauma care




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**LESSONS LEARNED**


**Institutional Response:**


- Institutional crisis management
  - Clarified lines of authority & reporting
- Mass casualty response plans
- Victim / family assistance center
- Media (staging & briefing)
- Mental health trauma response & recovery
  - Training & Credentialing
  - Managing on-going needs
  - Maintaining trust

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**INTEGRATION OF PROCESSES**

**Holistic Preparedness is Critical**



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**WHAT DID IT COST?**

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**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Costs:**

▪ Safety & Security:	\$11.4 Million
▪ Legal Settlement:	\$ 7.8 Million
▪ Campus health/wellness:	\$ 7.4 Million
▪ Facilities/Equipment:	\$ 6.4 Million
▪ Legal/Records Retention:	\$ 5.1 Million
▪ Family Services:	\$ 2.7 Million
▪ Communications:	\$ 2.5 Million
▪ Federal grants:	\$ 3.6 Million
▪ Other Operational:	\$ 3.2 Million
▪ Investigation by VSP:	\$ 531,000
▪ Review Panel:	\$ 465,000
▪ Autopsies:	\$ 69,650
	<b>\$47.6 Million</b>



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**HOW EFFECTIVELY DID WE  
COMMUNICATE:  
DURING THE CRISIS?**

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**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Multi-Modal Emergency Notification System**

- Phone
- SMS text messaging
- Email
- Digital display boards
- Desktop alerts
- Website
- Outdoor warning systems (siren & voice)
- Social media

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**LESSONS LEARNED**

**Outreach / Training about Incident Survival**

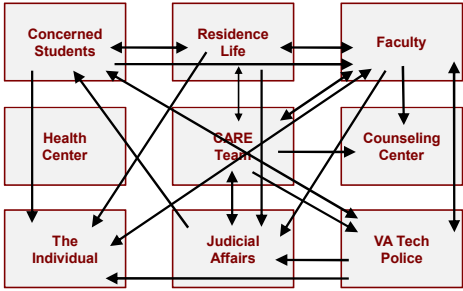
- Maintain situational awareness
  - Prepare
  - Monitor
  - Respond
- Adapt to needs of situation
  - Escape / Run
  - Evade / Hide
  - Engage / Fight
- Comply with law enforcement

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**HOW EFFECTIVELY DID WE  
COMMUNICATE:  
BEFORE THE CRISIS?**

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**COMMUNICATION**



SOURCE: OIG Report #140-07: Investigation of the April 16, 2007 Critical Incident at Virginia Tech. Prepared by: Office of the Inspector General for Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services – Commonwealth of Virginia

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**LESSONS LEARNED**


**Changes at Virginia Tech:**

- Create a Threat Assessment Team.
- Expand case management capacity.
- Improve communications across university systems

Source: Blythe, 2007; Hyatt, 2007; & Niles, 2007. Presidents Internal Reviews: Reports of the Working Groups

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**BEHAVIORAL  
THREAT ASSESSMENT & MANAGEMENT  
IN THE UNITED STATES**

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**HAVING A TEAM IS NOT ENOUGH**

**Organizations must have a systematic process that:**

- Utilizes an effective multi-disciplinary approach;
- Enables centralized awareness of developing concerns through active outreach programs & consultations;
  - Capable of addressing all threats & hazards;
- Facilitates a thorough & contextual assessment;
- Implements proactive & integrated case management;
- Monitors & re-assesses case on a longitudinal basis;
- Conducts all practices in accordance with relevant laws, policies, and standards of practice;

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**A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:**


**Utilizes an effective & relevant  
multi-disciplinary approach  
to address all threats**

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**THREAT ASSESSMENT TEAM**

**Multi-Disciplinary Involvement by:**

- Academic Affairs / Provost / Graduate College
- Human Resources
- Police / Security / Local Law Enforcement
- Residence Life
- Student Affairs / Dean of Students
- Student Health / Student Counseling
- University Counsel
- Key Gatekeepers / “Boundary Spanners”

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**ADDRESS ALL THREATS**

**Perpetrator’s Affiliation:**

▪ Student:	60%
• Current: 45%	
• Former: 15%	
▪ Employee:	11%
• Current: 6%	
• Former: 5%	
▪ Indirectly Affiliated:	20%
▪ No known Affiliation:	9%




Source: U.S. Secret Service, U.S. Dept. of Education, & Federal Bureau of Investigation (2010). *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education*.

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**HAVE A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:**

**Enables centralized awareness  
of developing concerns through  
an active outreach program  
& consultative process**

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**A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:**

**Facilitates a thorough & contextual assessment**

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**CONTEXTUAL ASSESSMENT**

**Violence is the product of an interaction among four factors:**

- S** The **subject** who may take violent action;
- T** Vulnerabilities of the **target** of such actions;
- E** An **environment** that facilitates or permits violence, or does not discourage it; and,
- P** **Precipitating events** that may trigger reactions.

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**A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:**

**Implements proactive & integrated case management plans**

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**A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:**

**Conducts all practices in accordance with relevant laws, policies, and standards of practice**

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- WHAT LAWS / RULES MAY APPLY?**
- Educational privacy laws
  - Personal privacy laws
  - Medical record privacy laws
  - Disability laws and regulations
  - Freedom of information / Open-records laws
  - Institutional Policies
    - General
    - Student and staff conduct
    - Academic governance
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**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

***Campus Threat Assessment and Management Teams: What Risk Managers Need to Know Now***

Jeffrey J. Nolan, J.D.,  
Marisa R. Randazzo, Ph.D., &  
Gene Deisinger, Ph.D.

University Risk Managers  
& Insurance Association  
(URMIA) Journal, 2011

Free download:  
[www.sigmatma.com/images/NolanRandazzoDeisinger\\_CampusThreatAssessmentTeams\\_FINAL\\_20110802.pdf](http://www.sigmatma.com/images/NolanRandazzoDeisinger_CampusThreatAssessmentTeams_FINAL_20110802.pdf)



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**ANSI RECOMMENDED RESOURCES**



Available for purchase at:  
[www.tgsinc.com](http://www.tgsinc.com)



Free download at:  
[www.threatassessment.vt.edu](http://www.threatassessment.vt.edu)

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**INFORMED BY RESEARCH & PRACTICE**




Available at:  
[rems.ed.gov/EOPGuides](http://rems.ed.gov/EOPGuides)  
Released: 6/18/13

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**A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS THAT:**

**Adapts to challenges  
& changing needs**

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**GROWING/FUTURE CHALLENGES**

**Lone Actor Terrorism / Violent Extremism**

- Domestic & international influence
- Social media / contagion effect
- Modify tactics
- Targets of availability

**Considerations:**

- Community engagement
- Collaboration & partnership
- Full Emergency Preparedness



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**WHAT ELSE COULD HAPPEN?**

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**POST INCIDENT THREAT MANAGEMENT**

**Increased hostility, harassment or threats to persons resembling suspect.**


- Encourage senior leadership to make strong statements of support for respect and civility
- Encourage timely reporting of developing concerns
- Have security and leadership interact with and engage with community

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**POST INCIDENT THREAT MANAGEMENT**

**Increased attention from persons who want to feel part of situation**

- High volume of contact from those (near and far) with altruistic desire to help
  - Prepare for receipt, cataloging & preservation of gifts, resources, memorials

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**POST INCIDENT THREAT MANAGEMENT**

**Increased attention from persons who want to feel part of the situation**

- Dignitary visits and attention

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**POST INCIDENT THREAT MANAGEMENT**

**Increased attention from persons who want to feel part of situation**


- Expect persons with significant mental health issues
  - delusional attempt to relate incident to their lives & infer meaning from incident
  - correspondence or communication that will be odd, disturbing or possibly threatening
  - increased risk of attention-seeking, symptoms, self-injury and/or suicidality
- Those who believe incident is a hoax

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**POST INCIDENT THREAT MANAGEMENT**

**Increased attention from persons who identify with the identified perpetrator(s)**

- May identify with subject's:
  - Grievances
  - Tactics/Methods
  - Outcomes

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