

## **SUN SENTINEL - Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, February 14, 2018**

On December 28, 2018, the **Sun Sentinel** published an article entitled, “**UNPREPARED AND OVERWHELMED.**” It pointed out deficiencies in the law enforcement response, preparedness of the school district and other flaws that contributed to the carnage at the hands of Nikolas Cruz. A link to the full article appears below. Our summary focuses on some of the measures and concerns which we have written about in the past, which should be considered as institutions consider their response to the “***active shooter***” threat.

<http://projects.sun-sentinel.com/2018/sfl-parkland-school-shooting-critical-moments/#nt=oft09a-2gp1>

### **Need for “Hard Corners” and Concealment Within Classroom/Office Space**

The excerpt below speaks to understanding the need for concealment within “***areas of refuge.***” Shooters generally take the path of least resistance, looking to maximize the number of people they can engage in the shortest period of time. They often bypass locked doors and don’t shoot into areas they can’t see in. “***Hard Corners***” are simply areas out of the line of sight of the gunman. They can be corners of classrooms/offices, closets, bathrooms or blinds covering windows. They cost virtually nothing other than foresight.

Cruz stalks the first floor unchallenged. He enters no classrooms and shoots through the windows at people in his line of sight.

Cruz kills six students in these classrooms — Alyssa Alhadeff, Nicholas Dworet, Alaina Petty, Helena Ramsay, Alex Schachter and Carmen Schentrup.

The simplest of security measures could have saved lives. But the school district failed to require that classrooms have designated “hard corners” — areas where students could hide outside the line of sight of a gunman looking through a doorway.

Two security experts had advised Stoneman Douglas teachers and administrators to designate these safe spaces, but only two teachers in Building 12 did so. Most classroom corners that could have provided refuge were instead blocked by teachers’ desks and other furniture.

The below excerpt notes the training and situational awareness of some of the teachers who understood the “***Hard Corner***” concept and the benefit of concealment. While Cruz fired into some of the classrooms, his inability to identify targets resulted in no one being hit.

## Saved on the second floor

Cruz heads up the west stairwell to the second floor but finds the hallway empty.

Some teachers, probably hearing gunfire below, had taken steps to protect the children. They had covered the windows in classroom doors so a shooter could not see in. Some huddle children away from the gunman's line of sight.

Cruz fires into two of 10 rooms, but no one is hurt.

The excerpt below reviews the effectiveness of an institution's **"lock down"** procedure. It's important to understand that students, faculty members, etc., will be in transition and need access to safe spaces other than classrooms which may already be locked. Restrooms, lounges, closets, etc., can provide an **"area of refuge."** Chaos is a byproduct of any critical incident. People will panic, especially when there has been no prior planning or training. Established procedures and drills can minimize this.

## Locked classroom, nowhere to hide

Students on the third floor are initially unaware there's a shooter in the building and are crowding the hallways because of the fire alarm. Now hearing the shots, they begin to run back toward classrooms.

Social studies teacher Ernie Rospierski directs students back into classrooms, but his door locks behind him with his keys inside.

Rospierski and several students are stranded in the hall.

The excerpt below illustrates the reality of any **"lockdown"** procedure. People will get caught in transition and individuals, such as Scott Beigel, will expose themselves as they seek to save others. It also underscores why some schools have developed a hard and fast rule to **"lockdown"** the classroom as soon as the alarm is sounded. That said individuals, especially those like teachers and nurses who view their roles as **"protectors,"** will often take initiative in an effort to save others.

## Vulnerable on the third floor

Cruz goes **up the stairwell to the third floor**, where about 20 people remain stranded in the middle of the hallway.

He fires multiple rounds into the crowd.

Geography teacher **Scott Beigel** is holding open his classroom door. As he ushers students in, Cruz shoots and kills him.

The excerpt below exemplifies the need for additional areas of refuge beyond the classrooms. As classroom doors are locked, people will be trapped in hallways.

## Restrooms locked, students can't escape gunman

An earlier decision to lock restrooms because students were vaping in them now traps those who try to find refuge on the third floor.

They have nowhere to hide from Cruz and his bullets.

Cruz kills senior **Meadow Pollack** and freshman **Cara Loughran** outside a locked classroom; they die huddled together. Cruz shoots senior **Joaquin Oliver** outside a locked bathroom.

The excerpt below illustrates the benefit of bullet resistant glass and hardened enclosures. Modifying existing areas with bullet resistant materials will provide for a more secure area.

## Protected by hurricane glass

Unable to get into the stairwell, Cruz heads to a nearby teachers' lounge.

Cruz shoots at the glass, targeting students and teachers as they flee across the campus below, but the glass won't break and no one on the ground is hit.

The excerpt below serves as a note that shooters have sought to escape simply by blending in with those fleeing the building, highlighting additional challenges to law enforcement.

## Cruz escapes, cops have no idea

Cruz takes off his rifle vest, drops his AR-15 in a stairwell, heads down the stairs, darts out of the building and runs across campus — all while police think he's still inside.

The last excerpt reinforces our oft noted theme that ***"You are the Help until Help Arrives."*** It took officers almost an hour to enter the final room. And this doesn't take into account how long it took to secure the school and bring in medical assets. Active Shooter and Victim Sustainability preparedness go hand in hand. Provide the training and trauma care products that will undoubtedly save lives.

## Final classroom entered

Almost an hour after the shooting began, officers enter the final room in Building 12.

