



School Safety Newsletter

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Sandy Hook Promise Releases New PSA About the Response to School Shootings

Dylan Stableford, December 11, 2017

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/sandy-hook-promise-releases-new-psa-response-school-shootings-142245523.html>

On the eve of the fifth anniversary of the mass shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., Sandy Hook Promise — an organization founded by parents of the victims of the 2012 massacre — has released another powerful public service advertisement aimed at preventing future school shootings.

The video, entitled “Tomorrow’s News,” imagines a local news report that predicts the next day’s school massacre. “I’m here at the scene of tomorrow’s shooting,” the reporter tells the audience, “where a 15-year-old will kill four children, two adults and then turn the gun on himself.”

The spot then runs through interviews with the familiar cast of school shooting witnesses: parents, teachers, students and first responders.

“When the shooting starts happening tomorrow I’ll probably just think it’s firecrackers or a car backfiring or something,” a parent says. “He told some of us that his dad kept a gun in his closet,” a classmate of the shooter says. “And he always talked about using it on, you know, the people that bullied him. Tomorrow I’ll probably say that I wish I told someone.”

“After the shooting we’re gonna feel pretty bad about picking on him,” another says. “But until then we’ll probably keep doing it because he’s pretty weird.” “Tomorrow I’ll probably point out that something seemed off with him since the beginning of the school year,” a teacher says on the faux news report.

A police officer then reveals another warning sign that will go unreported.

“Someone is expected to tell us after the shooting that the shooter has been posting on social media about doing this for weeks,” the officer says. “So how will you explain the shooting to your daughter?” the reporter asks a witness holding her young child at the end of the 90-second spot.

“Actually I won’t get to explain it to her,” the woman replies. “Because she won’t make it.”



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Sandy Hook Promise Releases New PSA About the Response to School Shooting

(Continued)

The reporter then signs off from the scene of “another shooting we’ll say we never saw coming.”

The new ad comes a year after the release of Sandy Hook Promise’s chilling PSA “Evan,” which shows how those affected by school shootings can miss the warning signs — even when they’re right in front of their eyes. Both ads were produced by New York-based advertising firm BBDO.

“We’re very much focused on what we can do to present these tragedies moving forward rather than always looking backwards and talking about what happened,” Sandy Hook Promise co-founder Nicole Hockley told Yahoo News. Hockley’s son, Dylan, was killed in the Dec. 14, 2012, massacre. “The new PSA is a continuation of our message and our mission — that we’re all able to stop a shooting from happening tomorrow by being able to take action today, and part of that taking action is knowing to recognize these signs of someone who’s at risk and then intervening, getting them the help they need.

“This video is a hard watch, it’s an uncomfortable watch, but it really pushes that message,” she added. “You hear afterwards about, oh, well, I heard that he had posted something on social media or he had been threatening students or she’s been threatening to hurt herself, so to say it after the fact is too late. It’s all about taking action now.”

In addition to “Tomorrow’s News,” Sandy Hook Promise is also releasing a new Sheryl Crow song — “The Dreaming Kind” — that was written specifically for the five-year anniversary of the shootings in Newtown. All proceeds from the sale of the single will benefit the organization.

To view the video, “Tomorrow’s Shooting,” visit: <https://www.sandyhookpromise.org/tomorrowsnews>

Sandy Hook Shooting Anniversary: How Schools Have Changed Security

Elizabeth Chuck, December 12, 2017

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/sandy-hook-shooting-anniversary-how-schools-have-changed-security-n827371>

Buzzers for the front door. Security cameras. Bulletproof glass.

These are among the physical reinforcements that have become more common in schools across the country in the five years since the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary, as more and more schools try to address security concerns.

Experts say the Dec. 14, 2012, massacre in Newtown, Connecticut — which left 20 children and six staff members dead — prompted the wave of alterations to school buildings.

"After Sandy Hook, you saw a tremendous increase in the number of buzzer systems," said Dr. Amy Klinger, director of programs and co-founder of the Educator's School Safety Network, a nonprofit that supports safer schools. By requiring that visitors be buzzed in by a receptionist or other staff member, schools say they're adding a layer of control about who can gain access.

Adding security features comes with challenges, though: They can be costly for cash-strapped schools — Klinger said the buzzer system alone can run about \$5,000 — and they can make school feel less than inviting.

"We want to always be looking at that balance between helping kids feel safe at school, and be safe at school, but not feeling like they're going to school in a prison environment," said Mo Canady, executive director of the National Association of School Resource Officers, a nonprofit for school-based law enforcement officers.

That was the goal in Newtown, where the school district demolished the original Sandy Hook Elementary out of respect for the victims. Last year, a new school opened elsewhere on the same property; Consigli Construction Co., which built the \$50 million school, has billed it as a national model for the "school of the future."

The new Sandy Hook school has a nature theme, with two "treehouse spaces" — glass-enclosed wings that jut out over the school's expansive courtyard. Inconspicuous security features, such as doors that can be easily locked from the outside or inside, bullet-resistant windows, and bioswales outside the building that absorb water for plants while also keeping visitors at a distance, are sprinkled throughout the property.

"The new building was very thoughtful and very sensitive," Matthew Consigli, president of Consigli

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Sandy Hook Shooting Anniversary: How Schools Have Changed Security (Continued)

Construction, said. "We wanted to make sure that we introduced and implemented security features that aren't readily apparent to the children."

Experts point out that structural reinforcements are only part of the solution, and in some cases, may even detract from other crucial safety measures. They urge schools to combine security equipment with other tools, like regular lockdown drills, having a school crisis team that holds meetings throughout the year, and keeping open lines of communication with local first responders.

"Many people have just pursued security equipment and hardware as a quick fix, something that's visible and tangible that they can point to to parents and local media," said Kenneth S. Trump, president of National School Safety and Security Services, a Cleveland-based consulting firm that helps schools prevent and prepare for crises. "Oftentimes, the best security is invisible."

Lockdowns, in particular, can be effective, as a shooting last month in California showed. When a gunman in the Rancho Tehama Reserve killed four people and targeted an elementary school, he was thwarted from getting into the school after staff initiated a lockdown, authorities said.

"It appears that because he couldn't make access to any of the rooms — they were locked — that he gave it up and re-entered the vehicle and then went on his killing spree and took it to the streets," Tehama County Assistant Sheriff Phil Johnston said. "So I really want to say that the quick action of those school officials, there is no doubt in my mind based on the video that I saw, saved countless lives and children."

But facility upgrades don't always stop tragedy altogether. A shooting last week in a New Mexico high school killed two children despite teachers going on lockdown and pushing a panic button as the gunman was shooting, according to local reports.

And even Sandy Hook had some physical barriers in place: The gunman, Adam Lanza, however, was able to easily breach the buzzer system there.

School safety consultants all stress that mass shootings in schools are exceedingly rare. Still, they urged administrators to focus as much on preventing an attack as to what their response would be. "The only way you're going to reduce this is training, and that training has to incorporate not only faculty, but parents," said Heidi Wysocki, co-founder of First Defense Solutions, which offers training on how to minimize casualties in active shooter situations. She cites the "Know the Signs" programs from Sandy Hook Promise, the nonprofit led by several families of victims in the school shooting, as a good guide.

While training staff members and drilling students on how to handle an attack is important, they said it shouldn't be at the expense of preparing for a more likely emergency: what to do if a noncustodial parent tries to pick up a child, for example, or if a student has a serious health emergency.

"We are doing active shooter training to the exclusion of everything else," Klinger said. "Statistically, you're probably not going to have an active shooter."

New Mexico High School Shooter Penned Eerie Online Post About 'Going Ape-s—t' Before Randomly Killing Students

Chris Sommerfeldt, December 8, 2017

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/n-m-high-school-shooter-posted-eerie-social-media-message-article-1.3686080>

The deranged gunman who killed two students at a New Mexico high school described in an eerie social media message posted just minutes before the rampage how he intended to go "ape-s--t," hold people hostage and, finally, take his own life, officials said Friday.

The killer, identified as 21-year-old William Atchinson, used to attend Aztec High School, where he fatally shot Casey Marquez and Francisco Fernandez before killing himself Thursday morning. Atchinson, who worked at a nearby gas station, detailed his plans in a disturbing message posted to an online gaming forum, New Mexico State Police Chief Pete Kassetas said during a press conference.

"If things go according to plan, today would be when I die," Atchinson posted at 6:51 a.m. — just over an hour before he went on the murderous spree. "I wait until the school buses are detected, then head on foot disguised as a student. I go somewhere and gear up, then hold a class hostage and go ape-s--t, then blow my brains out."



Mia Ray Langheim
School Intelligence
Officer

New Mexico High School Shooter Penned Eerie Online Post About ‘Going Ape—t’ Before Randomly Killing Students (Continued)

Atchinson gave no clear motive for killing Marquez and Fernandez but capped off his unsettling post: “Work sucks, school sucks, life sucks. I Just want out of this s--t.”

Atchinson ducked into a bathroom after sneaking into the school shortly before 8 a.m. There, he encountered Fernandez — who had been excused from class to go to the bathroom — and shot him dead. Atchinson then walked into the hallway where he fatally shot Marquez, officials said.

Teachers and students cowered for safety inside classrooms and bathrooms after the gunshots rang out. Atchinson proceeded to walk up and down hallways, firing at random, but no one else was injured. Within minutes of opening fire, officials believe Atchinson killed himself.

Thursday wasn’t the first time Atchinson made disturbing comments online. He was investigated by the FBI last year after he made “outlandish statements” on another gaming forum but the bureau concluded its investigation without bringing any charges after finding that Atchinson owned no guns, had no ties to suspect organizations and no apparent plans for an attack. Last month, Atchinson legally bought the Glock pistol he used on Thursday, according to officials.

Chief Kassetas said Atchinson appears to have picked his victims at random.

“They were in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Kassetas said.

Fernandez, a junior who played on the school’s football team, had dreams of going to college and was remembered as both protective and gentle.

“That man stood up for me anytime a bully got near me,” Iko Coghill, who went to elementary school with Fernandez, wrote on Facebook. “No one deserved this, and he especially didn’t.”

A candlelight vigil was held Thursday night for Marquez, who was a senior and the cheerleading captain of the school.

“I wish I could hold you and tell you I love you one more time,” Marquez’s older sister, Keane, posted on Facebook after the vigil. “We will miss you so much sweet baby sister.”

A thumb drive was found in Atchinson’s possession after the shooting and FBI officials are scouring over its contents. Kassetas would not comment on the contents but said it was “very obvious” Atchinson wanted police to find it.

Investigators said Atchinson had likely planned the attack for weeks, bringing several magazines with him in an attempt to shoot as many people as possible. Since most students were able to lock themselves in classrooms, officials said the number of people killed in Thursday’s tragedy pales in comparison to recent massacres in Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs, Texas, both of which saw dozens of people killed at the hands of gun-wielding maniacs.

New Mexico Gov. Susana Martinez said the families of Fernandez and Marquez are “absolutely broken” and decried Atchinson as a coldblooded killer.



“The fact that you carry a gun into a school with multiple magazines and start shooting at people, that to me is pure evil,” Martinez said.