

## Low-Cost Security Measures for School Facilities

*The National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities (NCEF) has developed a variety of school safety and security measures that may be implemented at little or no cost and without the use of complex technology. This document is excerpted from their document entitled, "Low-Cost Security Measures for School Facilities."*

### General

Using incident reporting data to locate trouble spots in the school and to consider alternative solutions. There are four ways to improve school security:

- Upgrading building or site features
- Adding electronic security devices
- Increasing manpower
- Improving school climate

The best solution is often a mix of two of these measures. Prepare school facilities emergency information for administrators and first responders. Include, at minimum, the following:

- A site plan that shows:
  - Surrounding streets
  - Primary and secondary access points
  - Fire hydrants
  - Power, water, gas, and communications line locations
- Reduced-size building floor plans showing:
  - Room names and numbers
  - Evacuation routes
  - Building entries and exits
  - Designated areas of refuge
  - Roof access points
  - Locations of the public address system panel and fire alarm panel
  - Sprinkler shutoff
  - Main power control panel
  - Main gas or oil shutoff
  - Oil storage tanks
  - Main water shutoff
  - Main HVAC shutoff
  - Emergency generator
  - Fire hose boxes

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### **Outside the School Building**

- Use signs, vegetation, fencing, or other methods to clearly define school property.
- Trim shrubbery and trees and relocate other obstacles such as trash containers to eliminate hiding places and provide clear lines of sight throughout school grounds.
- Prevent access to windows and roofs by trimming trees, relocating objects near the building that can be used as climbing devices, and ensuring that down spouts, covered walkway supports, light posts, and other building or site features are not scalable.
- Keep trees well trimmed if they are located near building exits, access roads, and utility wires so they don't block site access and building entry and egress in an emergency.
- Secure roof hatches, operable skylights, and rooftop equipment doors and access panels.
- Ensure that fire hydrants on and near school grounds are visible and unobstructed.
- Keep school grounds and buildings policed, and make immediate repairs to damage inside or outside the building.
- Routinely inspect exterior lighting for damage and bulb wear, and make immediate repairs.
- Fence off or otherwise enclose niches and blind spots in exterior walls that provide hiding places.
- Clearly mark and separate visitor parking.
- Keep bus and car access separated from school buildings and play areas by curbs, removable bollards, or gates that allow emergency vehicle access but keep other vehicles at a distance.
- Place traffic calming devices, stop signs, pavement markings, bumps, in parking lots and driveways.
- Give each school building a distinctive marking to help emergency responders, new students, and visitors quickly find their way.
- Clearly mark the main entry to the school and post signs on other entries redirecting visitors to the main entry.
- Ensure that the fresh air intakes for the school's mechanical systems are screened and located at least 12 feet off the ground or are otherwise inaccessible.
- Ensure that portable classrooms are adequately identified, lighted, and tied down, and that trailer hitches and tongues have been removed and access beneath them is restricted with fencing, siding, or other materials.

### **Inside the School**

- Limit the use of building entrances to one or as few as possible.
- Routinely inspect exterior doors for damage and faulty hardware, making immediate repairs.
- Install face plates at exterior door latches to prevent jimmying.
- Install fish-eye viewers in exterior doors lacking windows or sidelights to help identify those seeking entry.
- Institute strict procedures for key control.
- Ensure that internal access points between the school and joint-use facilities are limited and secure.
- Where appropriate, number or re-number doors and rooms in a logical, sequential, floor-by-floor pattern so emergency responders can locate them quickly.

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- Consider displaying room numbers on classroom windows so they are readily visible to first responders from outside the building.
- Routinely inspect all windows accessible from the street for damage and faulty hardware, and make immediate repairs.
- Ensure that all classroom windows meant to provide a secondary means of escape are in working order and are not blocked by screens, security grills, louvers, awnings, or other devices.
- Consider an all-lights-off policy for the school when it is not being used.
- If burglaries have been a problem, install motion detectors inside the school that trigger intrusion alarms and alert the police.
- Keep unoccupied rooms and spaces locked when not in use.
- Consider keeping door latches in the locked position in occupied classrooms so that in the event of a school lockdown, teachers can simply pull the doors shut.
- Keep egress paths (corridors, stairs, stairwells, and exits) clear of obstructions and flammable materials.
- Ensure that no more than 20 percent of wall space in classrooms or hallways is covered with teaching materials and artwork.
- Ensure that corridor and restroom lighting controls are protected from unauthorized use.
- Ensure that all spaces in the school requiring two exits have, in fact, two functioning exits.
- Routinely check that exit signs are visible and illuminated.
- Routinely check that fire alarms, fire extinguishers, and other fire safety components are in good working order, and that staff is trained in the use of fire extinguishers.
- Post clear and precise emergency evacuation maps in classrooms and other major building spaces and at key corridor locations.
- Ensure that all classrooms, including portables, have two-way communication with the office.
- Install a panic or duress alarm at the school reception desk and within the main office area to alert key staff.
- Use caller ID on all school phones to help identify and deter threatening callers.
- Ensure that medical supplies are locked in an observable part of the school nurse's office or health room.
- Ensure that designated areas of refuge have appropriate window and door protection.
- If the school's ventilation system has a master control, provide a shut-off switch in the principal's office.
- Ensure RF (radio frequency) communication is possible throughout the school.
- Install a battery or portable generator backup power supply for telephones and emergency communications.
- Restrict access to all rooms and spaces containing building wiring, equipment, and controls.
- Provide back-up emergency lighting in stairs, hallways, and rooms without windows.

This publication is based on selected assessment measures from the NCEF Assessment Guides, and more details are available at: [http://www.ncef.org/pubs/pubs\\_html.cfm?abstract=mitigating2](http://www.ncef.org/pubs/pubs_html.cfm?abstract=mitigating2).