

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

National Safe School Standards



As we move through 2025, the need for vigilance and preparedness remains as crucial as ever. Active shooter incidents continue to pose a significant challenge for law enforcement, even as we strive to strengthen our capabilities and response efforts. While there is no shortage of so-called “solutions” proposed by various experts, many

of these ideas tend to be divisive and fail to address the core issues that directly impact safety. It’s crucial that we, as professionals in the tactical and law enforcement community, work together to examine and implement proactive measures that can genuinely enhance safety, particularly in our schools.

A key area of focus should be the “hardening” of schools — implementing physical security measures, as well as improving school staff training on recognizing potential threats and responding effectively in high-stress situations. Additionally, we must push for legislation that establishes clear, actionable safety standards for educational institutions. One area where we all can find common ground is the need for a national standard on active shooter preparedness for schools, much like the well-established protocols for fire drills. Such a standard would ensure that all schools, regardless of size or location, are equipped to handle these tragic events as best as possible.

Of course, creating and implementing such a national standard will take time, effort and a collaborative approach. To kickstart this monumental effort, the NTOA has developed a proposal for National Safe School Standards. These nine standards address the existing gaps in safety and minimize the potential for human failure. The standards are:

1. **Safety laminate or school guard glass:** All entry/exit doors must have safety laminate or school guard glass with controlled access.
2. **Ballistic protection for classrooms:** Classrooms must be protected by a UL Level 8 ballistic door, and any adjacent side window glass must also be UL Level 8.
3. **Ballistic protection for common areas:** The library, media room, computer lab or any other large spaces must have ballistic protection like that of classrooms.
4. **Active shooter notification system:** A school-wide notification system for active shooter situations, separate from the fire alarm system, featuring blue strobes and horns.

5. **Wireless alert devices:** Individual wireless alert fobs or similar devices to initiate the alarm.

6. **IP camera access:** IP cameras with access for 9-1-1 emergency services.

7. **Actionable intelligence app:** An app that reports the location of wounded individuals and the type of injury sustained.

8. **Classroom gunshot triage kits:** Each classroom must have a gunshot triage kit. Additionally, a triage app must be available on every staff member’s phone, and all teachers must receive triage training.

9. **School resource officer (SRO) or trained armed security.**

Each of you, with your expertise and unique perspective, plays an essential role in developing local solutions that align with the larger goal. Few are as qualified as those within our tactical community to assist in shaping and establishing the foundation of a national safety plan. It is imperative that we reach out to local school districts, parent/teacher associations and command staff to build strong, cooperative relationships. Together, we can create actionable plans that enable schools to better protect themselves and respond effectively before law enforcement arrives.

It’s important to recognize that, too often, we focus solely on refining our response once the incident has occurred. While it is critical to continually improve our tactics and procedures, we also must dedicate attention to the period before law enforcement arrives — the critical time between the initial call and our response. This gap is where we can make the most impact, as timely intervention and preparedness can drastically alter the outcome of these situations. The work we do now, in this “good” time of planning and preparation, can ultimately save lives.

I strongly encourage each of you to take an active role in driving meaningful change. The challenges are complex, but our collective effort can make a profound difference in the safety and security of our schools and communities. Let’s take this opportunity to be part of the solution and work toward building a safer future for everyone, especially our children.

God Speed,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Thor Eells'.

Thor Eells
Executive Director