

HAZARD IDENTIFICATION AND VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS (HIVA)

Walla Walla County, Washington

SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Hazard Overview

It is acknowledged that various levels of school violence occur within Walla Walla County. However, this analysis is for a large-scale incident that would require response by emergency services personnel and activation of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

School violence can be defined as: a person's or group's behavior or language that causes another person to become hurt, physically or psychologically. That can include assaults (either physical fights or attacks with guns or other objects), bullying, extreme teasing, or physical or emotional intimidation (taunting or name calling, for example). Violence can be directed against students, staff, or teachers.

Violent behavior for young elementary school children primarily consists of aggressive behaviors such as kicking, hitting, spitting, or name-calling. As children grow older, behavior becomes more serious, characterized by bullying, extortion, and physical fighting. Aggressive or violent adolescents may engage in assault against other students and staff, sexual harassment, gang activity, or weapon carrying.

Examples of a large-scale incident include:

- Hostage situation threatening several individuals
- Bomb threat (where existence of a bomb has been confirmed)
- School shooting or threat of school shooting
- Bioterrorism threatening many individuals

History and Probability of Occurrence

Walla Walla County has not experienced a large-scale school violence incident.

Many of the incidents throughout the nation that involve gun violence are reflective of the culmination of other incidents that lead up to the ones involving guns.

According to the Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction, the number of 2000-01 school year weapons incidents are as follows:

PUBLIC SCHOOLS		INCIDENTS					
No. of Districts	No. Reporting	Handguns	Rifles Shotguns	Other Firearms	Knives Daggers	Other Weapons	Total
296	284 (96%)	49	20	51	1471	1135	2726

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PRIVATE SCHOOLS

INCIDENTS

No. of Districts	No. Reporting	Handguns	Rifles Shotguns	Other Firearms	Knives Daggers	Other Weapons	Total
498	232 (47%)	0	0	2	5	7	14

The statistics for weapons incidents reported by Walla Walla County school districts for the 2000-01 school year are:

School District	Handguns	Rifles Shotguns	Other Firearms	Knives Daggers	Other Weapons	Total
College Place	0	0	0	1	6	7
Columbia	0	0	0	5	1	6
Dixie	0	0	0	0	0	0
Prescott	0	0	0	0	0	0
Waitsburg	0	0	0	2	0	2
Walla Walla	0	0	0	8	3	11
TOTALS	0	0	0	16	10	26

"other weapons" includes clubs, chains, pipes, pencils, throwing stars, umbrellas, etc.

The United States Department of Education reports that forty-five percent of elementary schools reported one or more violent incidents compared with seventy-four percent of middle and seventy-seven percent of high schools during 1996-1997. Additionally fifty-six percent of the students expelled for bringing firearms or explosives to school in 1996-1997 were high school students, thirty-four percent were junior high, and nine percent were in elementary. These statistics confirm that an incident is more likely to occur at a high school, followed by junior high school and is least likely to occur at an elementary school.

Almost three out of four students reports that drugs were available at school in 1995 (Chandler, Chapman, Rand & Taylor, 1998). A *National Crime Survey Report* found that 37 percent (37%) of violent crime offenders ages 16 to 19 were perceived by their victim to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol (Whitaker & Bastian, 1991). Another survey conducted by the National Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education found that high school students who carried guns to school in 1993-1994 were 14.5 times more likely to use cocaine, nearly twice as likely to drink alcohol and three times as likely to smoke marijuana as other students. While illegal consumption or sale of drugs and

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alcohol among school children may not, in itself, be violent, such behavior often leads to violent acts.

Walla Walla County law enforcement personnel have acknowledged the presence of street gangs in county schools. The existence of these gangs and gang-related violence increases the risk of a school violence incident.

School violence incidents are random and cannot be accurately predicted. Estimation of probability is difficult. Probability of a large-scale school violence incident in Walla Walla County schools in the next 25 years is MEDIUM.

Vulnerability

A limited area or segment of Walla Walla County's population, property, commerce, infrastructure or service would be affected by a school violence incident. The vulnerability is LOW.

Risk Rating

The probability is MEDIUM and our vulnerability is LOW, so a risk rating of MEDIUM is assigned. There is moderate potential for a disaster of less than major proportions during the next 25 years. This rating warrants a modest program to prepare for, respond to, recover from and mitigate against a school violence incident in Walla Walla County. This hazard should be included in the county's emergency management training and exercise program.

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