



Schools Play Key Role in Lion Shake 2011

In Italy, every autumn, the U.S. Army Garrison Vicenza holds a large-scale civil disaster exercise called Lion Shake. The exercise tests and refines the garrison's consequence management plans and procedures in response to natural or man-made disasters. This year the exercise was led by the host nation with support provided by the garrison, and involved Vicenza Elementary and Vicenza Middle School. This rare opportunity for DoDEA schools to take center stage in an exercise simulating a major disaster, resulted from months of planning and coordination between the two schools, District Safety and Security Officer (DSSO) Pat Booker, Administration Officer Robert Johnson, the garrison command, 19 Italian agencies, and scores of volunteers.

The exercise scenario presented officials with the hypothetical release of an airborne agent when a HAZMAT truck overturned during inclement weather. The exercise required the schools to respond to three "injects" over the course of the day. The first called for a shelter-in-place. More than 700 pre-K through eighth grade students, from both schools, filed into the middle school multi-purpose room. The Exercise Inspector later praised the way elementary school principal Chris Beane and middle school principal Julio Gonzales, Ph.D., maintained communication with each other, and their respective crisis management teams, throughout the incident.



Vicenza principals confer with responders.

As the scenario unfolded, the schools received a second inject, this time requiring an evacuation. The eighth grade students boarded buses staged outside the school to simulate a mass evacuation while the younger students returned to normal instructional activities. "The kids were great," said Dr. Gonzales with pride. "We learned a lot, and the exercise gave us a chance to fine tune a few details for our individual school security plans."

A final surprise inject came near the end of the exercise when a student was reported missing. "We all went into action to locate the missing student and to practice proper procedures should this occur during a disaster," said Dr. Gonzales. At both the school and the installation level, the exercise was a success. The schools demonstrated their responsiveness in a crisis, shared information, and gained valuable insight into disaster preparedness. "There was a lot of reciprocal learning," acknowledged Dr. Gonzales. "We feel extremely well prepared now." ■



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Heavy Backpacks Are a Drag

The Department of Defense (DoD) Ergonomics Working Group recently published information in their newsletter about backpack safety for children. According to John Pentikis, Ergonomist, U.S. Army Public Health Command, incorrectly worn or over-packed back packs cause stress to growing joints and muscles. “Over time, this stress can manifest into back, neck, and or shoulder pain as well as posture problems,” he noted.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, 7,300 backpack-related injuries were treated in U.S. emergency rooms in 2006. Raising awareness in the school community about appropriate backpack use can reduce the number of injuries among children. Following are some backpack safety best practices recommended by the DoD Ergonomics Working Group:

- ◆ Backpacks should fit the physical size of the child, and, when packed, weigh no more than 10-15 percent of the child’s body weight. Refer to the accompanying chart for the specific breakdown of appropriate backpack weights.
- ◆ Items in backpacks should be distributed evenly with heavy items packed at the rear of the bag (right up against the student’s back) to lessen the stress on the spine. Use pockets to further distribute the weight.

- ◆ Adjust shoulder straps so the backpack lies snugly against the body. Use both shoulder straps and a waist strap to evenly distribute the weight and prevent the backpack from bouncing on the spine.

Backpack-related pain seems most common in middle school children carrying bags weighing up to 25 percent of their body weight, notes Mark Locke, M.D., a pediatric orthopedic surgeon, in Norfolk, Virginia. Dr. Locke adds this perspective: “In the future, children will probably carry CDs rather than books, so hopefully this will be a problem of the past.” ■

Backpack Weight Recommendations
(Weight in pounds)

Child's Weight	10%	15%	20%
50	5	7.5	10
60	6	9	12
70	7	10.5	14
80	8	12	16
90	9	13.5	18
100	10	15	20

Classroom Flip Charts Available

Classroom Emergency Protective Action Flip Charts that hang on the classroom wall to remind personnel how to respond during a crisis incident are now available. Principals may request copies for their schools by contacting safeschools@csc.com.

Substitute teachers and other educators can refer to the charts for the actions required of a classroom teacher during lockdown, evacuation, shelter-in-place, or take cover. The flip charts supplement the multi-hazard plan in the school office. ■

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Using the Bomb Threat Checklist

In most schools, there is no need for hesitation when the school clerk, secretary, or administrative assistant receives a bomb threat because all staff members know the location of the Bomb Threat Checklist and how to use it. Familiarizing office staff with the contents of the checklist and accompanying procedures enhances the confidence of school personnel that they will be able to respond effectively.

Typically, a paper copy of the Bomb Threat Checklist is posted near the phone. The checklist reminds individuals who receive a bomb threat to silently signal another school official in the office, while the recipient of the bomb threat keeps the caller on the line to gather additional information. If the school official receiving the bomb threat is alone in the office, an alert is sent to a colleague by e-mail, online messaging systems, or a text message. All schools have unique circumstances. Office staff should review the local situation to determine how to tailor procedures to the school and familiarize themselves with those procedures to respond rapidly and effectively.

As the colleague alerts responders by calling 911, or the equivalent emergency number, and sends word to the principal, the individual who received the call should remain on the line to ask questions such as:

- ▶ When is the bomb going to explode?
- ▶ Where is the bomb right now?
- ▶ What does the bomb look like?
- ▶ What will cause the bomb to explode?
- ▶ How do you know so much about the bomb?

The checklist starts with questions designed to gather information critical to protecting lives, and progresses to more specific questions designed to 1) help school officials and responders determine the credibility of the threat, and 2) assist with the subsequent investigation.

While talking with the caller, the school official should quickly scan the form and place check marks in boxes beside words that describe the caller's voice and speech, such as: calm, loud, excited, deep, distinct, nasal, or rapid. Additional clues captured by the checklist include background sounds: street noises, other voices, machinery, animals, or household noises. The type of language (i.e., well-spoken, incoherent, irrational) also offers clues to the caller's identity.

School officials seeking additional information on the checklist can start with their District or Area Safety and Security Officer. The U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) developed a guide to assist school officials in refining and updating their bomb threat response procedures. The ATF guide is available at www.threatplan.org. In addition, two sizes (4" x 6" pocket/badge size, and 6" x 7" phone-size) of the checklist are available as a PDF document from safeschools@csc.com. Although bomb threats are rare, school officials need to be prepared and take all bomb threats seriously. ■

Tips for Bomb Threat Practice

With advance coordination, the principal and school office staff members can practice using the bomb threat checklist. Here are some tips on how to practice safely:

- ✓ The principal and school secretary agree in advance on the approximate time and ensure both understand this is an exercise.
- ✓ The principal can then start the role playing exercise by calling and announcing: "Exercise, exercise, exercise, this is our practice bomb threat . . ."
- ✓ Conclude by reviewing the checklist later to see how many details the person using the bomb threat checklist was able to notice.

Occasionally practicing these procedures reduces stress during an incident, and increases the security awareness of front office staff members. ■

Arresting the Marijuana Uptick

Over the past four years, a decade-long decline in marijuana use has reversed. The new indicators of increased usage coincide with deeper scientific understanding of the harmful effects of marijuana use and evidence of effective prevention techniques.

In the 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey, researchers from the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research observed a sharp increase in 12th graders' self reports of marijuana use. These findings intensified the sense of urgency that policy makers were already experiencing due to the accepting attitudes toward drug use among 8th and 10th graders.

For the past four years, 8th graders reported greater tolerance of other students using marijuana. As students grow older, they experiment with riskier behaviors. Therefore, a decrease in disapproval of peers' marijuana use by 8th and 10th graders is a warning indicator. Historically, the lack of a stigma associated with marijuana use in 8th grade translated into wider usage by the time those same students reached 12th grade. Now that the changes in *attitude* toward the use of marijuana detected years ago have translated into *behaviors*, the increased use of marijuana is larger than anticipated.

At the same time that the increased use of marijuana is being detected, other studies are producing greater insight into why marijuana usage is harmful. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), in the National Institutes of Health, reports that regular marijuana use interferes with learning by distorting perceptions, impairing coordination, and making thinking and problem solving more difficult. In 2010, NIDA reported that chronic users experienced an impact on learning and memory that can last for days. A NIDA fact sheet also noted, "A number of studies have shown an association between chronic marijuana use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, and schizophrenia."

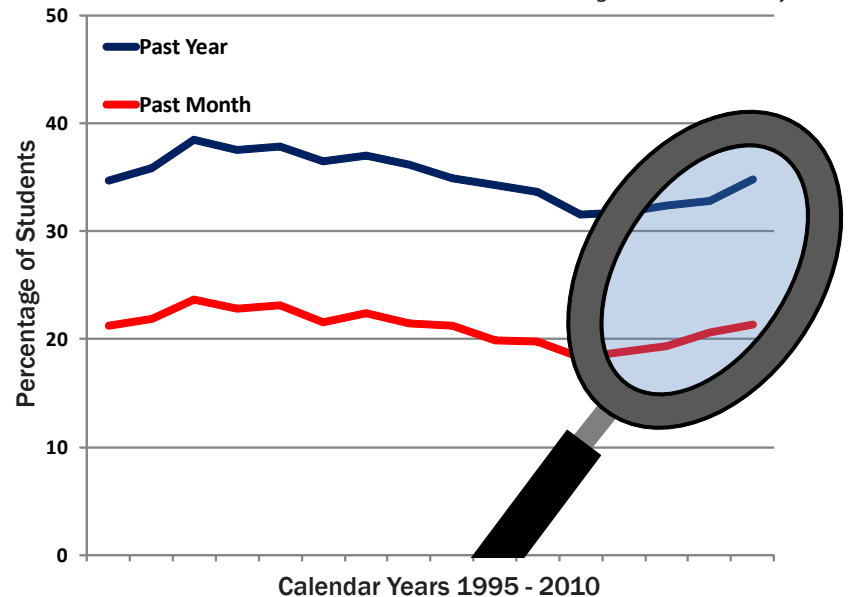
Fortunately, the studies also point to the solution: parental disapproval. Students have consistently indicated that "not wanting to disappoint their parents" was the most powerful influence in their decision not to use marijuana. Recognizing that some parents find it difficult to initiate a conversation with their child about drug usage, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) launched a publicity campaign to remind parents that they are "the anti-drug" and they have a powerful voice in helping their child protect the future by avoiding marijuana. Three parent actions that make a difference are:

- 1) Set ground rules and reinforce the message that marijuana use will not be tolerated.
- 2) Address peer pressure, and help plan how to respond if friends ask their child to use marijuana.
- 3) Provide a good example in personal behavior by not using drugs.

School administrators can help by publicizing the following resources that are available to parents at no cost. The ONDCP offers tips on how to talk to a child about marijuana, establish ground rules, and address peer pressure, at www.theantidrug.com (select topics from menu on left). NIDA offers a quiz to help parents familiarize themselves with marijuana related facts at http://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents/documents/marijuana_quiz.pdf. ■

Percentage of Students Using Marijuana

Source: 2010 Monitoring the Future Survey



Healthy Skepticism Helps Users Avoid Phishing Scams

The increasing sophistication of e-mail scams circulating on the Internet in recent months has fooled even experienced cybersecurity experts. These “phishing scams,” or e-mail solicitations previously designed to gather private information involved the same approaches used before the existence of the Internet, such as: work-at-home schemes, health/diet scams, and investment opportunities that seem “too good to be true.”

How it Works

The newer scams appear to be notices from a financial institution such as the user’s bank, a popular auction site, or a legitimate payment service. The phishing message warns that the account has been compromised or that the institution has “detected suspicious attempts to access the account.” The recipient is then asked to verify account information using an online form that opens in a new browser window, or download an attachment with further information.

Many of these messages conclude by warning recipients to report suspected scams and be suspicious of e-mail messages asking for account information. Ironically, criminals are bolstering the credibility of their hoax by warning intended victims to be wary. One recent message concluded with the line, “Thanks for your patience as we work together to protect your account.”

Why it Works

Savvy computer users have been fooled because the return address can mask the origin. Previously, computer users could use the tools in their browser to check the Internet Protocol (IP) address, but recently criminals have learned how to camouflage the IP address so it looks legitimate.

The return address for the e-mail also appears legitimate because “scripts,” or hidden computer code, redirect the message to an alternative site. An error message warning that the e-mail includes “scripts that cannot be processed” is another clue that the message might be a phishing scam.

What to Do

The safest response is to choose not to click on the attachment, nor to enter information in the window offered — especially if the form requests user name, password, or account information. If a customer service number is available for the financial institution, users should call the financial institution to check on the account status. To help the financial institution and your system administrator warn others, take a screen shot of the message and save the image.

Experts from the U.S. Computer Emergency Response Team (US-CERT), at the Department of Homeland Security, recently issued this warning regarding these types of attacks:

“The bogus site will look astonishingly like the real thing, and will present an online form asking for information like your account number, your address, your online banking user name and password — all the information an attacker needs to steal your identity and raid your bank account.”

– US-CERT Fact Sheet – “Recognizing and Avoiding E-mail Scams”



Fake messages from the “security department” asking users to enter account information have been compared to “the fox guarding the hen-house.”

The US-CERT has dedicated an online reading room to the topic of e-mail scams at www.us-cert.gov/reading_room/emailscams_0905.pdf. For additional information, including screen shots of recent scams that look like messages from legitimate banks, auction sites, and payment services, contact safeschools@csc.com. ■

Taking Gratitude Beyond the Turkey Dinner

Long before the Pilgrims sat down to a thanksgiving feast in 1621 to celebrate a bountiful harvest, writers and theologians have insisted that “counting one’s blessings” is the key to personal happiness. The Roman philosopher Cicero ranked gratitude highest among the virtues. In the twentieth century, Nobel prize winner Albert Sweitzer called gratitude the “secret to life.” The trouble with these assertions is that happiness is subjective, thus, notoriously difficult to measure. Recently, however, researchers in the field of positive psychology have begun to make progress in statistically measuring the ways gratitude improves the well-being of individuals.

The following findings from research conducted by Robert Emmons, Ph.D., at the University of California and Michael McCullough, Ph.D., at the University of Miami, indicate that science confirms what our ancestors knew intuitively; gratitude is good for us.

- ▶ In a controlled study that asked participants to keep a daily record for ten weeks of five things for which they were grateful, the study group had fewer colds and illnesses than the control group. In addition, to the surprise of researchers, they spent significantly more time exercising (1.5 hours per week) than the control group members.
- ▶ In a separate study of people living with neuromuscular diseases, the gratitude group reported getting more hours of sleep each night than the control group. They also took less time to fall asleep than their less grateful counterparts. A great deal of research has shown the positive relationship between a good night’s sleep and mood.
- ▶ Another study found that the regularity of the practice of gratitude matters. Incorporating gratitude into each day enabled study participants to respond flexibly to temporary life events. This finding was measured by surveying spouses and family members of study participants. Meanwhile, the participants who adopted only a weekly practice tended to react less effectively to life stresses.

There are many ways to cultivate gratitude in daily life. Drs. Emmons and McCullough used gratitude journaling in their studies. This involves setting aside time every day to record a list of things for which a person feels grateful. The list might include anything from celebrating a job promotion to being grateful the sun came out at lunchtime. Making time to write thank you letters to loved ones provides another means of incorporating gratitude into daily life. Others adopt a practice of offering verbal thanks a certain number of times per day to family members and colleagues.

Finally, the Oxford English Dictionary defines gratitude, in part, as “the appreciation of an inclination to return kindness.” It is no accident that grateful people are often the most generous with their time and abilities. The urge to return kindness is likely part of why gratitude makes people feel good. Finding ways to give back, through volunteering or just offering an unexpected word of thanks, increases the well-being of others and helps widen the circle of gratitude in our community. For more information about gratitude practices, contact safeschools@csc.com. For information and inspiration about volunteering, visit www.serve.gov. ■

