

Sandy Hook Mother Speaks at Fire Marshal's Massachusetts School Active Shooter Symposium

Public Safety Secretary Daniel Bennett, Undersecretary Patrick McMurray, and State Fire Marshal Peter Ostroskey, in conjunction with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), hosted the second of three one-day symposiums for school officials, fire, EMS, and law enforcement professionals yesterday. The community leaders attended in teams to learn more about establishing a proactive, integrated active shooter/hostile event response (ASHER) strategy for their school districts. It is believed that Governor Baker is the first governor to convene such a summit in the interest of school safety.

In May, the NFPA released NFPA 3000™ (PS), Standard for an Active Shooter / Hostile Event Response (ASHER) Program. Representatives from law enforcement, the fire service, emergency medical services, hospitals, emergency management, private security, private business, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Justice, and other disciplines developed this first-of-its-kind standard.

The keynote speaker was Michele Gay, a mother, and one of the founders of Safe and Sound Schools who lost her daughter, Josephine Grace, on December 14, 2012 in the Sandy Hook School shooting in Connecticut.

“We were proud to recently put forth a proposal that will allow schools to hire additional mental health professionals to increase support for our students, while also making

important security upgrades,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “We commend the school, fire and police leaders for participating in today’s important symposium and we look forward to working with everyone involved to enact our proposal to make the Commonwealth’s schools safer.”

“Sadly, Massachusetts is no stranger to acts of violence. School officials and first responders need coordinated training and tools to reduce the likelihood of such events and to be able to respond in a coordinated approach when needed to minimize harm,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Security Daniel Bennett.

“Collaboration is key to successfully identifying risks and ways to make our schools more secure,” said Undersecretary for Homeland Security Patrick McMurray.

“The unfortunate reality is that communities are increasingly faced with active shooter or other hostile events. They need a unified, proactive approach to address these incidents. NFPA 3000, the first standard around active shooter events provides comprehensive guidance to help communities, prepare, respond and recover” said NFPA President and CEO Jim Pauley.

“Schools, fire and law enforcement officials have a long history of collaboration on keeping our children safe whether it is fire prevention, school bomb threats, or personal safety. We are building on that foundation of teamwork to face this next major threat in emergency planning,” said State Fire Marshal Peter J. Ostroskey.

In addition to discussing how the NFPA 3000 Standard can be used by local communities to develop their comprehensive, cross-agency plans, there were best practice presentations on planning, prevention, response and intervention.

- The Department of Fire Services discussed how to secure classrooms in accordance with the State Fire Code and the American with Disabilities Act provisions of the State

Building Code;

- A panel discussion from the Needham Fire Chief, Police Chief and School Superintendent presented a case study on joint planning and response;
- The Northeastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) STARS Program shared their Threat Assessment Toolkit for early identification and intervention for troubled students;
- And NFPA showed how the world's first ASHER standard helps authorities work together to identify risks, undertake early intervention, respond accordingly and recover.