

Article for 6/11/14

SCHOOLS ARE ACTIVE IN PLANNING FOR EMERGENCIES

You are not alone. You are not alone. Sometimes I have to reassure myself of just that! Planning can be a boring job for some people and it can be difficult to get others to see the importance of planning -- but we don't have that issue with some of the wonderful administrators, educators, responders and officials in Madison County!

Many of us met this past week to combine our knowledge and resources to help North Zulch ISD do some planning for their campus. We are fortunate to have that same type of relationship with Madisonville CISD, also.

Knowing that school officials are taking the time and effort to effectively plan for emergencies is quite reassuring – not only for responders – but, especially for students, staff and their families.

Much too often we hear the news of a horrific incident that occurred at a school. Ask anyone around you if they have heard of Columbine, and I'm pretty sure you'll get an answer that associates that school as "the place with the school shootings". No school – or town for that matter – wants to be recognized as such a place...but it happens.

Our local school districts have greatly improved their security over recent years and toughened their accessibility for anyone to enter their facilities without being screened, video-taped, and their visit logged. Although we may get irritated when we are the parents or grandparents visiting the school, but we need to be patient and remember that everyone visiting may not have the same good intentions that we bring when we visit.

Extensive details are being considered in these school emergency plans. Many may be details that we may dread to think of, but that could save additional lives if they are in place and followed. It is through the interactions of responders and administration, and in this case with leadership from TEEX, that response plans can begin to be developed, documented, shared, exercised, and ready in the event they are needed on a small scale or a large incident.

Your local schools have plans that are constantly being updated that guide them to protect your loved ones and handle situations that we never want to see happen in our county – active shooters, bomb threats, pandemics, hazardous material incidents, and many others. Please be a responsible parent, grandparent, staff member, volunteer, or citizen and make it a point to learn about your responsibilities in the event an emergency happens. Keep your contact information up to date with the schools, read the paperwork your child brings home, be available to discuss your child's concerns, reassure them when they doubt how they should plan to handle certain situations, and remain open to the choices school administrators make when they are faced with difficult incidents. Be part of the solution, instead of part of the problem, and as always, Be Safe Out There!