



# A school bus crisis . . .

Hostage and bomb threat response

*It is more real than you think*

Moderated by Pete Japikse and Dick Caster



# Goals for today

- Acknowledge the threat
- Experience a hostage event
- Experience a bomb threat
- Understand the emergency response
- Reflect on readiness plans that districts should enact



# A new focus

- The threat of terrorism and acts of violence in schools is well known
- The threat of terrorism and acts of violence in our school buses is just now being recognized



# Recent events to note

- July 2004
  - Former school bus driver in Michigan found linked to a terrorist group
- October 2004
  - U.S. Dept of Education sends an alert to all schools about possible terrorist targeting of U.S. schools and school buses



# More headlines ...

- January 2005
  - FBI investigates mass radio thefts from schoolbuses in the Northern Pacific region of the U.S.
- February 2005
  - A school bus in South America is ambushed – 28 dead, mostly children



# More headlines ...

- March 2005
  - Joyce Gregory, a Tennessee school bus driver is shot and killed while driving her school route
  - A school bus in Miami, Florida is hijacked at gun point by two armed men



# Enough risk to take notice

- February 23, 2010
  - Transportation Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security, releases a School Bus Security Risk Assessment



# TSA's top findings:

- School buses are relatively easily obtained, through theft or hijacking
- School buses as weapons provide a high risk as vehicle borne improvised explosive devices
- As targets, school buses are highly vulnerable
- Reliance on school bus drivers alone to provide a majority of the security measures establishes drivers as the potential 'single point of failure component in the system'





# And then it happens again:

- January 29, 2013
  - Midland City, Alabama
  - A single armed suspect confront a school bus driver with students on board
  - The driver is shot and killed while protecting the children, and a kindergarten student is taken hostage.



# And again . . .

- October 17, 2013
  - Jacksonville, Arkansas
  - A suspect armed with a knife takes 11 elementary school children and their school bus driver hostage
  - After a ten-mile chase law enforcement personnel stopped the bus and took the suspect into custody.
  - No students were injured



# The specific bus threats:

- 1) Hijacking and hostage situation
- 2) Ambush
- 3) Improvised Explosive Device



# The bomb threat

- School buses are frequently left unattended for long hours
- Extra bookbags and items on school buses are not typically considered to be out-of-place
- Explosive devices are not always large and obvious!



# What is our risk?

- In Ohio:
  - 13,000 buses on the road every day
  - Travelling 1 million miles daily
  - With over 800,000 school children on board
  
  - With only the driver between the students and an ill-intentioned individual



# The 3 response options:

1. Act like an ostrich
2. Overreact
3. Study, Learn, and Plan

As educators, we are here to study, learn what we can, and plan.



# Today's exercise:

- Simulate, in a safe environment, the rescue of students and driver taken hostage on board a school bus
- Followed by actions necessary to remove the threat of a bomb on the bus.



# Special appreciation for today's event:

- Worthington City Schools,
  - Dr. Thomas Tucker, Superintendent
  - George Sontag, Transportation Director
  - Pete Scully, Principal, Kilbourne Middle school
  - Students from Kilbourne serving as today's hostages





# City of Columbus

- Columbus Division of Police
  - Lt. Paul Ohl
  - Sgt. Ron Jacobs
  - Columbus SWAT team
- Columbus Division of Fire
  - Capt. Steve Saltsman
  - Columbus Bomb Squad



Following today's presentation  
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Police and Fire Divisions



# Thank you!



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