

# PREPARING FOR THE UNTHINKABLE 1.

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It was a sunny summer morning in Pine City, and law enforcement, school officials and emergency responders were gathered to imagine a nightmare. Pine City High School held its first Active Shooter Training Exercise, putting all parties involved through a scenario depicting a shooting event and its aftermath. "It's always a good time to get everybody together to see how well we can function together when it comes time for a disaster," Denise Baran of the Pine County Sheriff's Office told the group. "Some of you have never seen each other before, others of you work every day together. "We have a scenario, a timeline to get through," she said. "We have our expectations of what we want to see. But this is why we exercise: so we can find gaps." "We really don't know how exactly it's going to unfold," Pine County Sergeant Patrick Ellstrom explained. "There's going to be some simulated gunfire. There will be loud noises. There will be guys coming into rooms fully kitted up in

armor." Roles were assigned to each of the participants in the exercise. Then Baran told them what would happen next. "The scenario is... Today, at 9:02 a.m. a student's parent enters Pine City High School west wing. The person is looking for a subject and begins yelling, causing a disturbance. When confronted, he pulls out a firearm and begins shooting. The first 911 call comes in at 9:04 a.m. "That's all the information you're going to get."



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Pine City High School Principal Troy Anderson and Denise Baran of the Pine County Sheriff's Office prepared participants for the active shooter training exercise. No students were involved in the training, so high school staff members were assigned the roles of students for the scenario. Only a handful of people knew how the scenario was meant to play out. The rest were instructed to react as if a real shooting event was underway.

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As the incident escalated at 9:03 a.m., school staff came over the loudspeaker: "Attention to all staff. This is an intruder lockdown. Attention all staff. This is an intruder lockdown. Assume positions for intruder lockdown." Then the shooter, played by a sergeant of the Pine County Sheriff's Office, began stalking the halls of the school looking for victims.

3.



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Within minutes the Pine County SWAT Unit arrived and, after setting off a flashbang grenade that staff indoors could feel through the walls, they entered the school. The officers did not know where they would find the shooter and so went room to room, upstairs and downstairs. They found wounded victims on the way – school staff holding cards describing their injuries.

4.



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The shooter was found and gunfire exchanged in the school cafeteria. The SWAT unit then stormed the floor to secure the shooter (in blue) and tend to victims. Dummies in the cafeteria and in school hallways were used to represent dead victims. After determining that there were no more individuals posing threats, the team moved on to the next phase – assisting wounded victims and evacuating the building.

5.



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EMS were allowed to enter the school and went to work aiding the injured. Some of the injuries were caused directly by the shooter, others reported being injured or traumatized in the chaos surrounding the shooting. The survivors were then moved to the Pine City Civic Center, where staff ran through the process of reunifying students with their parents or guardians. No participants were actually injured during the active shooter training exercise.