



West Orange Board of Education
179 Eagle Rock Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052

For more information contact;
Amy Simon at ASimonSays, LLC
amy@asimonsays.com
973-669-0600 Office
973-518-3040 Mobile



ACTIVE SHOOTER DRILL AT LIBERTY MIDDLE SCHOOL TO TEST MULTI AGENCY EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Immediate Advisory

08/06/13 West Orange NJ; The West Orange Board of Education will host a multi-agency active shooter drill at Liberty Middle School on Tuesday August 20th, at 10AM. The mock drill will test the abilities of over a dozen agencies to respond to an emergency incident at a school, similar to the recent event at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut.

"The protection of our young people is our highest priority," said West Orange Mayor Robert D. Parisi. "Unfortunately, as we've seen in recent years, no school is immune to the possibility of an attack. This is an especially important drill because it increases our effort to provide safe and secure buildings for our students."

Funded by a 140k grant from the Department of Homeland Security, the drill also provides an opportunity for returning armed services personnel to share their training and knowledge of strategy, response and combat with local law enforcement agencies when in crisis situations.

Partners in designing, executing and analyzing this exercise include the West Orange Police Department, Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Defense at Picatinny Arsenal, the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center and the US Federal Air Marshals. Agencies providing support include the Essex County Sheriff's Office, the Essex County Office of Emergency Management, the New Jersey State Police, University Hospital, Saint Barnabas Medical Center, Monoc and surrounding police departments from Essex, Passaic, Morris and Hudson Counties.

"This is potentially going to be the largest active shooter drill ever executed in New Jersey and perhaps the nation," said Sergeant John Morella, key coordinator of the event for the Township of West Orange. "Major media outlets will be coming to cover this, TAZER and three area universities are involved in providing equipment

to video tape it from every angle, and area law enforcement will act as secondary response teams. It's going to be huge and incredibly valuable in testing and enhancing our crisis preparedness." Sergeant John Morella is a Community Service Supervisor who is a member of the West Orange Active Shooter program, and was a school resource officer for twelve years with the West Orange Board of Education.

"In law enforcement we are constantly training and preparing to respond to all different types of scenarios. This coordinated drill helps officers from multiple jurisdictions learn how to work together by establishing a standardized response that involves all parties responsible for the care and safety of our children. We will do everything with the resources we have to achieve our goal," said West Orange Police Chief James P. Abbott.

The active shooter drill at Liberty Middle School has garnered interest from many surrounding municipalities and districts on the east coast and will include a viewing station for officials from the partnering organizations along with other entities to watch the drill unfold. A media tent will be set up for local, and national outlets to cover the event. Behavioral scientist have been engaged to both witness and follow participants through every step of the process, to analyze the approach and performance of the participants.

Montclair State University, Seton Hall University and Rutgers University is providing audio and video equipment and will be video-taping the event. Montclair State University has created a special a class around the exercise and will be making a documentary on the creation, execution and results.

"We are proud to offer Liberty Middle School to law enforcement to hold this active shooter drill," said interim superintendent Jim O'Neill. "The building is new and provides opportunities for a variety of scenarios. The grounds are expansive and can accommodate the many hundreds of participants and audience members expected. It is also an opportunity for the West Orange Board of Education to test our emergency management and communications plan for its level of effectiveness, and make adjustments if necessary."

Nearly 100 volunteers have already signed up to play the roles of students, teachers and administrators to assist in the exercise and more are requested. If interested in participating contact Sergeant Morella at 973-325-4038, or email him at jmorella@woboe.org.

"This exercise could help responding officers understand the correlation of efficiency and high pressure that they need to operate under in an event such as this and how to improve themselves in the way they approach these types of incidents in a controlled life-like environment. This is a very proactive approach with Law Enforcement and the U.S. Military joining forces; to maybe not avert these types of incidents, but to be able to deal with them more effectively and efficiently in the hope of having fewer casualties in events such as this, and of having an

understanding of how to react and deal with this type of incident as it unfolds,” Sgt. Morella added.

Media: For more information or to reserve a spot in the media tent contact Sgt. John Morella at 973-325- 4038, or email him at jmorella@woboe.org.