

Access Control & Secure Vestibules

“Effective access control requires that entry to and from a building be controlled.”¹ According to Spicer’s Campus Safety article *11 Components of a Secure School Front Entrance*. “Efforts to prevent forced entry and trespass are compromised if secondary points of entry or fire doors are unsecure or easily defeated and not seen.”²

There should only be one main entrance to all school buildings. Physical barriers and preventative measures should be in place for allowing all persons to enter only through a singular access entry point after interactions, permissions, and authorizations from school staff have been granted. If a school has multiple public access entry points, they should all meet the same security capabilities. This capability should be in place



at a minimum during normal school hours, or when a significant population of students is in the building. According to Atlas “All exterior doors should be monitored electronically to determine if they are fully closed and locked.... A door that looks closed but isn’t might be used to gain unauthorized access into the building and introduce weapons, a shooter, or at the very least allows all of the security efforts at the primary entrance to be undermined”.¹

Atlas stated “Arrival and dismissal times in K-12 schools require a lower security posture due to the volume of student and staff movement”.¹ Spicer’s article states, “Properly trained and equipped staff must be assigned to monitor activities during these staff periods. This involves training on intruder response, reverse evacuation and how to assist in the arrival of public safety vehicles, school buses, private vehicles and/or the media. Staff should be equipped with radio communications and have the ability to call 9-1-1”.²

Glass features in and around the interior doors at the front entrance of the school, ground level windows of the school and/or glass in classroom doors should be designed in such a way that would prevent unauthorized intrusion into that space or the building if the glass was compromised. This can be done with reinforced glass, reinforced window panes, and/or reduced size window panes small enough to prevent unauthorized entry.

Secure Vestibule

The recommended entrance for schools is illustrated in Figure 1. Consider upgrading the front entrance area to create two sets of doors which should be locked in order to form a secure vestibule. With both sets of doors locked, there should be an intercom and camera on the outside of the first set of hardened doors that allow the office personnel a complete view of the visitor requesting access. The vestibule between the two sets of doors should have a service window to the receptionist that

Example of a Secure Vestibule

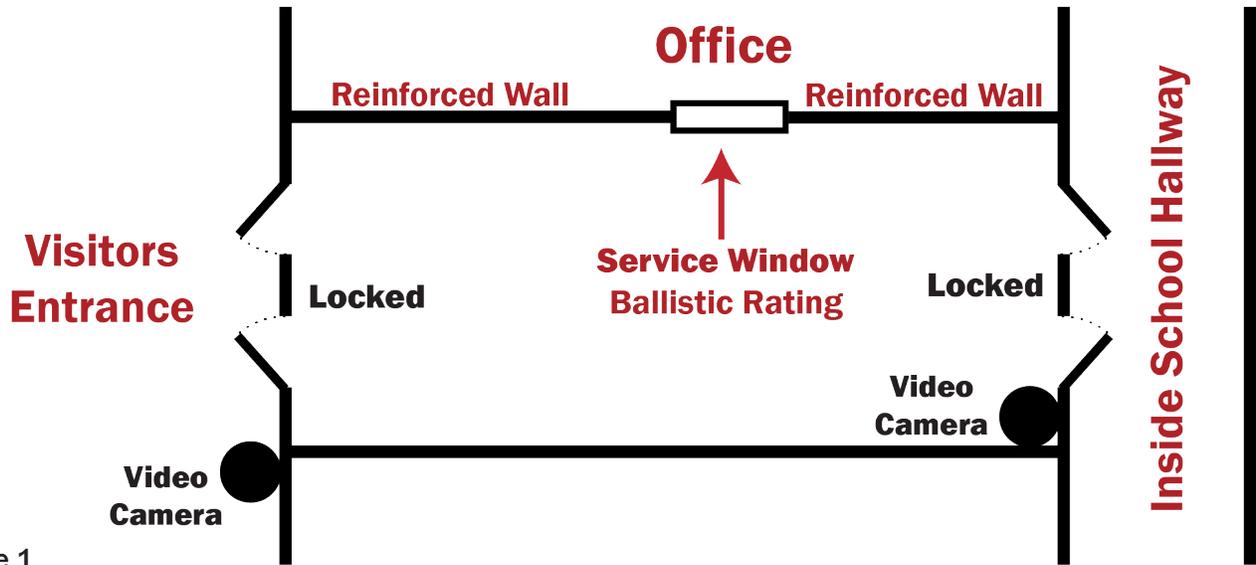


Figure 1

is made with bullet-resistant glass and surrounded by a ballistic rated wall to protect the office staff. This window should have a speaking portal and a recessed tray to pass small item underneath. The glass surrounding the doors and the door glass should be reduced in size and either replaced with resistive reinforced glass, or modified with security laminate film. The secure vestibule is the area where the visitor completes their business he or she has with the school without being given access to the interior of the school. If a backpack or package is brought to the school, it would be kept in a designated location in the vestibule for delivery. If the visitor is there

to pick up a student, the student should be escorted to the interior set of hardened doors where custody would be transferred. The office staff should in turn have no physical contact with the majority of visitors. The office staff can assess a visitor's intentions while the visitor is in the secure vestibule. Consider working with local Police and Fire Departments when making decisions about strengthening entryways and glass around the school to ensure that their response requirements are supported, so that changes meet Life Safety Code and ADA requirements.

HOMELAND SECURITY EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEW HAMPSHIRE DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY

References:

- 1 - Atlas, R. Ph.D., FAIA, CPP (March 23, 2017) 8 Ways to Improve School Entrance Security: By adopting these elements, you'll be able to prevent the entry of unauthorized individuals or delay their access until law enforcement can be summoned. Campus Safety Magazine (online). Retrieved June, 2019 from https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/8_ways_to_improve_school_entrance_security/
- 2 - Spicer, B. (October 23, 2013) 11 Components of a Secure School Front Entrance. Campus Safety Magazine (online). Retrieved June, 2019 from <https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/11-components-of-a-secure-school-front-entrance/>
- 3 - Homeland Security and Emergency Management School Security Assessment.

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