

# Critical Incident Planning and Response



*Submission for the 2001  
Herman Goldstein Award*



*Submitted by  
Kansas City, Missouri Police Department  
April 1, 2002*

# Polices

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Richard D. Easley  
Chief of Police

April 11, 2002

Herman Goldstein Award Selection Committee  
Police Executive Research Forum  
1120 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Suite 930  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Selection Committee Members:

It is with great pleasure that I offer my support for the nomination of South Patrol Division's *project*, "Critical Incident Planning and *Response*," *for the* Herman Goldstein Award.

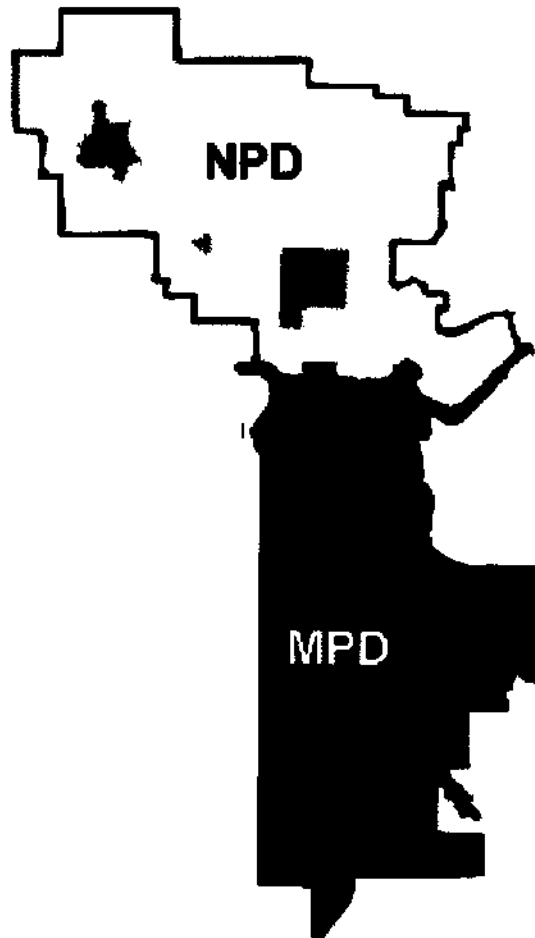
In response to the tragedy at Columbine High School in 1999, the Kansas City Missouri Police Department began to re-evaluate our preparedness for responding to such catastrophic events. In April 2001, Major John Armilio created a Critical Incident Team tasked with identifying locations throughout South Patrol Division that had the potential for mass casualties in the event some type of critical incident should occur. Pertinent information was gathered for each site in order to develop site plans, which were then integrated into an easily accessible computer format for first responders. Training for critical incidents was adapted to include rapid deployment for first responders. Further, facility managers for sites were contacted to determine their responsibilities in the event of a critical incident. Locally, the value of this project has been recognized, and site plans have been developed for schools citywide. It is hoped that in the future, this program can be implemented regionally.

The initiative, dedication, and creative thinking of the individual's involved in this program have significantly aided the Kansas City Missouri Police Department in becoming better prepared to serve the citizens of this community. The coordination of law enforcement personnel and community members in the collection of data and implementation of the program exemplifies what community oriented policing and problem solving is truly about.

Sincerely,

Richard D. Easley  
Chief of Police

# **CRITICAL INCIDENT PLANNING AND RESPONSE**



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## **CRITICAL INCIDENT PLANNING AND RESPONSE**

### **Kansas City, Missouri Police Department - South Patrol Division**

#### **PROBLEM**

Effective response to any critical incident, such as an active shooter, fire, bombing, or natural disaster, can be inhibited by a lack of communication, coordination of resources, and understanding of competing organizational needs.

#### **ANALYSIS**

This recurring police and community safety problem affects many individuals and entities over a large area. Through pre-planning, training, and innovative use of technology, a more coordinated, efficient, and effective response to critical incidents can be achieved. A more focused, continuous assessment and emphasis on critical incident pre-planning enhances partnerships with the community and better prepares them, as well as emergency responders to effectively respond to actual incidents.

#### **RESPONSE**

South Patrol Division developed a comprehensive approach to critical incident preparation through the following steps:

- Identification of locations with the potential for mass casualties during any type of critical incident.
- Utilization of district patrol officers to develop pre-plans for critical incident response at the identified locations.
- Partnership with the stakeholders at each location to assess their internal emergency response plans, provide training when requested, and share information on vital aspects of our mutual response to any incident which might occur at their facility.
- Incorporation of Tactical Response Team expertise through advance training of district patrol officers and review of pre-plans.
- Development of computerized critical incident pre-plans readily accessible on each patrol vehicle Mobile Data Terminal through innovative use of existing computer technology and creative programming.
- Proposed expansion of the program on a regional basis incorporating critical incident pre-plans for emergency responders throughout the metropolitan Kansas City area, which encompasses all or part of two states, five counties, and numerous local jurisdictions.

#### **ASSESSMENT**

Community partners participating in the project have expressed an overwhelming sense of appreciation and enthusiasm for the program. Facility employees report they are better prepared to effectively respond to emergencies. Other agencies and jurisdictions have begun to incorporate the pre-planning model into their emergency response preparations.

## **SCANNING**

In response to the tragic circumstances of Columbine High School in April 1999, our department began a process of re-evaluating our preparedness for responding to such a catastrophic incident. It was quickly apparent that there was considerable anxiety within the academic community regarding both the police department's response to their schools and the effectiveness of their own plans, if any existed at all. The Kansas City, MO Police Department initiated a training seminar entitled "Before and After Calling 911" with local school district personnel in the fall of 1999. This seminar examined early intervention and response to school violence. As a result of that training, our Tactical Response Team personnel gathered information on each high school in each patrol division. The information was compiled on paper and placed in three-ring binders in the trunks of supervisor and commander cars. Overtime, the books became lost, soiled, or damaged. Information concerning schools in other patrol divisions was not readily accessible by officers responding from another patrol division. Information gathered for the plans varied widely from division to division as there was no standard format for obtaining the information. There was no plan for updating the information or maintaining relationships with the schools on an on-going basis.

In April 2001, Major John Armilio, South Patrol Division Commander, created a Critical Incident Team tasked with identifying locations throughout the division that had the potential for mass casualties in the event any type of critical incident were to occur. The Critical Incident Team was to insure necessary steps were taken to provide for a well-planned and appropriate response by SPD personnel. As a result of that review, the Critical Incident Team identified two hospitals, a few businesses, and about a dozen high schools and middle schools that had significant

concentrations of population and thus the greatest potential for multiple injuries during any type of critical incident.

## **ANALYSIS**

Analysis revealed that the police department trained periodically for response to critical incidents, but the primary focus was on command response and establishment of the critical incident command system. There was little or no emphasis placed on the initial response by district officers during the first hour of such incidents. Specifically, in reference to active shooter scenarios, our tradition (like most agencies) had been to establish a perimeter, contain the suspect(s), and facilitate first aid as appropriate. In the spring of 2001, our Tactical Response Teams implemented a rapid deployment system for field personnel. This system coordinates the response of the first available supervisor and six officers on the scene. It empowers them to make the decision to immediately enter a building and take whatever actions necessary to neutralize any threat to the public. This was a dramatic departure from our traditional approach that had been dependent on the decision of a Tactical Response Team Commander to authorize entry. In most cases, that process could have delayed our entry by an hour or more, as was the case in Littleton, Colorado. In addition, we were still faced with the tasks of establishing locations for command posts, triage areas, perimeter control, parent/student exchange locations, and coordination of resources both internally and externally. These tasks are vital in any critical incident response. They require significant time and personnel resources, yet field supervisors were expected to complete them while on the scene of a still unfolding major incident.

Each critical incident was viewed as a separate and unique event with no common factors applicable to subsequent occurrences at other locations. The Critical Incident Team realized from the perspective of the police department, certain functions are constant in all critical incidents — establishing a command post location, securing the perimeter, establishing locations for triage, assembly of the media, and protection of evidence at crime scenes. These common factors were recognized as the basis for a more structured system of pre-planning for incidents at certain sites. Most importantly, these plans needed to be readily available to ALL personnel involved, regardless of their assignment or even jurisdiction.

Early in this process, the Critical Incident Team discovered that many of our community partners had unrealistic expectations of the police department during a critical incident response. Their expectations and procedures would, at times, conflict with those of the police department. For instance, the Critical Incident Team encountered one school whose policy prohibited leaving school property, EVEN IN THE EVENT OF AN ACTIVE SHOOTER! It was apparent that the department needed to be more involved in the critical incident planning of the schools and businesses in our area.

## **RESPONSE**

The Critical Incident Team began the process of addressing the police response to any type of critical incident that might occur within our patrol division. Locations such as schools, hospitals, and a military installation were identified as our initial priority for response. The Critical Incident Team scheduled meetings with the school principals, advised them of the team's project, and solicited their input and cooperation. The Critical Incident Team involved district patrol officers in the



planning process. A standardized template was developed for officers to use in gathering pertinent information regarding each critical incident site plan. Thus, each plan would have the same information in the same format. Information was gathered on command post locations, traffic control points, perimeter security, triage areas, student evacuation locations, parent/student exchange locations, relevant site information such as electrical, water, gas and alarm shut-offs, as well as floor plans and maps of the facility and surrounding area. We worked with the school staff to review and revise their existing emergency response plans as needed. This contact led to the development of a training module to present to school staff and administrators so all partners would be better prepared to respond to an emergency of any type. We shared information on expectations and limitations. Together we identified their role and responsibility in managing the school's response. In the past, training had concentrated on what to expect from the police department, with no plans for what was expected from the school. An extensive PowerPoint presentation was developed by the Critical Incident Team and presented to staff and faculty of virtually every school in South Patrol Division. This hour long training module was effective in stimulating dialogue between faculty and staff as well as between the schools and the police. The training received tremendous feedback from the teachers and was reported to have been successful in relieving many of their fears. Following the initial training, letters were sent to each of the principals detailing the primary and secondary student evacuation points. The principals were informed the department would be sending officers to these locations and requested a school staff member be available at the command post. Within a few weeks of beginning this process, the Critical Incident Team had overseen the development of approximately thirty-five plans for locations in South Patrol Division.

As the plans were being assembled, the Critical Incident Team began to examine the challenge of making these plans accessible to first responders. Obviously, the three ring binder system was inadequate for the task. The KCMO Police Department had recently installed MDT's (Mobile Data Terminals) in its district cars in the form of Windows 95 based laptop computers. Concerns of conflicts with mission critical MDT software prohibited the installation of database or other third party software on the MDT's. It was determined that the web browsers (Internet Explorer) integrated into the operating system offered a potential platform to catalog site plans.

By creating "image maps" of the city's divisions and patrol districts, a system was devised in which users can click on a division, district, and then select a particular site, arriving at an extensive site plan with just three (3) mouse clicks. The compact size of HTML code, flexibility of the browser, and familiarity to the user with little or no training, made this an ideal solution to the problem. While HTML is intended for use on a network or "web", it is also a very robust language for use locally (on the PC's own hard drive) while remaining completely portable. The portable nature of the language means that copies can be stored on CD's and run on virtually any computer with a web browser, regardless of their operating system or can be accessed from a remote site via a network connection. Within this application, it is likely that wireless data communication could be inhibited by radio tower failure or heavy voice traffic. To insure that these plans would be available when needed, the Radio Maintenance Unit installed the plans on every MDT's hard drive during routine maintenance. In addition, the plans were placed on the department's network and on a restricted Internet site so they could be accessed under nearly any circumstance.

The resulting program resembled a web site for each target site completed. The user is instantly (no delay since it is stored locally) taken to a checklist of information for each site, including floor plans, overhead maps, and intelligence information unique to each site. Supervisors and officers can quickly see how many and where personnel need to be deployed, even before they arrive at the scene. In addition, command posts, triage sites, and other locations are designated at "ideal" locations rather than created in an ad-hoc fashion.

This project was expanded department-wide at the direction of the Patrol Bureau Commander. The Critical Incident Team made training available to all sergeants and captains in the Patrol Bureau. Officers or sergeants in each Patrol Division were designated as division representatives to develop the program in their respective areas of responsibility. The district patrol officer remained the vital link in developing the plans for the schools or businesses in their respective patrol districts. Having that officer establish contact with the school principal, formulate the site plan, and provide training for the school personnel or employees of that business developed important community partnerships. Officers began to think tactically and view their districts differently in terms of potential problem areas. They became aware of potential resources within the community that could be utilized in responding to critical incidents. Important partnerships were being developed with the subject locations, surrounding businesses, and churches as we talked to them about using their facilities during a crisis.

## ASSESSMENT

It is difficult to quantify results for this type of project. The Critical Incident Team has created effective relationships with school administrators and business

leaders throughout the South Patrol Division. These relationships have improved communication and resulted in more effective response plans for virtually every school in the division. Schools within the division have made necessary changes to their internal plans to meet the needs of both their students and staff and the responding officers. MDT's in every police car in the division are now equipped with detailed site plans for 35 different locations, including nearly every school, two hospitals, and a military installation. Officers in the division are familiar with each site and much better prepared to respond to emergencies.

Fortunately, our success in preparing the schools has yet to be demonstrated in a school violence incident. However, we had two occasions in October 2001 to test the strength and effectiveness of the program with schools. Two separate incidents involving an unknown powdery substance occurred at two different schools in the South Patrol Division. While the full plan was not used in either incident, the benefits of our pre-planning and training with the schools were readily evident.

In the first incident, a school cafeteria worker discovered a substance in the kitchen area just prior to the start of school as buses were arriving. School staff held the children on the buses prior to our arrival. Access to the school was quickly blocked, arrangements made for the students to be transported to another school's gymnasium, and parents were directed to that location. Very few parents even arrived at the subject school. Initially, school officials wanted to release the students to the athletic field adjacent to the subject school, but after discussion with police and fire officials, opted to transfer the students to another facility. That option allowed the emergency responders and school officials to address the problem without having to control a large group of students at the incident scene. We believe that our work in establishing a relationship with the school district and the training

provided was instrumental in gaining their trust and convincing them to relocate the students. Only two hours of student instruction was lost as a result of this possible anthrax incident.

The other incident involved an anthrax threat inside another school. Upon the arrival of emergency responders, we found that the staff had evacuated the school and that all students were lined up single file, by class, with the teacher at the head of each row. All students were accounted for and the substance was removed and declared harmless. This response was in stark contrast to two years earlier, shortly after the Columbine incident, when we responded to a school in the same district on an incident involving a bomb threat. In that incident, there was mass chaos with students refusing to return to the building after it had been cleared, followed by a false fire alarm, which resulted in students running throughout the building and the grounds. Parents then responded to the school, en masse, blocking emergency responders' access to the scene. The school staff was overwhelmed by the confusion and dismissed school for the day.

Perhaps the best indication of the success of the program has been the requests from schools and businesses throughout the metropolitan area to be included in the system or to receive the training. Schools, businesses, and community groups in the division have expressed overwhelming support and enthusiasm for the project and repeatedly expressed their appreciation for our efforts to provide for their specific security needs. SPD personnel have conducted more than 50 training sessions, in six (6) different school districts to over 1500 administrators, teachers, and staff, as well as numerous presentations to school boards, private school associations, and a number of business and civic groups.

The International Association of Law Enforcement Planners viewed the project on September 12, 2001. The attendees were very impressed with the project and continue to monitor its progress on our web site. Locally, we have demonstrated our project to the Community Policing Steering Committee and the Mid-America Regional Council. MARC is a coordinating body for local, county, and state government agencies in the two state, five county Kansas City region. They coordinate training and services in an effort to provide the best service with minimal duplication. Their primary focus is on cooperation and communication enhancement. During a presentation to this group, we had the opportunity to talk to members of the KCMO Fire Department, emergency medical services providers, and the City Emergency Preparedness Director. All of these entities have expressed a desire to incorporate our program into their emergency response programs. Details of this integration are still under development.

One of the critical benefits that we have identified as a result of this process is the initiation of open communication, not only with community partners, but also with other emergency service providers in our own community, as well as in surrounding jurisdictions. Kansas City is part of a bi-state metropolitan area that straddles the Missouri-Kansas state line. It includes more than 136 cities with a combined population of approximately 1.9 million people. Kansas City alone has a resident population of nearly 450,000 and contains four county jurisdictions. Thirteen (13) school districts also lie totally or partially within the city limits.

Through mutual aid agreements and cooperation, we hope to devise a system that is accessible to all jurisdictions and can stand-alone for each or be used in cooperation with other jurisdictions in responding to mutual aid requests. Bordering jurisdictions, for example, could handle traffic perimeter assignments, thus

freeing local jurisdiction personnel for directly addressing the problem or threat where arrest powers or lethal force might become an issue.

The future goal of the Critical Incident Team is the establishment of a separate unit within the police department, charged with the responsibility of expanding the project citywide to all patrol divisions, as well as the metropolitan area. This unit would target government and public facilities such as city hall, state, federal, and county courts and office buildings. Also convention centers, arenas, stadiums, high-rise office complexes and special events such as parades, festivals, etc. would be evaluated so that pre-plans are in place and accessible prior to any event or incident. This unit would be responsible for updating existing plans and developing new plans by coordinating with each division commander to establish priorities within their division. District officers would still have the responsibility to develop the site plans and maintain contact with the individual business or facility manager. The Critical Incident Response Unit would act as a resource and coordinating element to ensure that plans are being developed in the proper format, site plans are kept current, resources are being coordinated, and training is current and relevant. They would also assume responsibility for responding to all critical incidents to ensure that the most current, up-to-date site plan was available on the mobile data terminals. The Critical Incident Response Unit would be responsible for completing the programming, developing additional enhancements, and distributing the updates to KCPD MDT's. Besides their KCPD responsibilities, the Critical Incident Response Unit would provide the KCPD representation and technical abilities to an organization such as MARC (Mid-America Regional Council) that coordinates activities between surrounding agencies and other emergency

personnel. Ultimately, the KCPD site plans would be integrated into a regional program that included plans from throughout the metropolitan area.

Ironically, the biggest barrier to the program has been its success. The program was originally developed to manage approximately fifteen sites in the South Patrol Division. At that scale, it was developed using one of the team member's personal equipment during periods when staffing was available. Almost immediately after a working model was demonstrated, the potential for the program was recognized and expanded to schools citywide. Immediately the number of sites leaped from 15-20 to over 200, far more than could be programmed by a single person utilizing "available" time. This "success" required that the team members, particularly the programmer, invest a great deal of "available" time in seeking funding and support. While a number of area businesses have been anxious to assist in the project, funding and staffing for a dedicated unit remains elusive. With each public demonstration of the project, more requests to be included come in and we become less able to deal with the volume.

The catastrophes in New York and Washington D.C. on September 11, 2001 changed all priorities and added a new sense of urgency that we are still dealing with. A mock scenario, scheduled for September 13, 2001 to test the program's effectiveness, was postponed indefinitely as all of America re-examined our preparedness for the unimaginable. As more and more of our political and business leaders became aware of the need for pre-planning, each has encouraged us to expand the project from a local to a regional level. As Critical Incident Team members and the department management attempt to define our role in a regional project, interest has elevated to even a broader, state level, and finally even interest as a national model. We have had interest expressed from a number of states,



including Alaska, Arkansas, New York, Arizona, and Illinois, as well as Canada and New Zealand. While the enthusiasm for the project has been a tremendous catalyst, its expansion has made it difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate our long-term needs. Unquestionably, the project has a place in the department's emergency preparations as well as its community policing efforts.

The countless sites remaining, and the limited qualified personnel and fiscal resources now available, poses a continuing challenge. It is also a project that is constantly being enhanced with new dynamics such as digital pictures, interactive floor plans, and on-line, automated updating.

### **AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION**

The Kansas City, Missouri Police Department has long embraced the Problem Oriented Policing philosophy to resolving crime and neighborhood issues. Problem oriented policing has been taught as part of in-service training and to academy recruits. It was this operational philosophy that predicated Major Armilio's creation of the Critical Incident Team. While the Critical Incident Team consisted primarily of a captain and three sergeants, the experience of district officers, particularly those with tactical response team experience, was utilized in creating the templates and the subsequent site plans. Truly, what began as a traditional problem solving response to a need soon evolved into a project that was completely "out of the box" in its innovative use of existing technology. Personnel were motivated by a strong sense of urgency and, more importantly, satisfaction at having created a functional and beneficial program.

To this point, work on this project has been completed from the division's existing overtime budget and available staffing. We were able to utilize laptop

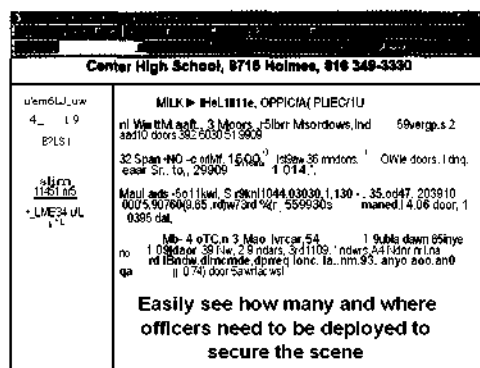
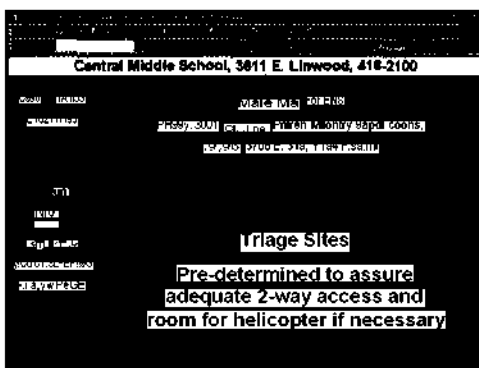
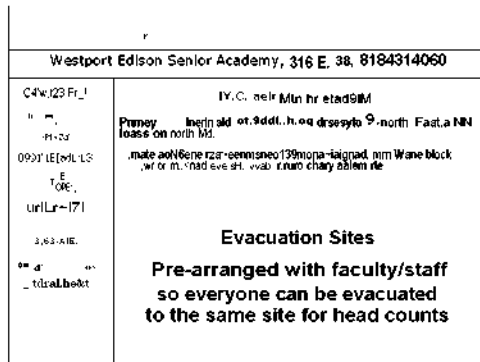
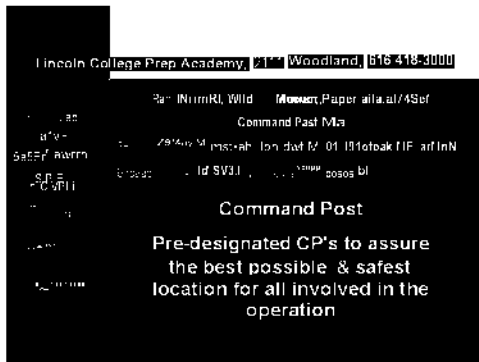
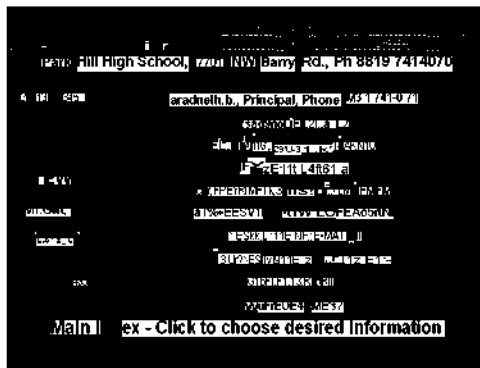
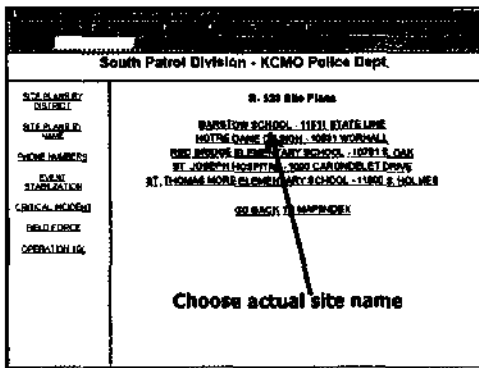
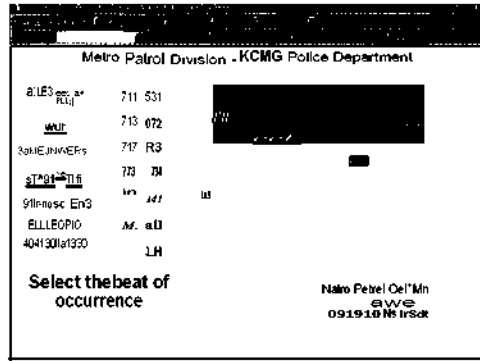
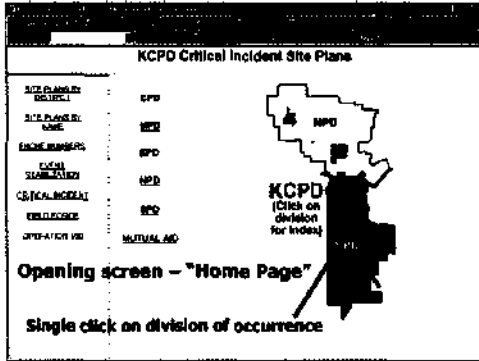
computers and projectors that had been obtained through existing grants for the school training programs. When the project was expanded citywide, each division commander utilized his own staff for the creation and submission of site plans. At the direction of the Board of Police Commissioners, the department acquired a desktop computer, peripherals, and software, dedicated to the project, at a cost of approximately \$4,000.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Major John Armilio  
Commander, South Patrol Division  
11109 Hickman Mills Drive  
Kansas City, MO 64134-4202  
816 234-5550  
Fax: 816-672-2888  
E-mail: [jarmilio@kcpd.org](mailto:jarmilio@kcpd.org)**

## Screen Shots

The following are "screen shots" of the MDT based site plans. The descriptive text, arrows, and highlights were added for clarification.



# Screen Shots

**Lutheran High School, 411 Wallace, 616 241-6476**

WORLDWIDE INFORMATION  
 HOW TO ACCESS: STUDIES: THEN LOGGING IN AND OUT  
 HOW TO CALL: VAP in Grid Box (each grid box, NW)  
 HOW TO CALL: VAP in Grid Box (each grid box, NW)  
 HOW TO CALL: VAP in Grid Box (each grid box, NW)  
 HOW TO CALL: VAP in Grid Box (each grid box, NW)  
 HOW TO CALL: VAP in Grid Box (each grid box, NW)

**Traffic Assignments**  
 Quickly determine how many  
 and where traffic assignments  
 are required.

**Red Bridge Elementary School - 10781 S. Oak - 612-4200**

Primary Contact: Michael Woodard, Principal, 616 992-4299

**General Site Information**

Primary Entrance: West Side - 2 sets of double glass doors  
 East Side - 1st doors  
 North Side - 2 sets of double glass doors, 2 single metal doors (not used)  
 South Side - 3 single glass doors (not used), 1 double glass door (not used)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS	305
NUMBER OF SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS	2
NUMBER OF FACULTY/STAFF	50

2001-2002 school year - Both students & MS Principals are gradeless North wing, south side of MS

**Lincoln College Prep Academy, 2111 Woodland, B16 419-3000**

Resource information that could be of benefit to officers in making entry or securing the scene

Electrical shut-off (back of school (basics) put handle in large storage compartment)  
 One set of overhead water heating in boiler room-water shut-off valve near  
 restrooms in boiler room (north west)  
 Are alarm first floor security office (on south side of school) first floor boiler  
 room (south side of school) south side of school  
 Note: TMC West, 2201 Wallace

**Southeast High School, 3600 E. Meyer, 616 416-1076**

an phone \*M66t

OVERHEA - AP ZOOMED OUT  
 OVER MAP ZOOMED IN

1st Floor	2nd Floor	3rd Floor	4th Floor
Roof Tower	Roof Tower	Roof Tower	Roof Tower

BACK TO OVERVIEW

**Northeast Middle School, 4904 Independence Ave., 419-3400**

Go to floor plan or zoom in

**Central Middle School, 3611 E. Linwood, 418-2100**

Zoomed in view

**Raytown Middle School, 4900 Pittman Road, 737-6306**

Image mapping allows the user to zoom in on a particular area or room

KCPD Critical Incident Site Plans

Besides site plans ...

- Phone numbers
  - Cell Phones
  - Department numbers
  - Emergency contacts
- Event cards
- Critical Incident cards
- Field Force Assignments
- Operation 100 "Do's & Don'ts"