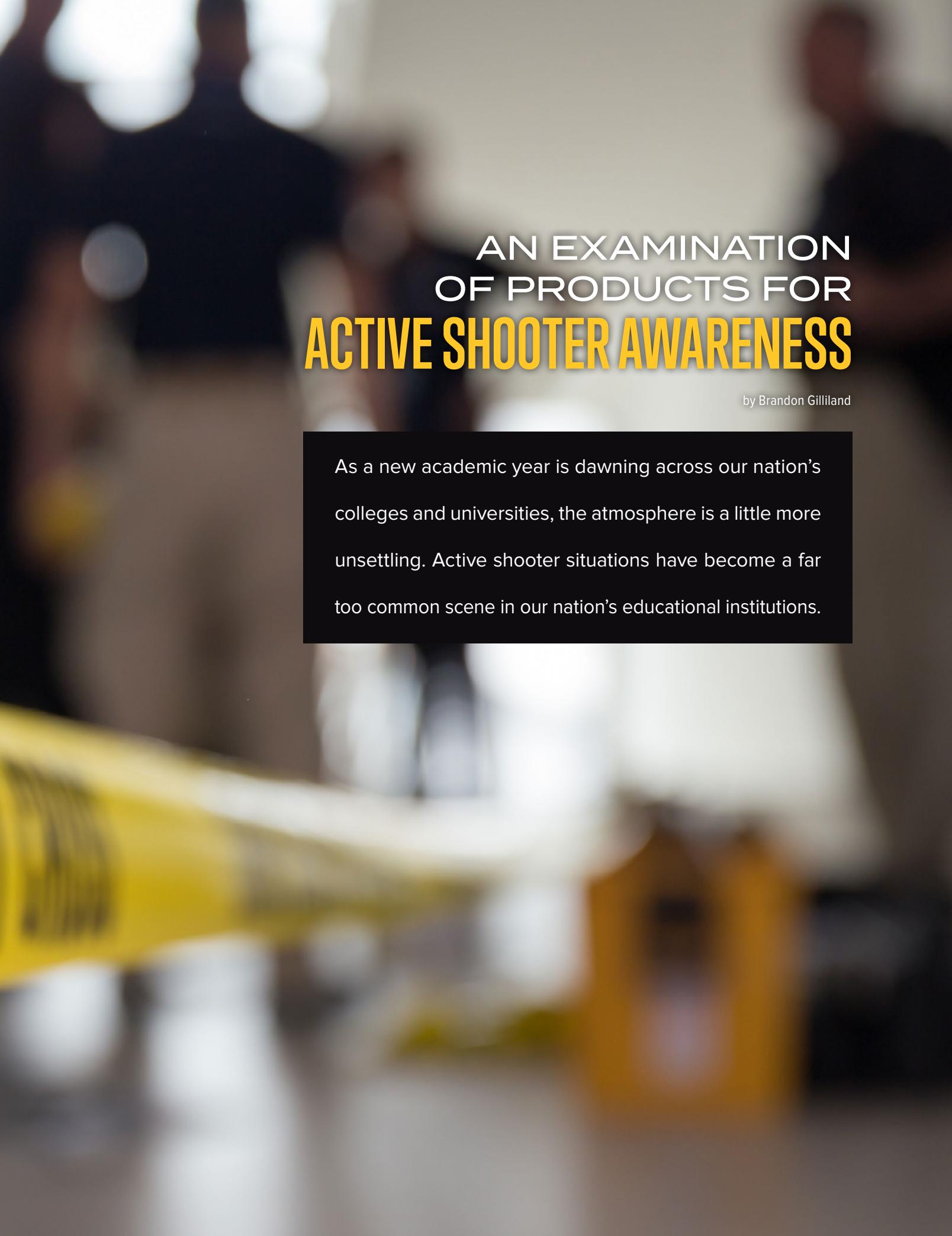


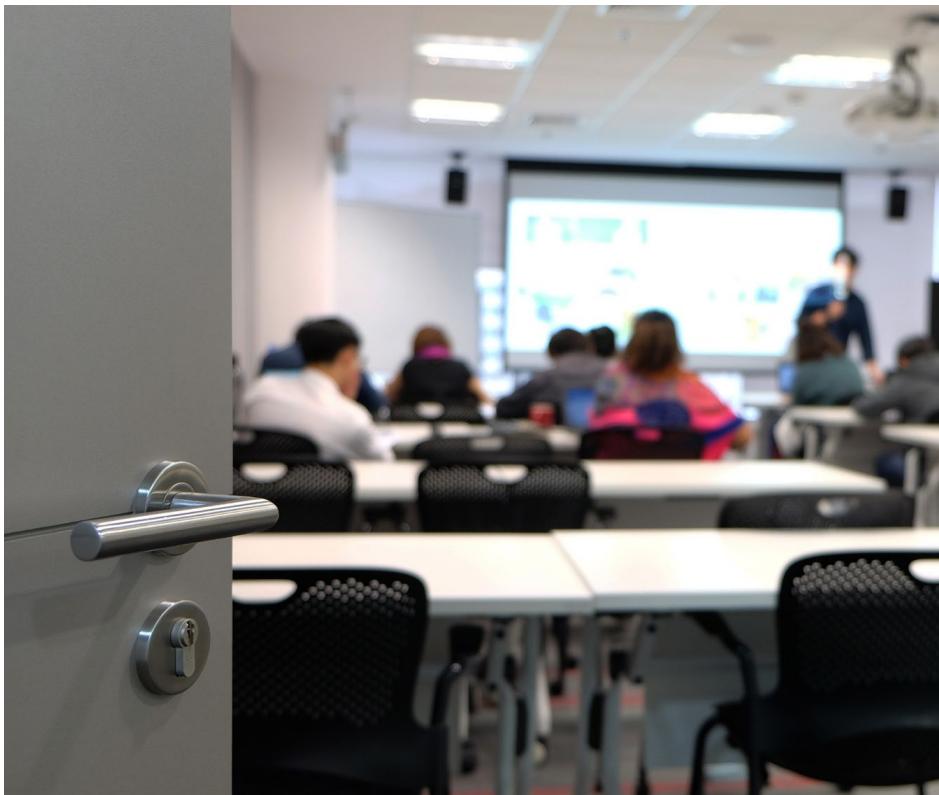
CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS



AN EXAMINATION OF PRODUCTS FOR **ACTIVE SHOOTER AWARENESS**

by Brandon Gilliland

As a new academic year is dawning across our nation's colleges and universities, the atmosphere is a little more unsettling. Active shooter situations have become a far too common scene in our nation's educational institutions.



The New Normal

As a practicing educator at both the secondary and postsecondary levels, as well as being the father of two small girls, I find it very difficult to accept this “new normal.”

Active shooter drills have become routine in our colleges and universities as these institutions have begun to formulate rapid response drills to active shooter situations.

Many colleges and universities have incorporated “Run, Hide, and Fight” into their campus safety plans. Others are purchasing construction materials in an effort to protect their faculty and students during an active shooter event.

While the need for developing and implementing campus safety plans and active shooter drills are critical to surviving horrific campus shootings, numerous products have been invented to assist students, professors, and administrators in preparing for active shooter situations.

Constructing “Safe Rooms”

New products have been invented which afford private colleges and universities the ability to construct classrooms that are effectively “safe

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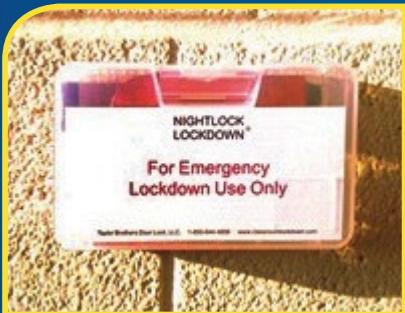


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rooms" by using fiberglass panels that provide security against bullets fired from outside of the classrooms.

Safety companies have created additional bullet-resistant material for items such as reception desks at the front of buildings, whiteboards at the front of classrooms and lecture halls, as well as classroom doors.

Companies are also now developing desks and tables for students to safely hide under. This provides an additional layer of protection in university classrooms and laboratories. Additional classroom furniture, such as armored podiums, have also been developed to potentially protect faculty members during an active shooter event.

Little Time to React

During active shooter situations, students are often found in the crosshairs with little time to react to the unfolding event. Students are often unable to evacuate the building where the shooting is taking place and must resort to finding an area within their environment to shelter in place.

Bulletproof backpacks are being manufactured to add an extra layer of safety for students. Similar to a bulletproof vest worn by law enforcement officers, bulletproof backpacks can prevent students from being hit by gunfire while running away from the shooter.

Additionally, once students have sheltered in-place, bulletproof backpacks can be used to protect students' chests and heads. These backpacks are relatively light in weight and do not weigh much more than standard backpacks. As a parent, I must weigh the cost of a bulletproof backpack, considering it to potentially save the life of my child.

Parents would have to deal with choosing how devastatingly difficult it would be to "add item to cart" in the first place versus their child not being protected in the event of an emergency situation while at school. It is an awful decision to consider.

Securing Doors and Offices

Many active shooter safety products have focused on securing classroom and office doors. Devices can be placed at the base

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of doors to prevent an active shooter from gaining access to other rooms.

Another device has been created to be placed at the top of door hinges to prevent doors from being opened. These options are readily available for purchase online and are relatively inexpensive.

There are also magnets made specifically to be placed over a door's lock. The purpose of these magnets is to keep the door locked at all times, but prevent the door from completely closing so that students may come and go on normal school days.

If there is a lockdown or the door needs to be secured, the magnetic strip can be removed and the door will fully close. This saves valuable time as faculty and staff do not have to search for keys to successfully lock a classroom door in time.

Products Matched with Planning

While products are clearly needed to assist in protecting all stakeholders from active shooter events, the need still exists for colleges and universities to develop campus security plans. The latest school safety

product inventions have a place in helping to protect faculty, staff, and students from active shooter events but must be coupled with an effective campus safety plan.

Campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students also need to be well-trained in how to operate many of these latest innovations. Publishing these plans and making sure that faculty and students are aware of these plans, as well as appropriate evacuation routes, in the event of an active shooter emergency should become common protocol in the upcoming school year.

Informing students and their parents of what your school is doing to enhance school safety measures may be an added benefit because they will know that this topic is being taken seriously and that proper precautions are in place.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Brandon Gilliland, Ed.D. is a ten-year veteran educator. His research interests involve school violence prevention and education law. He may be reached at brandongilliland@gmail.com.

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