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To: Federal Commission on School Safety
From: Michael J. Mulhare, Assistant Vice President for Emergency Management
Subject: May 16. 2018 Panel I Presentation

Good Afternoon, Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's panel discussion. I would like to talk about some of the practices and procedures that are in place at Virginia Tech. By way of background, I have spent almost 35 years working as an engineer, regulator, first responder and emergency manager. I came to Virginia Tech in November of 2008, to serve as the university's first director of emergency management. In 2014 Virginia Tech became the first university or college to receive national accreditation of its emergency management program.

While I did not join Virginia Tech until 19 months following the April 16, 2007 tragedy, my son and eldest daughter were both seniors at Virginia Tech and on campus that morning. We were fortunate, learning relatively early that they were both safe. Later that day they would learn that one of their friends and 31 other Hokies would not be as fortunate. I processed the events of that day as a parent and as an emergency manager. As a parent I struggled with the impulse to drive from Rhode Island to Blacksburg or to at a minimum have my children return home. In the end, the more rational thought process of an Emergency Manger prevailed and my wife and I realized that in order for them to grieve and heal they needed to be part of their community, part

of the Hokie Nation. So instead we would talk with them during the evening, encouraging them and their friends to take small steps to process their grief, and slowly and deliberately move forward.

When an opportunity presented itself to be part of Virginia Tech I did not hesitate. I thought I could provide value and had the right skill sets to build upon the existing foundation. It was also an opportunity to personally give back to an institution that had done so much for my son and daughter.

No two universities or colleges are alike, while their missions may be similar, there are many differences in focus, size, location and resources. Virginia Tech is a large institution with a daily population of close to 40,000 and occupies 2600 acres in a relatively rural area in southwest Virginia. What may be appropriate or required for a large rural research university may not be the same as what is needed at an urban institution or smaller liberal arts college.

I believe it is important to approach emergency preparedness and management using a holistic programmatic model. There is opportunity to force multiply resources and efforts by incorporating specific needs within an all hazard-planning framework. Areas of procedural, protocol and resource overlap become readily apparent. The programmatic approach used at Virginia Tech incorporates the phases of emergency management; Mitigation, Preparedness, Prevention, Response and Recovery with the Virginia Tech Emergency Management mission; to Build, Sustain, Improve; University Resiliency,

Departmental Readiness and Individual Preparedness. All goals, objective, plans, programs, protocols and procedures fall within this 3 by 5 matrix.

Within University Resiliency, there are many initiatives encompassing several emergency management elements. Threat Assessment is one of these programs. The Threat Assessment Team is multi-disciplinary, comprised of representatives from the Dean of Students, Provost, Counseling, Legal, Human Resources, Student Affairs and the Police Departments. Its mission is to determine if an individual poses or may reasonably pose a threat of violence to oneself, or others in the Virginia Tech community; and to intervene or to avert the threat and maintain safety. The team responds to behaviors exhibited by students, employees, visitors and non-affiliated persons in an attempt to prevent violence so that the Virginia Tech campus can remain a safe and secure working and learning environment. The team's goal is to intervene or avert ideation, planning, acquisition or implementation. The Threat Assessment Team serves as the hub with the Police, Community, Administration, Faculty, Student Services and Human Resource providing information. The police department provides investigation and case management. The team meets weekly and manages annually over 400 individual cases. It is important to note that there is an increasing trend in the number of cases managed. The threat assessment team also evaluates incoming students that have indicated on the Community Standards section of the enrollment application that they have been subject to a school disciplinary action and/or have been arrested or convicted as an adult or juvenile of any local, state or federal law, excluding

a minor traffic violation. The requirement to have a threat assessment team has been incorporated in to the Code of Virginia for public higher education institutions.

In response to the tragedy of April 16, 2007 Virginia Tech established a security infrastructure working group. Many of the recommendations from this group have been implemented and include the removal and replacement of perimeter door hardware to mitigate the risk of doors being chained; Install interior locks on classroom doors and other interior spaces; Increase the number of buildings that have electronically managed perimeter access; and the deployment of a surveillance camera network across campus.

Virginia Tech, thru written policy, established a Safety, Security Policy Committee (SSPC) comprised of senior leadership, legal, police and emergency management. The function of the committee is to review, evaluate and determine requirements for safety, security and preparedness programs. The committee meets at least quarterly to review emerging issues and concerns. During an incident, they assemble to provide support and guidance to the university president and are tasked with learning forward, establishing high-level goals and objectives and coordinating with state and federal partners. As a member of the SSPC University Relations serves as the public information officer and is supported by a cadre of communication specialists. The SSPC is further supported by an Incident Management Team, which is staffed by subject matter decision makers, who develop and implement the incident response strategies and actions. Virginia Tech has a Crisis Emergency Management Plan, which provides

direction, guidance and organizational structure. One unique document that is a result of the planning process is the Community Assistance Plan. This plan coordinates community support services, including an assistance center for families who maybe directly impacted by an incident as well meeting the immediate needs of the greater university community.

A training and exercise program is an important university resiliency strategy. The goal of the program is to reinforce a preparedness culture, practice individual roles and responsibilities during an incident and to identify areas of improvement in plans, protocols and procedures. In the past year 6900 faculty, staff and students have participated in emergency preparedness training and over 450 faculty and staff have participated in multiple exercises.

VT Alerts is the university's emergency notification system. It is a multichannel mass communication system. A multi-channel system is necessary because no singular delivery method has 100 percent reliability. There are also different constituent communication preferences. Since the goal is to deliver messages to the greatest number of community members, it is important to consider these preferences. These preferences are dynamic, changing from email to, text and now to social media. Alerting systems must evolve to meet changing expectations. Currently 10 delivery channels are in use with others in the development stage. Over 95 percent of the student population subscribes to VT Alerts. Supporting VT Alerts is the Emergency Notification Protocol. This document identifies how the alert system will be utilized, reduces the decision making to the lowest practical level and identifies who is authorized to send an

emergency message. The Protocol describes the content requirement of an emergency message. All initial messages contain the following information:

- What happened;
- Where it happened; and
- What action does the community need to take?

Many messages are pre-scripted to ensure that necessary information is contained within the character limitations of some of the delivery channels. Additional information is broadcast as it becomes available with a goal of communicating at least once every 30 minute.

Departmental readiness is supported by two primary initiatives. The first is the development of emergency action plans. The purpose of these plans is to provide actionable information for building occupants. These plans consider unique building characteristics while providing direction on how to secure-in-place (the university does not use the term lock down), shelter-in place and evacuate. The second initiative is the establishment of a building emergency coordinator program. The program is supported by university employees who volunteer their time to work with Emergency Management to develop plans, liaison with building occupants and serve as a point of contact for first responders.

Lastly I would like to talk about individual preparedness. It is challenging, in general, to instill the need to plan and prepare but is appreciably more challenging with an 18-22 year old population. Students have many interests but emergency preparedness is

typically not a priority. So what strategies can be employed to engage students? Advertise your programs, take every opportunity to meet and engage with students. Emergency Management staffs informational booths at orientation, campus festivals, employee events and other gatherings. The police department has residential life resource officer program and is actively engaged in community policing. It is also important to have recognition and develop a brand. For Virginia Tech Emergency Management it is "Be Hokie Ready". We want our community to associate the brand with being prepared. Information regarding what to do in an emergency must be readily available. We have transitioned from handouts and posters to zcards and now to an emergency preparedness APP. The APP provides easily accessible "*just in time*" what to do emergency information. For example if a VT Alert is sent that tells the community to Secure-in-Place and you don't recall what that means, the information is literally at your fingertips on your personal device. A presentation, *Safety, Security and Preparedness* is provided at all student orientations, on boarding of new employees and by request. The presentation reviews VT Alerts, the APP I just mentioned and key safety and preparedness information. It explains what it means to Shelter-in-Place. What to do in an evacuation. Why it is important to have a buddy; the Blacksburg and VT Police Departments sponsor a "No Hokie Left Behind" program. Why you need to have a plan. How would you egress a building in an emergency. Why you need to have a minimal amount of resources (i.e. food, water medicine etc.) to sustain yourself during an incident. What to do if there is an active assailant. What does it mean if a VT Alert states to Secure-in-Place. What to do if you cannot secure-in-place and need to take other action such as to run, hide or fight? What if someone wants to enter your secure

space? What can you expect from first responders, particularly law enforcement during an active shooter incident? This discussion was included in the presentation after talking with one of our survivors, who has become a friend and colleague, who described her confusion and fears as she lay wounded listening to the commands and conversation of law enforcement. We realized that time and effort is spent instructing our community what we want them to do but little information is provided regarding the perspective of law enforcement and other first responders. The intent is to inform our community should they find themselves in an active assailant scenario what actions not to take and why they need to comply immediately with law enforcement commands.

In closing, I want to mention the collaboration and free sharing of ideas and practices that occurs within higher education. I think higher education recognized very early that you could not individually accomplish all that is needed to be done Within state and regional organizations, athletic conference relationships, federal partners and national forums such as the Disaster Resilient University Network, the International Association of Emergency Managers University College Caucus and the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators platforms are provided to exchange ideas, challenges and successes. A recent higher education accomplishment has been the establishment of a National Intercollegiate Mutual Aid Agreement, which currently has 69 signatories

I want to thank you for the allowing me to participate in this forum. If there is any additional information, I can provide or if there is interest by the Commission or the

Commissions' team to see any of the programs or tools we use at Virginia Tech including the Safety Security and Preparedness presentation I would welcome the opportunity.