

To See, or Not To See...

Best practice for school classroom and office windows



There is a lot of confusion surrounding school classroom and office windows. Many school districts struggle with the question, "Should our windows remain unobstructed to reduce issues associated with sexual abuse and molestation (SAM) incidents or should they be obstructed to provide protection during an active assailant lockdown incident?"

The answer is simple....

During Normal Conditions

School classroom and office windows **should always remain unobstructed**, ensuring that there is clear natural surveillance into those rooms. This is primarily to protect students and staff from issues arising from SAM incidents.

Main windows, door lites and vestibule windows **should never be covered** with paper, posters, curtains, blinds or other opaque materials during normal conditions.

During a Lockdown

Lockdowns are the exception to the unobstructed classroom and office windows rule.

Once a lockdown has been initiated all classroom and office windows should be covered or obstructed completely to block natural surveillance into the room. The goal is to prevent bad actors from determining room occupancy or targeting individuals inside of a room.

Typical Window Covering Options

- Rapid deploying window shades
- Traditional style blinds or curtains
- Temporary door lite covers
 - Magnetic sheets (for metal doors)
 - Velcro shutters (for wood doors)
- Applied window tint film **not for use on door lites or vestibule windows*

Target Hardening

When we talk of hardening windows we typically imagine the installation of ballistic rated glass but that can be a very expensive endeavor.

An affordable alternative is the application of commercial applied anti-theft film, sometimes referred to as "hurricane film". While these types of films **do not** stop bullets, they will prevent the rapid breaching of windows by shooting into them. This buys the room occupants critical time to decide and react during an incident.

Take-Aways

- Statistically there is a much higher likelihood of a SAM related incident occurring as compared to an active assailant incident. It is imperative that natural surveillance is maintained in classrooms and offices during normal conditions.
- There are many commercially available options for window coverings that can be used during a lockdown situation. When choosing options consideration should be given to ease of operation, effectiveness, and durability.
- Consider the use of applied anti-theft / hurricane film on windows that are vulnerable to rapid breaching. These types of films are available in clear and tinted options.
- School districts should work with local law enforcement and trusted partners with expertise in identifying vulnerabilities at school sites.
- School districts should ensure that all devices or materials used as lockdown window coverings comply with applicable fire codes and flammability standards.