

SSHE Newsletter 2/2016

September 2016

1) Interview on Campus Security with Dr. Stephen White*



Dr. White, in the past, Switzerland has been fortunate in that cases of amok have been few. In light of recent events in Europe, e.g. the case of amok in July this year in Munich, do you think acts of violence might increase in Switzerland too?

I think we have to keep in mind that it is possible, because of the instant spread of news and the fact that gaining notoriety is one of the goals of individuals who contemplate and carry out these terrible acts. I think the probability for something serious is very low, and you should enjoy the peacefulness you have here. But you need to understand that no place is immune and to not take for granted that the risk is zero.

What could that mean for ETH?

Any university needs to be aware of these possibilities and have the resources to identify and respond to concerns about harm. These events have happened in Europe, e.g. at schools and universities in Germany and Finland. A culture of respect is at the core. The members of your campus community at all levels need to understand that civil conduct is expected. Conflicts and stress are inevitable but leaders need to emphasize that respect is essential and creating fear in others is unacceptable. People can't learn if they feel afraid. And of course, every school should have a risk assessment team trained to identify and respond to situations of concern.

As an expert on the assessment and management of workplace and campus violence, you have trained countless university staff members worldwide. In your opinion: What are the crucial factors in the prevention of campus violence?

First of all, you have to have a policy that threats and intimidation are unacceptable. Then you need to establish a multi-disciplinary team, which educates the ETH community, knows what to look for, and intervenes early in situations to sort them out. There may be few situations, which are really dangerous. But in these cases, get ahead of it; don't wait until there is a crisis. This is not the prediction of violence, but risk mitigation. Most often, there are clear warning signs and we know the risk factors for violence.

ETH is strongly engaged in preventive measures against cases of school shooting: We have established a threat management system, we are able to inform ETH members via e-mail, SMS, landline and public address systems in case of emergency and we are fitting public rooms, e.g. lecture halls and meeting rooms, with security locks. What more can we do to keep ETH a safe place?

I am very impressed with the proactive approach here. Emergency procedures are very important. It is, however, important to keep reminding people that these things might happen, to keep educating people, and make clear who they should contact. If a team is uncertain about how serious a case is, they should consult experts – “when in doubt, confer.”

How can ETH members contribute to prevent acts of violence from occurring at our university?

Two things: First, treat your fellow ETH members with respect. Second, be observant of common sense indicators telling you that someone is having trouble or is making trouble. They are angry and intimidating or threatening people, or making bizarre violent statements. Take note of others who might give concern, or act inappropriately. We are all now in a “see something, say something” world. Many attacks have been thwarted or stopped in the early stages of preparation. Only if we know about an issue we can do something about it. And when uncertain, people should call the threat management team. Don't be concerned about over-reacting. The team knows that many situations can be resolved without taking extreme measures. It will always be safer and wiser to look into something, than to dismiss it as unimportant straight away.

* Dr. Stephen White is a psychologist and the President of Work Trauma Services Inc., a consulting group assisting employers with serious workplace crises. His extensive work in organizational trauma reduction led to his specializing, since 1989, in the assessment and management of workplace violence risk. In collaboration with Dr. Reid Meloy, he developed and published in 2007 The WAVR-21, the first scientifically based structured professional guide for assessing workplace violence risk. Stephen White is an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California, San Francisco, where he currently leads a professional development group for medical students.

2) Signs inside Rooms with Security Locks



Every day, members of ETH Zurich and external individuals or guests attend lectures, meetings or conferences at ETH Zurich. Experience has shown that many people are unfamiliar with the premises and unaware of the address where they currently are. In the event of an incident, however, this becomes crucial: if the police, emergency medical services or fire brigade have to be called out, they need the official address to find the location. And abbreviations such as IFW or CLA are not much use to the emergency services, either. When raising the alarm – be it via ETH Zurich's Emergency Desk (internally 888 or via mobile phone on 044 342 11 88) or directly to the emergency services – providing the official address is therefore a must.

In preparation for a potential violent incident, we have therefore decided to install signs inside rooms, stating the postal address next to doors with fitted security locks. These signs will be combined with simple symbols and tips on recommended conduct during acts of violence, which render locking or barricading oneself in rooms necessary. With this course of action, ETH Zurich is following a police recommendation. These discreet emergency signs will all be installed by spring 2017.

Info event on targeted violence at ETH Zurich

SSHE is organising two info events on the topic of targeted violence for all members of ETH Zurich both in the Zentrum and on Hönggerberg in November 2016 in collaboration with Corporate Communications. Together with the city's police force, we provide information on ongoing measures and the correct way to act in an incident. We hope a large number of you will attend.

- Hönggerberg: 8 November, 12:15 –13:15 in HCI G 3 (broadcast in HCI G 7).
- Zentrum: 23 November, 12:15 –13:15 in HG F 30 (broadcast in HG G 5).

3) First Response – SSHE and the Facility Management Cooperate

Members of ETH Zurich should report emergencies to ETH Zurich's Emergency Desk (internally on 888 or via mobile telephone on 044 342 11 88) or – if the situation is life-threatening – inform the external emergency services directly. In the latter case, the Emergency Desk must always be informed after the external emergency services have been contacted. As a hub for emergencies at ETH Zurich, the Emergency Desk needs to be kept abreast of all incidents. We assume that most members of ETH Zurich are familiar with these procedures.

In the daytime, however, there is another option: between 7:30 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. you can also contact the Information and Service Centre (ISC) of the building area in question (Facility Management Department): The Facility Management staff are trained in first response duties and can be on the scene more quickly than the SSHE Department's staff, who are divided among the Zentrum and Höggerberg campuses. The Facility Management staff will immediately head to the scene and support you. The responsible SSHE staff will subsequently be informed and, if necessary, also come to the scene of the incident to support first response. Whomever you contact, SSHE and the building area will attend to the matter jointly and, if necessary, call out the external emergency services as well.

4) A Mobility Platform for ETH Zurich

Mobility is a topic that has become increasingly important for ETH Zurich in recent years – and it is set to keep the offices involved busy in the future, too. This is due on the one hand to large-scale projects such as the university district in Zurich's city centre (HGZZ) and on the other hand to the federal standards from the action plan [The Confederation: exemplary in energy](#) →, which calls upon the federal offices and government-related institutions involved to implement 16 measures on the topic of "Mobility".

Construction projects and federal standards require a coordinated approach from ETH Zurich. While numerous initiatives regarding mobility are currently running, sometimes measures and projects exist in parallel, without those in charge knowing about each other. As there has not been a central contact point for mobility topics thus far, the VPPR commissioned the Services and SSHE departments to develop a mobility platform to help coordinate projects and implement measures more efficiently and effectively. Susann Görlinger (SSHE) and Urs Nussbaum (Services) co-run the platform. This dual management structure guarantees a backup and enables the broad topic to be covered with complementary expertise and a broad network. Moreover, the mobility platform does not require any additional resources as, organisationally speaking, Susann Görlinger and Urs Nussbaum will remain with SSHE and Services respectively.

Any questions or comments on the topic of mobility? [Susann Görlinger](#) → and [Urs Nussbaum](#) → are glad to help.

5) Working Safely with Pesticides

In botany, unwanted organisms are combatted with pesticides. However, plant protection can also become a hazard for human health – if used improperly or not stored correctly, many pesticides can cause acute and chronic ailments.

"Good plant protection practice" stipulates only using pesticides if necessary, in the dosage required and under suitable environmental conditions. Moreover, where possible toxic pesticides are to be substituted with alternatives, which are less harmful to humans. The risk of exposure is therefore to be kept to a minimum and the work processes optimized so that nothing is contaminated unnecessarily. When working with most pesticides, chemical-resistant gloves, protective goggles and possibly even respiratory protection are required. Long trousers, a long-sleeved top and, in some cases, even protective clothing are compulsory. As pesticide residue can remain on the leaves, skin contact with the plants should be avoided after use. The [pesticide index](#) → (available in German, French and Italian; not in English) indicates the requirements valid for Switzerland.

Pesticide residues are to be disposed of as hazardous waste. Unapplied spray and watering solution and wastewater from cleaning the dispensers must not get into the water or sewer system; instead, it should ideally be emptied into a septic tank or spread on a treatment area or suitable vegetated area.

More information is available on the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO [website](#) → (available in German, French and Italian; not in English). Please contact cabs@ethz.ch → if you have any questions.

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