



# MANAGING THE RESPONSE TO A MOBILE MASS SHOOTING

A Critical Incident Review of the Kalamazoo, Michigan, Public Safety  
Response to the February 20, 2016, Mass Shooting Incident



Frank Straub, Ph.D.  
Brett Cowell  
Jennifer Zeunik  
Ben Gorban

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## Introduction

Kalamazoo, Michigan, is like any town in middle America. About 150 miles from Chicago, the city is home to approximately 76,000 people, three college campuses, and a thriving downtown area. On Saturday, February 20, 2016, 45-year-old Uber driver Jason Dalton allegedly engaged in a series of shootings that gripped and terrified the community of Kalamazoo—drawing national and international attention and media coverage.<sup>1</sup> The sequence of events that began Saturday afternoon with the suspect driving recklessly in and around the streets of Kalamazoo, ultimately ended with his arrest early Sunday morning. During that time, he allegedly shot eight people, killing six and severely wounding two, across three separate locations in and around the city. Law enforcement officers from six separate public safety agencies were involved in the response, investigation, and apprehension of the suspect.

## Implications and Challenges

Persons and groups motivated by a variety of ideological beliefs and/or individual factors continue to commit violence in communities across the United States. Instances of mass violence have increased in both frequency and lethality during the last decade.<sup>2</sup> The February 2016 mass shooting in Kalamazoo demonstrates the capacity of one individual to cause death and/or serious harm to innocent persons, as well as the fact that no community is immune from mass violence. More importantly, the event demonstrates the resilience of the Kalamazoo community and the strength of the regional public safety response to the tragedy.

Like any mass casualty incident, the challenges confronting the responding public safety agencies in Kalamazoo were significant. Addressing the challenges of these brutal attacks, as well as the calls-for-service that do not abate during critical incidents, was a monumental task. The three shootings, spread across the Kalamazoo area demanded a coordinated response between local, county, and state authorities to secure the three shooting scenes; treat and transport the injured; make family notifications; identify and locate the shooter(s); investigate the shooting; and, respond to local, national and international media demands.

Kalamazoo-area public safety personnel quickly identified and arrested the shooter, saving the lives of innocent people. In addition to learning from the public safety officers who responded to the shootings, saved the lives of severely injured victims, and quickly apprehended the suspect, other valuable lessons can be learned from the response to the mass shooting in Kalamazoo.

The purpose of this Police Foundation Critical Incident Review is to critically, objectively, and thoroughly examine the public safety response including the preparation for, and the recovery from the February 20, 2016 mass shooting. This review provides a detailed overview of the incident response; lessons learned to improve responding agencies' policies, procedures, tactics, systems, and relationships. It also provides guidance to other public safety agency personnel as they prepare to respond to mobile active shooter, mass casualty incidents, or other hostile events. It is important that the lessons identified in this report be studied and applied by public safety and law enforcement agencies as they work to protect their communities and prevent future acts of mass violence.

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1 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

2 Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (June 19, 2015). "Mass public shootings increasing in the U.S." <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/mass-public-shootings-increasing-in-us/> (accessed March 27, 2017).

## Key Themes of the Review

This Critical Incident Review provides a regional view of the response from the perspective of the first responders, and identifies lessons learned before, during, and after the mass shooting. The lessons learned relate directly to the response in Kalamazoo, but are applicable to active shooter or hostile events more generally. The lessons learned center on leadership, command and control, planning and response, investigations, emergency communications, public information, and post-event responder welfare and mental health.

Some of the key themes include the following:

- **Build relationships—leader to leader and organization to organization—during routine operations so that they are in place, when or if a critical incident occurs.** Kalamazoo’s law enforcement leaders knew each other and worked together for several years. They expressed confidence in their organization, as well as in each other, and their agencies, who were all part of the response to the shootings. That confidence was an essential factor in the decisions made, actions taken, and the overall success of the response. *Chapter 2: Leadership and Chapter 3: Command & Control Lessons Learned.*
- **Regional public safety partners should discuss, plan, and exercise coordinated responses to critical incidents including multi-agency command and control, tactical engagement, investigations, emergency communications, and the distribution of public information.** Kalamazoo’s public safety leaders demonstrated extraordinary cooperation, working across local jurisdictions and in concert with other agencies to respond, investigate, and apprehend the suspect. However, agency leaders as well as rank and file officers recognized the need for increased training and exercises to build the capacity for regional multi-agency responses to novel, complex, and hostile events, including incident command systems; communications; investigations; and, other systems and strategies. In addition, although consolidated, the regional crime lab continues to function under systems, policies, procedures, and protocols that are specific to the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) and the Kalamazoo County Sheriff’s Office (KCSO), rather than under one mutually agreed to structure. Consideration should be given to a fully integrated management structure; standardized policies, procedures, and protocols; and, fully integrated evidence management systems to facilitate investigations of major events. *Chapter 3: Command & Control; Chapter 4: Preparation, Training & Response; and, Chapter 5: Investigations Lessons Learned.*
- **Emergency communication policies, procedures, and practices should ensure the timely and accurate intake of information from multiple public sources (eg. voice, email, text, pictures, video) and transmission to all law enforcement personnel served by the system.** Kalamazoo operates a consolidated emergency communications system that performed well during the incident. However, the system was not able to receive email, texts, pictures, or videos. As a work-around during this incident, a Kalamazoo City dispatcher—on her own initiative—requested and received a picture of the suspect on her personal smart phone. She forwarded the picture to a County dispatcher who distributed it to investigators. In another example, the city of Portage—adjacent to Kalamazoo—operates on an independent radio channel, which limited its officers’ situational awareness regarding the shootings and search for the suspect. Consideration should be given to joining the Kalamazoo system to increase inter-agency communication, situational awareness, and officer safety. The City and County should continue to explore opportunities for greater integration of Next Generation 911 personnel, policies, procedures, and protocols. *Chapter 6: Emergency Communications Lessons Learned.*
- **Agencies should coordinate the release of information regarding incidents to the public, through a trained public information officer, using social media and other contemporary**

**communications strategies, to send unified public safety messages throughout the event.**

Neither the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety nor the Prosecutor's Office employs a dedicated public information officer. As a result, the bulk of the public information process during the incident was left to agency heads and went uncoordinated until several hours after the suspect was apprehended. Additionally, no coordinated effort to use social media was employed to apprise the public of important information as the events unfolded or to correct erroneous information. *Chapter 7: Public Information Lessons Learned.*

- **Law enforcement personnel should receive emergency medical and tactical emergency medical training and be equipped to render aid to severely injured victims and colleagues.**

Kalamazoo-area law enforcement officers received tactical emergency medical training and were properly equipped with trauma bags. The training and equipment allowed first responders to take immediate life-saving actions. *Chapter 4: Preparation, Training & Response Lessons Learned.*

- **Attend to first responder and affected agency personnel (including dispatchers) wellness and mental health before, during, and after a mass casualty incident.** Active shooter and other hostile events are devastating to the victims, to the community, and to public safety personnel involved in the response. It is critical that departments underscore the need for, and provide debriefings and other mental health resources to, all personnel both immediately following and long after the event. Kalamazoo area law enforcement leaders made mental health services available to all personnel in group and individual settings. However, some personnel were unable to attend the sessions because of investigative or other operational demands or were unaware of debriefings. Although the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office created a regional Critical Incident Debriefing Team, the Team is currently understaffed and training has lapsed. Departments should renew their commitment to this important asset, recruit new members, and ensure that training meets national best practices. *Chapter 8: Post-Event Responder Welfare & Mental Health Lessons Learned.*

## Conclusion

Kalamazoo-area public safety organizations responded to the February 20, 2016 mass shooting with dedication and professionalism—their actions saved lives. Many of the decisions made by organizational leaders and steps taken by first responders set an example for other public safety agencies as they plan to protect their communities against similar events.

We are thankful to the Kalamazoo area public safety leaders, their personnel, elected officials, and community members for telling us their stories and discussing the details of the incident through this review process. We could not have completed the review without their openness and honesty, as well as allowing us access to important information and data.

Agencies—such as those in San Bernardino and Orlando—who have also responded to recent catastrophic mass casualty incidents—have reported that reviewing and studying incident reviews, such as this one, helped them to prepare for the incidents that occurred in their communities. We hope that the lessons learned in this report adds to that growing body of knowledge to be used by public safety agencies to enhance their preparation for and response to active shooter or other hostile events.<sup>3</sup> The ability that leaders have to collaborate, innovate, and adapt their responses to these events will be critical in a world where surprise and uncertainty are becoming all-too-common characteristics of public safety.

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<sup>3</sup> See the Police Foundation's Full Library of Incident Reviews at [www.incidentreviews.org](http://www.incidentreviews.org).

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# INTRODUCTION

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Persons and groups motivated by a variety of ideological beliefs and/or individual factors have committed, and continue to commit, violence in communities across the United States. Instances of mass violence have increased in both frequency and lethality during the last decade.<sup>4</sup> The February 2016 mass shooting in Kalamazoo, Michigan, demonstrates the capacity of one individual to cause death and/or serious harm to innocent persons, as well as the fact that no community is immune from mass violence. More importantly, the event demonstrates the resilience of the Kalamazoo community and the strength of the regional public safety response to the tragedy.

## The Setting<sup>5</sup>

The city of Kalamazoo is located in southwestern Michigan, about 136 miles from Detroit, 73 miles from Lansing, and 145 miles from Chicago, Illinois.<sup>6</sup> The city spans more than 24 square miles and is home to approximately 76,041 people.<sup>7</sup> Kalamazoo is home to three institutions of higher learning—Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College; boasts a growing downtown area with museums, libraries, breweries, restaurants, and theaters; and, hosts various community events and activities.<sup>8</sup> Kalamazoo County is just over 561 square miles and has a population of approximately 260,263 residents. It encompasses the cities of Kalamazoo, Portage, and several smaller villages and agricultural areas.<sup>9,10</sup>

## The Incident

On February 20, 2016, 45-year-old Uber driver Jason Dalton allegedly engaged in a series of shootings that gripped and shocked the Kalamazoo community.<sup>11</sup> The sequence of events that began with the suspect recklessly driving the streets in and around Kalamazoo, ultimately ended with his arrest early the next morning, February 21, 2016. During that time, he allegedly shot eight people, killing six and severely wounding two. The crime scenes spanned three separate locations in and around the city.

Ultimately six Kalamazoo-area public safety agencies responded to the mass shooting: the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS), Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), Kalamazoo Valley Community College Public Safety Department (KVCCPSD), Michigan State Police (MSP), Portage Police Department (PPD), and Western Michigan University Police Department (WMUPD).<sup>12</sup> Kalamazoo-area first responders secured the shooting scenes, treated and transported the injured, investigated the incidents, identified and arrested the assailant, and briefed the media and the public. The collaborative and the coordinated regional response saved lives and ended a brutal rampage.

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4 Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health (June 19, 2015). "Mass public shootings increasing in the U.S." <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/mass-public-shootings-increasing-in-us/> (accessed March 27, 2017).

5 More detailed information on Kalamazoo and the surrounding area can be found in Appendix B.

6 The City of Kalamazoo. (n.d.). *About Kalamazoo*. <http://www.kalamazoo-city.org/about-kzoo/awards-recognition>. (accessed March 27, 2017).

7 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts: Kalamazoo city: Michigan*. <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/2642160,26077,00>. (accessed March 27, 2017).

8 The City of Kalamazoo. (n.d.). *Neighborhoods*. <http://www.kalamazoo-city.org/nbh>. (accessed March 27, 2017).

9 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts: Kalamazoo County, Michigan*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/26077>. (accessed March 27, 2017).

10 Kalamazoo County Government. (n.d.). *Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office*. <https://www.kalcounty.com/sheriff/>. (accessed March 27, 2017).

11 Dalton's trial—in which he faces 16 felonies, including six counts of murder, two counts of assault with intent to commit murder, and eight felony firearms counts—is scheduled to start June 13, 2017.

12 More detailed information on each of the responding public safety organizations and their response to this incident can be found in Appendix B of this report.

## The Police Foundation Critical Incident Review Technical Assistance

In March 2016, KDPS Chief Jeffrey Hadley, KCSO Sheriff Richard Fuller, and Kalamazoo County Prosecutor Jeffrey Getting asked the Police Foundation to conduct a Critical Incident Review of the Kalamazoo mass shooting.<sup>13</sup> The purpose of the review is to: provide a detailed description of the incident and an analysis of the public safety response; identify ways to improve Kalamazoo area public safety policies, procedures, training and tactics; and, offer insights that will help public safety professionals prepare for and respond to mass casualty and hostile events.

### Scope and Goals of Review

The report examines the following issues and challenges: leadership, command and control, planning and preparation, emergency communications, post-event investigations, media, and first responder mental health. This event was unique in that it required a regional response to a mobile active shooter. However, it appears that communities across the United States, indeed around the world, will continue to experience indiscriminate acts of violence, similar in some ways, to this one. This review is intended to add to the growing body of literature that public safety agencies can draw on to prepare for, and respond to, hostile events that threaten the communities they serve.

### Report Organization

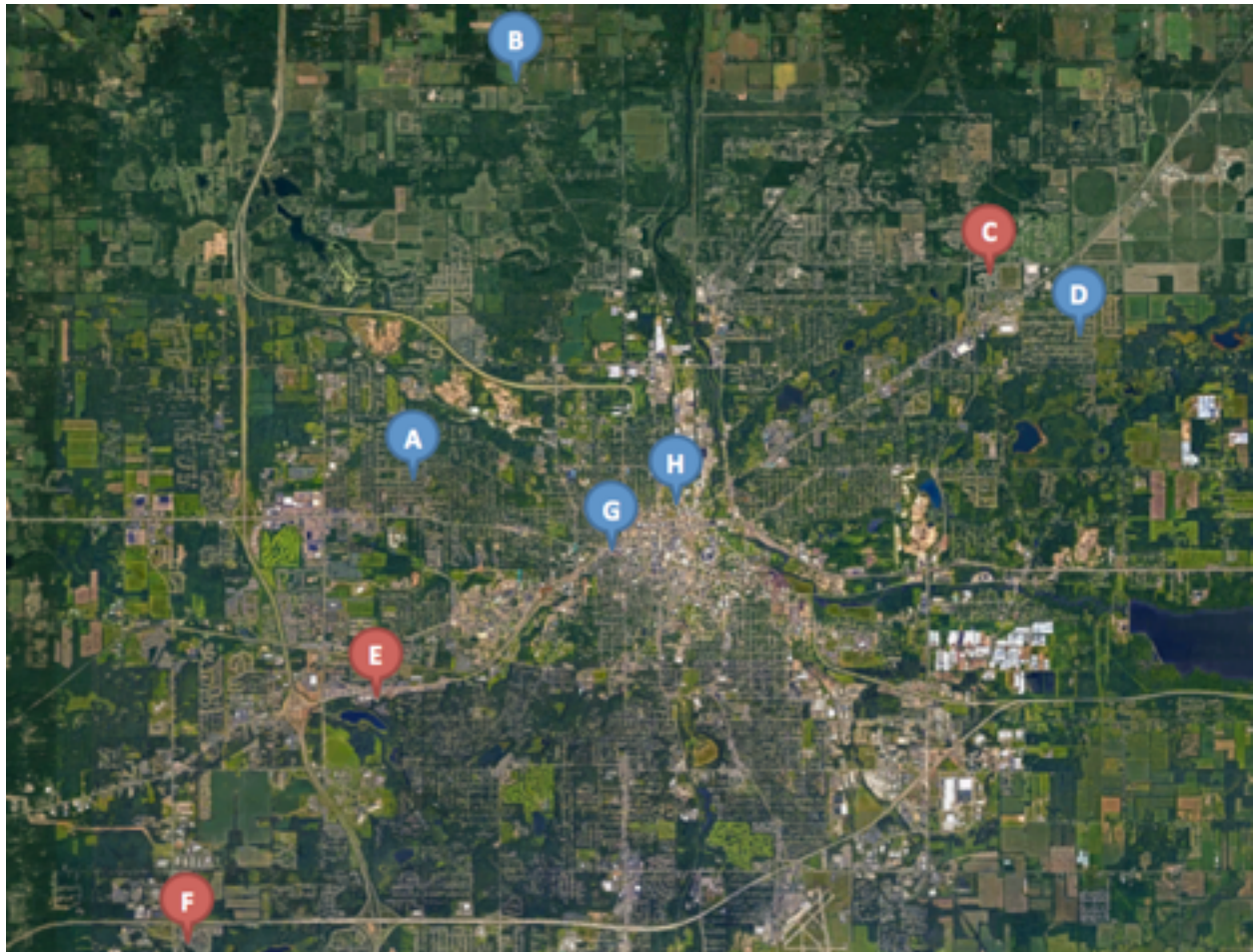
Chapter 1 describes the Kalamazoo mass shooting and the public safety response to it. Chapters 2 through 8 discuss key themes that emerged during the event and response. Chapter 2 focuses on leadership, and Chapter 3 on command and control. Chapter 4 highlights preparation and training issues, while Chapter 5 describes the investigative processes and crime lab operations. Chapter 6 examines the regional emergency communications system, and Chapter 7 focuses on the dissemination of information to the public and the media. Chapter 8 addresses the mental health challenges faced by responders to the mass casualty event. Finally, the conclusion summarizes key themes and identifies lessons learned and topics for further study. Throughout the report, key lessons learned and take-aways are pulled out into the large text boxes. They are also consolidated into one list in Appendix A.

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<sup>13</sup> The Police Foundation's Critical Incident Review and Technical Assistance program provides review and targeted technical assistance to law enforcement agencies dealing with high-profile events, major incidents, or sensitive issues of varying need. A library of the Police Foundation's incident reviews can be found at [www.incidentreviews.org](http://www.incidentreviews.org). More information on the Police Foundation's Critical Incident Review Technical Assistance can be found at <https://www.policefoundation.org/incidentreviews/>.

# 1. PUBLIC SAFETY RESPONSE TO THE KALAMAZOO MASS SHOOTING

On Saturday, February 20, 2016, 45-year-old Uber driver Jason Dalton allegedly engaged in a series of shootings that gripped and shocked the community of Kalamazoo, Michigan, drawing national and international media coverage.<sup>14</sup> The sequence of events that began with the suspect recklessly driving the streets in and around Kalamazoo ultimately ended with his arrest early the following morning. During that time, the suspect allegedly shot eight people, killing six and severely wounding two, in three separate locations in and around the city.<sup>15</sup> Law enforcement officers from six agencies were involved in the response. The following is an account of the events of that day.



**A. Matt Mellen Jumps Out of Suspect's Vehicle**

**B. Suspect's House**

**C. Meadows Apartment Complex**

**D. Suspect's Parents' House**

**E. Seelye Kia Dealership**

**F. Cracker Barrel**

**G. The Up and Under Restaurant**

**H. Arrest Location**

<sup>14</sup> Uber is a smartphone application (app) that is used to connect passengers requesting a ride with driver-partners nearby, similar to a taxi service. The app automatically calculates and charges the payment method passengers link to their Uber account, so no money is exchanged at the end of the ride. For more information about Uber, visit, <https://help.uber.com/h/738d1ff7-5fe0-4383-b34c-4a2480efd71e> (accessed March 9, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Dalton's trial—in which he faces 16 felonies, including six counts of murder, two counts of assault with intent to commit murder, and eight felony firearms counts—is scheduled to start June 13, 2017.

## A “Crazy Driver”

Shortly after 4:00 p.m. on Saturday, February 20, 2016, Matt Mellen requested an Uber pick-up to take him to a friend’s house so that he could pick up his car.<sup>16</sup> At 4:21 p.m., the suspect arrived in a silver Chevrolet Equinox, and Mr. Mellen got in.<sup>17</sup> After a bit of small talk between the two, the suspect received a phone call. Mr. Mellen didn’t pay much attention to the call, but after the suspect hung up, Mr. Mellen reported that the suspect, “hammered the gas pedal” and “started driving crazy.”<sup>18</sup> At one point, the suspect sped the vehicle into an oncoming lane of traffic, drove through a median, ignored a stop sign, and sideswiped a Ford Taurus.<sup>19</sup> Despite Mr. Mellen’s pleas to stop the vehicle, the suspect refused to do so. Finally, when the vehicle stopped at a stop sign, Mr. Mellen jumped out and [called 911](#) to report the “crazy driver.”<sup>20</sup>



Since Mr. Mellen’s 911 call was made from Huron Avenue, in Kalamazoo County, it was initially answered by Kalamazoo County dispatch. After Mr. Mellen described how the suspect had driven through a median at the intersection of Nichols Road and West Main Street—within the jurisdiction of Kalamazoo Township—the dispatcher transferred his call to a Township dispatcher. While on the phone with the Kalamazoo Township dispatcher, Mr. Mellen also reported that the suspect had struck a Ford Taurus on West Main Hill near the Henderson Castle Inn. Based on the location of that automobile crash, the dispatcher transferred Mr. Mellen again, this time to a Kalamazoo City dispatcher.<sup>20</sup>

16 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

17 “Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016.” Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

18 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

19 Ibid.

20 Detroit Free Press. (2016, March 14). 911 call: Kalamazoo shooting spree. <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/03/14/911-recordings-kalamazoo-shooting/81785802/> (accessed March 28, 2017).

Mr. Mellen recounted the events of his ride to the Kalamazoo City dispatcher and gave the dispatcher information about the vehicle, including that it was a silver Chevrolet Equinox and the license plate number.<sup>22</sup> The dispatcher then put out a “Be on the Lookout” (BOLO) for the vehicle over the radio system.

## Shots Fired

At 4:34 p.m., the suspect returned home. Forty-one minutes later, he called his wife from their home and asked her where the keys to their Hummer H3 were. The couple arranged to meet where the H3 was parked: at the suspect’s parents’ residence in Kalamazoo, approximately 10 miles away. Prior to meeting his wife, however, he accepted another pick-up request from Uber. Maci Eldridge had requested a pick-up for her boyfriend at the Meadows apartment complex.<sup>23</sup>

When the suspect arrived at the apartment complex, he had trouble locating the correct address. He called Ms. Eldridge and asked her for help finding her boyfriend’s exact pickup location. She provided him directions and then tried to follow up with him to make sure he found the correct address, but he did not answer his phone. Instead, he spotted Tiana Carruthers, who was leading five children to a nearby playground.<sup>24</sup>

The suspect drove up to Ms. Carruthers, rolled down his window, and asked her if she was Ms. Eldridge. Ms. Carruthers replied that she was not, and the suspect briefly drove off. However, he turned his vehicle around and headed back towards Ms. Carruthers. At 5:42 p.m., the suspect allegedly rolled down his driver’s side window and fired approximately 15 rounds at her from a Glock pistol striking her four times.<sup>25</sup> None of the children she was with were injured.

After allegedly shooting Ms. Carruthers, the suspect sped away from the scene. One minute later, and approximately one mile from the Meadows apartment complex, the suspect drove through a red traffic light at G Avenue and Gull Road, and was involved in another automobile crash. The other individual involved in the crash called 911 and reported that a silver Chevrolet Equinox struck his vehicle and fled the scene, traveling eastbound on G Avenue.<sup>26</sup>

At roughly the same time, a neighbor found Ms. Carruthers and called 911. The caller told the Kalamazoo County dispatcher that a woman had been shot several times and the suspect had driven off in a silver car.<sup>27</sup> A few minutes later, a Kalamazoo County Sheriff’s Office (KCSO) sergeant and deputy arrived on scene with an ambulance close behind. Ms. Carruthers—who was injured but still able to speak—told deputies that a man came up to her, asked her a question, and then opened fire.

While EMS personnel treated Ms. Carruthers and transported her to the hospital, deputies canvassed the Meadows apartment complex to obtain additional information regarding the shooting. County and city dispatchers notified deputies and officers of the shooting via messages on their mobile data terminals (MDTs) and radio broadcasts.

When the Kalamazoo City dispatcher who had taken the earlier call from Mr. Mellen heard the notification regarding the shooting at the Meadows apartment complex, she noted the similarity between the description of the erratic Uber driver and the suspect’s vehicle at the Meadows shooting. Pursuing this possible connection, the dispatcher called Mr. Mellen back and asked him for a description of his Uber driver. Mr. Mellen identified his Uber

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21 “Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016.” Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

22 Detroit Free Press. (2016, March 14). *911 call: Kalamazoo shooting spree*. <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/03/14/911-recordings-kalamazoo-shooting/81785802/> (accessed March 28, 2017).

23 “Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016.” Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

24 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

25 “Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016.” Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

26 Ibid.

27 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

driver as a white male, mid-40s, heavier set, with black glasses, salt-and-pepper hair, and some facial hair. He went on to provide the dispatcher with the name of the driver from the Uber confirmation email he received for the pick-up: “Jason.” Mr. Mellen told the dispatcher that the driver had introduced himself by a different name—one he didn’t remember—and indicated that he did not know the driver’s last name. Mr. Mellen also mentioned that he had a picture of the driver from the confirmation email. The dispatcher asked Mr. Mellen to text the driver’s picture to her private cell phone because the Kalamazoo City dispatch center could not receive the photograph. Mr. Mellen sent the picture to the dispatcher’s phone.<sup>28</sup> Upon receiving the picture, the KDPS dispatcher forwarded it to a County dispatcher, who subsequently provided it to investigators.

As KCSO crime scene technicians and detectives investigated the Meadows’ shooting scene, Kalamazoo County Sheriff Richard Fuller traveled to the scene and discussed the incident with the captain of the criminal investigations division (CID).

## The Suspect Switches Vehicles

After fleeing the Meadows apartment complex and the scene of the crash, the suspect drove to his parents’ house—which was approximately 1.4 miles away. He parked his damaged vehicle in the garage and met his wife. He told her that he had been in an accident where a vehicle sideswiped him and the driver shot at him.<sup>29</sup> He said he had contacted Uber and assured his wife that they would handle everything.<sup>30</sup> His wife later recounted that she believed his story was related to a different one he told her a week earlier about how taxi drivers did not like Uber drivers.<sup>31</sup>

At 6:05 p.m., the suspect called Ms. Eldridge and advised her that he could not complete the pick-up she had scheduled. Sometime after that call, the suspect spoke to his wife and told her that it was not safe for any of them to return home. He then went upstairs and took a Taurus handgun out of his father’s closet, loaded it, and gave it to his wife. He also told her not to go to work or send the kids to school on Monday.<sup>32</sup>

The suspect then attempted to leave his parents’ house in the Hummer H3. When it failed to start, he went back inside and grabbed the keys to the black Chevrolet HHR his wife had been driving. As he turned to leave again, he told his wife that he could not tell her what was going on, but that it would be in the news. He stated, “My name won’t be on TV, but you will know it is me.”<sup>33</sup>

## More Uber Passengers

At 6:44 p.m., the suspect was captured on a surveillance video withdrawing money from an ATM. For the next 35 minutes, he drove around the Kalamazoo area and eventually returned to his house at 7:19 p.m.<sup>34</sup> Back at home, the suspect retrieved another handgun—a Walther P99—and left his Glock handgun on a workbench in his basement.<sup>35</sup>

At 7:37 p.m., the suspect left his house, and at around 8:00 p.m. he accepted a new Uber fare. The suspect drove his passenger approximately 1.6 miles, dropping him off without incident at approximately 8:18 p.m. Shortly thereafter, the suspect accepted yet another Uber fare and drove the passenger approximately 5.4 miles downtown to the Transportation Center, again without incident. At 9:21 p.m., he transported three more passengers from the

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28 Detroit Free Press. (2016, March 14). 911 call: Kalamazoo shooting spree. <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/03/14/911-recordings-kalamazoo-shooting/81785802/> (accessed March 28, 2017).

29 “Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016.” Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

30 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

31 “Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016.” Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

Fairfield Inn—near the Cracker Barrel that the suspect would return to later that night—to the Kalamazoo Beer Exchange.<sup>36</sup> The ride took about 24 minutes and the passengers did not notice anything unusual or alarming about the driver.<sup>37</sup>

## Second Shooting

At 9:58 p.m., Richard and Tyler Smith, along with Tyler's girlfriend Alexis, entered the parking lot of the Seelye Kia dealership on Stadium Drive in the city of Kalamazoo. Richard and Tyler exited their Range Rover to look at vehicles in the parking lot, while Alexis stayed in the vehicle. At 10:01 p.m., the suspect entered the Seelye parking lot driving his black Chevrolet HHR.<sup>38</sup>

The suspect parked his vehicle in front of the dealership about five or six parking spaces away from the Range Rover. At 10:05 p.m., the suspect got out of his vehicle, approached Richard and Tyler, and asked them what they were looking at.<sup>39</sup> Before they could answer, the suspect opened fire.<sup>40</sup> He fired approximately 18 rounds at the father and son, fatally striking both.

Across the street, in a Burger King parking lot, witnesses heard the gunshots and captured cell phone video of the suspect fleeing.<sup>41</sup> At 10:06 p.m., one of the witnesses called 911, relaying to the 911 operator that they heard gunshots and saw two people lying on the ground.<sup>42</sup> Alexis crawled out of the Range Rover and called 911 using her boyfriend's cell phone.<sup>43</sup>

Two minutes after the 911 call, officers from the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) were dispatched to the Seelye Kia parking lot for "Shots Fired."<sup>44</sup> When the call was broadcast over the radio, KCSO crime scene technicians were just taking down the crime scene tape at the Meadows apartment complex.

At 10:10 p.m., a KDPS sergeant—the night supervisor—was the first to arrive at the Seelye Kia dealership. As the sergeant approached the scene, he observed two bodies on the ground and found Alexis hiding in the back of the Range Rover. He asked her where the suspect was, and she stated that he had run off towards the back of the Kia dealership. She described the suspect as a white male with a hood and gray hair.<sup>45</sup> The sergeant checked the two victims, both of whom had succumbed to their injuries.

A second KDPS officer arrived on scene and the sergeant directed the officer to continue interviewing Mr. Smith's girlfriend. As more KDPS officers arrived, the sergeant established a wide perimeter to contain the suspect and requested a dedicated radio channel (Tac-3) for the operation.<sup>46</sup> A KDPS K9 handler attempted to track the suspect, but after a few minutes, the scent was lost. The officers assumed the suspect had gotten into a vehicle, which was confirmed by a witness across the street, who stated the suspect sped away from the scene in a dark hatchback-style sedan.

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36 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

37 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

38 The suspect later told investigators that he had felt compelled to look at a black BMW in the parking lot. Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

39 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

40 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

41 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

42 KDPS CAD Notes. Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

43 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

44 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

45 MLive. (2016, May 4). *Police dashcam excerpts from the Feb. 20 mass shooting in Kalamazoo*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ci78k\\_3DBsc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ci78k_3DBsc) (accessed March 28, 2017).

46 Ibid.

The officers contacted Seelye's management to see if they could review the dealership's surveillance video. While they waited for management to arrive, the officers searched the parking lot and nearby buildings for evidence and additional victims. As they were searching, another "Shots Fired" call was broadcast over the radio.

### Third Shooting

Within 10 minutes of the Seelye shooting, the suspect pulled into the parking lot of a Cracker Barrel restaurant which was approximately five miles from the dealership. At 10:17 p.m., he approached an elderly woman sitting in the driver's seat of a white van, asked her a question, and shot her. He then walked around the van and systematically shot four passengers in an adjacent car, firing approximately 17 rounds from his Walther P99 before fleeing the scene at 10:18 p.m.<sup>47</sup> A witness observed the suspect's vehicle speeding away and [called 911](#). The witness described the suspect's vehicle as a dark blue HHR, but indicated that he had not seen the suspect.<sup>48</sup> The suspect, meanwhile, returned home and reloaded his handgun.<sup>49</sup>

When KDPS officers at the Seelye dealership heard the "Shots Fired" call for the Cracker Barrel shooting, they believed they had a mobile active shooter. The KDPS sergeant at the dealership quickly handed out assignments to the officers there, detailing who would stay at the dealership and who would respond to the Cracker Barrel.

At approximately 10:24 p.m., a Michigan State Police (MSP) trooper--was in the area, heard the "Shots Fired" call, and responded. The MSP trooper was the first on to arrive at the Cracker Barrel.<sup>50</sup> About one minute later, a KDPS officer arrived from the Seelye Kia dealership. The two officers found one deceased victim in the driver's seat of the van and three victims in the car--two deceased and one alive. After a few moments, the officers heard sounds coming from the front right passenger seat of the car and discovered a fifth victim, a 14-year-old girl, on the floorboard suffering from a gunshot wound to the head.

As additional officers arrived on scene, a KDPS officer and a KCSO deputy retrieved medical bags and began to treat the 14-year-old's injuries, while another officer attended to the injured victim in the backseat. Meanwhile, KDPS officers and KCSO deputies set up perimeters and an MSP sergeant took incident command.

Officers, deputies, and troopers worked with emergency medical service (EMS) personnel to render aid to the victims and quickly transport them to the hospital. Other officers interviewed witnesses at the Cracker Barrel and at the nearby Fairfield Inn and Microtel. One witness advised that the suspect drove away in a black Chevrolet HHR. This description was corroborated shortly thereafter, when MSP troopers obtained access to Cracker Barrel's surveillance video. Although the video was poor quality, it was enough to identify the suspect's vehicle as an HHR. With multiple units already on scene, other officers and deputies focused their attention on staying visible in the community and searching for the suspect's vehicle.

Soon after the Cracker Barrel shooting, Sheriff Fuller received a call at home from Undersheriff Matyas notifying him of the shootings at Cracker Barrel and the Seelye dealership. Sheriff Fuller responded to the Cracker Barrel scene while monitoring the situation via his department radio, and he instructed the Undersheriff to bring in additional personnel to assist with the investigation.

Meanwhile, KDPS Chief Jeffrey Hadley was awakened at home. Upon hearing the news of the shooting at the dealership, Chief Hadley responded to that scene while monitoring the situation via his department radio. He was eventually joined at the dealership by Kalamazoo County Prosecutor Jeffrey Getting, who had also met with law enforcement personnel at the Cracker Barrel scene.

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47 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. GO. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

48 Detroit Free Press. (2016, March 14). *911 call: Kalamazoo shooting spree*. <http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2016/03/14/911-recordings-kalamazoo-shooting/81785802/> (accessed March 28, 2017).

49 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

50 Ibid.

In addition to senior law enforcement executives, the Kalamazoo City mayor, Kalamazoo City manager, and the Kalamazoo County administrator were also notified of the shootings.

At approximately 10:40 p.m., staff at the Seelye Kia dealership arrived and worked with a KDPS officer to review the dealership's surveillance videos. The dealership had recently installed a new HD surveillance system, so the videos were able to provide a significant amount of information. After viewing the videos, the KDPS officer broadcast a description of the suspect over the radio: "average build male, tall, dark clothing, possibly blonde hair."<sup>51</sup> Additionally, the suspect's vehicle could be clearly identified as a dark-colored Chevrolet HHR. Given the consistent description of the suspect and the suspect's vehicle across incidents, investigators concluded the shootings were related.

## The Manhunt Begins

After the shooting at the Cracker Barrel, KDPS posted the following message on its Facebook page, warning the public to be cautious and to keep a lookout for the suspect:



Meanwhile, officers and deputies conducted numerous traffic stops of vehicles matching the description of the suspect's vehicle. To assist with the search, the MSP Commander for the Paw Paw post requested additional state troopers, provided the description of the suspect and his vehicle to other law enforcement agencies, and coordinated the deployment of MSP resources along Interstate 94.

In an effort to brief the public on the current situation, the Kalamazoo County Undersheriff and the MSP Lieutenant in command of the Paw Paw post appeared on a local news broadcast near the Cracker Barrel. The Undersheriff told the reporter:

"We've had several shootings here tonight in the county and the city of Kalamazoo. They all appear to be related. We have multiple people dead. In summary, what it looks like is we have somebody just driving around, finding people, and shooting them dead in their tracks."<sup>52</sup>

The Undersheriff went on to describe the suspect as a white male around 50 years old. The MSP Lieutenant added, "The vehicle involved in the incident here at the Cracker Barrel tonight appears to be a dark blue Chevy HHR." He stated that they currently had three people deceased at the Cracker Barrel and two victims being treated for life-threatening injuries at the hospital. He urged the public to, "be vigilant and to make sure that if they see a dark blue HHR to call 911 immediately and give us that information."<sup>53</sup>

51 MLive. (2016, May 4). *Police dashcam excerpts from the Feb. 20 mass shooting in Kalamazoo*. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI78k\\_3DBsc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CI78k_3DBsc) (accessed March 28, 2017).

52 Wood TV8. (2016, Feb 20). *Police: Gunman on the run after random shootings*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJ5i16qLm-M>. (accessed March 28, 2017).

53 Ibid.

Shortly thereafter, city and county 911 operators were inundated with numerous reports of suspicious persons, suspicious vehicles, and shots fired at locations in and around the city. One of the calls reported an active shooter near Western Michigan University's campus, which forced officers from a number of agencies—including KCSO and the Western Michigan University Police Department (WMUPD)—to respond to multiple calls while still trying to locate the suspect. Ultimately, these calls proved to be unfounded.

At approximately 11:10 p.m., another MSP lieutenant called the Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) Public Safety Director and asked him for assistance in setting up an emergency operations center (EOC). The lieutenant initially requested that the EOC be established at the Groves campus because of its proximity to the Cracker Barrel. However, because of known issues with the 800 megahertz signal on that campus, the KVCC Public Safety Director suggested that the EOC be established at the Texas Township campus instead, since that campus had invested a considerable amount of money in a bi-directional antenna, making it a more suitable location for sending and receiving communications.



At the Texas Township campus, the KVCC Public Safety Director and a KVCC captain set up the EOC in a room directly across the hallway from the KVCC Public Safety Department. By 11:45 p.m., the EOC was operational, and a briefing with all agencies was scheduled for 1:00 a.m. Representatives from MSP, KVCC, and KCSO were present in the EOC.

## More Passengers

Meanwhile, the suspect continued to pick up more Uber fares. At 12:04 a.m., he picked up three passengers and dropped them off at a Western Michigan University dormitory. While the passengers later recalled that the driver wasn't too friendly, he did nothing to alarm them.<sup>54</sup>

At 12:12 a.m., the suspect picked up four passengers at Bell's Eccentric Café and transported them to the Radisson hotel.<sup>55</sup> During the ride, one of the passengers jokingly questioned the suspect, "You're not the shooter, are you?" The suspect replied, "No."<sup>56</sup>

A few minutes later, the suspect picked up three more passengers at the Central City Tap House and drove them to Rugger's Up and Under, approximately one mile away. Again, one of the passengers asked him if he was the killer. The suspect replied, "Wow, that is crazy. No way. I'm not the guy."<sup>57</sup>



## A Surprising End to the Rampage

At 12:36 a.m., a KCSO sergeant observed a black HHR pulling out of Rugger's Up and Under. The sergeant followed the vehicle and requested backup. A few minutes later, a KDPS officer joined the sergeant, and at 12:40 a.m., the two conducted a vehicle stop.<sup>58</sup>

The suspect complied with the officers' commands during the stop. As additional officers arrived, the sergeant and officer removed the suspect from his vehicle and placed him under arrest.

54 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

55 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

56 Heath, C. (2016, Aug 22). The Uber killer: the real story of one night of terror. *GQ*. <http://www.gq.com/story/the-uber-killer> (accessed March 28, 2017).

57 "Timeline of Events for Jason Dalton on 02/20/2016." Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

58 Ibid.

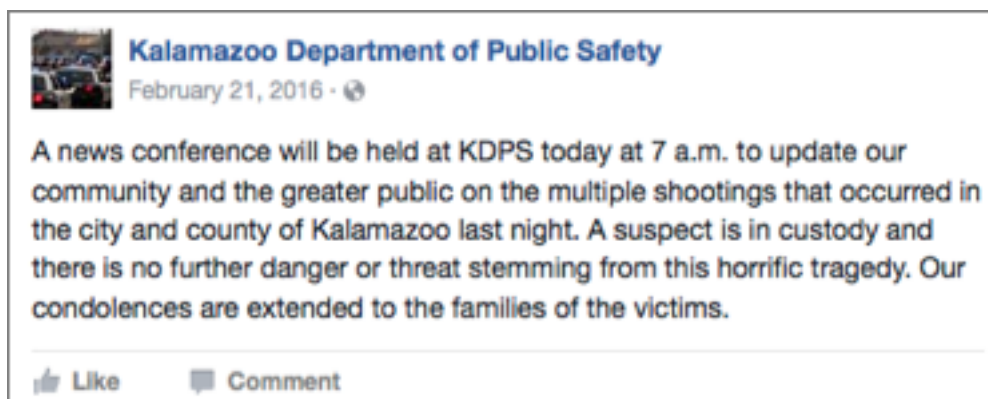
The officers searched the suspect, who was wearing a ballistic vest, and found a handgun in the back of his waistband. Once the suspect was in custody, the KDPS officer who had reviewed the surveillance video at the Seelye dealership arrived at the arrest location and identified the suspect as the shooter from the dealership. Because of the suspect's confirmed connection to the Seelye shooting, KCSO transferred custody of the suspect to KDPS, and KDPS transported him to their headquarters for interviewing.

Following his arrest, officers searched the suspect's vehicle and photographed the confiscated handgun, as additional officers secured his residence. The EOC was dismantled and senior leadership from each agency turned their attention to updating the public.

## Media Frenzy

In separate interviews with the press, the Undersheriff,<sup>59</sup> the MSP Lieutenant,<sup>60</sup> and Chief Hadley summarized the events and reported that law enforcement had one suspect in custody, but the motive for the crimes was still unknown.<sup>61</sup> During his interview, the Undersheriff commented that officers and deputies were still searching businesses and parking lots to ensure there were no other victims. Chief Hadley advised there was no longer a threat to the public.<sup>62</sup>

At approximately 4:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 21st, approximately 40 public safety commanders and members of their teams gathered at KDPS headquarters to discuss the shootings and determine next steps. The chief, sheriff, and prosecutor determined that a designated spokesperson was needed to address media inquiries and lead the first press conference, which was scheduled for 7:00 that morning at KDPS headquarters. With the suspect in custody, it was determined that the Kalamazoo County Prosecutor would be the spokesperson.



At the [press conference](#), Prosecutor Getting was accompanied by Kalamazoo Mayor Bobby Hopewell; Chief Jeffrey Hadley, a KDPS captain, and a KDPS officer; Kalamazoo County Sheriff Richard Fuller and the Undersheriff; and, the MSP Lieutenant.

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59 Wood TV8 [Matthew Keyes]. (2016, Feb 21). Kalamazoo police searching for additional shooting victims. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlvqUODSt20>.

60 [Wood TV8]. (2016, Feb 21). MSP: 'Strong suspect' in random deadly shootings in custody. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQ9ulsfwfMI>.

61 [WXYZ-TV Detroit | Channel 7]. (2016, Feb 21). 7 massacred in random shootings in Kalamazoo. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=khpIwS4S0jE>.

62 Ibid.

Prosecutor Getting began by offering his condolences to the families of the victims and reassured the public that the threat no longer existed. He advised that law enforcement had one suspect in custody and, based on the evidence, they had no reason to believe anyone else was involved in the incident. Mr. Getting described the three shootings and corrected erroneous reports regarding the number of persons shot and killed. He also advised that the 14-year-old that had been shot at the Cracker Barrel was still alive but in very serious condition, contrary to earlier reports that indicated she had passed away. Finally, he commended law enforcement officers for capturing the suspect and praised the management at the Seelye dealership and Cracker Barrel for assisting in the investigation. Prosecutor Getting also identified the suspect and advised that the suspect would be charged and arraigned Monday afternoon.<sup>63</sup>

Over the next 72 hours, the incidents in Kalamazoo received intense national and international media coverage. According to Chief Hadley, the Sheriff, Prosecutor and he recognized that Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests would become a significant issue as the media and others endeavored to obtain information regarding the mass shooting. Senior leadership from each of the public safety agencies held a series of meetings to discuss and coordinate the release of information. Prosecutor Getting, as the designated spokesperson, kept track of these requests on a spreadsheet and coordinated the release of information with each agency.

## Investigation

Responsibility for investigating the three shooting scenes was divided among the primary agencies: KCSO, KDPS, and MSP. Based on jurisdiction, KCSO was the primary agency investigating the shooting at the Meadows apartment complex, and KDPS took the lead at the Seelye Kia dealership. Despite falling within KCSO jurisdiction, MSP assumed primary investigative responsibility at the Cracker Barrel because the MSP trooper was the first officer to arrive at the scene, and the KCSO was already investigating the shooting at the Meadows apartment complex.

Evidence collected at the various scenes was sent to the consolidated crime lab operated by the KCSO and KDPS. The crime lab is capable of collecting evidence, processing fingerprints using an in-house Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), performing crime scene reconstruction, and conducting drug analysis. As such, the KCSO/KDPS crime lab processed much of the evidence from the various scenes, but ballistic and DNA evidence was sent to the MSP crime lab for processing. Additionally, the suspect's cell phone was sent to the MSP crime lab so that investigators could pull and analyze the GPS coordinates from Uber to determine the suspect's whereabouts on February 20th and 21st.

## Public Safety and Community Resiliency

In the aftermath of the shootings, law enforcement leaders realized the need to begin the recovery effort, and several debriefings were held to assist first responders. A KCSO Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)-trained lieutenant responded at 11:00 p.m. on February 20th and made personal contacts with KCSO personnel until 5:30 a.m. on February 21st. On Sunday afternoon, February 21st, the KCSO CISM team held a voluntary debriefing for all public safety personnel who were involved in, or affected by, the incident.<sup>64</sup> A longer debriefing was attended by KCSO deputies, KDPS officers, MSP troopers, and student interns who had been riding with MSP troopers who responded to the Cracker Barrel shooting scene, EMS, Fire, and dispatch personnel. Follow up contacts with the Texas Township Fire Department and the Medical Examiner's Office were made by the KCSO CISM team over the following weeks. A sergeant with MSP also sought to assess the well-being of troopers involved in the incidents and personally reached out to each of the responding troopers on Sunday to offer support and mental health services.

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<sup>63</sup> Wood TV8. (2016, Feb 21). *Kalamazoo county prosecutor updates deadly rampage investigation*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p5g-3sVlwU>. (accessed March 28, 2017).

<sup>64</sup> This team, created by the Sheriff in 2009, consists of five deputies trained in peer-to-peer counseling to provide positive coping skills and mechanisms to first responders dealing with stress and/or trauma as a result of a critical incident.

During law enforcement's response to the mass shooting incident, Kalamazoo Mayor Hopewell took a supportive role and focused on providing law enforcement with any necessary resources. Once the suspect was arrested, however, Mayor Hopewell quickly shifted his role to leading the Kalamazoo community through the recovery process. On Monday evening, February 22, the Kalamazoo community held a large vigil that began at the First Congregational Church, in downtown Kalamazoo, and later moved outside to Bronson Park. Approximately 1,000 people were in attendance to honor and remember the victims, and Mayor Hopewell offered words of support and encouragement to the community.<sup>65</sup>

Over the next few days, Mayor Hopewell also reached out to the families of the victims and attended memorial and funeral services for the victims. He engaged the media, providing a message of resiliency and hope to the Kalamazoo community. During an interview with [Michigan Radio](#) on Tuesday, February 23, Mayor Hopewell said, "We are a great community beyond this, and we're going to show that for all the victims as well as the suspect's family, because they are victims as well."<sup>66</sup>

On Wednesday evening, February 24, a larger CISM debriefing was conducted for first responders and dispatchers. All agencies were invited to attend, and approximately 50 people participated.

## Conclusion

On Saturday, February 20, 2016, a 45-year-old male subject allegedly shot eight people, six fatally, across three separate incidents in and around the city of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Faced with the unique challenges of a mobile active shooter over a seven-hour time-period, six law enforcement agencies joined in the response to the series of incidents and worked together to search for and capture the suspect. As President Obama personally acknowledged during a phone call with Mayor Hopewell, Chief Hadley, and Sheriff Fuller—the actions and response of law enforcement quickly ended the suspect's reign of terror.<sup>67</sup>

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65 Monacelli, E. (2016, Feb 22). "Kalamazoo remembers shooting victims at vigil: 'Our world has become a little smaller.'" *MLive*. [http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2016/02/kalamazoo\\_shooting\\_vigil.html](http://www.mlive.com/news/kalamazoo/index.ssf/2016/02/kalamazoo_shooting_vigil.html). (accessed March 28, 2017).

66 Grimes, R. (2016, Feb 23). "Kalamazoo Mayor Hopewell: 'This is just sad. We never thought we would be on that list'". *Michigan Radio*. <http://michiganradio.org/post/kalamazoo-mayor-hopewell-just-sad-we-never-thought-we-would-be-list>. (accessed March 28, 2017).

67 Obama, B. [ObamaWhiteHouse]. (2016, February 22). Watch @POTUS speak on the #KalamazooShooting and keeping the American people safe. Video: <https://twitter.com/ObamaWhiteHouse/status/701810557817585664> [Tweet]. <http://fox17online.com/2016/02/22/president-obama-addresses-kalamazoo-shooting-spree-pledges-federal-support/> (accessed March 28, 2017).

## 2. Leadership

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The mass shooting in Kalamazoo, similar to other hostile events, required public safety agencies from numerous jurisdictions to rapidly respond to a chaotic, complex, and evolving incident. In the face of this unique incident, no one was a substantive expert; no one knew precisely how to respond. Kalamazoo public safety leaders, under stress, had to think through and develop an understanding of the evolving situation, identify a course of action, and then exercise an untried, untested, and unperfected response to the event. Leading their organizations and the community through the mass shooting required adaptive leadership skills that were considerably different from those they had used in response to routine emergencies.

The multi-agency response to the Kalamazoo mass shooting set a tone of remarkable regional collaboration and resource sharing among local, county, and state public safety agencies. Department leaders respected each other's authority, responsibility and jurisdiction. The chief, sheriff and prosecutor expressed confidence in their organizations, as well as in the other public safety agencies that assisted in the response, creating a force multiplier. Together, public safety leaders linked and leveraged their knowledge and assets, resources, and operations to save lives, apprehend the suspect, and protect Kalamazoo from further harm.

Kalamazoo public safety leaders, officers, deputies, and state troopers knew each other and had worked with each other regularly prior to the mass shooting. These strong inter-personal relationships, trust, and respect at all levels of the agencies provided the foundation for the interagency response. Public safety leaders and their personnel checked their egos at the door and focused on their mission—responding to the shootings, rendering aid to the injured, searching for the suspect, and taking him into custody.

The hallmark of Kalamazoo's response was the ability of its public safety personnel to quickly assess the situation, reach across and draw on the capabilities of different agencies, as well as information provided by the community, and produce an effective response to the crisis.

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**Mass shootings and other hostile events quickly exhaust individual agency resources, suggesting the importance of strong inter-personal and inter-agency relationships to ensure collaboration and coordination.**

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# 3. Command and Control

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## Incident Command

Incidents such as the Kalamazoo mass shooting draw a response from numerous law enforcement agencies, fire departments, medical transport agencies, and emergency medical facilities. The ability to respond in a coordinated manner does not happen by accident. Rather, it reflects a region-wide commitment to incident command, shared experience in responding to routine emergencies, and the realization that the mass shooting went beyond the capabilities and jurisdiction of one agency.

During the initial response to each of the three shooting incidents, incident command fell to the first on-scene personnel. As additional personnel arrived, incident command was established at each crime scene based on

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**Incident command should be established as soon as possible and practical at individual scenes as well as to manage the overall event.**

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jurisdiction and/or agency response. The Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) assumed command of the Meadows apartment complex, the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) assumed command of the Seelye Kia dealership scene, and the Michigan State Police (MSP) assumed command and managed the crime scene at the Cracker Barrel.

The shooting at the Meadows apartment complex occurred at 5:42 p.m., just over four hours before the Seelye Kia dealership shootings at 10:05 p.m., and the crime scene investigation proceeded in a

manner consistent with KCSO protocols. The Seelye (10:05 p.m.) and Cracker Barrel (10:17 p.m.) crime scenes, although investigated independently by KDPS and MSP, were quickly connected based on witness interviews and videos. All three scenes were connected through the efforts of an alert dispatcher, witness interviews, videos, and the timely sharing of information among investigative personnel.

An EOC was established at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. However, it never became operational because of the suspect's arrest. At approximately 1:00 a.m., Chief Hadley, Sheriff Fuller and Prosecutor Getting met at KDPS Headquarters to coordinate the investigation. "Command" was established under the prosecutor to ensure the integrity of the investigation and consistent messaging. At 4:00 a.m., approximately 40 personnel from the involved agencies gathered at KDPS to coordinate the investigation and plan next steps. The first official media briefing was held at 7:00 a.m. on February 21, 2016.

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**Regional public safety partners should plan and exercise unified incident command for critical incidents on a regular basis.**

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**Regional response systems should be established to formalize priorities, options, and opportunities to prevent, respond to, and mitigate hostile events.**

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**Incident command at the "scene and event" level should be unified to coordinate various public safety and other government and non-government organizations engaged in responding to the event and its aftermath.**

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The Kalamazoo mass shooting demonstrates that regional public safety partners should plan and exercise unified incident command for critical incidents on a regular basis. Some officers and deputies interviewed by the Police Foundation team, advised that the search for the subject lacked coordination and clear assignments. While it is

important to note that the suspect was apprehended within hours of the third shooting, clear direction and assignments may have been made if unified incident command had been established earlier in the evening. It is important to establish unified incident command and identify a single incident commander (IC) as soon as possible and practical to facilitate communication, situational awareness, operational coordination, allocation of resources, and delivery of services. Protocols that define incident command policies and procedures, how changes in command will be addressed as an event evolves, and the roles and duties of the IC should be established and agreed to among all regional partners.<sup>68</sup>

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**Regional response systems training, exercising, and planning should consider the transition from routine to crisis events, as well as the capacity to draw on the capabilities of the system to employ untried, untested, and unprecedented strategies and tactics to resolve the incident and save lives.**

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### **Incident Command System**

The Incident Command System (ICS), is a standardized management system that is designed to enable effective and efficient response to any emergency situation by integrating facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications between responding agencies. The basic premise of ICS is that it is consistent among all public safety agencies. Therefore, when there is an event or incident that requires a multi-agency response, everyone involved understand roles and responsibilities, organizational structure, and overall strategy and tactics of the response. ICS is widely applicable across disciplines and is normally structured to facilitate activities in five functional areas: command, finance and administration, logistics, operations, and planning. ICS is also a key feature of the National Incident Management System.

For more information about ICS, visit the ICS Resource Center at, <https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/>.

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68 The Police Executive Research Forum (March 2014). "The Police Response to Active Shooter Incidents." Washington D.C.: The Police Executive Research Forum.

## 4. Preparation, Training, and Response

Active shooter events, “normally [occur] in a confined and populated area, in which one or more armed persons have used, or are reasonably likely to use, deadly force in an ongoing manner, and where persons have been injured, killed, or are under imminent threat of death or serious bodily harm by such persons.”<sup>69</sup> According to a study of 84 active shooting incidents between 2000 and 2010, more than 83 percent occurred at an individual location—either a business, school, religious institution, or military base.<sup>70</sup> In fact, the “Beltway Snipers” case, in which two individuals killed 10 people and critically injured three others in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia in October 2002, was one of the most recent high-profile mobile active shooter incidents.<sup>71</sup> Therefore, many of the preparations, policies, and trainings that Kalamazoo-area agencies had in place were understandably insufficient for such a unique and evolving situation.

### The Beltway Snipers – Lessons Learned From a Mobile Active Shooter

The Beltway Sniper Case was one of the largest, most complex, multi-jurisdictional criminal cases in United States history. The 14 shootings—resulting in 10 deaths and three critical injuries—spanned 23 days, in October 2002. Eight jurisdictions—in Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia—responded and investigated. The mobility and unpredictability of the snipers, as well as the expansive timeframe of the events, incited public fear and truly tested the capabilities of local, state, and federal law enforcement. The primary lessons learned—listed below—all revolve around preparing, and training, for a multi-jurisdictional critical incident:

- Develop and practice multi-jurisdictional plans before an incident.
- Plan to have a well-coordinated task force that can be mobilized as the crime occurs.
- Establish a unified command center (UCC) to coordinate, direct, and delineate responsibilities.
- Maintain accurate and effective communication within, and across, agencies and keep everyone involved during the investigation.
- Develop procedures to establish and preserve the crime scenes, especially when there are multiple law enforcement agencies involved.
- Create a formal prosecution task force where there is structured communication and regular coordination between law enforcement and prosecutors.
- Integrate multiple information management systems into one system.
- Consider issues that can arise, be thoughtful, and be prepared for new situations.

Source: Murphy, Gerard R. & Chuck Wexler. “Managing A Multijurisdictional Case: Identifying the Lessons Learned from the Sniper Investigation.” Police Executive Research Forum. October 2004. Downloaded from [http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free\\_Online\\_Documents/Sniper\\_Report/managing%20a%20multijurisdictional%20case%20-%20identifying%20lessons%20learned%20from%20the%20sniper%20investigation%202004.pdf](http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Sniper_Report/managing%20a%20multijurisdictional%20case%20-%20identifying%20lessons%20learned%20from%20the%20sniper%20investigation%202004.pdf).

69 International Association of Chiefs of Police. “Active Shooter Model Policy.” (2014). <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/ActiveShooterPolicy.pdf> (accessed March 7, 2017).

70 J. Pete Blair and M. Hunter Martaindale, *United States Active Shooter Events from 2000 to 2010: Training and Equipment Implications*. (San Marcos, Texas: School of Criminal Justice, Texas State University, 2013). [http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical\\_Issues\\_Series/blair%20-%20united%20states%20active%20shooter%20events%20from%202000%20to%202010.pdf](http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Critical_Issues_Series/blair%20-%20united%20states%20active%20shooter%20events%20from%202000%20to%202010.pdf) (accessed March 7, 2017).

71 Murphy, Gerard R. & Chuck Wexler. “Managing A Multijurisdictional Case: Identifying the Lessons Learned from the Sniper Investigation.” Police Executive Research Forum. October 2004. [http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free\\_Online\\_Documents/Sniper\\_Report/managing%20a%20multijurisdictional%20case%20-%20identifying%20lessons%20learned%20from%20the%20sniper%20investigation%202004.pdf](http://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Sniper_Report/managing%20a%20multijurisdictional%20case%20-%20identifying%20lessons%20learned%20from%20the%20sniper%20investigation%202004.pdf). (accessed March 28, 2017).

## Self-Deployment

Law enforcement training teaches and prepares officers to handle situations on their own or in pairs. They are trained to seek opportunities to perform the tasks assigned to them and self-initiate in the interest of public safety. Agencies measure and evaluate officers in part based on self-initiated activity. “Self-initiated” activity is the response to a situation witnessed by an officer or in response to a scene where the officer may take immediate action to assist in an evolving, ongoing incident. “Self-deployment” is the independent action of an individual or individuals to an incident without the ability to immediately intervene in an ongoing situation or without a request from the jurisdiction in command.<sup>72</sup>

However, the rapid response of state, local, and county law enforcement personnel to the Cracker Barrel, had the potential to cause significant ingress and egress problems for EMS vehicles. Since the Cracker Barrel was located at the end of a small cul-de-sac that was connected to a local road, as officers parked their vehicles and rushed to assist shooting victims, uncoordinated parking could have blocked ambulances from reaching the restaurant. However, a MSP sergeant recognized the potential problem and directed officers to keep access to the parking lot clear of vehicles.

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**Agencies must continually evaluate ingress and egress routes during critical incidents and pay particular attention to the accessibility of emergency vehicles.**

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**Agencies should have a unified plan for the timely transition from the somewhat chaotic active shooter response to a more methodical search for possible suspects.**

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Additionally, as information developed regarding the identity of the suspect and the urgency to capture the suspect increased, officers and deputies were instructed to make themselves visible and effect traffic stops on vehicles that matched the description of the

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<sup>72</sup> Brazier, Rick, Frank Straub, George Watson, and Rod Hoops. 2016. Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center. Critical Response Initiative. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://www.policefoundation.org/bringing-calm-to-chaos-a-police-foundation-review-of-the-san-bernardino-terrorist-attacks-2/> (accessed March 7, 2017).

suspect's vehicle. This led to instances in which law enforcement officers, including senior personnel, self-deployed to reported sightings of the suspect by members of the community and/or reported gun shots, which proved to be false.

## Training

While law enforcement leaders and personnel in Kalamazoo recognized the need to plan and train for critical incidents, the uniqueness posed by the mobility of the active shooter in this case created challenges for the responding agencies. While most of the individual responding agencies conducted their own active shooter training prior to the night of February 20, many of the officers and deputies that responded had not trained together. Additionally, with officers and deputies coming from multiple agencies, response policies, procedures, and protocols were different. Because the response involved multiple agencies and multiple crime scenes, some confusion existed regarding who the incident commander (IC) was, and who

officers were to report to when they arrived on scene.

As perpetrators of violence devise more devastating attacks, it is important that public safety personnel are trained to recognize the transition from a routine emergency to a crisis event. In this regard, training exercises should, as much as possible, prepare public safety personnel to confront novelty and develop and implement a response amidst chaos and uncertainty. Regional training exercises should identify potential resources, define the roles and responsibilities of responding public safety personnel, the importance of unified incident command, and identify non-traditional partners who may assist during or in the immediate aftermath of a crisis event.

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**Training exercises should, as much as possible, prepare public safety personnel to confront novelty and develop and implement a response amidst chaos and uncertainty.**

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**Officers should receive clear and specific directions to contact the Incident Commander upon arrival on scene to coordinate efforts and assignments.**

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## Tactical Emergency Medicine

The police officers and deputies who responded to the shooting scenes in Kalamazoo had received training in trauma medicine and were equipped to provide emergency medical care to shooting victims - their training and skills undoubtedly saved the lives of shooting victims.

More and more law enforcement agencies nationwide are providing basic trauma care and equipment for their officers. In October 2013, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) adopted a resolution at its annual conference in Philadelphia recommending:

“that every law enforcement officer should receive tactical emergency medical training including critical core skills of early, life-threatening hemorrhage control and rapid evacuation of mass casualty victims to a casualty collection point. Tactical emergency medical skills are critical life-saving interventions in the officer-down situation, whether as officer applied self-aid or aid given to a fellow officer, or to victims of a mass casualty situation such as an active shooter or bombing event.”<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Police Physicians Section, “Tactical Emergency Medical Training for Law Enforcement Personnel: Adopted at the 120th Annual Conference, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October 23, 2013,” International Association of Chiefs of Police, accessed June 22, 2016, <http://www.iacp.org/ViewResult?SearchID=2310> (accessed March 7, 2017).

This recommendation was repeated in the *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*, which states, "Every law enforcement officer should be provided with individual tactical first aid kits and training."<sup>74</sup> It goes on to state, "This would be a national adoption of the Hartford Consensus, which calls for agencies to adopt hemorrhage control as a core law enforcement skill and to integrate rescue/emergency medical services personnel into community-wide active shooter preparedness and training."<sup>75</sup>

While the primary goal of tactical emergency medical training has been to assist wounded officers, the benefits of such training and equipment beyond rendering aid to a wounded colleague were demonstrated on January 8, 2011, in Tucson, Arizona, when Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords and several other people were shot. Lives were saved because responding Pima County Sheriff's Department deputies had tactical medical kits and training, which they used to treat some of the gunshot victims.

According to a U.S. Department of Homeland Security document—*First Responder Guide for Improving Survivability in IED and/or Active Shooter Incidents* (June 2015)—"based on the immediacy of the threat and the geographic location of victims, law enforcement officers providing casualty care may offer the best chance for victim survival."<sup>76</sup> As demonstrated in Kalamazoo, law enforcement personnel, trained and equipped to treat trauma victims are saving the lives of their colleagues and injured members of their communities.

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**Law enforcement agencies should equip officers with tactical emergency medical kits and provide basic trauma care training to all officers.**

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74 President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. 2015. *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

75 Ibid.

76 U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Health Affairs (June 2015). *First Responder Guide for Improving Survival in IED and/or Active Shooter Incidents*. Washington, D.C., p. 19.

## 5. Investigations

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The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS), the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), and the Michigan State Police (MSP) were accustomed to working together during routine and complex investigations prior to the mass shooting. The investigators and crime scene technicians interviewed by the Police Foundation team emphasized the importance of these prior relationships in working and communicating with each other during the investigation of the February 20th shootings. Regional recognition of the expertise that each agency had, both in experience and technology, was vital to the successful investigation of the shooting scenes, the development and exchange of information, and the quick apprehension of the suspect.

The KCSO responded to and took the lead in processing the initial shooting scene at the Meadows apartment complex. KDPS responded to and processed the Seelye shooting scene, and MSP responded to and processed the Cracker Barrel scene. Prosecutor Jeffrey Getting also responded to the Seelye and Cracker Barrel homicide scenes to assist investigators and provide guidance. Although processed under the jurisdiction of the responding agencies, investigators shared intelligence information and resources in real time, which contributed to the suspect's arrest.

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**Regional crime laboratories create opportunities to reduce costs and improve efficiencies in the collection and processing of evidence.**

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Since 2003, KCSO and KDPS have operated a joint crime lab in an effort to financially support and maintain lab operations. The lab is staffed by technicians from both KDPS and KCSO, and the day-to-day operations are managed by a crime lab coordinator, who is selected based on a mutual agreement between KCSO and KDPS. Typically, KCSO and KDPS technicians only work on their agency's cases; however, the agencies worked together following the shootings to provide support during evidence collection and processing.

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**One evidence tracking system should be used to facilitate the accurate recording and processing of evidence.**

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While KCSO and KDPS operate within the joint crime lab and both agencies use the QueTel evidence management system, the two systems are not integrated. This created some frustration and inefficiencies, as technicians entered various pieces of evidence in both the KDPS and KCSO QueTel systems. To facilitate efficient collaboration in the future between the two agencies, the two QueTel systems should be integrated, and KDPS and KCSO

technicians should operate under one evidence management system.

To further facilitate efficient collaboration between KDPS and KCSO within the crime lab, all lab technicians should operate under one set of procedures and protocols. Currently, section 4.1.a. of the Interlocal/Cooperative Agreement for the joint KDPS/KCSO crime lab states:

"When working at the Crime Lab within the Crosstown Center and during any on-scene investigation, each Crime Lab employee will comply with established safety requirements, protocols and standards of the industry, and follow the policies and procedures of the governmental unit which employs that individual and the Public Safety Department."<sup>77</sup>

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**Regional crime laboratories should operate under one set of policies and procedures developed and agreed to by all partner agencies.**

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<sup>77</sup> KDPS/KCSO Crime Laboratory Interlocal/Cooperative Agreement provided to Kalamazoo assessment team in December 2016. Reviewed by assessment team December 2016 – March 2017.

To improve the efficiency of collaborative operations, one set of operating procedures and protocols, established per mutual agreement between the chief of public safety and the county sheriff per section 1 of the Interlocal/Cooperative Agreement, should be enacted to govern crime lab operations as opposed to KDPS and KCSO technicians following separate policies and procedures established by their respective agencies.

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**Evidence should be logged into the regional crime laboratory prior to transfer to an outside laboratory for processing and analysis.**

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## 6. Emergency Communications

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Various public safety communication centers across the country have regionally coordinated and consolidated their emergency response communications through Consolidated Regional Communication Centers. Successful partnerships have been developed at various levels of consolidation, involving partial to full integration of infrastructure, personnel, and services. Developing a fully consolidated communication center involves moving all existing dispatch services in the area to a single dispatch center with a single management structure.<sup>78</sup> The financial and logistical start-up costs for developing fully consolidated communications centers are significant, but at the same time, such centers may be worthwhile for communities where incidents routinely draw active responses from several local agencies. In these locales, full integration is cost effective in the long-term as, depending on the specifics of the partnerships, consolidation may include shared infrastructure, equipment, and other purchase and maintenance costs; shared personnel; and, increased interoperability and efficiency.<sup>79</sup>

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**Regional agencies should consider fully integrating emergency communications into a consolidated communications center to improve mutual aid responses to critical incidents.**

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In Kalamazoo, emergency communications have been partially integrated into a regional communications center. Kalamazoo County, Kalamazoo City, and Kalamazoo Township have consolidated their operations into one communications center, and they share a common computer-aided dispatch (CAD) and records management system (RMS). However, each agency generally manages its own emergency communications. Each agency staffs the communication center with its own personnel, who operate at their assigned consoles under their agency's supervision, policies, and operating procedures. City, Township, and County dispatchers usually only answer calls originating from their own jurisdiction. However, whenever dispatchers are unavailable to answer or respond to a call

within their jurisdiction, dispatchers from one of the other agencies within the communications center will take the call until a dispatcher from the originating jurisdiction becomes available.

Personnel in the communications center are responsible for answering emergency 911 calls and dispatching the police or fire services for a given jurisdiction (EMS dispatch is handled by a private company). Each agency operates on its own primary talk group, but all three agencies possess the interoperability to scan each other's radio traffic, given their standardized use of an 800 megahertz (MHz) radio system. In addition, when MSP officers are assigned to the Kalamazoo area, they are dispatched by Kalamazoo County dispatchers and have the ability to communicate with area police departments.

To the south of Kalamazoo City, but within Kalamazoo County, is the city of Portage. Portage operates its own emergency communications for fire and police services, and the radio system used by Portage is incompatible with the 800 MHz system used by Kalamazoo City, Kalamazoo County, and Kalamazoo Township. While some KDPS supervisors do carry an additional radio that can scan Portage's radio traffic, officers and deputies on patrol in Kalamazoo City and Kalamazoo County do not. This was an area of concern during the response to the February 20 mass shooting. Had the

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**All regional agencies should ensure real-time connectivity and interoperability of communications during mutual aid responses.**

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<sup>78</sup> Walter Currier and James Dye. "Consolidated Dispatch: Embraced or Feared?" *9-1-1 magazine*. June 1, 2011. Accessed from <http://www.9-1-1magazine.com/AECOM-Consolidated-Dispatch-Centers>.

<sup>79</sup> The Center for Public Management. Maxine Goodman Levin College of Urban Affairs. Cleveland State University. *Case studies for consolidated public safety dispatch center feasibility study: the next steps*. August 23, 2011. Accessed from [http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1422&context=urban\\_facpub](http://engagedscholarship.csuohio.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1422&context=urban_facpub).

suspect traveled into Portage's jurisdiction, KDPS, KCSO, and MSP would have had difficulty quickly communicating and coordinating with Portage officers to provide mutual aid and share valuable information about the suspect.

To ensure officer safety and to facilitate timely interagency coordination and communication during mutual aid responses in and around Kalamazoo, all regional agencies should operate on an 800 MHz radio system. Furthermore, Kalamazoo City, Kalamazoo County, and Kalamazoo Township should explore full integration of the consolidated communications center to further facilitate mutual aid responses. Full integration could include the development and implementation of standardized policies, procedures, and operating protocols for dispatchers and the cross-training of dispatchers to ensure proficiency in providing emergency communication services for all jurisdictions represented within the consolidated communications center. Other regional agencies should also consider joining the consolidated communications center to improve the regional response of law enforcement to critical incidents.

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**Dispatchers should ensure that all pertinent information received during an emergency call is documented in the dispatch notes, even after initial officers arrive on scene.**

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Another point to emphasize in communications during mutual aid response is the importance of dispatch notes. Some law enforcement officers expressed frustration with the lack of information provided in dispatch notes while responding to provide mutual aid to another jurisdiction. Dispatchers should ensure that all pertinent information received during an emergency call is documented in the dispatch notes in addition to being broadcast over the radio, even after the initial officers arrive on scene. This will ensure that officers responding to assist from another jurisdiction will have some understanding of the situation prior to

arrival, particularly if the assisting officers were on a different radio talk group and did not hear the initial radio traffic for the emergency call.

The quick apprehension of the suspect was made possible by law enforcement's ability to piece together an accurate description of the suspect and the suspect's vehicle across multiple witnesses and scenes and disseminate that information to multiple law enforcement agencies in the Kalamazoo area. Shortly after the shooting at the Meadows apartment complex, a dispatcher recognized the similarity of the suspect's description from the Meadows shooting scene to an earlier 911 call regarding a reckless Uber driver. The quick-thinking dispatcher called Mr. Mellen (the caller who initially reported an Uber driver who was driving erratically) and requested that he send a picture of the Uber driver, which Mr. Mellen had on his cell phone from his Uber pick-up confirmation. At the time, however, the consolidated communications center did not have the capability to accept picture messages from callers. As a result, the dispatcher had to provide Mr. Mellen with a personal cell phone number so that he could send the picture message. While this was effective, it was not ideal. In response, the communications center has created a dedicated number that callers can use to send picture messages to dispatchers. Emergency communication centers across the country should consider implementing similar capability to facilitate the exchange of information between callers and dispatchers, which may be vital to the rapid identification of a suspect.<sup>80</sup> Similarly, emergency communications centers should request the implementation of a text-to-911 service or Next Generation 911 to facilitate the exchange of information should a caller not be able to make a voice call to 911.<sup>81</sup>

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80 In response to the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings, city, state, and federal agencies were able to receive hundreds of photographs and videos from the areas around the explosions. These pictures and videos ultimately helped identify the suspects. From: Leonard, Herman B., Christine M. Cole, Arnold M. Howitt, and Philip B. Heymann. *Why Was Boston Strong: Lessons from the Boston Marathon Bombing*. President and Fellows of Harvard College. April 2014. <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/content/download/67476/1242714/version/1/file/WhyWasBostonStrong.pdf> (accessed March 28, 2017).

81 Federal Communications Commission. (2016, November 1). Text-to-911: Quick facts & FAQs. Retrieved from <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/text-911-quick-facts-faqs>.

By all accounts, the dispatchers involved in the response to the mass shooting performed admirably. They maintained their professionalism, stayed calm over the radio, shared information among the jurisdictions represented in the communications center, and effectively coordinated the response of numerous officers from multiple jurisdictions to crime scenes in and around Kalamazoo. In fact, the initiative taken by one of the dispatchers to follow-up with an Uber passenger, obtain a description and picture of the suspect, receive the picture on her personal cell phone, and distribute the picture to her colleagues, assisted in the identification and arrest of the suspect.

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**Emergency communications centers should be equipped to handle a text-to-911 service as well as have the capability to receive picture and video messages from callers.**

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### **Next Generation 911**

Next Generation 911 (NG911) is a more capable and intelligent 911 system that allows individuals to send text messages, photos, videos, and GPS information to public-safety answering points (PSAPs). PSAPs can also use NG911 to pinpoint the exact location and details of the emergency and more effectively determine what resources to dispatch. Additionally, NG911 allows local jurisdictions to share information across boundary lines—a significant change from the current proprietary systems that contribute to delayed emergency responses and local reluctance to share resources. Leveraging NG911 also provides call takers and dispatchers a means to receive critical information from victims and witnesses without using their personal devices, thus avoiding potential evidentiary processes and subpoenas for criminal and civil litigation, and violations of department policy.

Source: Linstrom, John. (September 8, 2015). Emergency Management. *The road to next-generation 911*. Retrieved from <http://www.govtech.com/em/next-gen-911/The-Road-to-Next-Generation-911.html>

# 7. Public Information

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## Releasing Information to the Public

In all critical incidents, law enforcement agencies face a delicate balance between informing the public about what is taking place and protecting the integrity of the investigation from outside influence. Law enforcement leaders should expect that some citizens suffer added fear as an event unfolds. This can drive some in the community to believe that law enforcement is not providing enough information fast enough, turning to social media and unconfirmed media reports to fill in these gaps.

In Kalamazoo, the public safety agencies also faced several public information challenges. Today, many agencies have at least one, if not two, sworn or non-sworn public information officers (PIOs), whose sole job is to manage the flow of information and messaging through media and social media. Often the PIO also acts as the department spokesperson. However, neither the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS) nor the Kalamazoo Prosecutor's Office had a dedicated PIO or a designated individual who was prepared and/or trained to take on this role in a critical incident. As a mobile active shooter incident, this event generated considerable media attention. A PIO could have taken press calls, managed social media content, built relationships with the media and scheduled press conferences, managed critical incident communications, generally coordinated information between responding agencies, and coordinated what information was released to the public.

From the beginning of the incident, there was a lack of coordination regarding information provided to the public. Chief Hadley and Sheriff Fuller initially handled media inquiries independently. When it became apparent that the incidents were connected to a single suspect, the chief executives of the responding agencies met and coordinated their media strategy. However, this did not occur until 4:00 a.m. on Sunday, February 21 – more than three hours after the suspect's arrest. Ultimately, Prosecutor Getting became the primary spokesperson to protect the integrity of the investigation and prosecution. Once established, the partnership worked well in providing information to the public in a timely fashion, but it added another responsibility to the already taxed law enforcement executives who were managing the event.<sup>82</sup> In one interview with the Police Foundation team, one of the KDPS chief executives commented that managing the dissemination and flow of information, both internally and externally, was daunting and at some points overwhelming.

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**Identify at least one employee per shift to serve the Public Information Officer (PIO) function and receive the appropriate guidance and training. The PIO would manage everyday flow of information from the department, serve as the face of department, and develop policy and procedures for controlling the message during critical incidents.**

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Additionally, the fact that the shooter was mobile—requiring multiple public safety agencies to respond—added another level of complexity to the timing and type of information that needed to be disseminated to the public. When multiple local, county, and state agencies are involved in an event, there is significant potential for conflicts and confusion in the release of information when each agency is operating under different media guidelines. Some investigators advised that information was released to the media before they thought it was appropriate to do so. From their perspective, the premature release may have increased the number of false leads that had to be investigated.

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<sup>82</sup> According to interviews with Kalamazoo community members by the Police Foundation Team.

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**Agencies should have policies that clearly guide PIOs in their use of traditional media and social media, especially with regard to releasing information during a critical incident.**

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While, in the end, the agencies worked through the public information challenges and successfully delivered messages to the public, KDPS and the Prosecutor's Office should have someone who is able to serve as a PIO on staff—if not a dedicated PIO—to manage the everyday flow of information from the department, serve as the face of department, and develop policy and procedures for controlling the message during critical incidents. Especially in critical incidents, the PIO function is an area designated under the Incident Command System (ICS), and should be accounted for in training and exercises. Therefore, KDPS and the Prosecutor's Office, as well as agencies of a similar size, should identify at least one employee per shift to serve the PIO function and receive the appropriate guidance and training.<sup>83</sup>

## **Dealing with the Media**

Responding agencies in Kalamazoo knew that they needed to engage the media to get information out to the public. To respond quickly and to leverage the assistance of the community, the Sheriff's Office called Channel 3 shortly after the Cracker Barrel shooting and provided them with a description of the suspect to disseminate. MSP also worked with media to get a description of the suspect's vehicle out to residents.

Department executives originally began responding to media requests individually, providing information they thought was appropriate to release. However, there was no central point of contact and little coordination between the agencies regarding the initial release of information. In addition, as the incidents unfolded, the media's interest intensified. Local, national, and international media outlets were requesting statements, interviews, and details regarding the shootings.

When it became apparent that the shootings were connected, the chief, sheriff, and prosecutor worked together and met regularly, which allowed them to develop the statements that were made during press conferences. All three leaders agreed that it was important to confirm and reassure the public that all of the agencies were working together to protect the community.

Many press requests were made early on for one-on-one interviews. Some were given when it was feasible, particularly with major news outlets. Agency heads also attempted to make sure to give local press contacts additional interviews as a way to strengthen the relationship with them, and to ensure the Kalamazoo community was well informed.

While the responding agencies managed the media attention, they admitted that having one point of contact, such as a PIO, from the beginning would have better controlled the flow of information to the public, and to some extent, improved the information they received back from the community. In times of crisis, community members look to public safety and city officials to reassure them and provide them with accurate information. Ultimately, while critical incidents are chaotic, responding agencies must send a calming, unified message to the community.

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**It is important to show the public the unified front of multiple agencies working cohesively together.**

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<sup>83</sup> The International Association of Chiefs of Police Center for Social Media, "serves as a clearinghouse of information and no-cost resources to help law enforcement personnel develop or enhance their agency's use of social media," and is available at: <http://www.iacpsocialmedia.org/>.

## Managing the Message on Social Media

The news media's hunger for breaking news 24 hours a day, seven days a week, can compound public safety's ability to manage the delivery of information. However, the issue is no longer managing content only for television and newspapers. It now includes planning for, and expecting challenges from, online media outlets and individuals. "Increasingly, social media is shaping the story, as governments, first responders, perpetrators, victims, and eyewitnesses are able to use it to directly and quickly reach the 'larger human audience.'"<sup>84</sup>

A number of social media outlets and individuals operate without the scrutiny and rigor of traditional media organizations. Many times, these outlets report incorrect facts and information, leading to viral rumors that spread quickly and cultivate additional chaos within the community and beyond. The reaction and rhetoric that follows viral rumors can hamper first responders' efforts and the investigative phase, as well as negatively impact involved law enforcement personnel.

During the shooting, the Kalamazoo community took to social media to update each other regarding what they knew about the suspect. After a harrowing ride as the suspect's Uber fare, one rider's girlfriend posted to her Kalamazoo friends and neighbors, letting them know to avoid him—even posting a picture.<sup>85</sup> A number of community members interviewed by the Police Foundation team during the review found out, or followed, information on the shooting on social media posts provided by other community members.

However, community members were also looking to social media from Kalamazoo public safety agencies to provide accurate information. Neither KDPS nor KCSO had a strong social media presence at the time of the shooting, and without anyone trained on how to use social media effectively, both agencies struggled to effectively leverage the valuable tool. KDPS had a Twitter account and Facebook page, neither of which were actively managed; KCSO did not have any social media accounts. This lack of a previously-established social media presence hampered the departments' ability to update the community on the progression of the incident; notify them when the arrest was made; and, reassure them that they were indeed safe from further violence. It also precluded them from leveraging the community as force multipliers in exchanging information.

### Best Practices from the Field: Responding to the Boston Marathon Bombings

In the hours and days following the Boston Marathon bombings in 2013, the Boston Police Department's (BPD) Media Relations Office used social media, including the department's official Twitter account, to effectively manage the dissemination of timely and accurate information to the public. Through Twitter, the BPD was able to quickly correct misinformation being spread in the professional media and through social networks. The BPD's use of Twitter has since been commended as the first time that tweets were successfully used by a police department to engage with the community during a time of crisis. In *Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons from Boston*, a report by the Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School and coauthored by former BPD Commissioner Edward F. Davis III, the authors wrote that "BPD tweets rapidly became the most trusted source of information about the status of the investigation and were often retweeted hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands of times."

Source: Edward F. Davis III, Alejandro A. Alves, and David Alan Sklansky, *Social Media and Police Leadership: Lessons from Boston*, New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 2014), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/244760.pdf>.

86 Burke, Sharon; Alyssa Simes & Davide Sterman. *War and Tweets: Terrorism in America in the Digital Age*. New America, Resource and International Security. October 2016.

85 Mooney, Paula. "Jason Dalton: Uber Rider Called 911 on Uber Driver, Fiancee Posted Facebook Warning About Dalton—Mackenzie Waite's 5:30 P.M. Post." February 21, 2016. <http://www.inquisitr.com/2814570/jason-dalton-uber-rider-called-911-on-uber-driver-fiancee-posted-facebook-warning-about-dalton-mackenzie-waite-530-p-m-post/>. (accessed March 28, 2017).

Social media can also provide an efficient way to get information from the public. During the Orlando Pulse nightclub terrorist attack, for example, victims held hostage by the shooter were able to use social media to communicate with persons outside the club, who provided information to Orlando emergency call-takers and law enforcement officers responding to the incident.

Responding agencies should utilize social media as an integral part of their public information strategy before, during and after a critical incident. Particularly in this case of a mobile, rapidly evolving incident, social media is a critical tool for communicating with the public. Using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope, Flickr, NextDoor.com, and others has become critical for releasing timely and accurate information both to the public and to the traditional media, as well as for getting information back from the public.

Although Kalamazoo public safety leaders and members of their staff attempted to keep the community informed via social media, the lack of a dedicated or designated public information officer led to sporadic and inconsistent use of social media.

By being active on social media prior to a critical incident, law enforcement agencies can better inform the public, because the public will be used to referring to the department's social media site to receive information regarding routine emergencies and events.<sup>86</sup>

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**Responding agencies should utilize social media as an integral part of their public information strategy before, during and after a critical incident. Using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope, Flickr, NextDoor.com, and others has become critical for releasing timely and accurate information both to the public and to the traditional media, as well as for getting information back from the public.**

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## Elected Officials and Community Relationships

Elected officials play an important role in critical and emergency incidents. They can rally the community and provide a clear path forward in the aftermath of a tragic event. However, they also pose an additional dynamic for public safety officials attempting to control the type and amount of information that is released. Law enforcement

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**When possible, identify a liaison to work directly with and coordinate elected officials' involvement in the incident response.**

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leaders in Kalamazoo recognized the importance of community trust and long-term relationships with elected officials and local leaders. They fully appreciated the public expectation for timely and accurate information regarding the mass shooting. In general, public safety and elected officials worked well together during the incident, as well as in its aftermath.

Roles and responsibilities for elected officials should be predetermined for response to critical incidents, and they should train on those roles.<sup>87</sup> When possible during critical incidents, responding public safety or city agencies should identify a liaison to work directly with and coordinate elected officials' involvement in the incident response. Often, this is the PIO or their

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<sup>86</sup> Braziel, Rick, Frank Straub, George Watson, and Rod Hoops. 2016. *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center*. Critical Response Initiative. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://www.policefoundation.org/bringing-calm-to-chaos-a-police-foundation-review-of-the-san-bernardino-terrorist-attacks-2/> (accessed March 7, 2017).

<sup>87</sup> Braziel, Rick, Frank Straub, George Watson, and Rod Hoops. 2016. *Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center*. Critical Response Initiative. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

designee. Liaisons should be at the scene, not in the office, as this is where many politicians will likely be located. The liaison can help officials stay focused on predesignated duties and responsibilities rather than being involved on scene or on camera when such involvement is outside the scope of necessary involvement.<sup>88</sup> Additionally, involving PIOs and elected officials in jurisdiction-wide ICS and other incident management training and exercises will allow them to better understand the value and practical application of using tools such as forming a Joint Information Center (JIC) to control and coordinate the flow information.

Kalamazoo elected and appointed officials followed the lead of their public safety executives during the event and in its immediate aftermath. Kalamazoo Mayor Hopewell became the lead in moving the community toward recovery. While this incident was difficult for the community, it didn't diminish, rather it increased, the trust and respect that the community has for its public safety personnel.

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

## 8. Post-Event Responder Welfare and Mental Health

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### First Responder Mental Health

Mass shootings and other hostile events take an emotional toll on all involved as well as those watching it play out from elsewhere in the community, across the nation, and around the world. “Most people are resilient enough to read about the death of someone they did not know without becoming overwhelmed by anxiety. But when they read about the death of a friend, they react more strongly. Similarly, most [public safety personnel] may be able to tolerate a more vivid exposure to death or violence than the general public, but there are situations, such as mass casualty events, where the traumatic stress simply exceeds an officer’s ability to cope without support.”<sup>89</sup>

The culture of public safety has historically not embraced the need to attend to the mental health of public safety personnel. Police officers, fire fighters, and EMS personnel are expected to be tough, resilient, and able to bounce back without much mental health treatment or professional attention. In fact, some of the officers, deputies, and civilians interviewed in Kalamazoo advised that they struggled with the stigma of asking for help and appearing weak to their colleagues.

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**Post-event responder welfare should be an integral part of interagency planning, training and exercises.**

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The law enforcement profession is beginning to recognize that resilience does not automatically happen; it takes time, attention, and support. The *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing* recognized that the culture of law enforcement stigma needs to change, saying, “This transformation should also overturn the tradition of silence on psychological problems, encouraging officers to seek help without concern about negative consequences.”<sup>90</sup>

Leadership is critical in setting the tone for open and honest dialogue about the mental health needs of an entire department, particularly in time of crisis. “In a critical incident it is easy for the department to single out personnel it believes are impacted and provide support to them. It is hard to make such a judgment when the personnel involved in the critical incident may not even know they need help.”<sup>91</sup>

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**Ensure your department has a policy regarding mental health support after critical incidents, and clearly communicate it to the entire department.**

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It is important that departments acknowledge and provide support to all personnel who are involved in a critical incident. All involved personnel have the potential to experience stress reactions, and targeting only those who demonstrate an obvious need for the support can create immediate and future issues related to post-traumatic stress. “It is better for the department to treat all employees consistently.”<sup>92</sup>

In the aftermath of mass shootings or other mass casualty events, agencies should designate a mental health incident commander, as soon as possible and practical. Ideally, this should be a person who has:

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89 National Alliance on Mental Illness (2016). *Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, p.13.

90 President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report* (see note 4), 62.

91 IACP National Law Enforcement Policy Center, *Critical Incident Stress Management: Concepts and Issues Paper* (Alexandria, VA: International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2011), 2, <http://www.theiacp.org/Portals/0/documents/pdfs/MembersOnly/CriticalIncidentStressPaper.pdf>.

92 Ibid.

- familiarity with your agency and public safety culture;
- credibility with your personnel;
- mental health training;
- connections with your local mental health community; and,
- an understanding of the impact of trauma and familiarity with Psychological First Aid.

The primary role of the mental health incident commander is to monitor public safety personnel in the aftermath of the event to coordinate debriefings, connect individuals to peer support or mental health professionals, connect public safety families to services if needed, and ensure a continuum of care in the weeks and months following the event. The mental health incident commander also advises the chief and command staff regarding operational decisions that impact personnel mental health (e.g. work and shift assignments) and vets and manages self-deployed mental health providers.<sup>93</sup>

In the immediate aftermath of the Kalamazoo mass shooting, both Chief Hadley and Sheriff Fuller made officer/deputy mental health

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**Assign a mental health incident commander to oversee officer mental health and coordinate services among participating agencies.**

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**Compel participation in critical incident debriefings or post-incident counseling both for victims and civilian and commissioned staff.**

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a priority, ensuring that debriefings were scheduled and mental health services made available. In fact, Chief Hadley advised that he had read the Police Foundation's critical incident report of the response to the terrorist attack in San Bernardino, California, and had paid particular attention to the recommendations regarding officer resilience and mental health.<sup>94</sup>

In 2012, the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO) established a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Team to serve the needs of KCSO and other public safety personnel exposed to traumatic events, as well as all public safety personnel in the Kalamazoo region. In fact, the KCSO Team

played a role in coordinating debriefings for first responders in the aftermath of the mass shooting. Within 24 hours of the event a debriefing was scheduled and attended by approximately 50 first responders. A second debriefing was held within the next three days, again with approximately 50 first responders in attendance. Participants acknowledged the value of the debriefings and appreciated the efforts made to hold them. Some employees indicated that they were unable to attend the debriefings though, particularly the first one, because of their involvement in the investigation. Others advised that they didn't feel it was necessary to attend and sought assistance through the employee's assistance program (EAP). A smaller group remarked that they did not feel their agencies had done enough to encourage

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**Consider follow-up counseling as it is not unusual for post-traumatic stress to manifest itself several weeks or months after an event.**

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<sup>93</sup> National Alliance on Mental Health (2016), "The Mental Health Incident Commander's Role during the Immediate Response to a Mass Casualty Event" in *Preparing for the Unimaginable: How Chiefs Can Safeguard Officer Mental Health Before and After Mass Casualty Events*. Washington, D.C. Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.

<sup>94</sup> Braziel, Rick, Frank Straub, George Watson, and Rod Hoops. 2016. Bringing Calm to Chaos: A Critical Incident Review of the San Bernardino Public Safety Response to the December 2, 2015, Terrorist Shooting Incident at the Inland Regional Center. Critical Response Initiative. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services. <https://www.policefoundation.org/bringing-calm-to-chaos-a-police-foundation-review-of-the-san-bernardino-terrorist-attacks-2/> (accessed March 7, 2017).

them to participate, and continued to struggle with the incident and its aftermath.

It appears that since its creation, the Team has lost members, training and the full support of the KSCO. Team members recommended that renewed attention be given to the Team to grow membership by potentially including public safety personnel from other departments and ensure regular training for Team members. The commander of the team could fill the initial role of the mental health incident commander with the support of a professional mental health provider.

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**In addition to mental health assistance, consider unit, team or department-level briefings to bring closure to the event.**

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# Conclusion

The mass shooting in Kalamazoo brings to light the very real threats that all communities, and public safety agencies tasked with protecting those communities, face today. No community is immune from those individuals who have the propensity, determination, and means to kill and seriously injure innocent people until they are physically contained, taken into custody, or neutralized. There is no doubt that a coordinated public safety response is necessary to prevent, respond to, and recover from, these devastating attacks.

Kalamazoo area public safety organizations responded to the February 20, 2016 mass shooting with bravery, dedication and professionalism; their actions saved lives. Many of the decisions made by organizational leaders, and the steps taken by first responders, set an example for other organizations as they plan to respond to a similar event. Lessons learned in this document are based on the policies, practices, and protocols that helped Kalamazoo public safety agencies successfully respond to the mass shooting; they also focus on areas for improvement.

Many of the lessons learned during the response to the mass shooting build on the body of knowledge that exists to assist public safety agencies in their mission to protect the communities they serve. We hope that the lessons learned in this report will contribute to the growing body of literature that public safety agencies can use to enhance their preparation for, and response to, active shooter or other hostile events. The ability that leaders have to collaborate, innovate and adapt their responses to active shooter and other hostile events will be critical in a world where surprise and uncertainty are the defining characteristics of public safety.

# Appendix A. Lessons Learned

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## Leadership Lessons Learned

- *Mass shootings and other hostile events quickly exhaust individual agency resources, suggesting the importance of strong inter-personal and inter-agency relationships to ensure collaboration and coordination.*

## Command and Control Lessons Learned

- *Regional response systems should be established to formalize priorities, options, and opportunities to prevent, respond to, and mitigate hostile events.*
- *Incident command should be established as soon as possible and practical at individual scenes as well as to manage the overall event.*
- *Incident command at the “scene and event” level should be unified to coordinate various public safety and other government and non-government organizations engaged in responding to the event and its aftermath.*
- *Regional public safety partners should plan and exercise unified incident command for critical incidents on a regular basis.*
- *Regional response systems training, exercising, and planning should consider the transition from routine to crisis events, as well as the capacity to draw on the capabilities of the system to employ untried, untested, and unprecedented strategies and tactics to resolve the incident and save lives.*

## Preparation, Training, and Response Lessons Learned

- *Agencies must continually evaluate ingress and egress routes during critical incidents and pay particular attention to the accessibility of emergency vehicles.*
- *Agencies should have a unified plan for the timely transition from the somewhat chaotic active shooter response to a more methodical search for possible suspects.*
- *Officers should receive clear and specific directions to contact the Incident Commander upon arrival on scene to receive coordinate efforts and assignments.*
- *Training exercises should, as much as possible, prepare public safety personnel to confront novelty and develop and implement a response amidst chaos and uncertainty.*
- *Law enforcement agencies should equip officers with tactical emergency medical kits and provide basic trauma care training to responding officers.*

## Investigations Lessons Learned

- *Regional crime laboratories create opportunities to reduce costs and improve efficiencies in the collection and processing of evidence.*
- *One evidence tracking system should be used to facilitate the accurate recording and processing of evidence.*
- *Regional crime laboratories should operate under one set of policies and procedures developed and agreed to by all partner agencies.*
- *Evidence should be logged into the regional crime laboratory prior to transfer to an outside laboratory for processing and analysis.*

## Emergency Communications Lessons Learned

- *Regional agencies should consider fully integrating emergency communications into a consolidated communications center to improve mutual aid responses to critical incidents.*
- *All regional agencies should ensure real-time connectivity and interoperability of communications during mutual aid responses.*
- *Dispatchers should ensure that all pertinent information received during an emergency call is documented in the dispatch notes, even after initial officers arrive on scene.*
- *Emergency communications centers should be equipped to handle a text-to-911 service as well as have the capability to receive picture and video messages from callers.*

## Public Information Lessons Learned

- *Identify at least one employee per shift to serve the Public Information Officer (PIO) function and receive the appropriate guidance and training. The PIO would manage everyday flow of information from the department, serve as the face of department, and develop policy and procedures for controlling the message during critical incidents.*
- *Agencies should have policies that clearly guide PIOs in their use of traditional media and social media, especially with regard to releasing information during a critical incident.*
- *It is important to show the public the unified front of multiple agencies working cohesively together.*
- *Responding agencies should utilize social media as an integral part of their public information strategy before, during and after a critical incident. Particularly in this case of a mobile, rapidly evolving incident, social media is a critical tool for communicating with the public. Using social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Periscope, Flickr, NextDoor.com, and others has become critical for releasing timely and accurate information both to the public and to the traditional media, as well as for getting information back from the public.*
- *When possible, identify a liaison to work directly with and coordinate elected officials' involvement in the incident response.*

## Post-Event Responder Welfare and Mental Health

- *Post-event responder welfare should be an integral part of interagency planning, training and exercises.*
- *Ensure your department has a policy regarding mental health support after critical incidents, and clearly communicate it to the entire department.*
- *Assign a mental health incident commander to oversee officer mental health and coordinate services among participating agencies.*
- *Compel participation in critical incident debriefings or post-incident counseling both for victims and civilian and commissioned staff.*
- *Consider follow-up counseling as it is not unusual for post-traumatic stress to manifest itself several weeks or months after an event.*
- *In addition to mental health assistance, consider unit, team, or department-level debriefings to bring closure to the event.*

# Appendix B. Kalamazoo Background and Incident Context Information

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## Geography

### Kalamazoo, Michigan, and the surrounding area

Founded in 1831, the city of Kalamazoo is located in southwestern Michigan, about 136 miles from Detroit, 73 miles from Lansing, and 145 miles from Chicago.<sup>95</sup> The city spans more than 24 square miles and is home to approximately 76,041 people.<sup>96</sup> It is divided into 21 neighborhoods, seven of which are adjacent to a growing downtown area that holds museums, libraries, breweries, restaurants, and theaters. The downtown area also hosts other community events and activities.<sup>97</sup> The city of Kalamazoo contains three higher learning institutions—Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo College, and Kalamazoo Valley Community College; hosts a variety of industries and businesses, including pharmaceutical, medical science, and craft beer industries; and, is the county seat of Kalamazoo County.<sup>98</sup> Kalamazoo County is just over 561 square miles and has a population of approximately 260,263.<sup>99</sup> The county encompasses the cities of Kalamazoo and Portage, several smaller villages, and scattered agricultural areas.<sup>100</sup>

Most of the residents of the city and the county of Kalamazoo are white and many are highly educated. Still, the city of Kalamazoo is generally more racially and ethnically diverse than the county. In Kalamazoo city, 68.1 percent of the population identifies as white alone, 22.2 percent identify as black or African American alone, and 6.4 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino. This is compared to Kalamazoo county, where 81.7 percent of the population identifies as white alone, 10.9 percent identify as black or African American alone, and 4.0 percent identify as Hispanic or Latino.<sup>101</sup> Of both city and county residents, more than 90 percent are high school graduates and more than 30 percent hold bachelor's degrees—both slightly higher than the national percentages.<sup>102</sup> While the city and county also have residents with similar age statistics and percentages of people in the civilian labor force, Kalamazoo city has a higher percentage of persons in poverty, at 33.9 percent compared to 16.0 percent in Kalamazoo county and 13.5 percent nationally.<sup>103</sup>

Kalamazoo has historically been known for its industry and educational opportunities. Since its beginnings, the city has been a hub for different industries, from celery and paper-mills to corporations such as General Motors and Upjohn.<sup>104</sup> In 2005, the city announced the Kalamazoo Promise, a program whereby unnamed donors pledge to pay the tuition at Michigan's public colleges, universities, and community colleges for every student who graduates from the district's high schools.<sup>105</sup> In recent years, the city has achieved awards and recognition for its attractiveness to young adults, work-life balance, and source water protection.<sup>106</sup>

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95 The City of Kalamazoo. (n.d.). *About Kalamazoo*. Retrieved February 16, 2017 from <http://www.kalamazoocity.org/about-kzoo/awards-recognition>.

96 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts: Kalamazoo city: Michigan*. Retrieved February 16, 2017 from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/2642160.26077.00>.

97 The City of Kalamazoo. (n.d.). *Neighborhoods*. Retrieved February 16, 2017 from <http://www.kalamazoocity.org/nbh>.

98 The City of Kalamazoo. *About Kalamazoo*.

99 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). *QuickFacts: Kalamazoo County, Michigan*. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/26077>. (accessed March 27, 2017).

100 Kalamazoo County Government. (n.d.). *Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office*. Retrieved February 16, 2017 from <https://www.kalcounty.com/sheriff/>.

101 U.S. Census Bureau. *QuickFacts: Kalamazoo city: Michigan*.

102 *Ibid.*

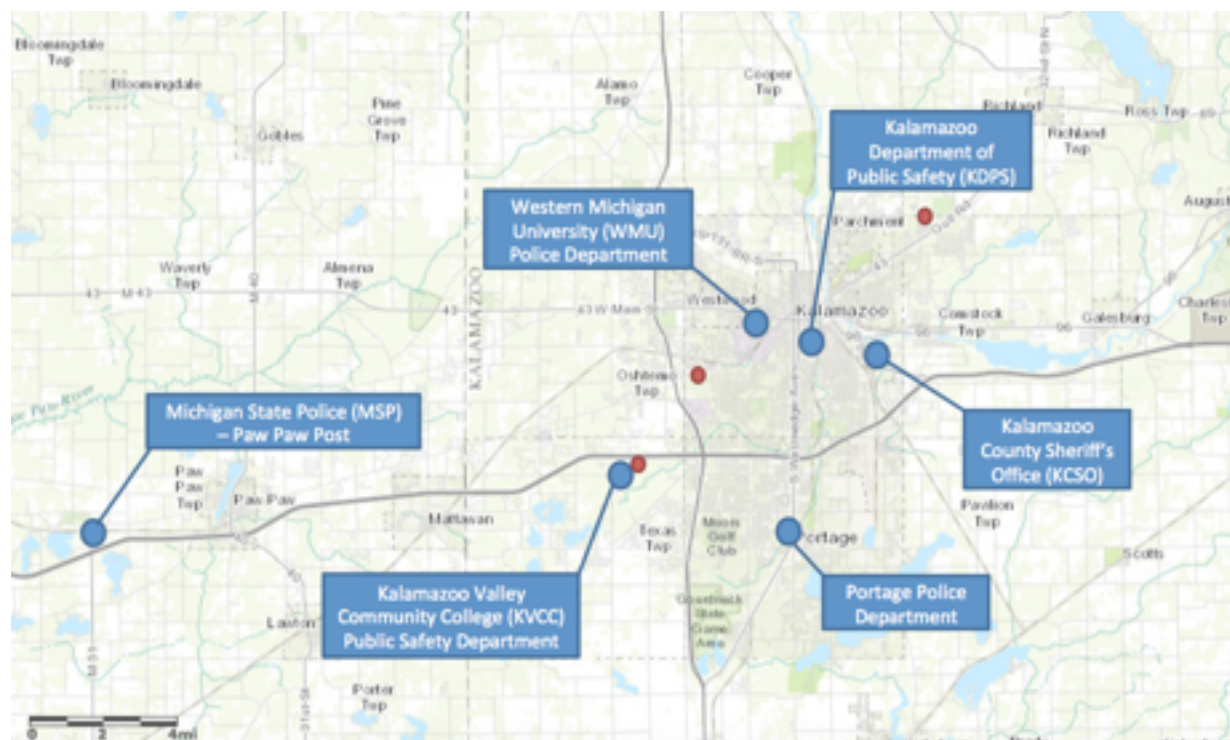
103 *Ibid.*

104 Fishman, Ted. (2012, September 13). Why these kids get a free ride to college. *The New York Times Magazine*. Retrieved from [http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/16/magazine/kalamazoo-mich-the-city-that-pays-for-college.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/16/magazine/kalamazoo-mich-the-city-that-pays-for-college.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0).

105 *Ibid.*

106 The City of Kalamazoo. *About Kalamazoo*.

## Responding Public Safety Agency Descriptions



### Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS)<sup>106</sup>

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety is an organization that cross trains all personnel to deliver law enforcement, fire, and emergency medical services to citizens of Kalamazoo. With over 257 employees, KDPS is organized into a number of divisions, including Operations, Criminal Investigations, Community Outreach and Service.<sup>108</sup> The KDPS Operations division responds to more than 95,000 calls for service per year and officers may serve in a variety of roles, including as Investigators, Crime Lab Technicians, K-9 Handlers, Neighborhood Liaison Officers, and Kalamazoo Metropolitan SWAT (KM-SWAT) Operators. KM-SWAT is a multi-jurisdictional team comprised of members from Kalamazoo Public Safety, Portage Public Safety, Kalamazoo Township Police, and the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office.<sup>109</sup>

The Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety responded to and investigated the shooting at the Seelye Kia dealership and provided mutual aid in response to the shooting at the Cracker Barrel. The agency was heavily involved in the search for the suspect and participated in the felony stop of the suspect's vehicle in support of the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office.

### Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO)

Established in 1830, the Kalamazoo Sheriff's Office (KCSO) serves the County of Kalamazoo. KCSO has 135 sworn law enforcement officers<sup>110</sup> and serves an estimated population of 260,293.<sup>111</sup> Bordering counties include: Calhoun

<sup>107</sup> KDPS Chief Hadley is also a Police Foundation Executive Fellow.

<sup>108</sup> Kalamazoo Public Safety. (2017). Retrieved from <https://kalamazoopublicsafety.org/about/departments-profile/> (last accessed February 19, 2017).

<sup>109</sup> Kalamazoo Public Safety. (2017). Retrieved from <https://kalamazoopublicsafety.org/about/divisions/operations/swat/> (last accessed February 19, 2017).

<sup>110</sup> Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2016). *2015 Crime in the United States*. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2015/crime-in-the-u.s.-2015/home>.

<sup>111</sup> The United States Census Bureau. (2015). *QuickFacts: Kalamazoo County, Michigan*. Retrieved February 15, 2017 from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/AFN120212/26077>.

County, Branch County, St. Joseph County, Cass County, Van Buren County, Barry County, and Allegan County.<sup>112</sup> The KCSO is divided into three divisions: Operations, Jail, and Support Divisions. The agency provides all uniform activities, conducts general investigations, is involved with safety and prevention programs, and operates the county's correctional facility/judicial support services. KCSO is also a part of the Office of Emergency Management, providing emergency preparedness collaboration with local public and private agencies.<sup>113</sup>

The Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office responded to and investigated the shooting at the Meadows apartment complex, and deputies were also involved in the response to the Cracker Barrel shooting. Additionally, KCSO was instrumental in the search for the suspect's vehicle and was ultimately responsible for locating, stopping, and arresting the suspect.

### **Michigan State Police (MSP)**

The Michigan State Police (MSP) collectively serves an estimated population of 9,922,576.<sup>114</sup> Established in 1917, MSP is a full-service police agency of more than 2,900 members that is divided into eight regional posts throughout the state.<sup>115</sup> Kalamazoo is served by the District 5 – Southwest Post.<sup>116</sup> MSP is divided into a wide range of divisions from Commercial Vehicle Enforcement, Special Investigations, and Special Operations to Biometrics and Identification. MSP offers many online services to aid the public, such as Traffic Crash Reports, Missing Persons, Safety Tips, and Sex Offender Registry.<sup>117</sup>

MSP was the first agency to respond to the shooting at the Cracker Barrel. MSP took command of the scene and handled the subsequent investigation. As law enforcement searched for the suspect, MSP worked with nearby agencies and coordinated the deployment of additional state troopers along Interstate 94 to assist in the search.

### **Portage Police Department**

The Portage Police Department is a small municipal law enforcement agency that is located approximately 7.5 miles south of Kalamazoo.<sup>118</sup> The department has 52 sworn members serving an estimated population of 48,177.<sup>119</sup> Police operations include Patrol, Investigations, Field Training, and Drug/Vice Operations.<sup>120</sup>

The Portage Police Department's dispatch center provided assistance to the city of Kalamazoo's dispatch center, and the department also joined law enforcement in the search for the suspect.

### **Kalamazoo Valley Community College Public Safety Department (KVCCPS)**

Established in 1966, the Kalamazoo Valley Community College is a fully accredited, public, two-year college in Kalamazoo County with approximately 10,000 students.<sup>121</sup> The Kalamazoo Valley Community College Public Safety

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112 Geoscience and Information. Michigan county map with county seat cities. Retrieved from <http://geology.com/county-map/michigan.shtml> (last accessed February 15, 2017).

113 Kalamazoo County Government. (2016). Kalamazoo Sheriff's Office. Retrieved from <https://www.kalcounty.com/sheriff/administration.htm> (accessed February 15, 2017).

114 The United States Census Bureau. (2015). *QuickFacts: Michigan*. Retrieved February 19, 2017 from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045216/26>.

115 Michigan State Police. (2017). *History*. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from [http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-1579\\_1664---,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-1579_1664---,00.html).

116 Michigan State Police. (2017). *State of Michigan prosperity regions*. [Pdf document]. Retrieved from [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/Posts\\_450432\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/msp/Posts_450432_7.pdf).

117 Michigan State Police. (2017). Divisions. Retrieved from <http://www.michigan.gov/msp/0,4643,7-123-72297---,00.html>

118 <https://www.google.com/#q=how+far+is+portage+from+kalamazoo>

119 The United States Census Bureau. (V2015). QuickFacts: Portage: Michigan. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/quickfacts/table/PST045215/2665560>

120 City of Portage. (2017). Police Division. Retrieved from <http://www.portage.mi.gov/Departments/PublicSafety/PoliceDivision/Operations.aspx>

121 Kalamazoo Valley Community College. (2017). *History of kalamazoo community college*. Retrieved March 1, 2017 from <https://www.kvcc.edu/about/historyofinstitution.htm>.

Department (KVCCPS) is comprised of both police and security officers, and has the authority to investigate all crimes, traffic offenses, and non-criminal matters on the campus.<sup>122</sup> With six sworn law enforcement personnel, KVCCPS protects students, staff, and visitors to ensure security and peace of mind for all.<sup>123</sup> KVCCPS serves four campuses, including Texas Township, Arcadia Commons, Groves, and the Bronson Healthy Living Campus.<sup>124</sup>

The KVCC Public Safety Department coordinated with MSP and established an emergency operations center at the Texas Township campus shortly after the Cracker Barrel shooting in preparation for a prolonged search for the suspect.

### **Western Michigan University (WMU) Police Department**

Established in 1903, Western Michigan University (WMU) has an enrollment of approximately 23,556 students.<sup>125</sup> The WMU Department of Public Safety includes a full-service police department—the WMU Police Department—with over 25 sworn police officers, who are licensed by the Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and are granted police powers by the University’s Board of Trustees and by the Sheriff of Kalamazoo County.<sup>126</sup> The WMU Police Department has full police authority to enforce all of the laws of the State of Michigan, as well as all university ordinances.

Western Michigan University Police assisted in the response to the Cracker Barrel shooting and responded to reports of an active shooter at the WMU campus.

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122 Kalamazoo Valley Community College. *2016 campus safety and security report*. [Pdf document]. Retrieved from [https://www.kvcc.edu/services/safety/PDF/Police\\_ClearlyReport2016B.pdf](https://www.kvcc.edu/services/safety/PDF/Police_ClearlyReport2016B.pdf).

123 Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2016). *2015 Crime in the United States*.

124 Kalamazoo Valley Community College. (2017). *Area map*. [Pdf document]. Retrieved from [https://www.kvcc.edu/about/virtualtour/area\\_map.htm](https://www.kvcc.edu/about/virtualtour/area_map.htm).

125 Western Michigan University. (2016). *Fast Facts*. Retrieved from <https://wmich.edu/about/facts>.

126 Western Michigan University. (2016). *Public safety*. Retrieved from <https://www.wmudps.wmich.edu/police.php>.

# Appendix C. Methodology for the Kalamazoo Critical Incident Review

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In March 2016, the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety (KDPS), the Kalamazoo County Sheriff's Office (KCSO), and the Kalamazoo County Prosecutor's Office (KCPO) requested that the Police Foundation conduct a critical incident review of the February 2016 mass shooting.

The Police Foundation team, comprised of subject matter experts in public safety and critical incident response, developed and executed a comprehensive methodology to review and assess the public safety response to the February 20, 2016, Kalamazoo mass shooting. From July 2016 through December 2016, team members collected, analyzed, and reviewed information and consulted with experts to capture intricate details of the Kalamazoo response. Understanding how decisions in the field improved or impaired the response process required a thorough examination of information developed from a variety of sources. Sources and types of information included: site visits to locations in the Kalamazoo area where incidents occurred; visits to responding agencies; focus groups and roundtables to identify successes and challenges; interviews with first responders and other key stakeholders to gain individual perspectives from those involved; document reviews; and literature and media coverage reviews.

## On-site data collection

### *Site Visits*

The team conducted three site visits – July 27, 2016; September 6–9, 2016; and, November 7–10, 2016. During these site visits, the team conducted individual interviews and focus group sessions with more than 40 individuals involved in the February 20, 2016 mass shooting, visited the shooting scenes, and collected documentation from the responding agencies. Those interviewed included the following:

- Mayor, City of Kalamazoo
- Manager, City of Kalamazoo
- Chief, City of Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety
- Prosecutor, Kalamazoo County
- Deputy County Administrator, Kalamazoo County
- Sheriff, Kalamazoo County
- First Lieutenant, Michigan State Police
- Investigators
- Dispatchers
- Responding Deputies, MSP Troopers, and Public Safety Officers
- Crime Laboratory Technicians
- Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team Members
- Community and Faith Leaders

### *Materials collection and review*

Through materials requests to responding agencies as well as collection of materials while on site, the team collected numerous documents, videos, photos, audio files, and other forms of data from agencies and departments involved in the response to the February 20, 2016 mass shooting. Review of these documents assisted in highlighting best practices and identifying gaps that served as the foundation of key focus areas to address when planning and preparing a response to mass casualty events. Materials reviewed included the following:

- KDPS Dashboard Camera Footage
- KDPS Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Records
- KCSO CAD Records
- 911 Recordings
- KDPS Social Media Content
- KDPS/KCSO Crime Laboratory Interlocal/Cooperative Agreement
- KDPS/Kalamazoo Township Dispatch User Agreement
- KDPS/KCSO Dispatch User Agreement
- KDPS Interagency Communication Procedure
- Timeline Detailing the Actions of the Suspect and Law Enforcement

## **Off-site data collection**

### *Literature review*

In addition to the information collected while on site, the team collected and reviewed relevant literature and media to further analyze the response to the Kalamazoo mass shooting and to assess national best practices as they relate to the response to the incident. In an effort to ground the incident review in national standards, model policies, and best practices, the Police Foundation team reviewed documentation on critical incident response, the Incident Command System (ICS) and National Incident Management System (NIMS), active shooter and mass casualty response, public information, and first responder wellness published by nationally recognized organizations including the following:

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ)
- The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP)
- International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
- National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA)
- National Preparedness Leadership Initiative
- Police Executive Research Forum (PERF)
- Police Foundation

### *Media analysis*

The Kalamazoo mass shooting was reported on television, the Internet, and social media. The team reviewed hours of open-source video footage and social media postings, read articles, and listened to relevant audio regarding the incident.

## **Analysis**

The Police Foundation team used the information collected to identify areas of focus and to identify lessons learned. They began by reviewing the planning, protocols, training, and preparation for critical incident events in the Kalamazoo region. They identified challenges and successes in the response and investigation of the February 20, 2016 mass shooting incident through interviews and other data collection methodology. Based on this information as well as best practices, model policies, and evidence-based protocols, the team produced a gap analysis in each of the focus areas.

## **Development of lessons learned**

The analysis of key focus areas provided a foundation from which to develop a set of lessons learned to be used by Kalamazoo public safety agencies and the public safety profession more generally as they plan, train, and adapt their protocols to respond to mass shootings and other hostile events.

# About the Police Foundation

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The Police Foundation is a national nonmember, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that has been providing technical assistance and conducting innovative research on policing for nearly 45 years. The professional staff at the Police Foundation works closely with law enforcement, community members, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and victim advocates to develop research, comprehensive reports, policy briefs, model policies, and innovative programs. The organization's ability to connect client departments with subject matter expertise, supported by sound data analysis practices, makes us uniquely positioned to provide critical incident review, training and technical assistance.

The Police Foundation has been on the forefront of researching and providing guidance on community policing practices since 1970. Acceptance of constructive change by police and the community is central to the purpose of the Police Foundation. From its inception, the Police Foundation has understood that in order to flourish, police innovation requires an atmosphere of trust; a willingness to experiment and exchange ideas both within and outside the police structure; and, perhaps most importantly, a recognition of the common stake of the entire community in better police services.

The Police Foundation prides itself in a number of core competencies that provide the foundation for critical incident reviews, including a history of conducting rigorous research and strong data analysis, an Executive Fellows program that provides access to some of the strongest thought leaders and experienced law enforcement professionals in the field, and leadership with a history of exemplary technical assistance program management.

Other Police Foundation critical incident reviews include:

- [Maintaining First Amendment Rights and Public Safety in North Minneapolis: An After-Action Assessment of the Police Response to the Protests, Demonstrations, and Occupation of the Minneapolis Police Department's Fourth Precinct](#)
- [Bringing Calm to Chaos: A critical incident review of the San Bernardino public safety response to the December 2, 2015 terrorist shooting incident at the Inland Regional Center](#)
- [A Heist Gone Bad: A Police Foundation Critical Incident Review of the Stockton Police Response to the Bank of the West Robbery and Hostage-Taking](#)
- [Police Under Attack: Southern California Law Enforcement Response to the Attacks by Christopher Dorner](#)





Police Foundation

1201 Connecticut Avenue N.W.  
Suite #200 Washington, DC 20036

(202) 833-1460

[www.policefoundation.org](http://www.policefoundation.org)