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**December 5, 2009**

## Report on Virginia Tech Shooting Finds Notification Delays

By [IAN URBINA](#)

RICHMOND, Va. — During the worst campus shooting spree in American history, [Virginia Tech](#) officials locked down some administrative buildings and warned their own families more than an hour and a half before the rest of the campus was alerted, according to revisions made in the [state's official report](#) on the tragedy.

The report indicates that students who were initially locked down at West Ambler Johnston residence hall, where the first two victims were killed, were later released from the building by the police and allowed to attend their 9 a.m. classes. Two of those students then went to class in Norris Hall, where they were killed by the shooter.

At least two members of the university's Policy Group, which was assembled to manage the crisis, let their own families know of the first two shootings, in the residence hall, more than 90 minutes before the group warned the rest of the campus, the report says. The report also says that the university president's office was locked down about 30 minutes before a formal warning was issued to the rest of the campus.

The original report, issued in 2007, concluded that university officials could have saved lives by notifying students and faculty members earlier about the killings on campus, which left 33 dead, including the shooter.

But the new report said the local police took more than half an hour longer than was initially believed to begin looking for a suspect, a fact first reported by The Richmond Times-Dispatch.

The new report also said university officials failed to contact the family of the shooter's first victim, [Emily Hilscher](#), for more than three hours, until after she had died. Ms. Hilscher survived for some time after being shot and was taken to two hospitals before she died.

Mark Owczarski, a spokesman for the university, said the revised report was inaccurate and lacked context.

“The revised report describes the two people who alerted their families as Policy Group members, and they were not,” he said. “It also inaccurately describes the actions of those two individuals who alerted their families as though it occurred with approval of senior officials. It did not.”

Mr. Owczarski said he could not elaborate further. But a university official, who requested anonymity because of pending litigation, said that the two people who alerted their families were secretaries for university officials.

One secretary mentioned that there had been a shooting while calling her son to wake him up for class, the official said. The other secretary was visiting her mother when she was called by campus officials and told to get to work right away because there had been a shooting. Before leaving, that secretary informed her mother of the situation, the official said.

The new revelations come more than two and a half years after the shooter, [Seung-Hui Cho](#), killed 32 students and faculty members at the university on April 16, 2007, before taking his own life.

The parent of a victim expressed mixed emotions about the new details.

“The new report contains good information that is relevant,” said Lori Haas, the mother of Emily Haas, who was wounded in the shootings. “But it also points out the fact that the university was not concerned enough with the students and their safety.”

She added, “These were serious mistakes, and we still don’t feel like everything that should be known has been revealed.”

In pending lawsuits, the families of two slain students fault the campus police and university officials for delaying a campuswide warning that a shooter was on the loose. They argue that the campus police advised the university’s Policy Group that the first two shootings at West Ambler Johnston Hall were probably the result of a “lover’s quarrel,” thereby delaying a response that might have prevented the subsequent Norris Hall shootings.

All but two of the families of those killed and injured agreed in 2008 not to sue in exchange for an \$11 million state settlement. The lawsuits, on behalf of the slain students [Julia Pryde](#) and [Erin Peterson](#), seek damages of \$10 million; oral arguments are scheduled for Dec. 14.

Although the new report does not reverse any of the state’s most important initial findings, it includes a more detailed timeline of the actions of the local police and university officials. The report, which was released by Gov. [Tim Kaine](#) on Friday, was provided to The New York Times on Thursday night by the family of one of the victims.

Governor Kaine had resisted calls from the families to reopen the investigation, but he agreed to have the report revised to include corrections requested by families of the victims.

TriData, a division of System Planning Corporation, coordinated the original investigation and report for the state, and prepared the recent revisions, which were provided to family members Thursday night.

Calls by victims' families to reopen the investigation grew stronger in July, after some of Mr. Cho's missing mental-health records were discovered in the home of the former director of the university's counseling clinic. The discovery raised new questions about the rigor of the state's investigation into the shootings.

But an official from the governor's office said the new report did not alter the state's initial findings.

"While the addendum corrects and clarifies facts found in the original report," Kate Paris, an executive assistant to the governor, said in an e-mail message to victims' families, "the review and revision process tended to reinforce the original recommendations of the panel."

TriData officials echoed this conclusion.

"While some of the findings have been modified slightly and one added," TriData said in the new report, "none of the new information merited changes to any recommendations in the original report."

In a news release on Friday, Governor Kaine said many of the recommendations in the original report were enacted during the 2008 session of the General Assembly, including the clarification of information-sharing procedures and involuntary commitment criteria, mandatory creation of emergency plans for colleges and universities, restrictions on firearm access for those adjudicated mentally ill, and the investment of \$41 million in the state's

mental-health operations.

The revised report added to the picture of Mr. Cho's mental-health problems. Mr. Cho was interviewed several times by [Virginia Tech](#) health officials more than a year before his attack, but in each instance, he denied homicidal thoughts and was not admitted for treatment, the report says.

Health officials on campus spoke to Mr. Cho three times in 2005, twice by phone and once in person, after concerns were raised about his behavior.

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