

## Chapter VIII

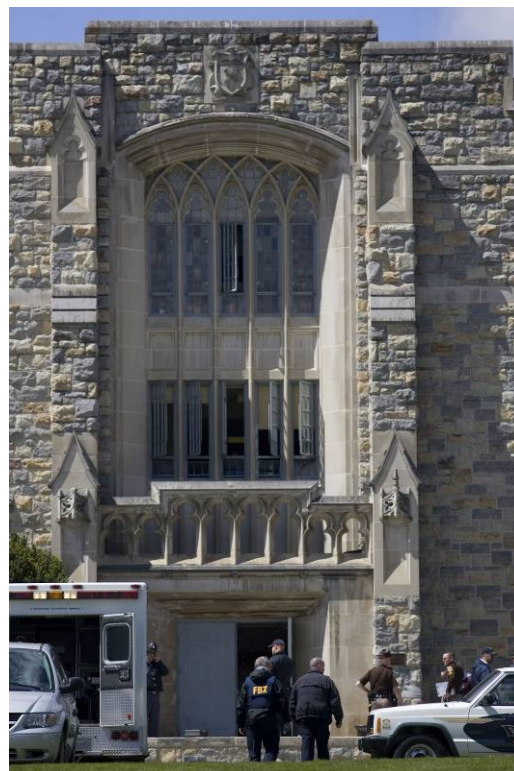
### MASS MURDER AT NORRIS HALL

Many police were on campus in the 2 hours following the first incident, most at West Ambler Johnston residence hall but others at a command center established for the first incident. Two emergency response teams (ERTs) were positioned at the Blacksburg Police Department (BPD) headquarters, and a police captain was with the Virginia Tech Policy Group acting as liaison.

Cho left the post office about 9:01 a.m. (the time on his mailing receipt). He proceeded to Norris Hall wearing a backpack with his killing tools. He carried two handguns, almost 400 rounds of ammunition most of which were in rapid loading magazines, a knife, heavy chains, and a hammer. He wore a light coat to cover his shooting vest. He was not noticed as being a threat or peculiar enough for anyone to report him before the shooting started.

In Norris Hall, Cho chained shut the pair of doors at each of the three main entrances used by students. Figure 7 shows one such entrance. The chaining had the dual effect of delaying anyone from interrupting his plan and keeping victims from escaping. After the Norris Hall incident, it was reported to police that an Asian male wearing a hooded garment was seen in the vicinity of a chained door at Norris Hall 2 days before the shootings, and it may well have been Cho practicing. Cho may have been influenced by the two Columbine High School killers, whom he mentioned in his ranting document sent to NBC News and previously in his middle school writings. He referred to them by their first names and clearly was familiar with how they had carried out their scheme.

On the morning of April 16, Cho put a note on the inside of one set of chained doors warning that a bomb would go off if anyone tried to remove the chains. The note was seen by a faculty member, who carried it to the Engineering



**Figure 7. One of the Main Entrances to Norris Hall**

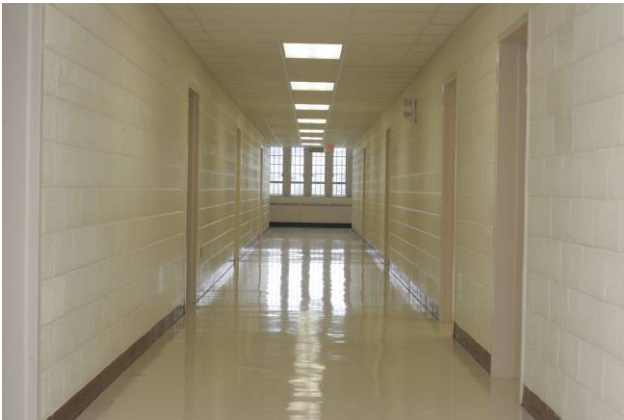
School dean's office on the third floor. This was contrary to university instructions to immediately call the police when a bomb threat is found. A person in the dean's office was about to call the police about the bomb threat when the shooting started. A handwriting comparison revealed that Cho wrote this note, but that he had not written bomb threat notes found over the previous weeks in three other buildings. Those threats, which led to the evacuation of the three buildings, proved to be false. That may have contributed to the Cho note not being taken seriously, even though found on a chained door.

The usual VTPD protocol for a bomb threat that is potentially real is to send officers to the threatened building and evacuate it. Had the Cho bomb threat note been promptly reported prior to the

start of the shooting, the police might have arrived at the building sooner than they did.

A female student trying to get into Norris Hall shortly before the shooting started found the entrance chained. She climbed through a window to get where she was going on the first floor. She did not report the chains, assuming they had something to do with ongoing construction. Other students leaving early from an accounting exam on the third floor also saw the doors chained before the shooting started, but no one called the police or reported it to the university.

Prior to starting the shootings, Cho walked around in the hallway on the second floor poking his head into a few classrooms, some more than once, according to interviews by the police and panel. This struck some who saw him as odd because it was late in the semester for a student to be lost. But no one raised an alarm. Figure 8 shows the hallway in Norris Hall.



**Figure 8. Hallway in Norris Hall**

## THE SHOOTINGS

The occupants of the first classroom that Cho attacked had little chance to call for help or take cover. After peering into several classrooms, Cho walked into the Advanced Hydrology engineering class of Professor G. V. Loganathan in room 206, shot and killed the instructor, and continued shooting, saying not a word. In fact, he never uttered a sound during his entire shooting spree—no invectives, no rationale, no comments,

nothing. Even during this extreme situation at the end of his life, he did not speak to anyone. Of 13 students present in the classroom, 9 were killed and 2 injured by shooting, and only 2 survived unharmed. No one in room 206 was able to call the police.

Occupants of neighboring classrooms heard the gunshots but did not immediately recognize them as gunfire. One student went into the hallway to investigate, saw what was happening, and returned to alert the class.

**First Alarm to 9-1-1** – Cho started shooting at about 9:40 a.m. It took about a minute for students and faculty in room 211, a French class, to recognize that the sounds they heard in the nearby room were gunshots. Then the instructor, Jocelyne Couture-Nowak, asked student Colin Goddard to call 9-1-1.

Cell phone 9-1-1 calls are routed according to which tower receives them. Goddard's call was routed to the Blacksburg police. Another call by cell phone from room 211 was routed first to the Montgomery County sheriff. The call-taker at the BPD received the call at 9:41 a.m. and was not familiar with campus building names. But it took less than a minute to sort out that the call was coming from Virginia Tech and it was then transferred to the Virginia Tech Police Department (VTPD).

At 9:42 a.m., the first call reached the Virginia Tech police that there was shooting in Norris Hall. Other calls later came from other classrooms and offices in Norris Hall and from other buildings.

Students and faculty in other nearby rooms also heard the first shots, but no one immediately realized what they were. Some thought they were construction noises. Others thought they could be the popping sounds sometimes heard from chemistry lab experiments on the first floor. One professor told his class to continue with the lesson after some raised questions about the noise. When the noise did not stop, some people went into the hallway to investigate. One student from an engineering class was shot when he

entered the hallway. At that point, terror set in among the persons in the classrooms who realized that what they were hearing was gunfire.

***Continued Shooting*** – This section portrays the sense of the key action rather than trace the exact path of Cho. It is based on police presentations to the panel, police news releases, and interviews conducted by the panel.

After killing Professor Loganathan and several students in room 206, Cho went across the hall to room 207, a German class taught by Christopher James Bishop. Cho shot Professor Bishop and several students near the door. He then started down the aisle shooting others. Four students and Bishop ultimately died in this room, with another six wounded by gunshot. One student tried to wrench free the podium that was fastened securely to the floor in order to build a barricade at the door. She was unsuccessful and injured herself in the process.

As Goddard called 9-1-1 from classroom 211, Couture-Nowak's class tried to use the instructor's table to barricade the door, but Cho pushed his way in, shot the professor, and walked down the aisle shooting students. Cho did not say anything. Goddard was among the first to be shot. Another student, Emily Haas, picked up Goddard's cell phone after he was shot. She stayed on the line for the rest of the shooting period. She was slightly wounded twice in the head by bullets, spoke quietly as long as she could to the dispatcher, heard that the police were responding, closed her eyes, and played dead. She said she did not open her eyes again for over 10 minutes until the police arrived. During her ordeal, she was concerned that the shooter would hear the 9-1-1 dispatch operator over the cell phone. But by keeping the line open she helped keep police apprised of the situation. She kept the phone hidden by her head and hair so she could appear dead but not disconnect. Although the dispatcher at times asked her questions and at other times told her to keep quiet, she spoke only when Cho was out of the room, which she could tell by the proximity of the shots.

Students in room 205 attending a class in scientific computing heard Cho's gunshots and barricaded the door to prevent his entry, mainly with their bodies kept low, holding the door with their feet. Cho never did succeed in getting into this room though he pushed and fired through the door several times. No one was injured by gunshot in this room.

Back in room 207, the German class, two uninjured students and two injured students rushed to the door to hold it shut with their feet and hands before Cho returned, keeping their bodies low and away from the center of the door. Within 2 minutes, Cho returned and beat on the door. He opened it an inch and fired about five shots around the door handle, then gave up trying to reenter and left.

Cho returned to room 211, the French class, and went around the room, up one aisle and down another, shooting students again. Cho shot Goddard two more times. Goddard lay still and played dead. This classroom received the most visits by Cho, who ultimately killed 11 students and the instructor, and wounded another 6, the entire class.

A janitor saw Cho reloading his gun in the hall on the second floor and fled downstairs.

Cho tried to enter the classroom of engineering professor Liviu Librescu (room 204), who was teaching solid mechanics. Librescu braced his body against the door and yelled for students to head for the window. Students pushed out the screens and jumped or dropped onto bushes or the grassy ground below the window. Ten of the 16 students escaped this way. The next two students trying to leave through the window were shot. Librescu was fatally shot through the door trying to hold it closed while his students escaped. A total of four students were shot in this class, one fatally.

Cho returned to most of the classrooms more than once to continue shooting. He methodically fired from inside the doorways of the classrooms, and sometimes walked around inside them. It was very close range. Students had little place to

hide other than behind the desks. By taking a few paces inside he could shoot almost anyone in the classroom who was not behind a piece of overturned furniture. The classrooms were all roughly square, with no obstructions. Figure 9 shows the interior of a typical classroom, seen from the corner furthest from the door. Table 1 shows the dimensions of the rooms with the shootings.



**Figure 9: Interior of Typical Classroom**

**Table 1. Dimensions of the Classrooms Attacked**

Room #	Dimensions
204	28' x 25'
205	24' x 25'
206	22' x 25'
207	24' x 25'
211	22' x 25'

The rooms were furnished with lightweight desk–chair combinations, single units combining both functions. Each instructor had a table desk and a podium, the latter bolted to the floor. The doors were not lockable from the inside. Unlike many lower grade schools and typical of most colleges, the instructors had no university-furnished messaging system for receiving or sending an alarm. Emergency communications from classrooms were limited to any phone or electronic devices carried by students or instructors. The offices had standard telephones, but they were on the third floor.

The massacre continued for 9 minutes after the first 9-1-1 call was received by the VTPD, and about 10–12 minutes in total, including a minute for processing and transferring the call to VTPD, and the time to comprehend that shots were being fired and to make the call. From the first call, shots can be heard continuously on the dispatch tapes, until they stopped with the suicide shot.

Within that period, Cho murdered 25 students and 5 faculty of Virginia Tech at Norris Hall. Another 17 were shot and survived, and 6 were injured when they jumped from classroom windows to escape.

Cho expended at least 174 bullets from two semiautomatic guns, his 9mm Glock and .22 caliber Walther, firing often at point-blank range. The police found 17 empty magazines, each capable of holding 10–15 bullets. Ammunition recovered included 203 live cartridges, 122 for the Glock and 81 for the Walther. The unexpended ammunition included two loaded 9mm magazines with 15 cartridges each and many loose bullets.

Cho committed suicide by shooting himself in the head, probably because he saw and heard the police closing in on him. With over 200 rounds left, more than half his ammunition, he almost surely would have continued to kill more of the wounded as he had been doing, and possibly others in the building had not the police arrived so quickly. Terrible as it was, the toll could have been even higher.

## DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

According to survivors, the first reaction of the students and faculty was disbelief, followed rapidly by many sensible and often heroic actions. One affirmative judgment in reflecting on this event is that virtually no one acted irrationally. People chose what they thought was the best option for their survival or to protect others, and many tried to prevent the shooter from gaining access to their room. Unfortunately, a shooter operating at point-blank range does not offer many options.

**Escaping** – Professor Librescu’s class was the only one where students escaped by jumping from windows. This classroom's windows face a grassy area. (Figure 10 is the view from outside and Figure 11 shows the structure of the windows. The view from inside looking out is shown in Figure 12.)



**Figure 10. Norris Hall Classroom Windows, Grassy Side**



**Figure 11. Typical Set of Windows in Norris Hall**



**Figure 12. To Escape, They Had to Climb Over the Low Window**

The window sills are 19 feet high from the ground, two stories up. In order to escape through the window, the first jumper, a male student, had to take down a screen, swing the upper window outward, climb over the lower portion of the window that opened into the classroom, and then jump. He tried to land on the bushes. Following his example, most of the rest of the class formed groups behind three windows and started jumping. All who jumped survived, some with broken bones, some uninjured except for scratches or bruises. Some survivors did the optimum window escape, lowering themselves from the window sill to drop to the ground, reducing the fall by their body length.

The other classes faced out onto concrete walks or yards, and jumping either did not seem a good idea or perhaps did not even enter their minds. No one attempted to jump from any other classroom.

Some attempts were made by a few students to escape out of the classroom and down the hall in the earliest stage of the incident. But after some people were shot in the hall, no one else tried that route.

***Attempting to Barricade*** – In three of the four classrooms that Cho invaded and one more that resisted invasion, the instructor and students attempted to barricade the door against Cho entering either on his first attempt or on a later try. They tried to use the few things available—the teacher’s table, the desk–chair combinations, and their bodies. Some attempts to barricade succeeded and others did not. Cho pushed his way in or shot through some doors that were being barricaded. In the German class, two wounded students and two non-wounded students managed to hold the door closed against the return entry by Cho. They succeeded in staying out of the line of fire through the door. Two other rooms did the same. In one, Cho never did get in. At least one effort was made to use the podium, but it failed (it was bolted to the floor). Cho was not a strong person—his autopsy noted weak musculature—and these brave students and faculty helped reduce the toll.

***Playing Dead*** – Several students, some of whom were injured and others not, successfully played dead amid the carnage around them, and survived. Generally, they fell to the ground as shots were fired, and tried not to move, hoping Cho would not notice them. Cho had systematically shot several of his victims a second time when he saw them still alive on revisiting some of the rooms, so the survivors tried to hold still and keep quiet. This worked for at least some students.

## POLICE RESPONSE

Within 3 minutes of the Virginia Tech police receiving the 9-1-1 call, two officers arrived outside of Norris Hall by squad car. They were Virginia Tech officer H. Dean Lucas and Blacksburg Sgt. Anthony Wilson. A few seconds later, three more officers arrived by car: Blacksburg Police Department officers John Glass, Scott

Craig, and Brian Roe. More continued to arrive throughout the incident.

By professional standards, this was an extraordinarily fast police response. The officers had been near WAJ as part of the investigation and security following the first incident, so they were able to respond much faster than they otherwise would have. The two police forces trusted each other, had trained together, and did not have to take time sorting out who would go from which organization in which car. They just went together as fast as they could.

The five officers immediately proceeded to implement their training for dealing with an active shooter. The policy is to go to the gunfire as fast as possible, not in a careless headlong rush, but in a speedy but careful advance. The first arriving officers had to pause several seconds after exiting their cars to see where the gunfire was coming from, especially whether it was being directed toward them. They quickly figured out that the firing was inside the building, not coming from the windows to the outside. Because Cho was using two different caliber weapons whose sounds are different, the assumption had to be made that there was more than one shooter.

The officers tried the nearest entrance to Norris Hall, found it chained, quickly proceeded to a second and then a third entrance, both also chained. Attempts to shoot off the padlocks or chains failed. They then moved rapidly to a fourth entrance—a maintenance shop door that was locked but not chained. They shot open the conventional key lock with a shotgun. Five police officers entered and rapidly moved up the stairs toward the gunfire, not knowing who or how many gunmen were shooting.

The first team of five officers to enter Norris Hall after the door lock was shot were:

VT Officer H. Dean Lucas (patrol)  
Blacksburg Officer Greg Evans (patrol)  
Blacksburg Officer Scott Craig (SWAT)  
Blacksburg Officer Brian Roe (SWAT)  
Blacksburg Officer Johnny Self (patrol)

They were followed seconds later by a second team of seven officers:

VT Lt. Curtis Cook (SWAT)  
 VT Sgt Tom Gallemore (SWAT)  
 VT Sgt Sean Smith (SWAT)  
 VT Officer Larry Wooddell (SWAT)  
 VT Officer Keith Weaver (patrol)  
 VT Officer Daniel Hardy (SWAT)  
 Blacksburg Officer Jeff Robinson (SWAT)

Both teams had members from more than one police department. The first police team got to the second floor hallway leading to the classrooms as the shooting stopped. The second police team that entered went upstairs to the opposite end of the shooting hallway on the second floor. They saw the first team at the opposite end of the hall and held in place to avoid a crossfire should the shooter emerge from a room. They then went to clear the third floor.

The first team of officers arriving on the second floor found it eerily quiet. They approached cautiously in the direction from which the shots were fired. They had to clear each classroom and office as they passed it lest they walk past the shooter or shooters and get fired upon from the rear. They saw casualties in the hallway and a scene of mass carnage in the classrooms, with many still alive. Although the shooter was eventually identified, he was not immediately apparent, and they were not certain whether other shooters lurked. This seemed a distinct possibility. As one police sergeant later reflected: "How could one person do all this damage alone with handguns?"

Some people have questioned why the police could not force entry into the building more quickly. First, most police units do not carry bolt cutters or other entry devices; such tools would rarely be used by squad car officers. They usually are carried only in the vans of special police units. Second, the windows on the first floor are very narrow, as on all floors of Norris Hall. A thin student could climb through them; a heavily armed officer wearing bulletproof vest could not. Knocking down a door with a vehicle was not possible given the design and site of the building.

The auditorium connecting Norris Hall with Holden Hall and shared by both could have been used as an entry path, but it would have taken longer to get in by first running into Holden Hall, going through it, and then up the stairs to Norris Hall. The police ERT had the capability of receiving plans of the buildings by radio from the fire department, but that would have taken too long and was not needed in the event.

During the shooting, a student took pictures from his cell phone that were soon broadcast on television. They showed many police outside of Norris Hall behind trees and cars, some with guns drawn, not moving toward the gunfire. Most of them were part of a perimeter established around the building after the first officers on the scene made entry. The police were following standard procedure to surround the building in case the shooter or shooters emerged firing or trying to escape. What was not apparent was that the first officers on the scene already were inside.

Once the shooting stopped, the first police on the scene switched modes and became a rescue team. Four officers carried out a victim using a diamond formation, two actually doing the carrying and two escorting with guns drawn. At this point, it still was not known whether there was a second shooter. The police carried several victims who were still alive to the lawn outside the building, where they were turned over to a police-driven SUV that took the first victims to emergency medical treatment. (The emergency medical response is discussed in Chapter IX.)

A formal incident commander and emergency operations center was not set up until after the shooting was over mainly because events unfolded very rapidly. A more formal process was used for the follow-up investigation.

## UNIVERSITY MESSAGES

When university officials were apprised of the Norris Hall shootings, they were horrified. Vice Provost Ford explained the events as follows (continuing his statement presented to the panel from the previous chapter):

At approximately 9:45 a.m., the Policy Group received word from the Virginia Tech police of a shooting in Norris Hall. Within five minutes, a notification was issued by the Policy Group and transmitted to the university community which read:

*“A gunman is loose on campus. Stay in buildings until further notice. Stay away from all windows.”*

Also activated was the campus emergency alert system. The voice message capability of that system was used to convey an emergency message throughout the campus. Given the factual information available to the Policy Group, the reasonable action was to ask people to stay in place. The Policy Group did not have evidence to ensure that a gunman was or was not on the loose, so every precaution had to be taken. The Virginia Tech campus contains 153 major buildings,<sup>1</sup> 19 miles of public roads, is located on 2,600 acres of land, and as many as 35,000 individuals might be found on its grounds at any one time on a typical day. Virginia Tech is very much like a small city. One does not entirely close down a small city or a university campus.

Additionally, the Policy Group considered that the university schedule has a class change between 9:55 a.m. and 10:10 a.m. on a MWF schedule. To ensure some sense of safety in an open campus environment, the Policy Group decided that keeping people inside existing buildings if they were on campus and away from campus if they had not yet arrived was the right decision. Again, we made the best decision we could based on the information available. So at approximately 10:15 a.m. another message was transmitted which read:

*“Virginia Tech has cancelled all classes. Those on campus are asked to remain where they are, lock their doors, and stay away from windows. Persons off campus are asked not to come to campus.”*

At approximately 10:50 a.m., Virginia Tech Police Chief Flinchum and Blacksburg Police Chief Crannis arrived to inform the Policy

Group about what they had witnessed in the aftermath of the shootings in Norris Hall.

Chief Flinchum reported that the scene was bad; very bad. Virginia state police was handling the crime scene. Police had one shooter in custody and there was no evidence at the time to confirm or negate a second shooter, nor was there evidence at the time to link the shootings in West Ambler Johnston to those in Norris Hall. The police informed the Policy Group that these initial observations were ongoing investigations.

Based upon this information and acting upon the advice of the police, the Policy Group immediately issued a fourth transmittal which read:

*“In addition to an earlier shooting today in West Ambler Johnston, there has been a multiple shooting with multiple victims in Norris Hall. Police and EMS are on the scene. Police have one shooter in custody and as part of routine police procedure, they continue to search for a second shooter.”*

*“All people in university buildings are required to stay inside until further notice. All entrances to campus are closed.”*

Information about the Norris Hall shootings continued to come to the Policy Group from the scene. At approximately 11:30 [a.m.], the Policy Group issued a planned faculty–staff evacuation via the Virginia Tech web site which read:

*“Faculty and staff located on the Burruss Hall side of the drill field are asked to leave their office and go home immediately. Faculty and staff located on the War Memorial/Eggleston Hall side of the drill field are asked to leave their offices and go home at 12:30 p.m.”*

At approximately 12:15 p.m., the Policy Group released yet another communication via the Virginia Tech web site which further informed people as follows:

*“Virginia Tech has closed today Monday, April 16, 2007. On Tuesday, April 17, classes will be cancelled. The university will remain open for administrative operations. There will be an additional university statement presented today at noon.”*

<sup>1</sup> From another university source, we identified 131 major buildings and several more under construction. In any event, it is a large number of structures.



*“All students, faculty and staff are required to stay where they are until police execute a planned evacuation. A phased closing will be in effect today; further information will be forthcoming as soon as police secure the campus.”*

*“Tomorrow there will be a university convocation/ceremony at noon at Cassell Coliseum. The Inn at Virginia Tech has been designated as the site for parents to gather and obtain information.”*

A press conference was held shortly after noon on April 16, 2007, and President Charles W. Steger issued a statement citing “A tragedy of monumental proportions.” Copies of that statement are available on request.

The Policy Group continued to meet and strategically plan for the events to follow. A campus update on the shootings was issued at another press conference at approximately 5:00 p.m.

It should be noted that the above messages were sent after the full gravity of what happened at Norris Hall had been made known to the Policy Group. They were too late to be of much value for security. The messages still were less than full disclosure of the situation. There may well have been a second shooter, and the university community should have been told to be on the lookout for one, not that the continued search was just “routine police procedure.” When almost 50 people are shot, what follows is hardly “routine police procedure.” The university appears to have tempered its messages to avoid panic and reduce the shock and fright to the campus family. But a more straightforward description was needed. The messages still did not get across the enormity of the event and the loss of life. By that time, rumors were rife. The events were highly disturbing and there was no way to sugarcoat them. Straight facts were needed.

## OTHER ACTIONS ON THE SECOND AND THIRD FLOORS

While the shootings were taking place in classrooms on the second floor of Norris Hall, people on the other floors and in offices on the second floor tried to flee or take refuge—with one exception. Professor Kevin Granata from the third floor guided his students to safety in a small room, locked the room and went to investigate the gunfire on the second floor. He was shot and killed. People who did take refuge in locked rooms were badly frightened by gunfire and the general commotion, but all of them survived.

In the first minutes after they arrived, the police could not be sure that all of the shooters were dead. The police had to be careful in clearing all rooms to ensure that there was not a second shooter mixed in with the others. In fact, perpetrators can often blend with their victims. Groups of police went through the building clearing each office, lab, classroom, and closet. When they encountered a group of people hiding in a bathroom or locked office, they had to be wary. The result was that many people were badly frightened a second time by the police clearing actions. Some were sent downstairs accompanied by officers and others were left to make their own way out. Although quite a few officers were in the building at this time, they still did not have sufficient members to clear all areas and simultaneously escort out every survivor. It also appears that there was inadequate communication between the police who were clearing the building and those outside guarding the exits.

For example, one group of professors and staff was hiding behind the locked doors of the Engineering Department offices on the third floor. When they were cleared by police to evacuate, they were directed down a staircase toward an exit where they found a chained door with police outside pointing guns at them. One of them remembered that there was an exit through the auditorium to Holden Hall and they left that way.

The group of students from Professor Granata's third-floor class that hid in a small locked office were frightened by officers approaching with guns at the ready, but then were escorted safely out of the building.

The police had their priorities straight. Although many survivors were frightened, the police understandably were focused on clearing the building safely and quickly. Had there been a second shooter not found quickly, the police would have wasted manpower escorting people out instead of searching for and neutralizing the shooter.

### ACTION ON THE FIRST FLOOR

According to VTPD Chief Flinchum:

When officers entered Norris Hall, two stayed on the first floor to secure it. One officer said one or two people came out of rooms and were evacuated. Officers on the second floor took survivors down to the first floor on the Drillfield side of Norris, but they had to shoot the lock on the chained door to get out. When they did this, other officers entered Norris and began initial clearing of the first floor while the other teams were clearing the third and second floors. The first floor was cleared again by SWAT after the actions on the second floor were completed.

This all was appropriate, thorough police procedure.

### THE TOLL

In about 10 minutes, one shooter armed with handguns shot 47 students and faculty, of whom 30 died. The shooter's self-inflicted wound made the toll 48.

Of the seven faculty conducting classes, five were fatally shot. Three were standing in the front of their classrooms when the gunman walked in. One was shot barricading the door, and one shot while investigating the sounds after getting his class to safety on the third floor. They were brave and vulnerable.

Based on university records, 148 students were on the rolls of classes held at 9:05 a.m. in Norris Hall on April 16. At least 31 and possibly a few more missed classes or had classes cancelled that day. So at least 100 students were in the building, possibly as many as 120, including a few not enrolled in the classes. (The statistics are inexact because not all Norris Hall students responded to a university survey of their whereabouts that day.) Of the students present, 25 were killed, 17 were shot and survived, 6 were injured jumping from windows, and 4 were injured from other causes.<sup>2</sup>

Room 211 suffered the most student casualties (17). The other rooms with casualties were 207 (11), 206 (11), 204 (10), 205 (1), and 306 (1).

In addition to the classes, there were many other people in the building at the time of the shootings, including staff of the dean's office, other faculty members with offices in the building, other students, and janitorial staff. None of them was injured.

When the shooting stopped, about 75 students and faculty were uninjured, some still in classroom settings and others in offices or hiding in restrooms. With over 200 rounds left, the toll could have been higher if the police had not arrived when they did, as noted earlier.

Table 2 and Table 3 at the end of this chapter show the numbers of students and faculty who were killed and injured, by room, based on the university's research.

### KEY FINDINGS

Overall, the police from Virginia Tech and Blacksburg did an outstanding job in responding quickly and using appropriate active-shooter procedures to advance to the shooter's location and to clear Norris Hall.

<sup>2</sup> There are small inconsistencies in the tallies of injuries among police, hospitals, and university because some students sought private treatment for minor injuries, and the definition of "injury" used.

The close relationship of the Virginia Tech Police Department and Blacksburg Police Department and their frequent joint training saved critical minutes. They had trained together for an active shooter incident in university buildings. There is little question their actions saved lives. Other campus police and security departments should make sure they have a mutual aid arrangement as good as that of the Virginia Tech Police Department.

Police cannot wait for SWAT teams to arrive and assemble, but must attack an active shooter at once using the first officers arriving on the scene, which was done. The officers entering the building proceeded to the second floor just as the shooting stopped. The sound of the shotgun blast and their arrival on the second floor probably caused Cho to realize that attack by the police was imminent and to take his own life.

Police did a highly commendable job in starting to assist the wounded, and worked closely with the first EMTs on the scene to save lives.

Several faculty members died heroically while trying to protect their students. Many brave students died or were wounded trying to keep the shooter from entering their classrooms. Some barricading doors kept their bodies low or to the side and out of the direct line of fire, which reduced casualties.

Several quick-acting students jumped from the second floor windows to safety, and at least one by dropping himself from the ledge, which reduced the distance to fall. Other students survived by feigning death as the killer searched for victims.

People were evacuated safely from Norris Hall, but the evacuation was not well organized and was frightening to some survivors. However,

being frightened is preferable to being injured by a second shooter. The police had their priorities correct, but they might have handled the evacuation with more care.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

***VIII-1 Campus police everywhere should train with local police departments on response to active shooters and other emergencies.***

***VIII-2 Dispatchers should be cautious when giving advice or instructions by phone to people in a shooting or facing other threats without knowing the situation.*** This is a broad recommendation that stems from reviewing other U.S. shooting incidents as well, such as the Columbine High School shootings. For instance, telling someone to stay still when they should flee or flee when they should stay still can result in unnecessary deaths. When in doubt, dispatchers should just be reassuring. They should be careful when asking people to talk into the phone when they may be overheard by a gunman. Also, local law enforcement dispatchers should become familiar with the major campus buildings of colleges and universities in their area.

***VIII-3 Police should escort survivors out of buildings, where circumstances and manpower permit.***

***VIII-4 Schools should check the hardware on exterior doors to ensure that they are not subject to being chained shut.***

***VIII-5 Take bomb threats seriously. Students and staff should report them immediately, even if most do turn out to be false alarms.***

**Table 2. Norris Hall Student Census for April 16, 2007 9:05 a.m. Classes**

Room No.	Total Students on Class Roll	Total Students Accounted For:						Students Injured** by Gunshot	Used Windows To Escape	
		Killed or Later Died	Injured	Not Physi- cally In- jured	Did Not Attend Class	Status Not Verified	Total		Injured*	Not Injured*
200	14*	0	0	0	14**	0	14	0		
204	23	1	9	6	5	2	23	3	6	4
205	14	0	1	8	3	2	14	0		
206	14	9	2	2	1	0	14	2		
207	15	4	7	1	3	0	15	6		
211	22	11	6	0	4	1	22	6		
306	37	0	1	20	1	15	37	0		
Labs	9	0	0	9	0	0	9	0		
<b>Totals</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>

\* Included in "Total Students Accounted For"

\*\* Class was cancelled that day

**Table 3. Norris Hall Faculty Census**

Room #	Total Faculty Scheduled	Total Faculty Accounted For					
		Killed or Later Died	Injured	Not Physi- cally Injured	Did Not At- tend Class	Status Not Verified	Total
200	1	0	0	0	1**		1
204	1	1	0	0			1
205	1	0	0	1			1
206	1	1	0	0			1
207	1	1	0	0			1
211	1	1	0	0			1
306	1	0	0	1			1
225/hallway	1	1	0	0			1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>8</b>

\* Class was cancelled that day

These tables were provided by the Virginia Tech administration.