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## **What's Changed Since Va. Tech Massacre?**

**Campuses Take Steps to Increase Notification; Some Push for More Guns on Campus**  
By MARCUS BARAM

It's been almost 10 months since the nation's worst school shooting rampage, when a crazed gunman killed 33 people at Virginia Tech.

That massacre prompted anguished debates about campus security, gun laws, and the privacy rights of the mentally ill, with lawmakers pushing various proposals, and campuses vowing to institute new policies.

Since last August, there have been several other school shootings, including Thursday's rampage by Steven Kazmierczak, who shot and killed five people before turning the gun on himself at Northern Illinois University.

So, what has been done? Or is there only so much that can be done to prevent violence on campuses without creating armed fortresses?

Hundreds of college campuses have taken steps to revamp their notification procedures, in the wake of the Virginia Tech massacre, when students weren't informed about the shooter for hours, according to campus security experts.

**"Many of them have made changes, from text messaging systems and e-mail systems, to more old-fashioned methods, such as the use of sirens and loudspeakers," said Carolyn Reinach Wolf, a lawyer and founder of Campus Behavioral Health Risk Consultants LLC.**

**The administration at NIU seems to have taken those steps, according to Wolf. Students and faculty learned about the shootings on their BlackBerries and voice mail within minutes. Administrators have also distributed booklets with color-coded tabs identifying various emergency situations, according to a school spokesperson.**

**Last December, when graffiti, referencing the Virginia Tech massacre, was found in a women's bathroom at NIU, the campus was shut down for a day.**

**"Whatever changes and modifications NIU made, worked very well yesterday," said Wolf. "In addition, it seemed like they were very well coordinated with off-campus law enforcement. What was missing at Virginia Tech was the timing, where it took them several hours to institute their safety policy."**

Other changes have been slower to come: Although both the House and Senate passed amendments to the Cleary Act, which mandated that warnings should be sent out within 30 minutes, and recommended that schools need to adopt emergency notification procedures, they are being held up, due to squabbling between the White House and Congress.

"Campuses aren't the ivory towers that they're perceived to be," said Alison Kiss, program director of Security on Campus, a nonprofit group that pushes for increased school safety. "Most campuses still need to have more notification for their students and faculty."

Gun laws vary from state to state, and Illinois is generally considered to have strict gun laws, according to Wolf. Since Kazmierczak did not have a police record, he qualified to buy guns, including the Remington 12 gauge shotgun and Glock 9mm pistol he purchased at a gun store.

This morning, some NIU parents, led by Dr. Connie Catellani, plan a press conference to push for tougher gun laws. "A call to action to put all federal and state elected officials and candidates on notice, that parents will no longer take "the gun lobby is too powerful" as an excuse not to have tougher gun laws in the U.S.," wrote the group in a press release.

Most campuses, including NIU, do not allow students to carry guns on campus. Utah is the only state that lets students carry concealed weapons.

But, since Virginia Tech, 12 states are considering bills that would allow students to have concealed weapons permits at public universities.

Helping push the effort is Students for Concealed Carry on Campus, an Internet-based group, which claims to have 11,000 members, reports USA Today. From April 21 to 25, the group will hold a nationwide protest by getting students to wear empty holsters to class.

Some states, including Virginia, are considering legislation to require public colleges and universities to notify a parent if a student is deemed a danger to himself or others. This did not happen in the case of Virginia Tech shooter Seung Hui Cho, although the issue is being hotly debated by privacy advocates.

The U.S. Senate recently passed a bill that would call on school administrators to contact parents if a student is considered a harm to themselves or others. It is awaiting action by the House.

Questions remain as to how much can be done to prevent a gunman intent on wreaking havoc on college campuses, which pride themselves on their openness.

"You know, I wish I could tell you that there was a panacea for this kind of thing, but you've noticed that there's been multiple shootings all over this country within the last six months," NIU Police Chief Don Grady told reporters. "It's a horrendous circumstance, and ... it's unlikely that anyone would ever have the ability to stop an incident like this from beginning."