

Four students killed and seven others injured in Oxford, Michigan school shooting

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Three students were killed and eight others were injured early Tuesday afternoon when a 15-year-old student opened fire with a semi-automatic handgun inside Oxford High School, located in metropolitan Detroit. One of the students who was critically wounded in the shooting spree died at the hospital Wednesday morning, bringing the death toll to four.

Law enforcement officials reported that the unidentified sophomore male student fired twelve rounds from a 9mm Sig Sauer SP 2022 on the south end of the high school starting at approximately 12:51 p.m. Police confirmed that he had claimed to be law enforcement to gain access to barricaded class rooms.

The deceased victims of the shooter include two male students, Tate Myre, 16, and Justin Shilling, 17, and two female students, Hana St. Juliana, 14 and Madisyn Baldwin, 17. Among the wounded are one teacher and six other students, including a 14-year-old girl who had been placed on a ventilator Tuesday night after being shot in the chest and neck.

The shooter was reported by police to be from Oxford Village, a small town of 3,500 people located approximately 40 miles northeast of downtown Detroit. Oxford High School has 1,600 students and serves communities in the area of Oxford Township in northwestern Oakland County.

Oakland County Undersheriff Michael McCabe led a press briefing at 5 p.m. He said that local emergency services dispatch received more than one hundred 911 calls when the shooting began. McCabe said, “Deputies responded, and within five minutes had the suspect in custody. He did not cause any problems. He gave the weapon up. He didn’t have the weapon on him at the time.”

After authorities took the shooter into custody, the youth “invoked his right to not speak,” McCabe said.

His parents met with law enforcement and advised them that they were retaining an attorney. He is currently in custody at an area juvenile facility and police reported that he acted alone.

McCabe told reporters that an investigation is underway and there is not yet any information about a motive for the shootings, if the students killed were targeted or other details including if the shooter have any prior run-ins with the police.

Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard reported during a 10 p.m. briefing Tuesday that the gun used in the shooting had been purchased by the suspect’s father on Friday, just four days prior to the shooting.

Approximately 25 local agencies and 60 ambulances responded to the active shooter emergency call. News media has reported that the alleged shooter’s home was searched by police investigators following the issuing of a warrant.

High school students recounted to news reporters the scene at the school as they went into active shooter protocols that have been practiced during the drills that have become a standard procedure in schools across the country.

The school went into a lockdown as students barricaded themselves in classrooms. A video on social media shows students gathered in a classroom with the door closed when someone yells through the door telling them, “This is the Sheriff’s Office. It is safe to come out.” The teacher responded, “We’re not willing to take that risk right now.” When the person outside the classroom replied, “Come to the door and look at my badge, bro,” the teacher led the students out of the classroom through a window and across a courtyard to another part of the building.

The students were evacuated from the high school and parents were notified to join with children at the

garden center of the Meijer superstore located behind school grounds.

Michigan Democratic Party Governor Gretchen Whitmer attended the late afternoon press conference and spoke briefly about the school shooting, calling it “horrific” and “every parent’s nightmare.” When she was asked by one reporter to comment on the significance of the latest school shooting in the US, she called it a “uniquely American problem,” and then said the focus needed to be on “the community, the families, supporting all the first responders, including incredible people at our hospitals that are working so hard to save the lives of those who are fighting for their lives.”

Students had reported a rumor of a possible shooting incident at Oxford High School weeks ago. A letter from the school administration to parents sent on November 12 appears to have dismissed the danger, saying, “We want our parents and students to know there has been no threat to our building nor our students.” The administration went on to say that “the safety and security of our students and staff is always our top priority,” and that “OHS has numerous highly-trained professionals who work to keep our building safe and secure.”

School districts like Oxford Community Schools are increasingly relying upon the services of SWAT teams and other rapid response and semi-militarized police force groups to address the phenomenon of the “active shooter” in American schools.

While covering the Oxford High School shootings, for example, WXYZ-TV interviewed a representative from Tactical Encounters, a Michigan-based police training organization that promotes itself as a program with “a sincere desire to prepare officers for real-life encounters by first, teaching them through instruction and demonstration and secondly, by placing them in stress-induced scenarios to use the tools they’ve learned to improve their chances of winning all their encounters.”

The tragedy in Oxford, Michigan is only the latest in a series of school shootings in the US that are increasing with alarming frequency. According to a database of K-12 school shootings maintained by the Naval Postgraduate School at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security (CHDS), there have been 222 incidents in 2021 alone. The data shows that this number is nearly double the previous record set of 119

school shootings in 2019, and there has been a 10-fold increase in shootings over the past decade.

The CHDS database goes back to 1970 and shows that the majority of shooters during the past fifty years are male and 42 percent are students, with the balance divided among outsiders, former students, parents, police officers, relatives and others.

Wherever those who use firearms to kill or maim students, teachers and school staff come from, the shocking rise in mass shootings at schools across the country is rooted in the inequality and brutality of American capitalist society and the conditions of social isolation, mental distress and violence that it creates. There is no doubt that the economic dislocation, uncertainty and deadly health conditions facing masses of people as a result of the homicidal “herd immunity” and “profits before lives” policies during the pandemic are a significant cause of the extraordinary increase in school shootings over the past year.



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