

## Assignment #1 – Case Study 1: VA Tech Massacre

### Scenario:

In two separate incidents approximately two hours apart, the deadliest single perpetrator shooting rampage in the history of the United States occurred at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in Blacksburg, Virginia, on April 16, 2007. The shooter, Cho Seung Hui, killed 32 students and faculty and wounded 30 others before committing suicide. Beginning shortly after 7:00 a.m. at West Ambler Johnson Hall, a dormitory on the Virginia Tech campus, Cho used two handguns to kill and wounds his victims. The early morning events and facts are summarized as follows:

[Seung-Hui Cho](#) was a senior at Virginia Tech, majoring in English. He was born in South Korea in 1984 and became a permanent U.S. resident in 1992.

### Timeline:

December 13, 2005 - Cho is ordered by a judge to seek outpatient care after making suicidal remarks to his roommates. He is evaluated at Carilion-St. Alban's mental health facility.

February 9, 2007 - Cho picks up a Walther P-22 pistol he purchased online on February 2 from an out-of-state dealer at JND Pawn shop in Blacksburg, across the street from Virginia Tech.

March 2007 - Cho purchases a 9mm Glock pistol and 50 rounds of ammunition from Roanoke Firearms for \$571.

April 16, 2007 -

7:15 am - Police are notified in a 911 call that there are [at least two shooting victims](#) at West Ambler Johnston Hall, a four-story coed dormitory on campus that houses approximately 895 students.

9:01 am - Cho mails a package containing video, photographs and writings to NBC News in New York City. NBC does not receive it until two days later due to an incorrect address on the package.

9:26 am - The school sends out an email statement that a shooting took place at West Ambler Johnston Hall earlier that morning.

9:45 am - 911 calls report a second round of shootings in classrooms at Norris Hall, the engineering science and mechanics building. At least 32 students and faculty are killed.

9:50 am - "Please stay put." A second email notifies students that a gunman is loose on campus.

9:55 am - University officials send a third message about the second shooting via e-mail and text messages to students.

10:16 am - Classes are canceled.

10:53 am - Students receive an email about Norris Hall shooting, with the subject line, "Second shooting reported: police have one gunman in custody."

12:42 pm - VT President Charles Steger issues a statement that people are being released from campus buildings and that counseling centers are being set up. He announces that classes are canceled again for the next day.

April 17, 2007 - Virginia Tech Police announce that they "have been able to confirm the identity of the gunman at Norris Hall. That person is Seung-Hui Cho. He was a 23-year-old South Korean here in the U.S. as a resident alien."

April 18, 2007 - NBC News announces that they have received a package containing pictures and written material which they believe to be from Cho, sent between the two shootings.

August 15, 2007 - It is announced that the Hokie Spirit Memorial Fund, funded by private donations, will donate \$180,000 to the families of each of the 32 victims. Those injured will receive \$40,000 to \$90,000, depending on the severity of the injuries, and a waiver of tuition and fees if applicable.

March 24, 2008 - The state proposes a settlement to the families related to the shooting. In it, \$100,000 is offered to representatives of each of the 32 people killed and another \$800,000 is reserved to those injured, with a \$100,000 maximum. Expenses not covered by insurance such as medical, psychological, and psychiatric care for surviving victims and all immediate families are also covered.

April 10, 2008 - Governor Kaine announces that a "substantial majority" of the families related to the shootings have agreed to the \$11 million settlement offered by the state. It isn't clear how many families have not accepted the deal. The settlement will pay survivors' medical costs for life and compensate families who lost loved ones. By accepting the settlement, the families give up their right to sue the university, state, and local government in the future. Neither the attorneys representing the families nor the governor would discuss the exact terms until final papers are drawn.

June 17, 2008 - A judge approves the \$11 million settlement offered by the state to some of the victims and families of those killed in the shooting rampage. Families of 24 of the 32 killed, as well as 18 who were injured are included in the settlement.

April 10, 2009 - Norris Hall re-opens. The 4,300-square-foot area will house the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention, which relocated to the building.

December 9, 2010 - The U.S. Department of Education releases a report charging that Virginia Tech failed to notify students in a "timely manner," as prescribed by the Clery Act.

March 14, 2012 - A jury awards \$4 million each to two victims' families who sued the state for wrongful death. The jury finds Virginia Tech failed to notify students early enough following the discovery of two shooting victims at West Ambler Johnston dormitory. The families of Erin Peterson and Julia Pryde argued that had officials notified students and staff earlier of the shooting, lives might have been spared. The Peterson and Pryde families did not accept a portion of an \$11 million settlement between the state and the families of victims, opting instead to sue for wrongful death. The amount is later reduced to \$100,000 per family.

October 31, 2013 - The Supreme Court of Virginia overturns the jury verdict in a wrongful death suit filed against the state by the families of two of the victims, that "there was no duty of the Commonwealth to warn students about the potential for criminal acts" by Seung-Hui Cho.

January 21, 2014 - The [court denies a request by the Pryde and Peterson families](#) to reconsider its ruling.

April 2014 - Virginia Tech pays fines totaling \$32,500 to the Dept. of Education for violation of the Clery Act, a law requiring colleges and universities to provide timely notification of campus safety information.

**Questions:**

1. Were any or all the killings at Virginia Tech preventable?
2. The VA Tech incident involved two crime scenes. Based on Locard Exchange Principle, how might the forensic technician connect the shooter to both crime scenes? Explain your answer. Be sure to engage in a viable discussion with at least 2 peers.