

Lockdown is the new fire drill

The Toronto Star
Friday, November 11, 2005
Byline: Louise Brown

When about 1,500 Brampton teens were ordered into "full lockdown" Wednesday after a shooting at their high school, they already knew the drill.

What routine fire drills were to their parents, lockdown drills are to students in a world where violence is more of a threat.

Like most of their peers across the GTA, students at Brampton's Chinguacousy Secondary School have "lockdown practice" twice a year so they'll know how to respond if someone poses a safety threat, but there's no time to leave the school.

In practised simulations, they are taught to get out of the halls and step into the nearest classroom so it can be locked.

They are supposed to keep away from doors and windows and are reminded to turn off their cell phones to prevent the spread of rumours, although some managed to place calls this week without getting caught.

But are they emotionally prepared to see the police tactical squad in their classroom looking for intruders, as happened at the Brampton school, asks Stu Auty, president of the **Canadian Safe School Network**.

"The sight of armed officers walking into your class is an image you're never going to forget - and it underscores the fact our children are growing up in a very different world than their parents," said Auty.

"Lockdowns are crucial in a world where violent crime is on the rise, but can you imagine the emotional impact they have on some students?" said Auty.

Wednesday's lockdown was called after an 18-year-old student was shot in the parking lot. The student was taken to hospital with non-life threatening injuries. School resumed after two hours, with a letter going home that night to parents.