



Lexington Police Department NEMLEC / STARS Information sheet



NEMLEC stands for the North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council. NEMLEC is a consortium of 30 police chiefs representing law enforcement agencies from communities in Middlesex and Essex Counties located in Northeastern Massachusetts.



The Council is a non-profit corporation formed in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 180 and operates under an interagency mutual aid and assistance (compact) agreement.

As part of the NEMLEC Compact Agreement, each member police chief commits the resources of their law enforcement agency to assist other member agencies in an effort to increase and improve their capabilities to provide protection of life and property thereby preserving the safety and welfare of the region.

This commitment is further embodied in the NEMLEC Mission Statement which reads as follows:

(Mission Statement)

The North Eastern Massachusetts Law enforcement Council is committed to providing the highest quality of support and supplemental public safety services to its police chiefs through a regional partnership of member communities.

NEMLEC is led by an Executive Board made up of four member police chiefs who are elected by majority vote of the entire Council for terms of two years.

In addition to the Executive Board, the Council is organized into a series of 9 committees responsible for the oversight and coordination of NEMLEC's operational units. Each committee is chaired or co-chaired by "Control Chiefs" who manage their respective committee and operational units. The NEMLEC Sub Committees include:

STARS Team

Strategic Planning Committee

Resource Development Committee

Regional Investigative/Narcotic Unit Committee

Tactical Police Force/Special Operations Unit Committee

Training and Education Committee

Policies and Procedures Committee

Communications and Technology Committee

Regional Public Safety Mapping and Analysis Committee

History

NEMLEC was established in 1963 when several local police chiefs began meeting informally to share information and discuss common problems. The original communities were Burlington, North Reading, Reading, Stoneham, Wakefield, Wilmington, Winchester, and Woburn.

The Council is very much a product of the turbulent social and political struggles of the 1960's. The increase in crime and disorder associated with "suburban sprawl" as people migrated from the larger cities, the development of the Interstate Highway System, the Civil Rights Movement, and the growing resistance to the Vietnam War threatened to overwhelm the serenity of many quaint, idyllic New England towns.

NEMLEC has evolved over the years to address the ever-changing demands placed upon the law enforcement profession by providing a system for the dissemination of information among law enforcement agencies and through mutual assistance and logistical support to meet the immediate requirements of an emergency or unusual situation.

The NEMLEC police chiefs formally incorporated the organization on July 3, 1969, and on that date the Council's Tactical Police Force (TPF) was created. By this time, the total number of member communities had increased to twenty-two.

While the Council has continued to grow and adapt to meet the needs of the times, it has been guided by a set of Enduring Principals:

- **Local officials retain control within their community;**
- **Enhance regional services through adoption of emerging technologies;**
- **Increase efficiency and cost effectiveness of member departments through mutual partnerships;**
- **Ensure communications, coordination, and interaction between member agencies;**
- **Provide continuous professional development and training based upon identified regional needs;**
- **Strive to uphold the core values of professional policing through ethical decision making based upon integrity, morality, and respect for the dignity and diversity of all.**

What is STARS

School Threat Assessment and Response System (STARS)

Lexington's Participation in the School Threat Assessment and Response Program of the North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council

The North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC) and regional school officials have come together to ensure safe and secure school environments conducive to learning.

The **School Threat Assessment and Response System's** mission is to prepare, assess, respond, and strive to prevent threats of violence in our schools through a regional program that recognizes the individual uniqueness and integrity of each community.

This multi-tiered assessment and response system is designed to provide local officials access to specialized resources developed through a collaborative effort.

Utilizing the STARS System Protocol, incidents and threats are addressed through response classifications involving varying degrees of consultation, readiness, and intervention.

Once STARS is initiated, local systems and efforts are augmented by NEMLEC's regionally coordinated resources including access to personnel and experts with specialized skills, planning and training opportunities, communications systems, equipment and advanced technologies, and protocols for program and technique evaluation.

As with all NEMLEC programs and initiatives, the School Threat Assessment and Response System provides a mechanism to ensure communication, coordination, and interaction between member agencies in an efficient and cost effective manner with ***recognition and respect for the need to maintain control at the community level.***

The STARS program makes certain resources available to member communities. At this time in the program's development these resources include the following.

- **STARS Response Team**

Made available through the NEMLEC Regional Response Team (RRT), STARS Teams made up of both law enforcement and school personnel who have received specialized training and experience in the assessment of threats of violence in school facilities will assist local police and school officials determining the seriousness of threats and make recommendations for appropriate responses.

- **Bomb Detection Canine**

Made available through the NRMLRC Regional Response Team (RRT) in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Alcohol and Firearms (ATF), an ATF trained explosive device detection canine and law enforcement handler is available to local police and school officials.

- **Equipment and Technology Pilot Testing and Evaluation**

As a component of the STARS program, pilot testing and evaluation of various types of equipment and advanced technologies will occur in selected schools and school systems from NEMLEC member communities.

- **School Facility Floor Plans**

Floor plans of each school facility in NEMLEC member communities will be developed and provided to local law enforcement and school officials in both hard copy (booklet) and electronic (computer disc) formats.

- **Document Examiner (Handwriting Expert) Services**

Made available through the NEMLEC Regional Response Team (RRT), the services of a qualified document examiner (handwriting expert) are made available to local law enforcement and school officials.

Additional STARS program resources currently under development include:

- Local Critical Incident Planning and Preparation Information Technology Systems
- Mobile Incident Command and Communications Capabilities
- Mental Health Evaluation and Consultation Service
- Computer Crime Forensic Investigation Capabilities ~ Regional Internet (WEB-based) GIS and Information Sharing System
- Public Information and Media Relations Capabilities

STARS Article

March 6 - 12, 2000

Massachusetts' Proactive Approach to Youth Violence Prevention

By [Meghan Fay](#), Internet Reporter

When a 6-year-old boy fatally shot his classmate in Michigan last week, communities nationwide were shocked. But the incident also reaffirmed many of the efforts school districts are making to identify and assess those youth who need help and attention.

Many communities in the Boston area, in light of these recent school violence incidents, have reevaluated school safety protocols and become more proactive in their efforts to thwart violence among at-risk youth. "If it can happen in a school like [Columbine High School, a school that seemed to be a model school], it could happen in any of our communities. We're not immune," said **Leo Sacco**, Chief of Police in Medford, Massachusetts and President of the North Eastern Massachusetts Law Enforcement Council (NEMLEC).

NEMLEC is a consortium of police chiefs from 26 communities, who meet monthly to discuss issues that concern their communities. According to Sacco, although school safety has always been a concern, after Columbine it became a topic of conversation that demanded action. "As police officers we do a great job of responding to incidents, but we realize that it's not enough; we need to focus on violence prevention," said Sacco.

STARS Bridges Communication Gap Between Law Enforcement and Educators

Officials created STARS, which stands for School Threat Assessment Response System, to make school violence prevention a joint effort between NEMLEC and area school superintendents. The mission of STARS is, "to prepare, assess, respond and strive to prevent threats of violence in schools through a regional program that recognizes the individual uniqueness and integrity of each community."

STARS unifies the school safety efforts of both law enforcement officials and school superintendents. With the increase in communication between the two entities, a new plane of understanding has been reached. Sacco explains that officers now understand that educators want law enforcement involved in school safety efforts, but are, "really looking to keep the learning environment as normal as possible."

The program sets out 18 different incidents/threat response areas, including written and electronic incidents (i.e. Internet, e-mail), weapons/firearms incidents; gang activity; narcotics incidents; hate crime and diversity incidents; and fatalities, suicides or attempted suicides. Each of these potential incidents has an appropriate response classification and response level -- either local, regional or state and federal. There are five, three-member assessment teams called STAR Teams, which consist of a representative each from law enforcement, education and mental health services, charged with assessing situations.

There isn't one answer to preventing school violence, but many feel as though increased communication between educators and law enforcement is one key to Massachusetts' present success. While suburban communities are working with NEMLEC and developing the pilot program STARS, the Boston Public School system is continuing its work with the juvenile justice roundtables to address school violence prevention.

At-Risk Youth Benefit From Roundtable Discussions

Five years ago, Suffolk County District Attorney, **Ralph C. Martin II**, established the Community Based Juvenile Justice Program (CBJJ) to reduce juvenile crime, increase school and community safety and to identify and develop innovative intervention strategies for juveniles who are at risk for developing delinquent behavior. Currently, 60 percent of the high schools and 47 percent of the middle schools in Boston participate in CBJJ. The goal is to intervene in the lives of at risk youth as soon as school or agency personnel identify them.

“What we are faced with is a wide range of different departments and agencies who don’t know what each other are doing and occasionally they work against each other,” said **John Sisco**, Chief of Safety Security and Chief of School Police for Boston Public Schools. The juvenile justice roundtables bring the following agencies together, literally, at the same table: representatives from the District Attorney’s office, probation, Boston Police Department, Department of Youth Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Mental Health, School Headmaster or Superintendent, Student Support Coordinator and attendance officer.

All of the parties involved in the roundtable discussions are bound by confidentiality regulations so no minutes are taken nor are there any written documents shared between individuals. All information is shared in conversation. “It enlightens us to the status of the child and what services they are getting and what services need to be enhanced. We are operating outside the box in the best interest of the clients we serve,” said Sisco. The roundtables have become a crucial element to providing adequate services to youth because usually confidentiality regulations prevent sharing information about youth receiving services.

The juvenile justice roundtables work to catch kids before they fall through the cracks and also try to prevent a duplication of services. The youth who are discussed at the roundtable are referred from the school system. If a youth hasn’t caused trouble in school, then their name won’t come up at the table. But if the school exhausts its resources in trying to help the youth, the student’s name will get mentioned to develop a comprehensive plan of services to address the student’s needs.

The intervention can range from organizing a visit from a probation officer to an intervention to deal with mental health related behavior. “We’re a safety net,” said Sisco. “Our systems have holes in them and this is an effort to catch those kids who fall through”

According to **Amy Chris**, Program Coordinator for the community based juvenile justice roundtables, however, not everyone is pleased with the juvenile justice roundtables. The collaboration effort receives criticism from defense attorneys and different community groups who feel left out of the discussion. Chris believes that the critics are concerned that the discussions are punitive in nature, which she assures they are not.

According to **Ann Todd**, Student Support Coordinator for Dorchester High School in Dorchester, Massachusetts, she finds out about students who are exhibiting at-risk behavior or are having difficulties either by a referral from a student or teacher or the name is brought up at the roundtable.

“We’re not pinpointing kids to get them in trouble. It’s to get them resources,” she said. The roundtables evolved from frustrations over duplicated services, the schools feeling powerless and a need to effectively reach youth with services. Whereas, schools used to feel as though they were working in the dark and had no resources to turn to, now, “I have a name, a face and a person I know to contact,” when I need to get help for a student, said Todd.